

# NEWSLETTER

## #HKinPictures: The (de-)stigmatization of waste-picking in the city

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Scavenging is an age-stratified and gendered phenomenon in Hong Kong, where elderly people (usually women) collect discarded packaging and cardboard scraps transported with mental carts across the streets and sell for recycling.

Most people have certain stereotypes about waste pickers. For example, “they are uneducated”, “scavenging is a consequence of their laziness in early life”, and the most prominent one is “they are scavenging for living because they are poor”. It is no surprise that you generate such stereotypical images if you have limited contextual knowledge behind

why they become a scavenger. They are scavenging not because of impoverishment; they are scavenging because they care about the hygiene of our communities to avoid the ‘rubbish’ accumulating in the streets. Despite being old, they hope to become useful people and contribute to our societies. And indeed, scavenging plays an indispensable part in Hong Kong’s recycling industry. Revisiting back to a wave of business closures of Hong Kong’s wastepaper exporters in response to China’s plastic waste ban in 2017, waste pickers were forced to stop collecting. It resulted in the scenario that the polystyrene boxes and cardboards are being discarded and cumulated everywhere near the shops. In this case, we can properly see how scavenging activities underpin the foundation of the recycling business in Hong Kong.

However, under the current policy framework, scavenging is not being considered a legal occupation. They are being excluded from the rights of labor protection and minimum wage. They basically work all hours of the day but receive less than \$3000 dollars per month. There are long miles to go before officially acknowledging the working status of a scavenging person. But there are many charitable

non-governmental organizations working hard to advocate scavengers’ human rights. You might wish to learn more information from some platforms like [V Cycle](#) and [Mission to New Arrivals](#).



## On Being a Teaching Assistant

NL Team

The following is a summary of the results from the short questionnaire on Teaching Assistant (TA) challenges of postgraduate and MPhil students at our department, that was sent in mid-January.



The time some of our students spend on average on their TA duties varies greatly: While the minimum is around **2-3 hours** weekly, it goes up to **5-8 hours** for others, and up to **10-16 hours** at max.

Communicating via **email** and **Blackboard** - not that surprising - appears to be the preferred way of TA of staying in contact with their students. Others also give phone numbers and communicate via **WhatsApp** or **WeChat**. Another group seems to prefer to **avoid contact** to undergraduates outside lecture or tutorial hours. While some mention **privacy concerns** as a reason not to give private phone numbers, others highlight the **pace and convenience** of delivering information that way.



Being a motivated student is sometimes tough, not only for ourselves, but also for the ones we are responsible for as TA's. While for some, providing an interesting tutorial session as a TA is **not our problem**, others say what they do or try to do, such as: **Be nice** and in a **good mood** and encourage them to **think critically**. Be authentic and motivating, as your own mood will certainly affect others, so show some *real* interest in the subject and your attitude will be contagious. Also, be **patient** and **tolerant**, and not always super-formal. Finally, give them enough possibilities to present their ideas in class, give them enough time to show their interests and works.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### ✓ Call for papers and applications

- Vienna Yearbook of Population Research. **Deadline for Papers: March 31, 2022** [[See the ad](#)]
- Mid-Term Workshop of the Critical Political Economic Research Network. **Deadline for Papers: February 28, 2022.** [[See the ad](#)]
- Postgraduate Conference on Interdisciplinary Learning at Lingnan University Hong Kong. **Deadline for Abstract Submission and Registration: February 28, 2022.** [[See the ad](#)]
- XVII ISA International Laboratory for PhD Students. **Deadline for Applications: March 31, 2022.** [[See the ad](#)]
- Gosling-Lim Postdoctoral Fellowship in Southeast Asian Studies. **Deadline for Applications: April 1, 2022.** [[See the ad](#)]
- SciDataCon-IDW Seoul 2022: **Deadline for Proposals: February 14, 2022.** [[See the ad](#)]
- 2022 International Conference on Method Triangulation. **Deadline for Abstracts: March 7, 2022.** [[See the ad](#)]

#### ✓ Job ads:

- Assistant Professor at the University of International Business and Economic (UIBE) in Beijing. **Deadline for Application: February 28, 2022.** [[See the ad](#)]

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