



## Opening the Bin 3 – Waste, economy, culture and society 'One World, one Bin?'

June 15-17 2023

[Lancaster University Management School, Bailrigg, Lancaster, LA1 4YX](#)

In April 2017 close to 100 scholars from the social sciences and the humanities from all over the world met for the first time at Lund University to discuss waste, culture and society during the [Opening the bin conference](#) in Helsingborg. The second conference [Re-open the Bin](#) was held online in May 2021, hosted by the University of Gothenburg, Sweden and attracted over 100 participants online. Both conferences were organized by a constellation of waste researchers. It is now time to [Open the Bin](#) again.

### Call for papers

[Opening the Bin 3](#) invites contributions that explore the organizing and re-organizing of waste as representative of the 'new normal' (Li, 2020). As events in recent years increasingly show, the world is moving deeper into a permanent state of crisis, at sanitary, social, economic and environmental levels, which confronts us with the construction of a 'new normal', in which waste, in all of its diversity, plays a central, inescapable role. This is not only about the fact that inherently wasteful regimes of production, consumption and discard are behind the reproduction of these interconnected crises at a global scale (Nelson, 2020). It is also about the fact that resilience-procuring agents, in organizational and governmental spheres, cannot help but generate waste in their efforts to absorb strain, repair and prevent further damages (Adyel, 2020; Sarkodie and Owusu, 2020, Zapata Campos et al., 2020). Considering such a scenario, we seek to offer a space for open, creative, transdisciplinary academic exchange around waste that is at the same time unapologetically normative; wasting ought to be debated, for it must be curbed, if our earthly society-in-crisis is to have a chance to endure.

In light of the above, a theoretical and empirical vigilance of the multiple incarnations of waste is essential to understand new ways of inhabiting ruined territories and relations. We are called to figure out what it takes to live among the ruins, how to work through them (Carenzo 2016; Gago, 2017; Reno, 2016), and how to find ourselves amidst them (De Cock and O'Doherty, 2017; Liboiron, 2015). The purpose is to make imperfection visible and to critically question the responses by organizations that reassess the space, place, role of waste in ecological, economic and other social challenges. Waste is to be addressed in its ubiquity, its volatility, its complexity, which creates uncertainty and ambiguity, and ultimately, as a constitutive dimension of everyday, organized life (Corvellec, 2019). Residues and ruin lie at the very heart of the crisis-ridden Anthropocene (*ibid.*). From humble household garbage to massive CO<sub>2</sub> generation via mining, industrial, healthcare and nuclear activity; from highly efficient productions of disposable items to the industrial emission of greenhouse gases at every stage of the value chains, or the routine production of food waste injustice; questions are raised as to what organizations are doing, not doing, pretending to do, missing, or envisaging, to tackle challenges inherent to a world in a state of massive, constant upheaval, at multiple levels.

At a concrete level, waste can take a life of its own, and it is vital to understand what it means for organizations and/or individuals to inhabit ruined territories and live amongst the wasted (Edensor 2005; Doeland, 2019). On the one hand, this implies looking at how processes and practices of production, distribution, procurement and post-consumption reinforce symbolic and literal meanings about what is valuable and what is discardable (Strasser 1999; Corvellec 2019; Hetherington 2004), forming a politico-cultural bedrock for the development of all sorts of business and non-profit endeavors. On the other hand, it implies looking at waste and ruin as ‘signs of life’ that index our historical bonds to material reality and our continuity as a species. Following Reno (2014) and Corvellec (2018), residues can go beyond its perpetual function as an anthropocentric reminder of the ruining quality of human systems, and instead serve to inform, and literally fuel, waste management projects that are committed to finding use and worth in what is left to rot under the sun (see also Hird 2015; Alexander & Reno 2012).

Yet it is also crucial to address the global circuits of waste, and the macro-level implications of programs for ‘zero-waste production’, international governance arrangements based on ‘green’ Corporate Social Responsibility guidelines, and the overall construction of circular economy(ies) in all five continents (Haas et al., 2015; Gregson et al., 2015; Gregson et al., 2017; European Commission, 2018). Everyday practices of insurgency are rewriting the dominant narratives of waste pickers, acknowledging their roles as environmental stewards (Gutberlet et al., 2021). Waste pickers have often taken it into their own hands through their social movements and organizations to promote material recovery and reuse driven by grassroots innovations (Kain, et al., 2022) and to seek dialogue with governments for the integration into municipal waste management, not without conflicts and setbacks.

