

Research on the **Circular Economy** in China: An institutionalist's perspective on waste management

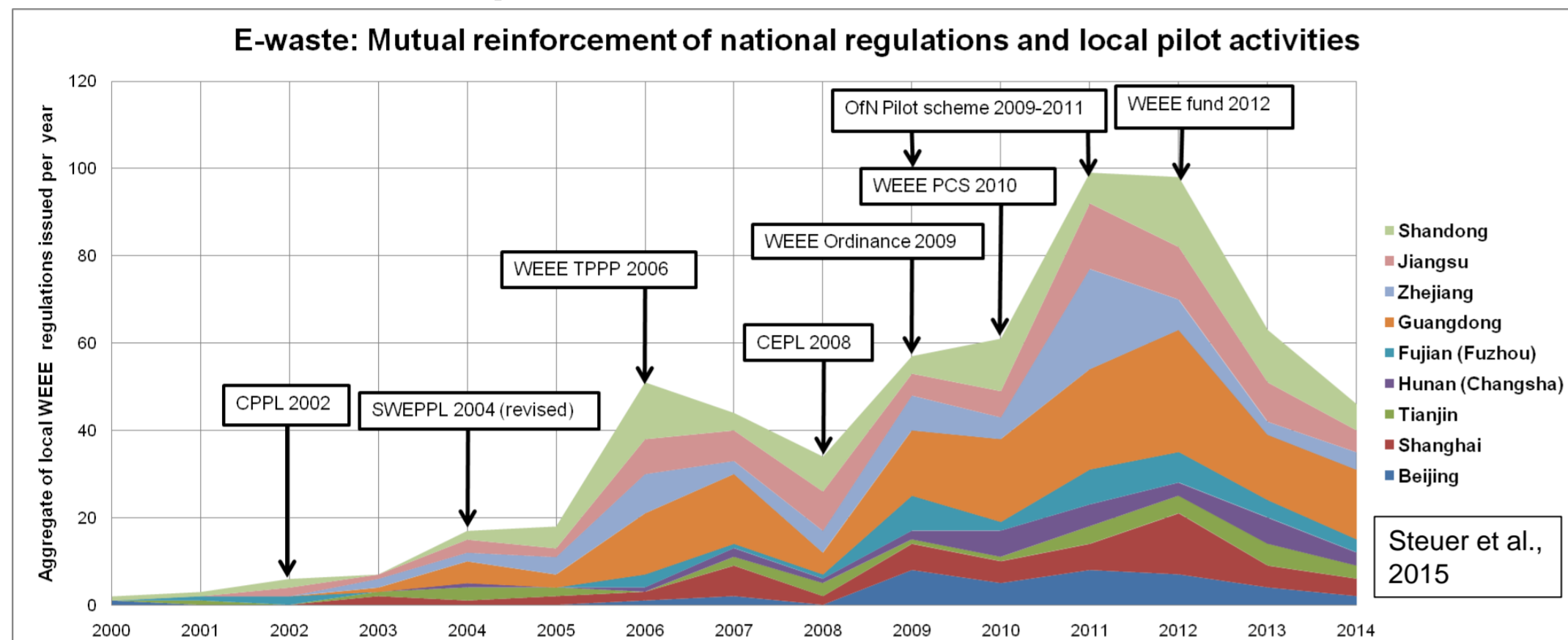
Research questions

- How does the institutional, i.e. rule-based, setting of the Circular Economy (CE) evolve in the PRC?
- What is the dynamic between formal and informal rule-systems?
- How can institutional effectiveness be measured in the CE context?
- Which predictions and suggestions can be derived?

