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# Self-employed Proletarians in an informal factory: The case of Cali's garbage dump

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## Abstract

This paper presents data on the organization of work among the scavengers on the garbage dump in the city of Cali, Colombia. Garbage pickers can be characterized as working for the large industrial consumers of recuperated materials, but as not being employed by them. Hence their activities are organized, but in a special way. There is a certain degree of regularity in the hours and forms of work, and a certain amount of management by the dealers in waste materials. However the majority of the garbage pickers work independently and are effectively paid on a piece work basis. While this encourages competition, conflict between pickers is surprisingly rare. Garbage pickers have organized themselves to defend their right to work, but for a number of reasons are unlikely to press for improvements in their working conditions.

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