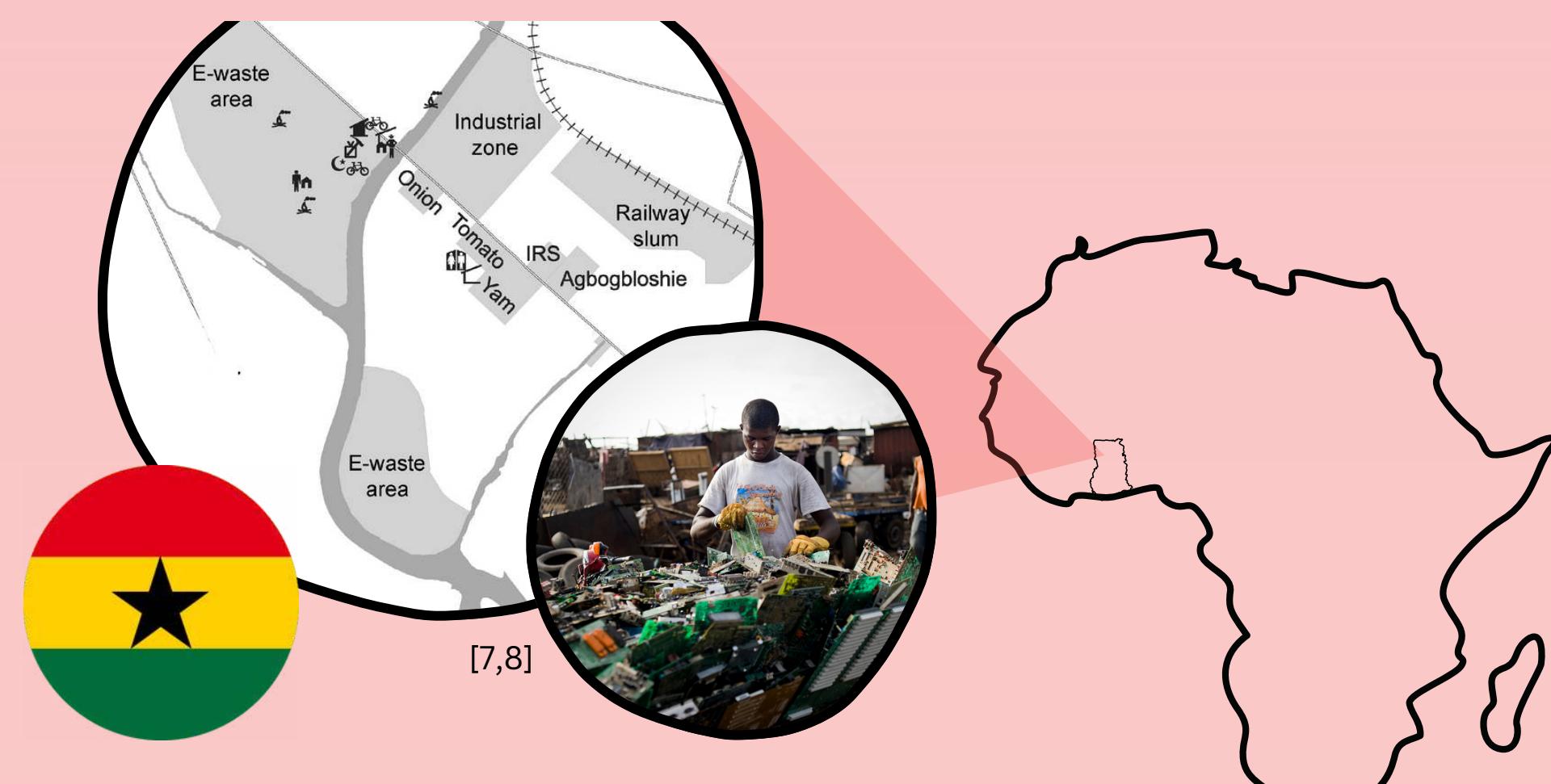


Welcome to **SODOM**

or: a single story about e-waste in
Agbogbloshie?



Agbogbloshie is a market at the informal Old Fadama settlement in Accra, where industrial, commercial, and residential zones overlap. The scrap processing site is part of the market and is located next to the Odaw River and Korle Lagoon. About 79,684 people live in the Old Fadama settlement. Since the colonization of Ghana by the British, the place has been the setting for land use conflicts and injustice.^[1,8]

The Agbogbloshie scrapyard has gained negative popularity over the past two decades, drawing attention from the Western world. It's frequently labeled as "Africa's e-waste nightmare", "the world's largest e-waste dump" or "**E-hell on earth**". The international media coverage shows **binary stories** about e-waste from the Global North polluting the Global South resulting in a simplistic imaginary about pollution and poverty in Agbogbloshie. This reduces Ghanaians complex lifeworlds into **passive victims** of e-waste dumping and leads to **unequal power relations**.^[1,2]

E-waste flows are mostly shown as **unilateral flows** from the Global North to the Global South.^[2]

Studies showing **high levels of contamination** in Karole Lagoon define the source as e-waste, rendering the lagoon as one of the most toxic water bodies on earth.^[1]

Agbogbloshie is characterized as an **illegal dumping ground** for e-waste.^[1]

The Consequences



On 01. July 2021 the scrapyard was **evicted** by the Ghanaian government. The popular narrative about the scrapyard was used as justification, as it gives Ghana "a bad name".^[1,2]



Agbogbloshie is a **profit-making recycling industry** for electronic devices which contributes to an economic value chain.^[2]

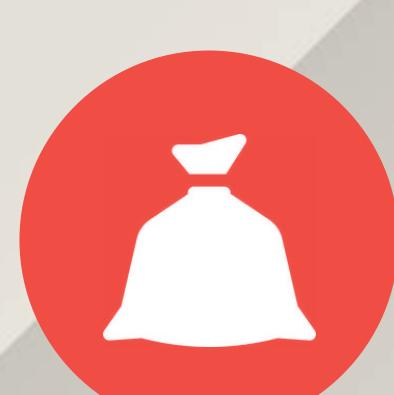
But what is the other side of the story?



E-waste flows are **multilateral flows** with the majority of trade taking place **intra-regionally among the Global South**. Beside a significant amount of Ghana's e-waste is imported from South Africa, much is generated within Ghana.^[3,6]



The main activities taken place at the scrapyard are: **collection, recycling, repair and refurbishment, and trading of metal**.^[5]



The e-waste industry is **not the only source of pollution** in Old Fadama. The local breweries, paint and textile factories discharge their waste into the Korle Lagoon.^[1]



The scrap business constitutes a new form of **livelihood**. Scrap-related work is the second largest employment in Old Fadama. About 90% of the 4500-6500 workers call Old Fadama their home.^[1,5]

“ —

"Many scrap dealers lost their jobs after the demolition. We normally acquire and store goods for up to three months before selling them. Because many of the goods were destroyed, a lot of people lost their capital."

(Mr. Yaw Asare, chairman of Old Fadama)^[2]

“ —

"The government thinks this is rubbish, but that's what helped me start something small [being modest about the house he has built in his hometown] back home, and that's how I support my family."

(Fatau, 32-year old scrap dealer)^[2]

“ —

"In the scrapyard, I had a place to store my goods. It could take two to three days to dismantle them. There's nowhere to store my goods here [Old Fadama]. No shelter, nothing. We had our lots and space in the scrapyard. Do you see any shed here? No! We work in the sun from morning till night. It has affected everyone. There's also no security here."

(Babatunde)^[2]