



# WASTE MANAGEMENT

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- Today let's talk about waste management. Everyone here knows how important this topic is because everything we consume must come out as waste at some point. We also know how important the four Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Recover) are to help slow our waste stream. In a talk about how we can do things to help our environment it is important of course to remind ourselves of these practices. However, living in such a globalised world we still produce mass amounts of waste every second of every day. The 4 R's are an ancient technique to limit our output and there was a major push to "use it up" "wear it out" and "make it do" during WWII times where individuals were motivated to cut their consumption on behalf of the war effort. The history of human civilisation is quite literally recorded in rubbish. Whether it's a broken stone hammer or a plastic disposable razor being discarded, three basic methods of garbage disposal have been used since antiquity; *dumping*, *burning*, and *burial*. The variations of these three basic schemes are limited only by economic viability and human ingenuity. For example, with *burning* there is an open pile of rubbish in Thailand which gets burnt back when it gets too full or there is Jersey with its sophisticated incineration plant.

# THE BASIC PRINCIPLES

- **Reduce**  
Avoiding unnecessary waste generation in the first place
- **Reuse**  
Using objects, devices, or substances again
- **Recycle**  
Using waste material in place of virgin material to manufacture new products
- **Recover**  
Extract energy or material resources from otherwise discarded mixed wastes



