

***Textile Waste in Emerging Economies:
Management and Governance Towards a Circular System***

Anwasha Borthakur

Ensuring environmental sustainability emerges as a major challenge for the contemporary Global South. As the most populous country in the world, India, for instance, is confronted with massive environmental challenges including air, water, land, waste, and energy management. Unfortunately, waste management studies in the developing countries and emerging economies are still inadequate to inform major policy decisions. In my Humboldt Fellowship, I will focus on textile waste governance in the Global South in general, and in the emerging economies in particular. Textile is still a relatively invisible, ignored, and understudied stream of waste in the Global South. It is characterized by its inherent toxicity (e.g. dyes) and management challenges having detrimental human health and environmental consequences and thus requires urgent research and policy attentions. Considering India and South Africa as representatives of emerging economies, I will examine textile waste management approaches in these two countries. I will reflect on all the three phases of textile lifecycle—from its *production* and *consumption* to the final *disposal*.

The aim is to develop a novel analytical framework to analyse the effectiveness of textile waste management approaches in emerging economies towards a circular system. In a first step, I will seek to explain the four factors that fundamentally determine the efforts for a circular system with respect to post-consumer textile in an emerging economy: firstly, producers' (apparel and footwear) efforts towards circularity; secondly, consumers' behavior and awareness; thirdly, informal sector's involvement; and fourthly, policy instruments. As a second step, I will evaluate the reasons for the absence of the local traits in policymaking in these countries which are already in alignment with a circular economy system. The complexities associated with textile waste management call for an interdisciplinary research approach. With my background in environmental science and science and technology studies (STS), diverse disciplines such as political science, environmental justice, and environmental history comprehensively inform my study. I will address diverse socio-economic-political-environmental attributes of production, consumption, and disposal of textiles. For instance, textile waste management aspects such as the Global North-Global South trade of waste, the engagement of the informal waste recycling sector, and existing policy instruments will be of particular research interest in the current project.