GOVERNING SUSTAINABLE INFORMAL E-WASTE MANAGEMENT: THE INDIAN REALITY

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E-waste Movement & Management

• Massive scale of e-waste generation
• E-waste has toxic (Pb, Hg, Cd, As) & valuable materials (Au, Ag, Cu, Fe, Al & Steel)
• E-scrap is shipped illegally from the OECD economies to mainly Asia & Africa
• Informal sector is major centre of waste disposal & recycling operations

Secondary Research & Qualitative Fieldwork in Netherlands, Belgium and India in 2011-12
International Export of E-waste
E-waste in India

- Indian Informality processes 90% of e-waste.
- Collection - overseas imports, auctions & tenders (commercial) & door-to-door collection (household).
- Dominated by Informal traders – sorts, repairs, dismantles & recycles
- Used electronics and extracted metals sold in second hand market
- PCBs exported to Umicore by both formal & informal recyclers
- Nexus between Formality and Informality
Sorting & dismantling
Recycling - Mandoli
Recycling - Moradabad
Global Production Network of E-waste

• Map the spatial linkages in and governance of e-waste movement & management
• Origin of physical material can be traced to the formal sector of electronic production
• E-waste travels globally from formal in advanced to informal processing in developing countries
• Recovered resources & secondary products from e-waste return to formal production & consumption
• Single system of material transfer, economic transactions & financial arrangements
Revisiting E-waste in India

• Not isolated but integrated in a global network
• Recycling Industry is not just a waste disposal and management system.
• E-waste is not WASTE
• Existence of second-hand market
• Historical tradition of Repair and Reuse
• Role of Informality & Linkages with Formality
Governing E-waste in India

• Fifth largest generator: 1,850,000 tonnes annually
• E-Waste Management and Handling Rules, 2012
• Superseded by E-Waste Management Rules, 2016
• Law upholds Extended Producer Responsibility: collection of 30% of e-waste
• Business users can sell to state approved e-waste processors
• Policy design targets formalization of informal waste treatment
Mismatch in E-waste Governance

• State views E-waste as an environmental concern & places the onus on producers
• Re-processors perceive e-waste as a valuable resource
• Indian Law turns INFORMAL into ILLEGAL
• Informality goes underground but does not disappear
• State failure to understand the dynamics of waste management