



Unmaking Waste

**Transforming Production and
Consumption in Time and Place**



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Foreword

Unmaking Waste 2015: Transforming Production and Consumption in Time and Place was held at the University of South Australia in May 2015. The initial idea for the conference came from many discussions at the Zero Waste SA Research Centre, where it became clear that most of us felt that waste – at the global and local scales – is essentially a consumption problem. For when we accelerate and expand consumption, we have to generate waste to ‘make room’ for the new. This led us to consider how we might ‘unmake waste’, both in material and social terms, and from what disciplinary, or cross-disciplinary perspectives, this ‘unmaking’ of waste might be approached.

So as it developed, the conference’s four main themes addressed our central concern through four complementary lenses: the first, ‘Engaging Values and Innovative Practices’, took up the theme of consumer wants, materialist values and the individualism underpinning consumerism. Papers responding to this theme reflected upon a growing body of research that emphasises the importance of a sense of ‘lack’, and the role of values and beliefs in shaping the enticements of consumerism. The second, ‘Engaging Communities through Social Innovation’, looked at ‘waste’ more broadly from a social perspective, and the possibility of engaging communities through various strategies of social innovations to reduce overconsumption and waste.

The third, ‘Engaging Strategies for Design for Reuse’, asked delegates to consider how designers might shift the attention of consumers away from the brand new, and how ‘waste’ materials could be transformed into valued resources for reuse, and beautiful objects or places that could be valued over the longer term. Finally, the fourth theme placed the problem of waste and overconsumption within an urban setting, asking how ‘Urban Systems’ might be redesigned for ‘Low Carbon Living’. This theme also underpinned our successful three hour China Australia Roundtable on the Circular Economy, which was attended by the keynotes and about 15 other invited speakers. We are grateful to all those who took part in this session, and especially to our joint chairs, David Ness and Ke Xing.

I am also very grateful to the keynotes, who each provided a unique interpretation and valuable addition to the conference. Professor Stuart Walker from Lancaster University gave a fascinating talk on transforming design practice towards sustainable outcomes, which linked to themes 1 and 3 (he also gave a valuable workshop to delegates on this theme); Professor Maria Cecilia Loschiavo dos Santos, from the University of São Paulo, responded to theme 2, and talked about the cooperative practices among the poor around recycling waste in Brazil; Professor Veena Sahajwalla, from the University of New South Wales, took up one of the main challenges of theme 3, and discussed how waste might be chemically transformed into more useful, and safer, materials for reuse; and Dr Shi Han, from the City University of Hong Kong, addressed the sustainable low-carbon urban transition in China, with a particular interest in how China’s new laws on encouraging a circular economy are working.

I would like again to take this opportunity to thank our keynotes and also our generous sponsors, including especially Vaughan Levitzke, CEO of Zero Waste SA (now Green Industries SA), whose ongoing commitment to the Centre and its work, made the conference, and this volume, possible. I would also like to thank the Tonsley Project’s



developers, Renewal SA, and the Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences at the University of South Australia, for their generous sponsorship.

Last but not least, I would also like to thank our dedicated band of student volunteers and the outstanding staff in the School of Art, Architecture and Design – particularly Kate Thornton, Chris Thornton, Christina Penhall and Hazel Ryder – whose excellent work made this conference a reality that so many clearly enjoyed.

Robert Crocker, DPhil (oxon)

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