BURN

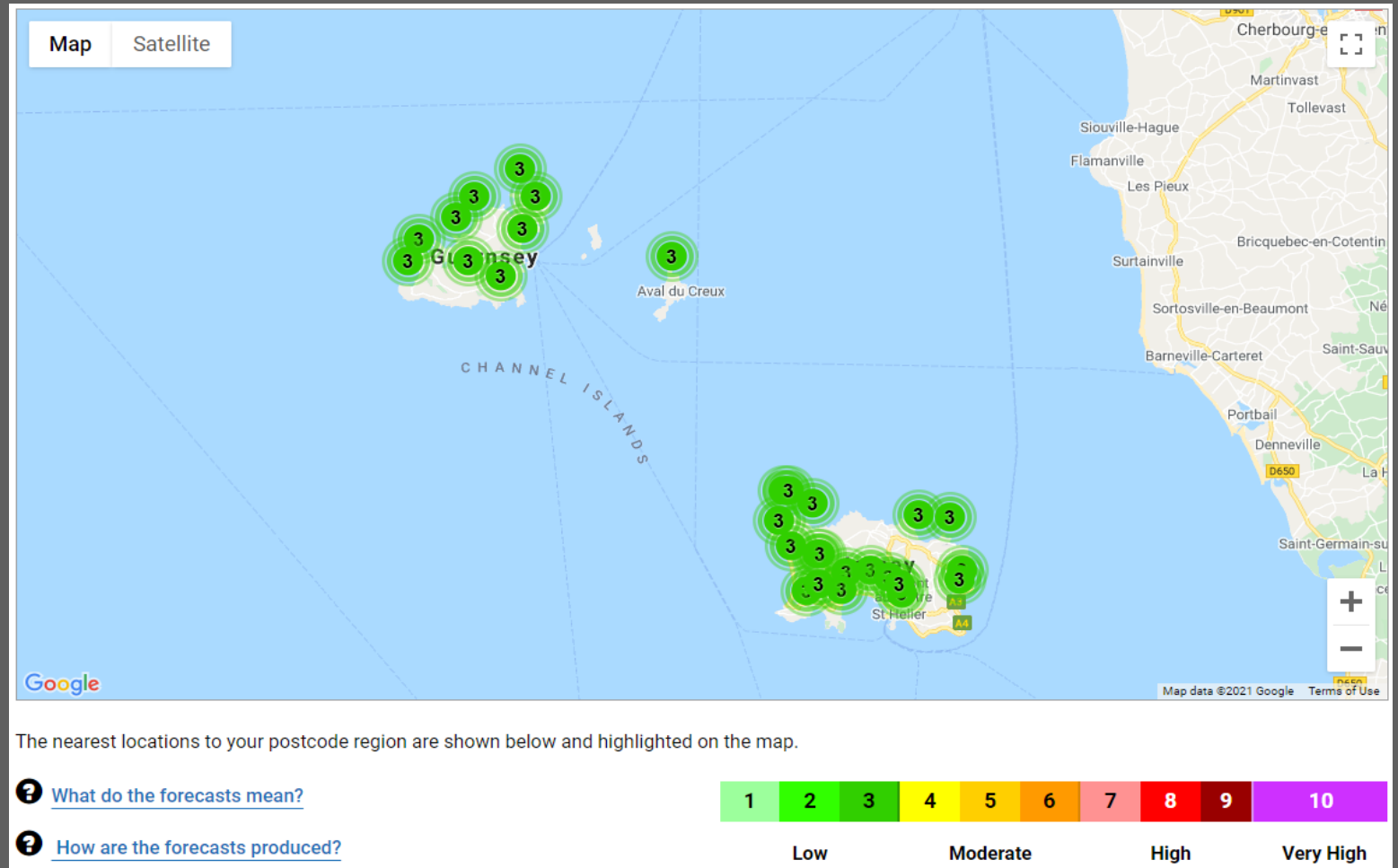
DUMP

BURY

- I recently did a meteorology study to determine whether Jersey's incineration plant (40km away) impacts Guernsey if Jersey continues to incinerate their waste. The answer was yes, Jersey's household waste incinerator does affect the health of Guernsey islanders due to many factors. The incinerator is modern and built to high standards so that there is minimal pollution. However, Guernsey decided to export their waste to Geminor, a UK distributor who forwards the waste to Sweden. Sweden appeared to be a cheaper and cleaner option. As a result, Jersey's incineration plant did not have as much waste as they thought it would and is not used efficiently. It now has the option of frequently started up and shut down which increases combustion and the potential for increased emissions. Or it burns the recycling to keep the incinerator running. "Local authorities which incinerate more recycle less" (Roy, 2020); in Jersey's case it is very clear that the introduction of waste incineration has meant that their recycling efforts have declined because the recycling is added to the waste incinerator to keep it operational. This means that plastics are added to the burning process and more harmful pollutants are therefore released despite its modernity.
- Guernsey's waste choices therefore meant that more pollution has been given out by Jersey and therefore their choice for a cleaner solution ended up backfiring on ours and Jersey's health - an unforeseen complication. Sweden benefits because their incinerator plant converts their waste into energy. So although on paper Guernsey's recycling efforts and waste disposal are better than Jersey. It is due to our decision to choose Geminor, which was due to economics.
- Politically, Guernsey was pressured into a decision due to public movements and complaints surrounding the landfill method. There are still plenty of potential landfill sites on the island but we choose to export our waste due to environmental concerns surrounding landfill as a disposal option.



# GUERNSEY AND JERSEY



- I won't run over all the environmental problems that come with landfills and their leachates and particulate matter but instead will look at a couple of common myths. Many of us have been led to believe that natural substances biodegrade rapidly in landfills. Although food and garden wastes degrade at a very slow rate (25-50% over 10-15 years), the vast majority of theoretically biodegradable substances, such as paper or natural textiles, break down at an exceptionally slow rate. In one highly publicized example, was that copies of 40-year old newspapers were recovered from landfill sites, which "looked so fresh you might read one over breakfast". The nearly anaerobic conditions in the depths of a typical landfill are not conducive to the efficient decomposition of most organic substances, and so they persist for extremely long periods, taking up valuable landfill spaces for decades.

▪ I looked at a study in the US which documented the contents of a landfill. This was a study which moved away from the previous method of calculating the waste stream by its weight and instead looked at its volume as landfills are so dependent on their carrying capacity. It revealed that: paper, 34%; plastics, 19.9%; metals, 12.1%; yard wastes, 10.3%; food wastes, 3.3%; glass, 2%; and other materials, 18.4%. This study only looks at solid household waste which is great because it tells the individual consumer what they can do to cut out the most volume in landfills but it also actively ignores municipal sludge, non hazardous industrial wastes, agricultural wastes, and oil, gas, and mining wastes. It shifts the responsibility onto the individual and away from companies and governments.

# LANDFILL

How long it takes food and other organic material to decompose in a landfill = **25-50% over 10-15 years**

The Composition of a US landfill in 1990:

Paper, 34%; plastics, 19.9%; metals, 12.1%; yard wastes, 10.3%; food wastes, 3.3%; glass, 2%; and other materials, 18.4%.



- This leads us onto what I would argue is more a lie than a myth. Large corporations often launch recycling campaigns or charity events to encourage recycling efforts. One of PepsiCo's goals is to "work to increase recycling rates". This puts the responsibility onto the consumer. They can keep producing plastic and tell us that it's our job to recycle more to save our oceans, so that they can use cheaper recycled plastic to save them money on drilling. Of course it works for us as we want to reduce oil drilling but it only works to help the companies who continue to exploit environmental standards. So if we ask ourselves what we can do to help our environment, in terms of waste management, of course we should do all we can on an individual level. But, we also need to understand which systems we are a part of, what do the government decisions really accomplish and what are the knock-on effects? Ask questions and make companies responsible for decisions that impact everyone.
- To end, I would like to introduce you to a term called - the implicated subject.
- I first learned this term in my social justice English class which used the term to describe white women. Although an individual may not be actively racist, they still benefit from a system which oppresses black communities. So you may not be the oppressor or the victim, instead you are an implicated subject.
- Recognizing our position as an implicated subject is crucial. As soon as we start to recognise the systems of oppression that we benefit from, then we can work to minimise the fallout.
- Environmentally we are all implicated subjects, the impact that humans have had on the environment in the incredibly short time that we have existed on this planet is breathtaking. We are all contributing to a capitalist society which exploits our own environments. But this is nothing new to you all, we know what these desks are made from, we know they result from unsustainable practices. We know we are killing the world and that this will end up with us all dead. We are actively killing ourselves. We are both the oppressor and the victim in this scenario as we willingly contribute to our own destruction. If we really start to recognise our position as an implicated subject then we can try to put an end to real issues such as environmental racism. The most marginalised communities are often the ones which are either chosen as locations for waste disposal sites or their water pipe contamination is overlooked, indigenous land treaties and hunting rights are ignored etc. Many people around the world experience environmental racism because their communities or their countries do not have the money for the fancy waste plants in Sweden or Jersey. You as an individual might not be the oppressor but you still benefit from these systems.

# THE IMPLICATED SUBJECT

- PepsiCo's goal is to “work to increase recycling rates”.
- Michael Rothberg and intersectionality
- Environmental racism



- The 4 R's
- History of waste
- Guernsey and Jersey
- Incinerator
- Landfill
- Responsibility
- Environmental racism
- Implicated subjects

# QUESTIONS

So to take away, what can we do? We can recognise our own roles as an individual and as a part of a larger system to help our environments.