

## **Sodom and Gomorrah**

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Stanford Social Innovation Review  
Spring 2013

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## Sodom and Gomorrah

EVERY YEAR THE UNITED STATES, the United Kingdom, and a host of other industrialized nations ship (often illegally) cargo containers filled with unwanted electronic waste off to less developed countries for disposal. One of the places this e-waste ends up is Agbogbloshie—nicknamed Sodom and Gomorrah—a low-income suburb of Accra, the capital of Ghana. There, workers (often teenage boys) comb through the detritus of Western society looking for anything that might be of value. Sometimes they are able to retrieve whole parts, like a disk drive. In most cases they break up the gear, often burning it, to reveal valuable metals such as copper, aluminum, and even gold. What remains is discarded on land that abuts a coastal lagoon that flows into the Atlantic Ocean.

The e-waste recycling in Agbogbloshie provides a livelihood for thousands of people, but it also results in a heavily polluted environment that impacts the health of the workers and residents of Agbogbloshie, people living nearby, and the natural ecosystem. Over the last decade the Ghanaian government has attempted to redevelop the site and restore the lagoon, an effort called the Korle Lagoon Ecological Restoration Project (KLERP). But the results have been mixed, and the e-waste recycling remains. Much of the opposition to the project has come from the residents of the town, many of whom are recent migrants from the north and fear that redevelopment will mean the loss of their homes and their livelihood.

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