Editorial: Mobile Trash

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This special issue of *Wi: Journal of Mobile Media* brings together international scholars from a range of disciplines who reconfigure the concepts of 'mobile' and 'mobilities' in relation to trash. The authors do this by using various approaches, from new materialism to software studies, from media archaeology to design, from infrastructural studies to feminism. As such, this issue contains short pieces that engage the politics of trash and speak to its borders, transitions, movements, permutations and invisible transferences. Together, the authors explore and expose the reaches of e-waste, globally – in Australia, Sweden, Canada, and the Philippines – and extraterrestrially, down into ocean depths. An important thread that emerges from these texts is the global flows of trash in relation to throwaway culture more generally, and as tracked through specific objects, metaphors and concepts. Here, the bounds of what constitutes global waste are disputed, conceptual limits are challenged, and the many possible and actual trajectories and modalities of trash are dismantled and reconstituted.

We were inspired to assemble this issue for two reasons. One was to build from our ongoing exploration of the topic through our Techno Trash project (technotrash.org), where students from various universities in Canada and the US have contributed 'tech-eco writing prompts' about the personal and global costs of digital technologies. Two, we wanted to bring together a range of critical perspectives that synthesize mobilities + trash. The authors in this special issue of *Wi* achieve this; they envision a politic of trash that traverses the mundane to the other worldly, data to flesh, material to immaterial, and static to kinetic.

throwaway culture

Sarah T. Roberts recounts the story of a rogue Canadian garbage barge attempting to offload illegal garbage in the Philippines. The narrative underlines the relationships

between countries of the Global North with countries of the Global South in matters of waste, as well as reframes discussions of techno-trash as fundamentally tied to material things. Having coined "Commercial Content Moderation" (CCM), Roberts shows the link of e-waste practices to the kind of disposal that CCM workers do, increasingly undertaken in sites like the Philippines, the Business Process Outsourcing (or BPO) capital of world.

Drawing from software and waste studies, **Sabine LeBel** details the historical, material, and virtual contexts of the trashcan icon, as metaphor, virtual object, and now quotidian tool in mobile interfaces. In considering how the trashcan icon might connect material and virtual realms of mobile trash, LeBel makes an important connection between metaphors of trash and ideals of disposal.

disposable objects

Frankie Kubicki offers a critical historiography of the twenty-first century's throwaway paper cup. Kubicki employs the story of the paper cup as a means of questioning assumed narratives as to why we throw things away. Contrary to the ease with which we dispose of paper cups, the author demonstrates that we are reluctant to dispose of media objects.

Jenny Kennedy and **Rowan Wilken** examine the disinclination to dispose of USB sticks, in part for environmental concerns, but also because of the data stored on them. Building on a pilot study examining people's use of portable hard drives and USB sticks in Melbourne, Australia, Kennedy and Wilken consider the ways in which USB portable hard drives hold enduring personal, social and economic significance.

trajectories of waste

Karma Chahine examines the concepts of 'creative renewal' and 'mobility' in relation to The Garage Sale Trail in Sydney, challenging us to think about the multitude of

trajectories offered by creative ways of thinking about waste that shape and reshape the urban landscape.

From Sweden, **Jennie Olofsson** discusses electronic waste as fluid objects, exploring how they flow and change shape. Olofsson ponders the status of objects as they are discarded as a reworking of the traditional understanding of e-waste as an end point in a lifecycle.

Deena Rymhs examines some of Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas's recent installations and re-casts normative notions of value through the artist's encoding of repurposed materials within a Haida ecological and economic framework.

Issue co-editor, **Andrea Zeffiro**, speaks with **Frauke Zeller** and **David Harris Smith** about the cultural significance of hitchBOT, the infamous hitchhiking robot, whose journey across the United States came to an abrupt end in Philadelphia in August of 2015. Zeller and Smith reflect on hitchBOT's legacy and consider how caring for non-human matter might bring renewed attention to an ethics of trash.

Taking us to outer space, **Josh Lepawsky** invites us to contemplate 'offworld rubbish', as a counterpoint to the current terrancentrism of mobilities. Lepawsky details the discards and remainders of human technologies that have been accumulating extraterrestrially.

Thank you to all the wonderful contributors to this issue. We would also like to thank Owen Chapman, Michelle Macklem and Antonia Hernández among others in the *Wi* team for the design and production of this special issue.

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