How do we actually know that our economies and societies are becoming more circular? (Calisto Friant et al., 2020; Circle Economy, 2020)? Can any organization be waste free, especially if one considers humans and non-humans in addition to material and energy flows (Murray et al., 2017; Corvellec, 2018)? Are these approaches radical enough to tackle the crises that waste represents, or is this the latest attempt of a dying, linear system to rescue itself and keep our waste activities invisible (Valenzuela & Böhm, 2017; Hobson, 2020)? How do we actually work, manage, organize and define value in a Circular Economy? (Isenhour & Reno, 2019; Bozkurt & Stowell, 2016; Laser & Stowell, 2019). Who gets invited and what role do grassroots organizations play in the circular economy? (Gutberlet & Carenzo, 2020) At present, circular wastelessness or the invisibility of ruin is deemed symbolic of ‘good organization’, even during, and precisely because of, the ‘new normal’ scenarios of a world after crisis (Ibn-Mohammed et al., 2021; Ellen Macarthur Foundation, 2020). Waste touches on every aspect of individual and organized life (Perry et al., 2010) and why it is important to move beyond the spectacle of waste within an anthropocenic imaginary (Liboiron, 2015; Mostafanezhad and Norum, 2019) to appreciate again a fundamental fact; namely, that the effluent, squandering imperfection of both human and non-human activity is actually the obverse of society’s capacity to construct a better future.

We welcome theoretical and empirical contributions that respond to the above-outlined opportunities and challenges. Here is an indicative, arbitrary and in no way exhaustive list of possible topics:

- People at work with waste and/or circularity: organizational, local, regional and global approaches
- Livelihoods of people at work with waste: public policies, social movements and collective organization
- Between hope and distress: The analysis of subjectivity, emotions and/or affect to understand the commitment of organizational members towards sustainability, circularity /or zero waste.
- Imperfection (waste) as the collective reorganization of responsibility
- Ethnographies of organizational waste strategies, restorative and regenerative strategies, and the development of sustainable circular business models
- The ‘new normal’ and social innovation
- Dystopia: What if nothing is done?
- The spatiality of sustainability, circularity and disposal practices
- Consumption in the age of waste: do we have to consume radically less?
- Environmental justice implications of waste. How does waste management, infrastructure and policy impact communities differently?
- Strategies for value creation – who and how are they created? And/or what or who is given value?
- Hierarchy vs horizontality; organizational forms and processes of organizing material distributions
- Organizing materials, energy and waste in the Anthropocene
- The management of externalities in management and governance
- Scales of transition: micro-, meso- or macro-loops?
- Regional differences and uneven development
- Governance and regulation in ‘the Age of Waste’: soft, strict, autocratic or otherwise
- The role of non-humans in the organizing material and energy flows
- Community-based research and citizen science uncovering cutting edge waste issues

We welcome papers that open new spaces of reflection, understanding and critique, regardless of their theoretical sources of inspiration and methodological approaches. Innovation in writing and composing style are also welcome. In addition to scholars working in organization and management studies, we welcome contributions from – inter alia – anthropology, sociology, psychosocial studies, geography, philosophy, politics, art history, communication, film, gender and cultural studies, among other fields.

*The conference will combine seminars with field visits, food and waste activities.*

### **Closing Date for Abstract Paper Submission: 1st February 2023**

Papers should be submitted in electronic form (pdf) via email to [OTB3@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:OTB3@lancaster.ac.uk). Please include your contact information and affiliation.

**PhD Student - please express your interest in taking part in a dedicated pre-conference waste workshop on the morning of 15th June.**

### **Important dates:**

1<sup>st</sup> February 2023 – Abstract paper submission

6th February 2023 - Acceptance decision announced

14th April 2023 - Registration Closes

15th May 2023 - Sending full paper or work-in progress

15th-17th June 2023 - Conference takes place at Lancaster University

**Website:**

<https://wp.lancs.ac.uk/OTB3-2023/>

**Contact:**

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**Social Media:**

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**Participation Fee:**

- Normal Rate - £250 +VAT, if applicable
- Full Time PhD Student Rate - £100 +VAT, if applicable

Scholars from middle-low income countries can apply for free release. We are working to get a limited number of grants and will post more information when communicating acceptance decision.

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