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The Paradoxical Centrality of Abandonment in the Urban Life
(see Chinese translation below)
Jérôme Monnet

Representing what is discharged, waste is logically considered peripheral, if not marginal, in contemporary urban life. According to the well-known formula of the anthropologist Mary Douglas (2003), « *dirt is matter out of place* »; human beings thus create places dedicated to contain and exclude that « dirtiness », which they want to be rid of. In private spaces, be it domestic or professional, we maintain the *cleanliness* of the property: organizing belongings, removing dust and disposing of waste. This ultimate physical exclusion allows one to place waste out of reach and out of sight: it is first confined to bags or assigned to containers, before to be « taken out » from our homes and placed into bigger containers, which are in turn removed from the citizens’ daily view by being discharged into garbage dumps, and then buried or incinerated.

The whole system of dismissing « dirty » material from places where it does not belong involves a territorialized network, whose existence maintains itself in the citizens’ consciousness on a subliminal level, so that the production and transportation of waste does not contaminate the city. Indeed, the sociocultural construction of waste requires that it is kept at the same time out of sight and out of mind. « Seeing » dirtiness leads us to feeling dirtied and to wanting to clean ourselves, or else denouncing the dirtiness of others and demanding a cleansing.

I would like to ponder on the marginalization of waste in the city and its paradoxical character, by exploring the idea that this product of society is a fundamental component of public space, and therefore of contemporary urbanity. For this reason, it is interesting to consider the notion of abandonment. The process of abandonment, even when it is ultra-fast, makes it possible to grasp the transformation of that which is not yet waste, and still has a value and a use, into a thing that no longer has a place in our midst; that which has to be excluded, discharged and hidden.

Freudian psychology has shown the importance of the character building moment of the young human being, when they accept that their excrement, which although originated from and created by them, is no longer « theirs »: it then becomes possible to be separated from something which was part of oneself without undermining her or his integrity. But it is another matter, a more cultural factor that leads one to want and need to hide their excrement from their own view and from the view of others. While in Ancient Rome it was acceptable to do one's needs in public, in specialized places where people could get together and talk, today’s standard is everyone must confine themselves away, isolated from even those with whom we are more familiar or intimate.

The abandonment maintains a connection with the intimate and public concept of the self that could also be illustrated with the fate of a cigarette. Bought as a desirable product, worthy of a financial expenditure, it will be consumed through one of the most intimate parts of the human body, the mouth, by inhaling the smoke and the tar that it contains. But once consumed, the cigarette will go directly from being an intimate and valorized object, to one of undesirable waste, that which we need to get rid of as fast as possible by disposing of it, but not just anywhere. In the private spaces mentioned before, the smoker will want to stub out the butt before putting it away in an ashtray or bin, to isolate the dirtiness it represents henceforth, and to respect the personal and collective sense of cleanliness. But if the smoker is in a place that he or she considers « public », whatever its juridical status might be, they allow themselves to do what they wouldn't do elsewhere: discard the cigarette butt on the ground, without the feeling of sullyng or dirtying themselves.

One could now look at various other examples, evoking the fate, after use, of subway or bus tickets, tissue paper, disposable bottles, food packages, free newspapers, leaflets, etc. These objects

share the requirement to be thrown into the garbage if people are indoors, and the possibility of being left behind “anywhere”, or almost, when people consider themselves as being outdoors. The possibility of abandonment is, therefore, an important indicator of public space. For example, social practice shows that clients do not consider shops as public spaces, because they don't generally allow themselves to abandon their waste there, whereas train stations or open air markets are more frequently used as places where we authorize ourselves the abandoning of certain things we no longer want.

It should be noted that there is a double variation, synchronized or not, of the public production of waste and the intolerance towards it. Thereby, dog dirt can become a source of scandal and denunciation as the number of dogs gradually increases in a city. We observe the media controversies or political mobilizations against people who spit on the ground or urinate in the streets. The cigarette butt becomes a matter of public controversy as soon as the law forbids smoking in indoor public spaces and encourages smoking outside. With the intensification of contemporary forms of mobility, and the development of consuming and snacking in the streets, we abandon packaging and remnants in collective transport or on public benches. The distribution of free newspapers with second-rate content is swiftly followed by their abandonment after a quick reading... These leftovers first appear to be tolerated as part of the “normal” dirtiness of public space, until their accumulation or a change in their social acceptability lead people to protest against their presence.

