



MODULE I - CLASS I

UNICATA

UNIVERSITY OF AND WITH WASTE PICKERS

RESEARCH PRODUCTION THROUGH CITIZEN
SCIENCE BY UNICATA STUDENTS

VOLUME I

2023



UNICATA

UNIVERSITY OF AND WITH WASTE PICKERS



DECEMBER 2023

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This is a compilation of the work of the first class of Module I – Pilot Project at UNICATA.

This booklet contains the final works presented on August 12, 2023, in São Paulo-SP.

ISBN: 978-1-7776032-3-6



University
of Victoria





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UNICATA

UNICATA is a university of and with waste pickers of recyclable materials, based on Paulo Freire's popular education pedagogy, the democracy of knowledge and the practice of peer learning. This university aims to expand access to knowledge and possibilities for reflection, for a community that generally suffers social exclusion and high vulnerability.

UNICATA is an educational space that allows one to dream, dare, innovate, and inspire with new ideas and transformative achievements in the field of popular education for waste pickers. The knowledge acquired through practice-based learning, collective popular knowledge and academic knowledge must be focused on the professional and human needs of waste pickers.

UNICATA is the result of many years of participatory research partnerships between waste picker cooperatives in São Paulo (SP), researchers from the University of Victoria (UVic), Canada, researchers from the Federal University of ABC (UFABC) and the University of São Paulo (USP). Since 2005, these partners have been involved in several initiatives, notably the Brazil-Canada project, the current Mapping Waste Governance project and the Recycling Network project.

UNICATA was designed for waste pickers with or without the completion of basic education, avoiding structural barriers and exclusion criteria for those individuals who are less literate. This university proposes to adapt teaching and the classroom to the needs of students by using different means of communication in its academic outcomes (video, audio, group work). Those students who want to advance their literacy will be referred to specific courses to fulfill this desire (e.g., Youth and Literacy Movement - MOVA, Youth and Adult Education - EJA, Cícera Tereza dos Santos Educational Community Association - ACECTS, among others).

Throughout several workshops, we shared and discussed the proposal of UNICATA and created the introductory module that was offered to the first class from April to June and concluded in August 2023, in São Paulo - SP.

UNICATA

In 2022, we began a survey with waste pickers to find out about their aspirations, needs and desires in relation to the possibility of studying. In this way, we better understand the current socioeconomic, cultural, and political context of waste pickers to propose teaching that is relevant to this population. Since then, we have been co-creating with academics and waste pickers, the curricular content for the development of each course module, which is then being organized in the form of a booklet. Research is an integral activity of each module and the results of the research carried out by the first class of module 1 will be presented in this publication.

THE PUBLICATION

This publication is the result of research projects carried out by students in the first class of Module 1. Involving students in research activities from the beginning of the course is essential to achieve the purpose of providing a transformative, revealing, and emancipating experience for students.

UNICATA's philosophy is characterized by participatory action research and citizen science. Participatory research prioritizes the demands of the community itself to study certain social or economic situations that reflect their daily lives, aiming at their transformation. The objective is to integrate the knowledge of those who participate in the research to collectively generate new knowledge that can help to transcend the challenges identified in the research.

THE PUBLICATION

Citizen science recognizes the research potential in each person, offering tools and practices, thus making each individual capable of contributing to the generation of new knowledge. In this way, greater emphasis is placed on students as active researchers, preparing them to be researchers and lifelong learners. This type of research questions how knowledge is being created, for whom this knowledge is produced, who participates in the research, how the results are made available and who benefits from the knowledge produced by this research.

UNICATA is built on the value of experiential learning, which is a pedagogical method that appreciates the construction of knowledge in a practical way, through the experiences of students. It is based on the assumption that deep learning happens when we are faced with situations experienced by the participants. Students' reflection on their daily lives not only allows for a greater understanding of the factors that determine the situations they experience, but also allows for what Paulo Freire calls 'critical consciousness', a precursor to true social transformations.

The dimensions that define this methodological framework focus on questions such as: What will be studied? How is the study being carried out? What tools will be used in the study? What will be the benefits of the study and for whom?

With their research practice, the students of the module 1 pilot project revealed essential aspects of the lives of waste pickers, the resistance and their survival and struggles for greater recognition and justice.

We feel honored to be able to share with you the insights and learnings from the research process and the discussions involved in generating these results shedding light on the contexts of waste picking and the lives of these workers.

UNICATA

UNIVERSITY OF AND WITH WASTE PICKERS



FINAL WORKS



WHAT WILL TOMORROW BRING?... FROM TRASH TO LUXURY?