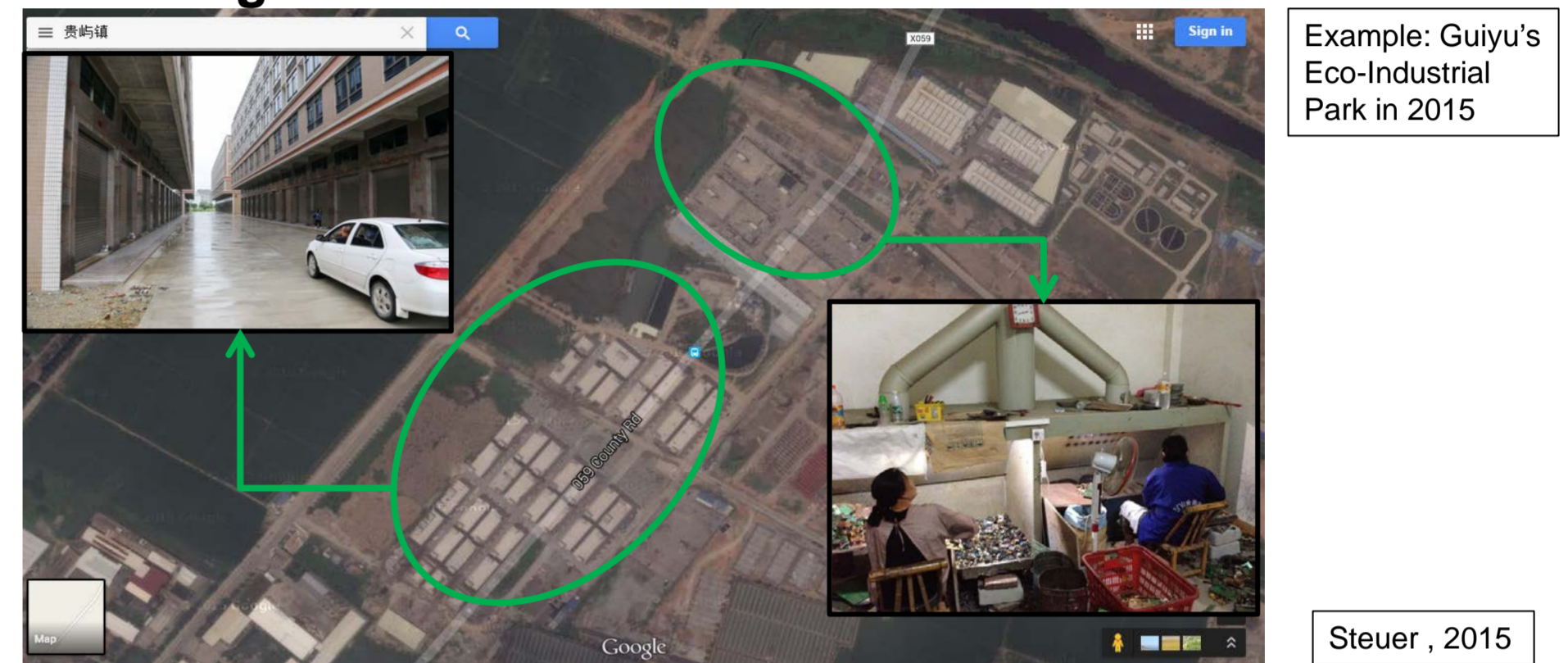
Focal points: Methodology and topics

- Employing the Old Institutional Economics: Institutional change via **trial-and-error** search for and/ or **imitation** of rules adapted to an occurring problem or challenge
- Inheritance** and **variation** of institutions indicate emerged path-dependencies, **selection** mechanisms (economic gain, power relations, embedded values,...) are key determinants for institutional effectiveness and thus maintenance
- Content focus A:** Identifying actors and their respective interests
- Content focus B:** (1) Formal legislation in the CE, especially WM; (2) state-initiated Eco-Industrial Parks; (3) formal and informal systems in waste management

