

# Analysing the environmental state in authoritarian and neoliberal governance settings

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# Actors and policy problems

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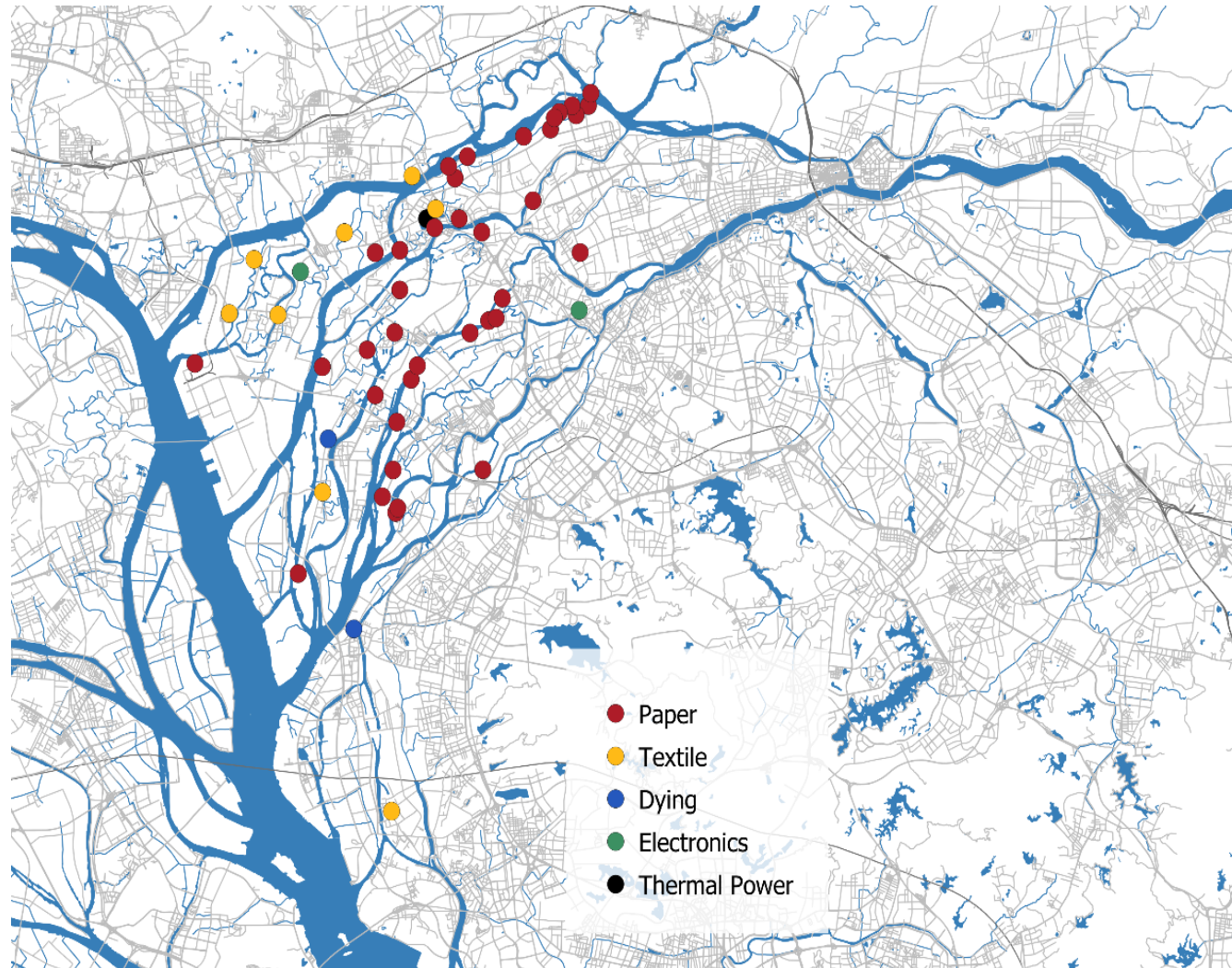
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Policy problem</b>	<b>Solution</b>	<b>Conception of nature</b>
Local state	Economic decline, severe pollution	Restructuring of local environmental state	Market opportunity
Environmental NGO	Legitimizing a tool for environmental measurement	Produce a standard	Valued and to be protected
Corporate sector	Move from linear waste economy to circular economy	Develop markets for materials and encourage the flow of materials	Resources have an economic value

# Dongguan: a city in transition

- Economic challenges
  - Small-scale township economic enterprises
  - Early to industrialise, a 'world factory city'
  - Competition, economic stagnation
- Environmental challenges
  - Air pollution, water pollution
- Innovative form of governance
  - Entrepreneurial governance – combines government and local business community
    - Bottom-up urbanisation processes