GROUP I

Guidance: Angela Martins Baeder

STUDENTS:



**ANA MARIA DA SILVA DE
OLIVEIRA**



**ANTONIO FERREIRA DO
NASCIMENTO**



**ELAINE CRISTINA DE
PAULA**



JOANA DAR'C DA SILVA



**LUZIA MARIA
HONORATO**



WHAT WILL TOMORROW BRING?... FROM TRASH TO LUXURY?

GROUP 1

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- Why did the interviewees end up in this alternative job (waste picking)?
- What made them leave?

METHODS:

- Interview 1, on 07/18/2023, in Cotia, with Carolina*
- Interview 2, on 07/19/2023, in São Bernardo do Campo, with Nazaré*

*Fictitious names chosen to preserve the anonymity of participants

RESULTS:

Answers from the interview with Carolina:*

The interviewee's father worked at this dump for 50 years and she started when she was 10 years old. The dump was closed in 2000, but the family continued to live there until 2014, when they were removed. In 2016, they managed to formalize the cooperative. But she had to work as a caregiver for the elderly to obtain funds for this formalization. They currently work in a PEV (Ponto de Entrega Voluntária = Voluntary Recycling Return Station) in Caucaia and have their own truck, purchased with help from Rede Sul. The main demand is a depot for them to work in.

Answers from the interview with Nazaré:*

Parents took their children to work at the landfill instead of having them study because they needed the income. As a solution, the city council created a course for the children of the waste pickers, and they began to receive an allowance to study.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS:

“Society would be unable to imagine what life looks like inside the dumpsite!”

“They say life is made of choices... I couldn't choose!”

ORGANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES FOR SELF- EMPLOYED WASTE PICKERS

GROUP II

Guidance: Felipe Palma da Silva

STUDENTS:



**NANCI DARCOLETE
MESQUITA**



MARIA DIVINA FREITAS



ORGANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES FOR SELF-EMPLOYED WASTE PICKERS

GROUP II

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- How do self-employed waste pickers relate to urban solid waste?
- How does the remuneration for services provided to these workers work in the city of São Paulo?

METHODS:

- “The research used as key sources the legislation related to solid waste, institutional and government websites, in addition to the experiences of researchers from UVic, UFABC and USP, who are involved in the problem”.

RESULTS:

Organization of waste pickers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cooperatives/associations• Collective/family groups• Self-employed waste pickers - organized or not• Homeless waste pickers
Waste picker relationship - waste picker x municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Today the city of São Paulo, through the Secretariat of Social Development, has an open notice to establish a partnership with 30 local cooperatives and associations.• Another 20 will be incubated for future qualification within the socio-environmental program of the city.• Part of the category has a formal relationship with the city hall.
Demands of waste pickers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transfer of land/depot• Technical and financial support for ventures• Municipal census focused on waste pickers• Inclusion and prioritization of waste pickers in socio-environmental programs• Contracts with remuneration for the provision of services performed by waste pickers• Payment for environmental services
Post-pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crisis• Reduction in the prices of recyclables• Lack of public policies• Lower raw material prices in the industrialization process• International impacts such as the Ukraine war

ORGANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES FOR SELF-EMPLOYED WASTE PICKERS

GROUP II

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS:

“The income generation potential is very large”

“No to incineration”

“For us, fighting is not an option... it is survival!!!”



INCLUSION AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF WASTE PICKERS AND HOMELESS PEOPLE

GROUP III

Guidance: Jutta Gutberlet

STUDENTS:



**ROSANA MARIA DOS
SANTOS**



**GUIOMAR CONCEIÇÃO
DOS SANTOS**



**OLINDA PEDRO
DA SILVA**



**SUELLY MARIA DOS
SANTOS**



INCLUSION AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF WASTE PICKERS AND HOMELESS PEOPLE

GROUP III

RESEARCH QUESTION:

- How is the daily life of a self-employed waste picker?

METHODS:

- Four interviews.

RESULTADOS:

What is the day-to-day life of an individual self-employed waste picker like?	“Every day is challenging, because there are days that are beautiful and there are days when the streets are empty. This is my view, there are days when one day makes up for the month. We meet generous people and also people who despise our work.”	Maria
Is what a waste picker collects during a month enough to meet basic needs?	“Yes, it is enough.”	Maria
How does a waste picker feel about their daily contact with people?	“Today most people cooperate more, they separate solid waste, they are people I have known for some time, who are conscious and loyal.”	Maria
Based on your experience as waste picker, is there anything that you think of is necessary to improve the conditions for the category?	“People’s awareness regarding waste separation.”	Maria
Do you feel included or excluded in society?	“Today I work for myself, I don’t have a boss, I feel included, but sometimes I have to go out to collect and people I don’t know still treat me with contempt.”	Maria

*We use fictitious names to preserve the anonymity of participants.