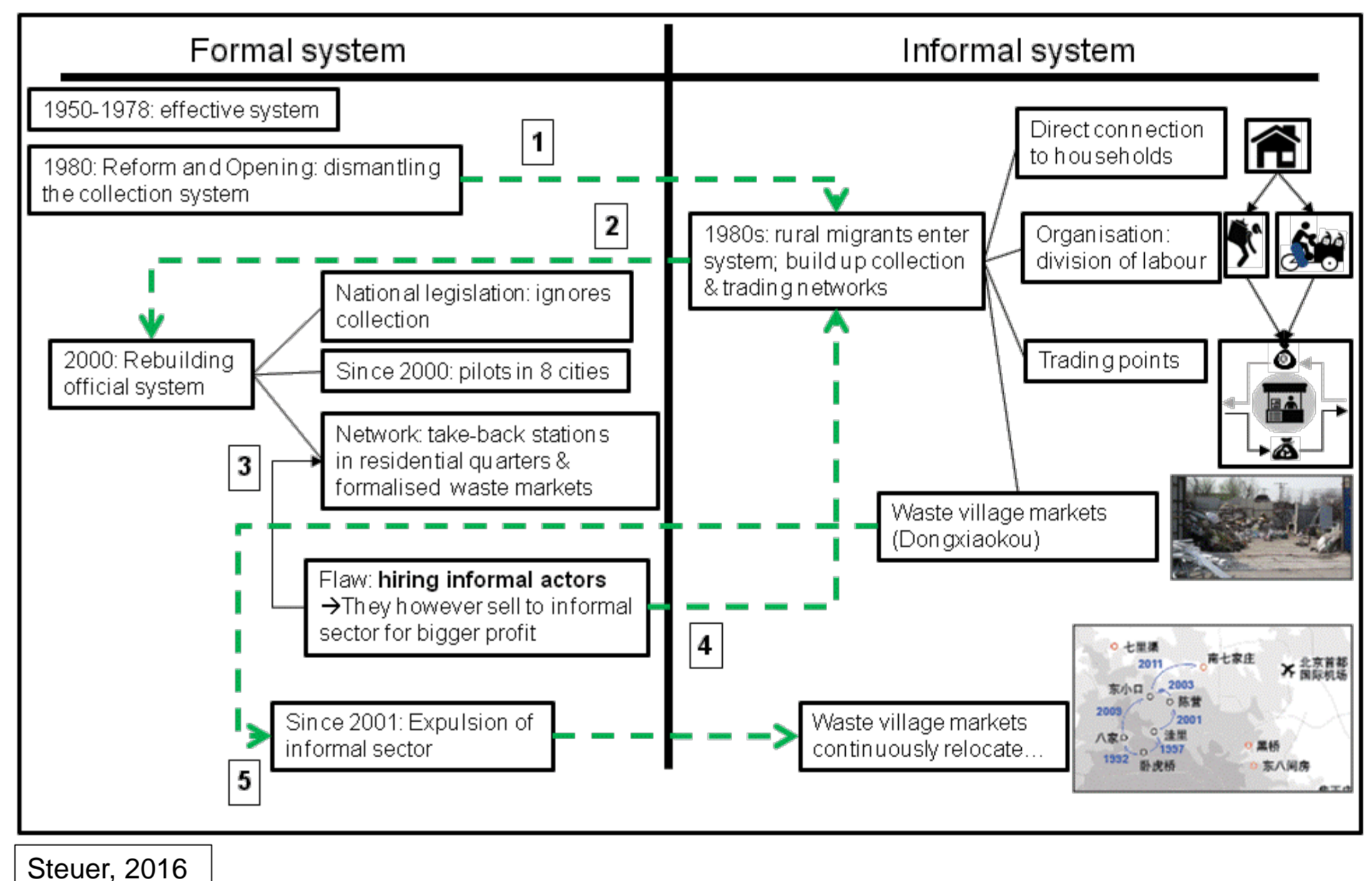
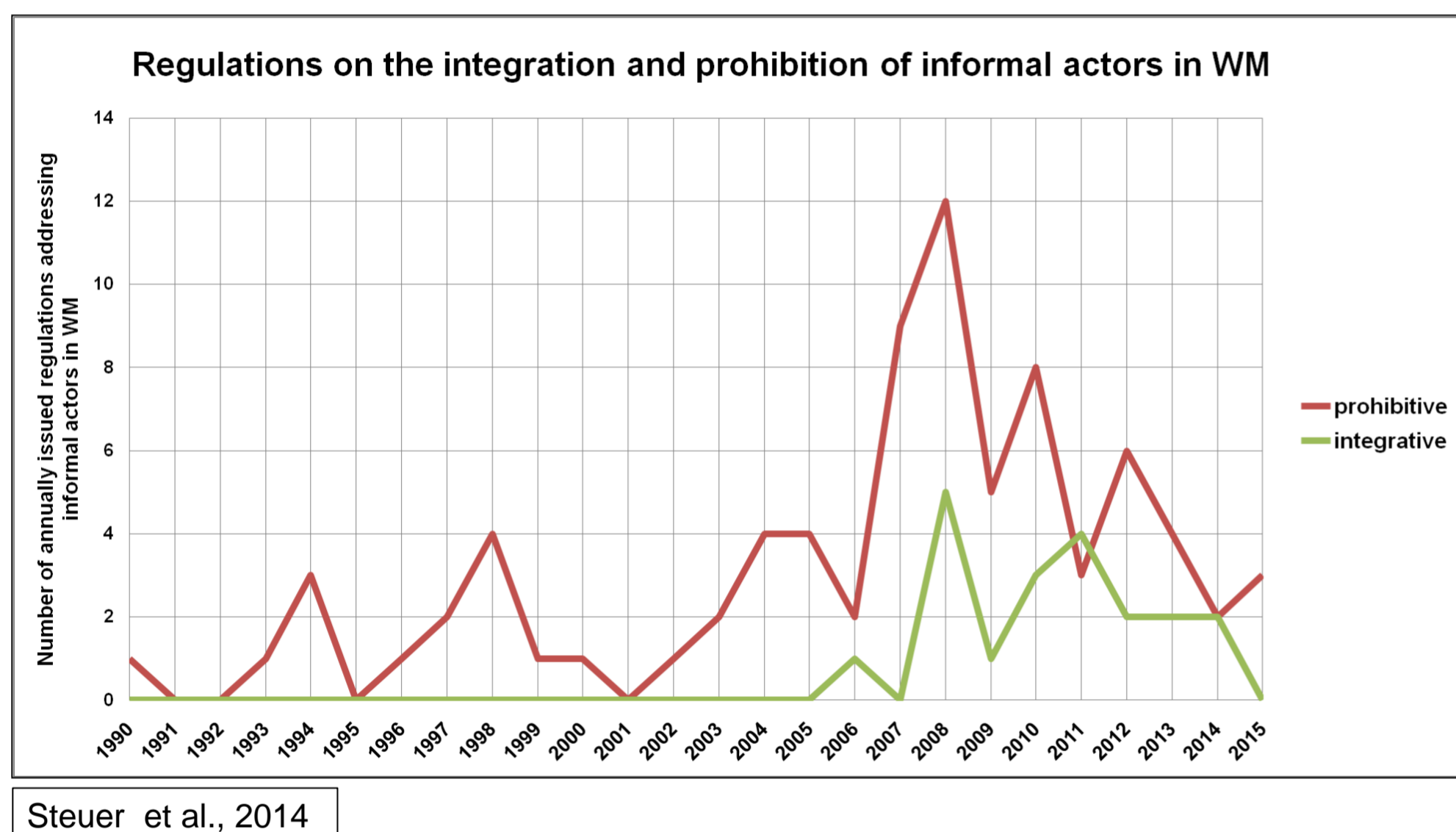
Result B1: Local experimentations reinforce national solutions



