

Abstract PhD project: Liu, Chang

Recording Industry's Wasted Moves: On the Transnational and Environmental Dimension of Recording Industry's Waste

Dakou refers to cut cassetts and CDs which were dumped by record companies from Western countries and exported to China as plastic waste for recycling, however, it entered and circulated in China's music market in the 1990s and 2000s before the rise of Chinese pirate copies and online music resources, and those who grew up with it are later known as China's dakou generation. In this project I will reconsider the legacy of China's dakou generation through the lens of transnational studies and ecocriticism and demonstrate the importance of the ecological dimension of the recording industry in the context of globalization.

Based on in-depth interviews with professionals from the music industry and consider matters related to regional authorization and distribution, I will attempt to illustrate how newly released records in Western countries can be both commodities for sale and valueless waste to be recycled, and how it became commodities again and circulated in China's music market, though they entered China as plastic waste. I then extend my focus to the cultural, social, and political implications of dakou products. By examining the narrative functions of dakou products in texts such as memoirs, proses, and essays written by renowned Chinese musicians and rock critics, I will argue that dakou product as one type of transnational garbage, despite its negative connotations in environmental justice discourse, can also be used as a tool by the under privileged Chinese to counteract the totalitarian political regime in China and achieve empowerment.

I will conclude this project by urging the necessity of bringing multiple perspectives into the study of China's dakou generation and considering the limit of global environmental justice discourse which frequently runs the risk of denying agency to the underprivileged groups and forging new stereotypes.