



Designing Law and Policy for a Zero Plastic Circular Economy

Call for Papers - Special Issue of the [Law, Environment and Development Journal \(LEAD Journal\)](#)

Plastic, the convenient, malleable, hydrocarbon-based material, which has become symbolic of the 'Plastocene' throwaway culture, is now perceived as a severe global environmental threat. The threat is linked to its manufacture and disposal. Since most plastics are made from petroleum or natural gas, there is a direct link between over dependence on fossil fuels and climate change. Synthetic plastic does not biodegrade; it accumulates. Microscopic plastic particles are present in the air throughout the world and in all major oceans. Further, plastic packaging is a significant source of landfill waste. As a result marine and land animals regularly consume plastic in all its forms with fatal consequences for both biodiversity and ecosystems. In addition, there are broader implications for other rights, such as the rights to food and health whose realisation is affected by plastic entering the food chain.

Warning signs from scientists that we have reached peak-plastic at a planetary scale have increasingly led to demands for new initiatives, and a review of the existing regulatory framework, to address the crisis. Reversing the trend of plastic use, as well as cleaning up existing pollution, is an immense law and policy challenge, which will impact all aspects of the economy, environment and society. It also needs to be linked to other related environmental challenges such as climate change.

The existing international waste management framework is inadequate to address the growing plastic crisis. In addition to better implementation of existing commitments and introduction of stronger new ones, more stringent action is required to move towards a plastic free economy. This can be spurred by strengthening the concept of 'circular economy' that

seeks to ensure much higher re-use and recycling rates of plastic and replace the existing take-make–dispose model economy. The regulatory challenges to achieve this systemic transformation towards a zero-plastic world need to be identified, understood and reimaged. The measures will have an impact on supply side management as well as production and processing, including recycling.

In recent years, some key generators and managers of plastic waste have taken some action. The European Commission released a Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy in January 2018. The UK announced in early 2018 that all avoidable plastic waste would be eliminated in the next twenty-five years. In late 2017 China instituted reforms to address plastic management; a key component is banning solid waste imports. Various other countries, such as India, Saudi Arabia, Kenya, South Africa, and Rwanda are introducing reforms to waste management regulation to address environmental, social and economic problems associated with plastics.

Efforts to address the plastic surge notwithstanding, there is a strong North-South dimension, to plastic waste management. This was recently highlighted by the Chinese ban on plastic waste imports that will have ramifications throughout the recycling supply chain. In other parts of the Global South, plastic is not just an environmental issue; it is also linked to the livelihoods of waste-pickers. Law and policy reforms, including the introduction of new technologies, need to consider implications for their working conditions, health and human.

Abstracts for papers are welcome on any aspects of the above. We welcome papers that address (but are not restricted to) any of the following themes:

- Law and policy reform related to waste, plastics pollution, and the circular economy;
- Environmental and sustainability aspects of waste and plastics;
- Community and public participation in waste reduction and recycling initiatives;
- Labour and livelihoods dimensions of the waste economy;
- The use of technology and materials in designing zero-waste economy;
- Environmental justice, pollution and waste management;
- Sustainable Development Goals and the zero-waste circular economy;
- Liability and responsibility for plastic pollution and waste under international and domestic legal regimes; and
- North-South relations, development, international trade and waste.

The editors of the LEAD Journal **invite abstracts for articles on the above topic by 1 June 2018.** These should be submitted to the Managing Editor, Ms Jessy Thomas at leadjournal@gmail.com for any further question, email the Editor, Philippe Cullet at pc38@soas.ac.uk