# Location of key polluting factories in Dongguan





# River pollution







# Global Footprint Network and the Ecological Footprint Standards

- GFN promotes the Ecological Footprint (EF) as a resource accounting tool
  - Seeks to improve the quality of public policy decision making by raising awareness of the environmental consequences of decisions
- Concern within the EF community about the quality of studies and the variability of results echoed by the European Common Indicators Project
  - “the importance of setting out a common and shared ... EF calculation methodology”
- Search for a shared methodology key justification for EF Standards
  - “We're interested in not just ... our own commercial well-being, but in the future of the Ecological Footprint and the standardisation which is key [to] that. That's what people want. They want to know that when they get results, it's not just any old results. Their [EF] is [not] going to change ... they're stable results.” (Footprint Practitioner Interviewee)

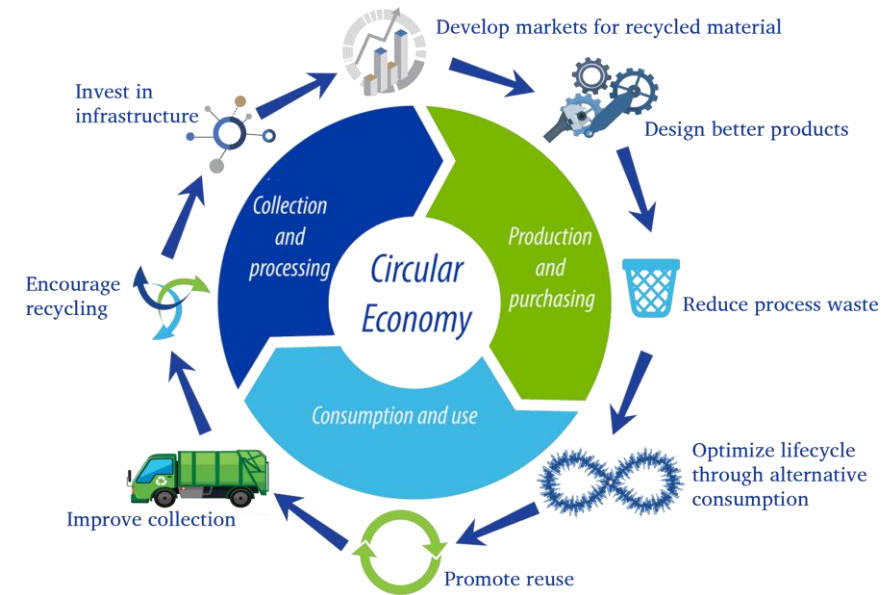


- EF standards help to provide structure and continuity in the disordered world of environmental governance
- GFN the key body to enlist the EF community in formulating and adopting standards
  - GFN lacked the economic and political authority to
    - Promote certification of standards
    - reach out to others (e.g. academics, NGOs, policy community) and engage them in standards activity
- GFNs standards initiative stifled
- EF advocates remain committed to raising awareness of resource limits



# Corporate actors and the Circular Economy

- Shift in thinking of waste as materials with negative value to being a resource with positive economic value
  - Waste becomes a resource input to which value can be added along a supply chain
  - “A circular economy is an industrial system that is restorative or regenerative by intention and design” (EMF, 2012, 7)
- Material flows take place at multiple scales – from the local to the global – as economic actors seek profitable markets
- To increase further market activity
  - Public policy initiatives
  - NGO awareness raising in the business community
  - Corporate sector promotion of standards
- Standards are central to a neoliberal governance approach and the activity of markets in terms of trust-building and quality control:
  - “[I]n a political situation where we want to only have public policy intervention if this is an added value and where we want to focus as much as possible on allowing for dynamic standard setting by collaborative action, I think there is a clear coming together between public policy and economic stakeholders, to try to see how much we, how can we achieve things through standards. I think that's an obvious area of common interest.” (Interviewee A2)
- Companies regard standards as part of market relations
  - “[I]f you like ... standards are sort of [the] ... formalisation of the market supply chain message.” (Interviewee B1)
- Moves towards a CE are increasingly relying on the efforts of corporate actors and voluntary standards
  - Markets and standards shape perceptions of the value of materials and of environmental protection



# Reflections

- Normalising of environmental neoliberal governance
  - GFN no debate on alternatives to standards
  - Corporate actors promote a traded CE
    - An ecologising of markets?
- Repositioning of actors
  - Linear waste to valuing resources
  - Regulation, recovery, enhancement
- Learning and innovation
  - GFN who experiment with standards
- Actors, policy and environmental histories matter in understanding how debates and solutions are shaped
  - Breadth of governance
  - Comparative analysis highlights variety of activities