

**Data Imaginaries:
Tourism and the Political Theater of PM2.5 in Northern Thailand**

In northern Thailand, broad shifts from subsistence farming to commercial agriculture and intensified forest scavenging have reportedly exacerbated the production of seasonal air pollution in northern Thailand. While upland and primarily ethnic minority farmers are the widely blamed culprits, significant uncertainty exists over the causes, constitution, and consequences of the widely dubbed haze crisis. In recent years, artists have filled this uncertainty with fictional characters who offer politically safe, yet provocative testimonies that seek to make sense of the smoky season. Artists whose livelihoods are often connected to the tourism industry now enroll fictional characters into their representations of alternative data imaginaries of PM2.5. Hip-hop, theater, and performance artists are increasingly visible as their work takes center stage at markets, museums, and festivals along the tourist routes. Many artists are finding new ways to express their frustration over the uncertainties of seasonal air pollution through their visual representations of the political-economic drivers that perpetuate the recurring crisis. Further, tourists themselves have become increasingly engaged with local debates through their collection, consumption, and representation of AQI and hotspot data through art, apps, and social media. This presentation demonstrates the emerging role of data imaginaries among tourists and tourism practitioners in the co-constitution of cultural narratives of air pollution and the popular reshaping of environmental governance regimes in northern Thailand.