INCLUSÃO E EXCLUSÃO SOCIAL DE CATADORAS E CATADORES E PESSOAS EM SITUAÇÃO DE RUA

GRUPO III

<p>How do you experience exclusion?</p>	<p>“João was a child abandoned by his family when he was little, he was addicted to drugs for many years, went through many problems and suffered a lot. He felt like he was excluded for a good part of his life.”</p>	<p>João</p>
<p>How do you perceive social inclusion?</p>	<p>“João replied that after he was welcomed into the Reviravolta Project, he feels happy because today he has housing, food, health treatment, he has people's attention and he had support from the psychologist who helped him with this inclusion and today he feels like a citizen”</p>	<p>João</p>
<p>How do you feel as a cart driver?</p>	<p>“Pedro replied that he likes being a cart driver but there are times when he feels humiliated, that people even spit when he passes by on the street and the traffic is difficult and it is oppressive for him to work these days.”</p>	<p>Pedro</p>
<p>What would a work structure where rights are equal look like?</p>	<p>“It would be a cooperative where all members work collectively with the right to give their opinion and make joint decisions. And together we fight to receive payment for the provision of environmental and social services.”</p>	<p>Ana</p>

*We use fictitious names to preserve the anonymity of participants.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS:

“The waste pickers, in the exercise of this profession, act as environmental agents.”

“With this approach we can see that inclusion is happening, but there is a lot to do to speed up the process and we conclude that the path to inclusion is awareness building, goodwill and partnerships between the parties.”

WOMEN IN WASTE PICKING

GROUP IV

Guidance: Isabella de Carvalho Vallin

STUDENTS:



ABIRA UMMA PACKEER



**MARIA APARECIDA
RODRIGUES**



**VALQUIRIA CÂNDIDO DA
SILVA**



WOMEN IN WASTE PICKING

GROUP IV

RESEARCH QUESTION:

- What reasons led women to become waste pickers?

METHODS:

- 12 interviews with self-employed and cooperative women waste pickers

RESULTS:

Reasons identified:

- *Unemployment*
- *Flexibility to combine work with home and childcare*
- *Depression*

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS:

“Women started waste picking because they needed to, but they continued because they like what they do”

“Double working hours”

“Where are the rights of women waste pickers?”

DROP IN AMOUNTS COLLECTED: A PROBLEM FACED BY WASTE PICKERS

GROUP V

Guidance: Isabella de Carvalho Vallin

STUDENTS:



FERNANDA DE CARVALHO TEIXEIRA



IVANILDE FÁTIMA TOMAZ



FABIANO DA CRUZ PEREIRA



PEDRO LUIZ DA SILVA



TAMIRES TUANE SILVA CONCEIÇÃO



DROP IN AMOUNTS COLLECTED: A PROBLEM FACED BY WASTE PICKERS

GROUP V

RESEARCH QUESTION:

- How is the market for recyclable materials in Brazil?

METHODS:

- Research on news websites and the researchers' own experiences in their daily work.

RESULTS:

- Drop in the price of PET (polyethylene terephthalate) (researchers' personal experience)
- Drop in the price of other materials, such as tin, other plastics, and cardboard (according to secondary data).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS:

“Recyclables have become very undervalued. The waste pickers were able to get a fair share and today they are no longer able to do so.”

“In this sense, UNICATA will be necessary, as a viable, practical, and dignified alternative for these workers to enter society and the job market through organization in the form of associations or cooperatives. In this way, a greater number of people working with the same objective, under the rights and duties of a statute organized by them, can achieve, in a planned manner, an increase in the amount of waste collected and sold directly to recycling industries for a higher value”.

TEXTILE WASTE AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

GROUP VI

Guidance: Jutta Gutberlet

STUDENT:



EDNA CHAVES



TEXTILE WASTE AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

GROUP VI

RESEARCH QUESTION:

- How is the work of Caçadoras de Retalhos (a textile waste pickers group)?

METHODS:

Interview with members of the group Caçadoras de Retalhos.

