

## RESEARCH SEMINAR

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT  
THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

### Urban Political Ecology and Environmental Justice of Informal E-waste Recycling in Guiyu, China

16 Sep 2021 (Thu)  
4:30–6:00 pm (UTC+8)

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Current environmental justice (EJ) research is moving beyond the distributional paradigm to embrace frameworks that emphasize the plurality of EJ. This study proposes that actor-network theory (ANT), which foregrounds nonhuman agency and heterogeneous associations, holds great potential for pushing forward this research agenda. It presents an ANT-informed analysis of the plural epistemologies of EJ by focusing on a global e-waste scavenging hub – Guiyu in China. E-waste is considered a fluid and emergent material actant. The multiplicity of e-waste materialities co-constitutes the disparate worldings of EJ, with a wide range of actors involved in the knowledge-making practices. Disparate EJ realities concerning e-waste scavenging have been worlded and enacted through the heterogeneous associations among numerous non-human actors. In tracing these heterogeneous associations, this study juxtaposes two competing EJ worldings related to the ontological indeterminacy of e-waste. It first problematizes the worlding of North-to-South dumping that not only misrepresents the complex geographies of e-waste, but also epitomizes a simplified distributional model of EJ. Then it ventures to theorize an often-neglected and under-researched dimension: EJ as situated capabilities and functionings concerned by the local community. This study thus adds to ongoing efforts to advance pluralist epistemologies of EJ.

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