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Resources Management and Effective Co-operation of Organisations in Amazonia: A Discussion on the Social Component of Recycling in the City of Belém

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Abstract

This paper aims to understand the organisation process of recycling in Amazonia through the discussion of the social components of the sorting collection system mainly conducted by former farming families in the city of Belém. In the middle of the 70's, the Brazilian Amazon region faced several problems related to the implementation of large industrial and agricultural projects. Consequently, this situation caused mismanagement of natural resources, rural conflicts and loss of land used by farming families in some rural areas of the state of Pará. This unfavourable condition encouraged a process of migration of these families to Belém. Furthermore, due to the lack of opportunities in the formal labour market in the city, these families were forced to collect recycling materials, as scavengers, in order to earn their living. A broad understanding of this issue involves the relationships among different groups as well as the social-economical situation of these actors. To support this research, an interdisciplinary study was conducted mainly based on the fields of Industrial Ecology (IE), Theory of Groups, Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) and anchored by a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA). Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) is known as a promising tool for environmental management. In order to contribute to the discussion of LCA, as well as its application field, this study also intends to include the social component in its scope, through the analysis of the agents that act in the recycling of aluminum cans. Finally, the results show the current benefits of the sorting-collection system, indicating the gains through the organised groups which, in final statement, takes place by means of the effective co-operation among the actors.

Keywords: Farming families, life cycle assessment, recycling, social component, theory of groups