In this way, public space is a product of the non-self. One can maintain her or his own integrity by transferring the burden of waste to an anonymous otherness, through unconscious micro depositories which volume is far beyond the “public” equipments dedicated to it: the garbage cans, the roadside gutters, the WC, the drains, etc. The links between the process of abandonment and the production of the “public” dimension of the urban space allows us, therefore, to ponder the central role that *publicness* plays in the creation of contemporary urbanity.

During the course of the planet's hominization process, which has seen the human species occupy all possible spaces, whether it be in the long-term (like in most continental regions), or in a temporary or exploratory manner (like high peaks, ocean depths or polar ice caps), human beings have not stopped abandoning what no longer had any interest or value to them: leftover food, broken or used objects, lands worn-out by pastoral exploitation, forestry, agricultural or mining projects, villages emptied by rural exodus, silted up harbours, towns abandoned by traffic, etc. Throughout the entire duration of the process of appropriating the planet into a habitable environment, abandonment has been an ongoing process that gives archaeologists today inexhaustible material: in excavating corpses, objects, and architectural and spatial structures.

Over this time-frame, the act of abandoning is often perceived as leaving “behind oneself” that which is no longer of interest, without having to co-exist with what we abandon. But settlements in general, and urbanization in particular, imply a radical change-in our relationship with all that we abandon. When a society can no longer separate itself with all what it abandons by relocating itself completely, it must rebuild itself on site, with, and on top of, its own discharges. The constant reconstruction of the city onto itself has thus become characteristic of the phase of global urbanization that started with the Western industrialization in the XIX century. Before, entire urban systems or sites could be abandoned when the civilization that built them collapsed or weakened, as we can see in the case of monumental ruins that have since become tourist attractions following their restoration. By contrast, in the past two centuries, the abandonment of cities appears to have become an exception (such an exception would be the contemporary “shrinking cities”).

At a time when we are no longer abandoning cities, and thus having to coexist with all that is operationally discharged after consumption, we can now move on to put the paradoxical process aforementioned. On the one hand, discharges are devalued as waste, and are therefore marginalized and made invisible by containing it in isolated places, inside buildings or within the urban fabric. On the other hand, the ability to abandon things in the space shared with others relies on a trust about the public order in the city.

Indeed, disposing of something in public space implies the transfer from one's load onto the whole society and especially onto the “public” service established for “cleaning” shared spaces. The very gesture of throwing something away has a specific implication in the city: after having separated

oneself from a thing with which one does not want to maintain any relation, everyone has faith in the fact that upon one's return, the waste will have disappeared thanks to the intervention of a greater collective body concerned with the common good. Moreover, this confidence accredited to public space to take charge of the waste that we abandon, also extends to other forms of abandonment, which in turn presumes its capacity to manage it.

As a matter of fact, alongside the definitive abandonment which creates a dramatic break between oneself and the abandoned thing which no longer belongs to anyone (*res nullius*), there is another form of abandonment. It is ambiguous because it is provisional: we trust public space to “maintain” the objects we temporarily leave unattended, without abandoning our ownership. A ubiquitous example of this in the contemporary city is given by the parking of private vehicles on the road: their owners, who have gone to do something else without having renounced their right to the object, far from it, privatize momentarily the public space entrusting their property to it. Cars and trucks lining the sides of the streets, bicycles and motorcycles locked to street hoardings and occupying sidewalks, kick scooters parked alongside gates that protect access to schools: all these elements have become unavoidable (literally as well as figuratively) in the global cityscape. This invasive use of public space has become a major concern for public authorities, who then implement more or less sophisticated systems to control, repress and/or tax these temporary abandonments.

As well as this definitive or provisional abandonment of certain objects, a third type of abandonment characterizes public space: that of living beings, which represents another type of trust. When humans furtively abandon pets – like litters of kittens deposited in the trash, dogs attached to streetlights, or exotic animals put in the sewer – they rely on public space to shift this burden to other humans. This is particularly evident in the cases of abandoned human babies: in the Old European regime, they were so frequently abandoned at the doors of convents and churches, that charitable institutions set up special apparatus called “Towers of Abandon”, in order to preserve the anonymity of those doing the abandoning, whilst making sure the babies were safe. The recent resurgence of these cases in Europe and Asia has led hospitals to put similar apparatus in place (“baby hatches” or “baby boxes”).