Result B2: Enforced formalisation via industrial up- grading and designated circulation of material flows



Result B3: Formal vs. informal rule systems in waste management – fierce competition over dominance



4. Ongoing and completed research projects

- REWIN: Improving resource efficiency for the production and recycling of electronic products by adoption of waste tracking system**
Duration: 13.12.2011-12.08.2017 [funded by the EU-China Sustainability Programme]
- CFL: China Fluorescent Lamps collection and treatment demonstration project**
Duration: 01.09.2013-31.08.2016, [funded by the EU-China Sustainability Programme]
- Ship rec: Sustainable Ship Recycling by Adopting Integrated Waste Management Approaches in China**
Duration: 01.08.2013 – 31.07.2016, [funded by the EU-China Sustainability Programme]
- Invisible hands? – Informal employment in the service of resource efficiency in urban China** [Anniversary Fund of the Austrian National Bank]
Duration: 1.1.2013 – 31.12.2013
- Invisible Markets - The role of households and waste collectors for resource management in urban China** [Anniversary Fund of the Austrian National Bank]
Duration: 1.1.2016 – 31.12.2016

5. Selected Publications

- Steuer, B., Salhofer, S., Linzner R. 2015. **The winner takes it all – why is informal waste collection in urban China successful?** Proceedings Sardinia 2015.
- Schulz, Y. and Steuer, B. 2015. **Dealing with discarded e-devices.** In: Sternfeld, E. [eds.] Routledge Handbook China's Environmental Policy (forthcoming).
- Salhofer, S., Steuer, B., Beigl, P., Ramusch, R. 2015. **WEEE management in Europe and China - a comparison.** Waste Management.
- Steuer, B. 2016. **Why Does 'Informal' Waste Collection and Recycling Thrive in Mainland China?** Paper presented at the 'Waste in Asia Conference', Leiden, the Netherlands, June 2016
- Steuer, B. 2016. **What Institutional Dynamics Guide Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Refurbishment and Reuse in Urban China?** Recycling 2016.
- Steuer, B., Ramusch, R., Part, F., Salhofer, S. 2016. **Analysis of the value chain and network structure of informal waste recycling in Beijing, China.** Resources, Conservation and Recycling (accepted).

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