

# Chapter 9

## Managing the Recycling Business in Istanbul: Inclusion or Exclusion of Waste Pickers?

**Nuray Cakirli**

*University of Goettingen, Germany*

**Aytug Sozuer**

*University of Yalova, Turkey*

### ABSTRACT

*The global waste market is estimated at US\$410 billion a year and growing, while only 25 per cent of total waste is known as recovered and recycled. Besides, this figure does not include the informal segment in which around 20 million people work as waste pickers in developing countries. Solid waste management policy and recycling practices differ among certain parts of the world to a large extent. Industrialized countries generally have formal and automated waste management systems, whereas developing countries rely on the informal sector. In Istanbul, which is one of the few megacities in the world appear to be at the crossroad of a policy choice. Authorities will either privatize the recycling business for large firms or try to follow more inclusive approach for more than 100,000 waste pickers in the city. Based on the literature, this study will review the formal waste management systems and describe the integration of informal recycling sector in particular world regions that may have policy implications for Istanbul.*

### INTRODUCTION

Municipal solid waste (MSW) has become a complex problem in major cities of the developing world, mostly due to rapid industrialization and increased urbanization. Particularly, municipalities of the growing cities struggle to handle MSW because of poor collection and disposal systems. Inadequate waste removal and management facilities, as well as continuing population growth and higher consumption levels make MSW management issue much tougher to solve today. Furthermore, if not managed properly, MSW is likely to pollute air, water, and land, which will risk residents' health and environment (Medina, 2005).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-3147-0.ch009

In order to tackle challenges of managing solid waste, cities respond by improving their MSW management policy, such as installing new waste collection and recycling programs. Although the practices have evolved in recent years, MSW is not being suitably managed and material recovery is still inefficient. Many big city municipalities in developing countries' lack the resources to comply with the growing demand for MSW management services. Thus, many individuals engage in informal waste picking and recycling activities to make a living (Marello & Helwege, 2014).

Informal waste pickers, who are also known as scavengers, collect and commercialize solid waste informally in cities. They perform similar to formal agents in the waste stream. Waste pickers collect recyclable and reusable materials from the generated waste and push forward through the recycling value chain, as do the official or authorized waste collectors (Moreno-Sanchez & Maldonado, 2006). Scavenging contributes to material recovery from the garbage that has already been disposed, yet probably will be lost in dumpsites and landfills unless collected. Moreover, this activity reduces the costs of city's waste management programs by collecting the recyclable material. Besides the quantity of recovered waste, informal waste picking generates income for disadvantaged parts of the community. The studies which point out the economic and environmental benefits of waste pickers suggest that, system improvements without consideration of waste pickers could be highly counter-efficient (Wilson, Velis, & Cheeseman, 2006). Therefore, the recognition of the role that waste pickers could play in MSW programs deems necessary.

Istanbul, a megacity with around 15 million inhabitants, faces MSW management issues as well. Currently, land filling, which is an environmentally unfriendly practice, is the main method for MSW management in the city. However, only half of the 17.000 tons of MSW produced daily in Istanbul could be recycled (ISTAC, 2016). The shortage in services and increase of the needy naturally leads to scavenging activity in this metropolis. The total number of waste pickers is estimated at more than half a million around the country, where approximately one fifth is active in Istanbul. Moreover, the community has been significantly expanded in the last few years due to more than 3 million refugee inflows from war zones in the Middle East (EC, 2016). Although they perform a valuable activity for the ecosystem, a challenge appeared for waste pickers from the local and national authorities restricting their work and permitting only licensed institutions for waste collection. Based on media resources, it is inferred that the formal waste management community tries to eliminate the informal sector in order to collect the complete recycling rent, especially in major cities of Turkey. Recent developments also show that the authorities are drawing regulations in favour of formal enterprises. Despite many initiatives and researches around the world signal the integration of waste pickers in the formal network as a viable option for inclusive development, the approach taken in Istanbul appears to the contrary.

Apparently, there are pros and cons of granting exclusivity to public and private enterprises for recycling business compared to formalizing and organizing waste pickers as an inclusive policy option. The purpose of this study is to present the examples of recycling management in highly industrialized nations and developing countries in order to understand the materialization of both systems. Therefore, the context and actions in different parts of the world will be reviewed to evaluate their relevance for MSW management in Istanbul.

The study first describes the MSW management and the informal recycling sector in general and then presents those issues in the context of Istanbul. The interpretations of the study would likely have policy implications for the emerging metropolis.

20 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

[www.igi-global.com/chapter/managing-the-recycling-business-in-istanbul/192224](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/managing-the-recycling-business-in-istanbul/192224)

## Related Content

---

### Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders and Ergonomic Intervention in Marble and Granite Industries: A Review

Neelkanth Revansiddappa Kodle, Santosh P. Bhosle and Vivek B. Pansare (2022). *International Journal of Social Ecology and Sustainable Development* (pp. 1-12).

[www.irma-international.org/article/work-related-musculoskeletal-disorders-and-ergonomic-intervention-in-marble-and-granite-industries/292038](http://www.irma-international.org/article/work-related-musculoskeletal-disorders-and-ergonomic-intervention-in-marble-and-granite-industries/292038)

### Women's Role in Economic Development a Significant Impact in the EU Countries?

Halil brahim Aydin, Maroua Benghouland Aniela Balacescu (2019). *International Journal of Sustainable Economies Management* (pp. 29-38).

[www.irma-international.org/article/womens-role-in-economic-development-a-significant-impact-in-the-eu-countries/218876](http://www.irma-international.org/article/womens-role-in-economic-development-a-significant-impact-in-the-eu-countries/218876)

### Survey of State-of-Art in Green Cloud Computing

Sanjay P. Ahuja and Karthika Muthiah (2019). *Green Business: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 1360-1369).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/survey-of-state-of-art-in-green-cloud-computing/221107](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/survey-of-state-of-art-in-green-cloud-computing/221107)

### A Hybrid AI-Based Conceptual Decision-Making Model for Sustainable Maintenance Strategy Selection

Soumava Boral, Sanjay K. Chaturvedi, V. N. A. Naikan and Ian M. Howard (2019). *Advanced Multi-Criteria Decision Making for Addressing Complex Sustainability Issues* (pp. 63-93).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/a-hybrid-ai-based-conceptual-decision-making-model-for-sustainable-maintenance-strategy-selection/227295](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/a-hybrid-ai-based-conceptual-decision-making-model-for-sustainable-maintenance-strategy-selection/227295)

### A Specific Issue on Sustainability of Transportation Planning in an Urban Region: Ambulance Location Problem

Aykan Aknclar and Ece Aknclar (2020). *Sustainable Infrastructure: Breakthroughs in Research and Practice* (pp. 870-883).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/a-specific-issue-on-sustainability-of-transportation-planning-in-an-urban-region/240877](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/a-specific-issue-on-sustainability-of-transportation-planning-in-an-urban-region/240877)