But the abandonment of a being by another is not a phenomenon as widespread as the abandonment of oneself to public spaces and charities: that is, beggars, tramps and other homeless people. Just as most city dwellers prefer to ignore what happens to the waste once they have produced it, they would like to ignore the existence of “street people”. However, this reality is within everyone’s view, and not only because public space represents a refuge for these poor people, but, most of all, a resource. Besides the fact that they need to become visible if they want to beg, they must go around as to rummage through the garbage bins to retrieve waste, which value they restore: food to eat, clothes and furniture to reuse, objects and materials to resell, etc.

The stigmatization that affects the population whose survival depends on the exploitation of waste, is due to the cultural representation of “contamination” of the former by the latter. The encompassing society and the authorities can thus allow themselves to discard them as « human waste », preferring to ignore the sub-human conditions in which they live, whilst barely tolerating those who are visible.

The issue arises to extend the notion of abandonment even further, by including entire spaces and groups. In Los Angeles, the City Council has extended its ban on loitering to its whole territory, specifically intended to prevent homeless people from moving and establishing themselves in streets elsewhere than those of the pericentral, “sacrificed” neighborhood of Skid Row, where their presence is tolerated. In Europe, Giorgio Agamben has discussed the common linguistic roots of the words abandonment, ban, bandit and *banlieue*. Is it possible to see a form of abandonment in the persistent devaluation of the *banlieue* as “under-urban” (sub-urb) form of city? In these poorly recognized urban spaces, utilized by urban planning as landfill locations of hazardous, contaminated and unwanted equipment, roads and infrastructure are often neglected as they contain communities who are undervalued as poor and/or “foreign”. Then, camps and slums appear as urban discharge, treated and marginalized just like any waste.

In conclusion, the place of waste in the city can be analyzed within a more complex system, in which the possibility of abandonment requires the rule of public order to which the citizens entrust

the job of dealing with all that they definitively reject or temporarily abandon. When we consider the role of invisibilization in the process of abandonment, it follows an intervention in this system that would involve making visible again what was hidden or repressed. Refocusing the public eye on waste, amongst other things, and on abandoned beings, creates a scandal necessary for everyone to remember their responsibilities in the production and management of this phenomenon.

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城市廢棄物的核心矛盾

Jérôme MONNET

廢物是我們棄置的東西。在現今的城市生活，廢物引身出來的問題不是被邊緣化，就是被忽視。根據人類學家 Mary Douglas 的名言，污垢是在錯誤地方出現的東西，人們絞盡腦汁製造空間去專門儲存和棄置廢物。在私人空間，無論是家居抑或工作場所，我們都會盡力保持清潔：整理物品、除塵和處置廢物，這種在物質層面上終極排除廢物的做法，令垃圾觸不到、看不見：從我們的家被收集前，垃圾先被封在垃圾袋或容器，其後再放置於更大的容器中。為求使之消失在公民的視線，垃圾會被送往垃圾場，再遭深埋或焚化。

將污物從不屬垃圾的地方去除的系統，涉及的網絡只存在於公民的潛意識，於是廢物的生產和運輸不會污染城市。誠然，社會文化建構中，廢物需要被排除在視線和意識以外。眼見污穢使我們感覺被玷污、想要清潔自己，又或責難別人骯髒和要求對方清理。

我希望探索人類社會產生的廢物，如何成為公共空間以及當代城市生活的根本元素，藉此思考廢物在城市被邊緣化和矛盾的特質。因此，對棄置物品的思考十分有趣，棄置的過程即使如何快速，我們仍能了解廢物如何從仍具價值和用途的物件，變成失去地位、需要被排除和隱藏的物件。

弗洛伊德的心理學，指出青少年人格建立的時刻之重要性。當青少年接受其排泄物雖然是源於自身，但卻不再屬於他們，他們就能夠將曾屬於自己一部份的東西與自己分隔，同時不損害她或他的人格整全。然而，還有另一個與文化較相關的要素，令人將自己的排泄物，從自己或他人面前隱藏。古羅馬接受在公共空間解手，亦有專門為此而設的地方，人們同時可以相聚聊天，但在今時今日的標準，所有人解手時都必須要將自己與其他人隔離，甚至對熟悉或親密的人亦然。

