

University of Otago, New Zealand  
Languages and Cultures  
2022 Research Seminar Series

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Global Friction on Wet Markets



This talk addresses the criticism toward Asian wet markets as reservoir for zoonoses, a discourse emergent alongside the outbreak narrative of Covid-19 surrounding the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan. It unpacks the stigmatization of wet market — a term first popularized in Singapore in the 1970s, when wet markets were differentiated from air-conditioned supermarkets — and the misfire of considering such food market form as biosecurity risk. While it is crucial to examine the neoliberal form of large animal farms coupled with mega-sized food infrastructure in contemporary China, which stretches beyond the “threshold of domestication” as some anthropologists and evolutionary biologists have warned, Dr. Hsieh argues that central to the friction on wet markets is the politics of multispecies life and death entangled with precarious labor created in the economic boom-and-bust cycles in Asia. She suggests that a better understanding of how Asia’s food infrastructure intersects with local and international food regimes will be essential to our vision for a post-pandemic world.

Dr. I-Yi Hsieh is an anthropologist based in Taipei. Her research interests are urban anthropology, multispecies urbanism, and anthropology of art. Her current ethnographic research project examines the global friction on wet markets, following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, with a special focus on the multispecies web of life and death entangled in the East Asian food infrastructure. She is also working on a book manuscript tentatively titled “*Insect, Fish, Flower, Bird: Private Collecting and Domestic Nature in Reform Era Beijing*.” You can find her publications in *Asian Anthropology*, *positions: asia critique*, *International Quarterly of Asian Studies*, and *Asian Theatre Journal*.

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Password: 525701; Meeting ID: 993 3870 7134

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