Interview script:

- 1- How did the idea of bringing people together to collect textile scraps come about?
- 2- How do you feel about waste pickers being included or excluded in society?
- 3- Is the material collected during the month enough to satisfy your basic needs?
- 4- Do you consider these activities a hobby or a profession?
- 5- If you could do one thing to improve people's lives, what would it be?
- 6- Do you consider your role important for ecology and environmental preservation?
- 7- Because it is a product considered "waste", what is the consumer public's acceptance of the merchandise?

RESULTS:

How the group started:

"I went on Facebook where there were a lot of people from all over Brazil and saw that I had no chance of getting textile scraps, and as I knew the Brás region, I decided to create my own WhatsApp group. We started with seven people and today we have 500 women in the group from all over Brazil and that was the idea, and then more people joined, one recommended us to another and so the group grew."

Inclusion:

All textile waste pickers consider themselves included in society. They responded that they love the work and that all the material is put to good use, including small scraps, and that they can work with the collected material for a whole month.

Income:

They report that the money they receive from the production of clothes and handicrafts is of great help in meeting their needs.

RESÍDUOS TÊXTEIS E A INCLUSÃO SOCIAL

GRUPO VI

Professionion:

Most waste pickers consider themselves to be professionals and only 3 of them do the work as a hobby. There are some who take the material to help others, sew and make donations.

Importance:

Everyone considers the activity important in relation to the environment and also for the Brazilian economy, because when they remove a small part of the textile waste from nature, which is then recycled, it generates income, complementing or being the main source of family income. It's not trash, it's opportunity.

Customers:

Regarding the appreciation or rejection of products, they responded that it varies from person to person, but the majority of their customers value and support them, as they are aware that in this way they are preserving their lives and the life on the planet.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS:

“(...) we need to find a way to ensure that we do not leave residues behind us. Using biodegradable materials. Optimize the use of our clothes, produce more durable furniture and utensils.”

“Textile waste pickers are few compared to the tons of textile waste disposed of daily in landfills, the work of artisans and seamstresses cannot manage to use all the material, what is the solution? There need to be many more companies with the capacity to recycle textile materials, crushing them and making new textiles out of the old.”

“(...) a big movement is needed, as is done with recyclable materials such as cans, paper, cardboard. And this cannot be limited to small individual actions, but rather business attitudes, or even governmental ones. It is necessary that companies that recycle textiles also collect textile scraps from the industries, avoiding that they reach the landfill. After all, it is a condition for recycling that the recyclable materials are clean. But we need to go further, creating laws and tax incentives that encourage these attitudes.”

CONCLUSION

We learn to walk, and walking is the best learning experience. In this sense, the entire process of introducing and facilitating research over the 18 weeks of UNICATA's module 1 was a learning exercise for everyone.

The process involved several phases, starting with the presentation of basic research tools in class, followed by a phase of defining interesting questions and challenges to be studied. Gradually, the students found, processed, organized, and evaluated the information and ideas that they raised on the subjects they wanted to study. Once each group's project was completed, the students rehearsed the presentation of their research and finally gave a public presentation on the main research results, at the City Council in São Paulo, on August 12, 2023.

This entire process was accompanied by the academic team of professors and postgraduate students from the universities involved. This was an innovative experience introducing scientific research, exposing students to the learning process that leads to understanding, forming interpretations, developing and evaluating assumptions, as well as critical and creative thinking. Students' experiences with citizen science highlights the importance of active participation in the scientific research process.

Each subsequent module will work on research in an integrated way, with teaching and knowledge co-production. This prepares students for Module 6, which will be the final module of the course, and will be dedicated exclusively to research, resulting in the Course Conclusion thesis.

We are proud that the students have completed this enormous challenge, which has contributed to the generation and democratization of knowledge, fostering students' enthusiasm for science, putting them in contact with authentic research and demonstrating the relevance of science to society. We are enormously grateful for the effort and dedication of the entire team of students, teachers, technicians and other supporters. This was a process that can only be carried out collectively.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

The concluding event in honor of the waste pickers was filmed and the video is available at the following address:

Title: Celebrating waste pickers

Link: <https://youtu.be/RKMX0vOkOrl>

On August 12, 2023, we celebrate the first 22 students who completed the first of the course's six modules: Inclusive solid waste governance for a sustainable and fair society. More than 150 guests attended this celebration including: leaders from the waste picker community, government representatives, university professors, representatives from different non-governmental organizations, a representative from Argentina's waste picker training program and many friends from the waste picker community. During the event in the city hall's main room, the students also presented some of the main conclusions from their first experiences with community research.

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