我想用一支煙的命運，說明棄置廢物與「親暱的自我」與「公開的自我」的關係。一支煙本來是一件要花錢買回來的產品，由我們最親暱的器官之一——口腔——吸入煙霧和焦油。然而，吸完那支香煙後，那支煙就會由親暱和增值的物件，直接變成我

們想除之而後快，但又不能隨處拋棄的廢物。在剛才提及的私人空間，吸煙者會先碾滅煙蒂，才棄之於煙灰缸或垃圾桶，以便與它所代表的污穢分離，這同時又可尊重個人與集體的清潔意識。可是，若吸煙者在其認為是「公共」的地方，不論此地在法律上定義如何，他們就會容許自己去做在別處不會做的事情：把煙頭丟在地上，而不會有玷污或弄髒自己的感覺。

再看其他例子：地鐵或巴士車票、紙巾、用完即棄的瓶子、食品包裝、免費報紙、宣傳單張等。它們的共通點是，如果人們在室內，大多將它們掉進垃圾桶，但當人在戶外，大有可能將它們隨處遺棄。因此，棄置與否，公共空間也就成為一個重要指標。例如，社會習慣顯示，客人不視商店為公共空間，因為他們一般不會在商店棄置垃圾，而在火車站或露天市場，我們卻較容許自己丟棄垃圾。

值得注意的是，不論是否同時發生，廢物的產生和對此的排斥往往相輔相成。當狗隻數量增加，狗糞隨之成為醜聞和被譴責的對象；一些媒體或政治動員針對隨街吐痰或小便的人；當法例禁止室內吸煙，變相鼓勵室外吸煙，棄置煙頭就立即成為公眾爭議的問題。隨著現今社會的一切愈見流動，加上街頭小食和消費的普及，我們在公共交通或長椅上棄置包裝和廚餘；沒甚內容的免費報紙，讀者接過匆匆讀完便隨即拋棄。最初公眾彷彿容忍這些剩餘物資的存在，視之為公共空間內的「正常」污垢，直至它們累積起來，或者社會的容忍度有變，令公眾反對它們存在。

由此看來，公共空間是「非我」的產物。通過把廢物的負擔轉移到不知名的他者，並放進無意識和微細的儲存空間，一個人就可以維持自身的人格，而這些儲存空間遠遠超出專門處理垃圾的公共設施的負荷：垃圾桶、路邊的坑渠、廁所、排水溝等。棄置垃圾的過程與建構城市空間的公共一面的連繫，都能讓我們思考「公共性」在當代城市所扮演的核心角色。

人類在地球的進化過程中，顯露了其盡可能佔據空間的行為，無論長期佔據（像大多數陸地），或者只是臨時或探索式（如高聳的山峰、海洋的深處或極地冰冠）。人類從未停止過棄置對他們不再有任何利益或價值的東西：剩食、損壞或用過的物件、因放牧、伐林、耕作或採礦而耗盡的土地、因農村人口外流而丟空的村落、淤塞的港口、因交通規劃而被遺棄的小鎮。在將地球變作宜居地的過程中，棄置廢物從未休止，這也讓考古學家有取之不盡的材料：屍體、物件、建築與空間結構。

在這段時間，棄置行為本身，往往被視為將不再感興趣的物品拋諸腦後，而不必與它們共存。然而，停駐安居，特別是城市化的過程，徹底改變我們與所有棄置物的關係。當一個社會無法完全遷徙，以將自己與其棄置物分隔，它就必須在原地、在社會排放的廢物之上重建。因此，隨著十九世紀西方工業化，城市不斷重建已經成為全球城市化的特徵。在此之前，當文明崩潰或衰弱，它的城市系統或地方會被完全遺棄荒廢，就如經復修後變成旅遊景點的巨大廢墟。相比之下，在過去兩個世紀，荒廢城市似乎寥寥可數（罕有例子包括當代的沒落城市）。

當我們不再遺棄城市，因而要與所有消費過後的廢物共存，我們可以繼續討論上述的矛盾。一方面，排放的東西被貶值為廢物，因此被邊緣化，而置於偏僻的地方、建築物內或城市的肌理之間，務求隔絕於視線範圍；另一方面，能否在與他人共享的空間棄置垃圾，是基於人們對社會秩序的信任。其實，在公共空間棄置物品，意味個人的責任轉移到整個社會，特別是轉移到為清潔共享空間而設的公共服務。拋棄的姿態本身，在城市中自有意義：在自己和廢物斷絕關係以後，所有人都滿懷信心，返回現場時廢物自會消失，這一切多得關心公共利益的機構介入。此外，對於公共空間完善處理棄置物的信心，還延伸到其他形式的棄置，反而假定它有能力去處理所棄置的事物。

