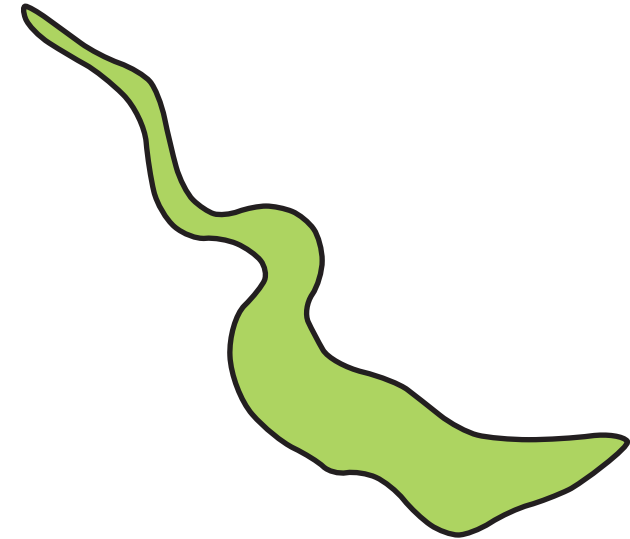


**Daisy Tam** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Humanities and Creative Writing at the Hong Kong Baptist University. She received her PhD in Cultural Studies from Goldsmiths, University of London where she began her research on ethical food practices. Her current work on food waste and the city is a theoretical and technological project that explores collaborative food rescue practices and its capacity to contribute towards a more ethical food system. Her recent publications include: (co-authored with James Burton) “Towards a Parasitic Ethics,” *Theory, Culture and Society* (Sep 2015); “The Hidden Market: The Alternative Borough Market” in Evers, C. & Seale K. (eds) *Informal Urban Street Markets: International Perspectives* (New York: Routledge); “Little Manila: The Other Central of Hong Kong” in *Messy Urbanism* (University of Hong Kong Press, forthcoming).

**James Burton** is a fellow at ICI Berlin. A former Alexander von Humboldt fellow, he has been a lecturer at the universities of Goldsmiths, Kent and Klagenfurt. His interdisciplinary research across philosophy, literature, cultural and media studies, concerns the myriad critical, cultural and ethical relationships between fiction, technology and the posthuman.



# Theft Economies and Subtractive Ecologies: Rethinking Parasitism

Organized by  
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## Theft Economies and Subtractive Ecologies: Rethinking Parasitism

Ideas and images of parasitism are generally negatively perceived – in ethical, moral, social, political as well as technical and scientific contexts. The set of associations surrounding both popular and scientific images of the parasite – as causing damage, freeloading, stealing, abusing an unwitting or unwilling host – mean that it almost always evokes a drive or will to exclude. The parasite is seen as, and figuratively used to designate, that which must be kept out, removed, pushed back, even destroyed. Hence the use of parasitism and related terms to refer to groups, individuals, organisms and agents deemed unwanted or undesirable – with an implicit logic that their actions or mode of existence mean they deserve such exclusionary attitudes and the gestures that go with them. By the same token, critical responses to the use of the terminology and imagery of parasitism seem to be restricted, on the whole, to criticizing and opposing its discursive application to groups deemed economically unproductive or socially without value, such as migrants, the unemployed, the poor.

Would it be possible – and would there be value – in considering parasitic roles and relations as neither inherently destructive nor undesirable, indeed, even as constitutive of functioning social, ecological and economic systems? In *The Parasite* (1980), Michel Serres proposed and explored a way of thinking relations of transfer – in social, biological and informational contexts – as fundamentally parasitic, that is, taking the subtractive form of a “taking without giving,” in contrast to established models based on notions such as exchange and gift-giving. Taking spurs from Serres’ text, this symposium will explore different ways in which we might rethink and retool parasitism, considering the ways in which its formally subtractive character might be separated from negative ethical, political and social connotations, in order to explore and activate its critical and conceptual potential.

While recognizing the risks that come with such a rethinking (such as the danger of inadvertently justifying racist, classist or otherwise prejudiced attitudes), the workshop will invite/offer short interventions to open up interdisciplinary discussion of the potential and limitations of a retooled understanding of parasitism.

## Programme

15:00 – 16:30	<b>Workshop</b> , Part I
16:30 – 17:00	Coffee break
17:00 – 18:30	<b>Workshop</b> , Part II
19:30	<b>Keynote:</b> Daisy Tam Food and the City. A Case of Hong Kong

Please note:

there is no need to register for the evening event, but the workshop session will discuss short excerpts from Michel Serres.

Please contact [info@ici-berlin.org](mailto:info@ici-berlin.org) if you would like to register for the workshop and receive the excerpts in advance.