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# Disrupted Waste Flows in a Broken World (DECAY)

*A Data Management Plan created using DMPTuuli*

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## **Project abstract:**

The project DECAY examines our contemporary trashscapes beyond the utopian fantasy of the eternal redemption of waste as value. Thematically the project is situated within the social scientific research on waste, and its general aim is to formulate a critique of the circular economy (CE) by challenging and disrupting the idea of endless recycling and the simplistic model of the perfect translatability of waste into value. We argue that all waste cannot be reclaimed, but there always remains something in it that does not circulate and cannot be recycled and reused. Drawing from the so-called broken world thinking and from the emerging field of maintenance and repair studies, we take spills and leakages and the practices of patching-up and mending to be at the centre of the very constitution of the CE and its innovations. Thus, the research contributes to the growing body of research focusing on the significance of mundane practices in the operation of the CE. Our research questions are:

- (1) How can a focus on the mobilities, relational agencies, and effects of waste matter further our understanding of the constitution and reassembling of the CE?
- (2) What kind of disruptions and spills are there in the circularity of waste flows and translation of waste into value, and how is the CE sustained and enacted through socio-material practices of maintenance and repair despite these failures?
- (3) How and with what effects can an approach to waste as an unruly object offer a radical reexamination of the economic order?

The research is carried out through three independent yet closely interconnected ethnographic sub-studies on food waste, plastic waste, and incineration ash. We use a rich body of data from participant observation to interviews, waste diaries, documents, photographs, and media materials. To grasp the mundane constitution and reassembling of the CE, DECAY develops a 'more-than-human ethnography' as a means to attend to the leaky realities of waste and trace the journeys of trash in and through different stages of its social life. Disrupting the waste-as-resource paradigm, the project increases our understanding of the role of failure and leakage as well as repair and tinkering play in the everyday operation and (in)stability of the CE. Ultimately, with its focus on the aneconomic side and imperishability of waste as an unruly object, the project offers a view on the inextricable entanglement of human life with waste.

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## 1. General description of data

### 1.1 What kinds of data is your research based on? What data will be collected, produced or reused? What file formats will the data be in? Additionally, give a rough estimate of the size of the data produced/collected.

The main data corpus consists of *in situ* participant observation through ethnographic immersion, but the materials also involve ethnographic interviews (a total of ca. 100–150) of key interlocutors, waste diaries (ca. 40–50), documents, marketing materials, photographs, and media materials. The interviews and the fieldnotes will be in .docx format, the media materials will be in various formats (.docx, .pdf, .jpg), the recorded interviews will be saved in .mp3 format, and the photographs and other images in .jpeg format.

### 1.2 How will the consistency and quality of data be controlled?

In doing qualitative social scientific research, it is not possible to use calibrated instruments as in the natural sciences or take multiple measurements. What is more, the researcher participates in the production of the data, together with the subjects studied. It will be, however, taken care of that the presence of the researchers will not thwart the quality of the data or bring a bias. Several data quality control procedures will be taken to ensure that no data will be lost or accidentally changed during the research process. The interviews will be recorded and then digitised in .mp3 format. Detailed labelling will be used to avoid confusion between files, while also using accompanying notes and documentation about the data.

## 2. Ethical and legal compliance

### 2.1 What legal issues are related to your data management? (For example, GDPR and other legislation affecting data processing.)

Legal issues related to the data management of the project include data ownership and a data-sharing agreement between the same PI's ERC-funded project WasteMatters (running from Sept 2022 to Aug 2027) and this particular project. The agreement will be concluded before commencing any research activities.

### 2.2 How will you manage the rights of the data you use, produce and share?

The original creator(s) retain ownership, copyright, and related intellectual rights to the deposited data, while the Finnish Social Science Data Archive (FSD) has the right to preserve and disseminate the data. The data restored to the FSD archive is available for reuse. The terms and conditions for the deposition and reuse of the data will be specified in the deposit agreement, and the terms and conditions for data-sharing between the two aforementioned projects will be specified in the data-sharing agreement.

Authors will be specified for each archived dataset (authors are the persons responsible for the substantive and intellectual content of the data). A separate document including all the bibliographic information of collected items will be made for the newspaper articles, published photographs, and other media materials used for analysis.

## 3. Documentation and metadata

### 3. How will you document your data in order to make the data findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable for you and others? What kind of metadata standards, README files or other documentation will you use to help others to understand and use your data?

The project will document all data to which it has copyright (i.e., interviews, fieldnotes, photographs taken) in digital form and place it in long-term storage especially in the Finnish Social Science Data Archive (FSD). The data to be shared will be made available after research. The data will be available for subsequent reuse by other researchers by restoring it to the FSD archive. No time limits will be set for the reuse of the data. At FSD, the data will be given an ID number, and it will also be identifiable with the study title. Also its data type (i.e. qualitative), availability, and publication type will be announced.

At FSD, the metadata will be stored into XML files using the DDI Codebook 2.1 specification. Structured XML is suited for long-term preservation, and various documents can be created based on it.

## **4. Storage and backup during the research project**

### **4.1 Where will your data be stored, and how will the data be backed up?**

During the research process, the data that is in electronic format will be stored on the computers of the team members, with each team member responsible for the data produced by themselves. Access to the data will be password protected. All the data that exists in print will be stored and kept safe in the office of each team member within locked drawers. The data will be backed up saving a back up copy to the university's network drive.

### **4.2 Who will be responsible for controlling access to your data, and how will secured access be controlled?**

The team members will be responsible for backup and recovery of the data produced by them. However, regards the data that will be jointly used with collaborators, we will agree in each case how to store and back it up and ensure safe transfer between us. In addition, university's IT support will be consulted to guarantee a safe and secure storage and transfer. In any case, we will avoid storing or sharing unencrypted personal or sensitive data with them.

## **5. Opening, publishing and archiving the data after the research project**

### **5.1 What part of the data can be made openly available or published? Where and when will the data, or its metadata, be made available?**

The project will document all data to which it has copyright (i.e., interviews, fieldnotes, photographs taken) in digital form and place it in long-term storage especially in the Finnish Social Science Data Archive (FSD). The data to be shared will be made available after research. The data will be available for subsequent reuse by other researchers by restoring it to the FSD archive.

### **5.2 Where will data with long-term value be archived, and for how long?**

It is difficult to assess in advance which data has long-term value for subsequent research and future generations of scholars. Potentially and hopefully all the data that the project produces has long-term value. The data will be restored especially in the Finnish Social Science Data Archive (FSD). No time limit will be set for the storage and reuse of the data.

## **6. Data management responsibilities and resources**

### **6.1 Who (for example role, position, and institution) will be responsible for data management?**

The data management tasks will not be allocated to any one person, but we want to share the responsibilities and make the whole research group involved. We will consult the FSD personnel for specialist expertise on data management,

data preservation, and the sharing of data. No additional computational facilities will be needed for data management during the research project, but we estimate the the management will take approximately one day per month.

**6.2 What resources will be required for your data management procedures to ensure that the data can be opened and preserved according to FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Re-usable)?**

The FSD will cover long-term storage costs and the effort of making a detailed DDI documentation of the data produced in and by the project. The collection, processing, basic documentation, and anonymisation are taken into account in the research outline and the budget of the research, and they are integral to other research practices in the project. The time and effort needed will depend on the amount and nature of the data.