事實上，棄置令自我與不再從屬任何人的廢棄物之間，出現戲劇化的斷裂。此外，也有另一種棄置行為：由於只是短暫性質，關係也就變得不明：我們相信公共空間會

「保護」我們暫時留下的物品，且並不會奪走我們的擁有權。在當代城市無處不在的例子，就是在路邊停泊的私家車：另有活動的車主，不必放棄對車子的擁有權，更甚的是，實際上他們短暫地私有化了那部份的公共空間，並將其財產予以委託。汽車和貨車泊滿馬路兩旁；自行車和電單車被鎖在路邊圍板，佔據行人路；滑板車停泊在保護學校的閘口旁邊，這些現象在全球城市景觀中，（無論就字面及象徵意義而言）都已是無可避免。這種對公共空間入侵式的使用，已成政府部門的主要問題，他們於是實施整全的系統，控制或遏制這些短暫的棄置行為，又或同時對此徵收稅項。

除了以上明確和臨時的棄置行為，第三種只會出現於公共空間的獨有棄置行為，就是棄置生命，它代表另一種信任。當人類偷偷拋棄寵物，像將小貓放在垃圾筒、將狗繫於街燈，或將稀有動物放在下水道，他們依靠公共空間，並將責任轉移給其他人。棄嬰的例子尤其明顯：在古代歐洲政權下，嬰兒遭遺棄在修道院或教堂門前的情況比比皆是。為了保護棄嬰者的身份，同時確保嬰兒的安全，慈善機構建立名為「遺棄塔」的特殊設施。最近，棄嬰潮在歐洲和亞洲再度湧現，醫院因此需要設置類似設施（「嬰兒艙」或「嬰兒盒子」）。

然而，生命被人遺棄的現象，始終及不上一個人把自己「遺棄」給公共空間和慈善機構普遍，言下之意即是乞丐、流浪者和其他無家者。正如大多數市民產生廢物後，寧可無視廢物的下場，他們同樣希望無視街頭流浪者的存在。可是，這一現實眾人皆見。公共空間對這些窮人而言不僅是避難所，更重要的是，公共空間代表了資源。除了因為行乞時需要被看見，他們也必須在垃圾桶翻找廢物，並重新賦予價值：可吃的食物、可重用的衣服和傢俬、可變賣的物品和材料等等。

污名化影響這些利用垃圾維生的社群，由於文化表述往往視這些拾荒者受垃圾污染。因此，社會和當局就可遺棄他們，視他們為「人類垃圾」，對進入視線範圍以內的拾荒者姑且容忍，但漠視他們非人的生存條件。

這議題還可以進一步將遺棄這個概念，推展至很多空間及社群。洛杉磯市議會已擴大禁止遊蕩的範圍至其全境，旨在防止露宿者遷移至貧民窟以外，並於街道上建立自己的家園。貧民窟是「被犧牲」的社區，露宿者的存在於此尚可容忍。在歐洲，Giorgio Agamben 討論了遺棄（abandonment）、禁令（ban）、土匪（bandit）和市郊（*banlieue*）這些字眼在語言學上的共同根源。在市郊持續被貶為「次等城市」（sub-urb）的情況，是否可能從中察覺一種遺棄的形式？城市規劃師將這些不廣為人知的城市空間用作堆填區，放置危險、受污染和沒人想要的設施。被貶為貧窮和／或「異地人」的社群居住於此，所以道路和其他基建配套往往備受忽視。於是，露宿者的帳篷和貧民窟就以城市廢物的形式出現，如同任何垃圾一樣被處理和邊緣化。

總括而言，我們可以通過更複雜的系統去分析垃圾在城市中的定位。棄置行為需要社會秩序的規範，公民委託公共秩序去處理所有他們明確或暫時棄置的東西。當我們考量棄置過程如何將廢物移至視線範圍以外，但隨之而來的是我們無可避免地又要要介入系統，被隱藏或壓抑的東西又再次出現。通過將公眾的視線重新聚焦於廢物以及被遺棄的生命，就能揭示出醜陋的真相，足以讓每個人記住製造及處理「廢物」的責任。