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Urbanization and Environment: Trends and Consequences of Solid Waste Management in Thai Cities

Vilas Nitivattananon^{1*}, Siwaporn Tangwanichagapong¹

¹ Urban Environmental Management, Asian Institute of Technology

E-mail* vilasn@ait.asia

The major cause of most environmental problems is the rapidly growing human population. Urbanization has been widely taken place globally and particularly in Asia and the Pacific, resulting in both economic development and environmental consequences. Cities are blamed for major source of pollutants and waste contributors with environmental impacts on both local and global scales, while they are also significant areas for adapting to the climate change risks. Understanding environmental history regarding the urbanization process and trends as well as its consequences is therefore important for harnessing the growth and development benefits of urbanization while proactively managing its negative effects.

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In Thailand, it has been recognized that the urbanization is rapidly growing over last 10 years. While indicating development growth, solid waste is one of major environmental problems and also counted for GHG emission among other urban sectors. Several indicators related to solid waste management (SWM) can be used to analyze the trends and consequences for seeking possible alternative strategies towards sustainable urban development. These can cover, but are not limited to, the following: urban economic, land use, housing and infrastructure development; waste generation, waste collection and composition as well as reuse and recycling, financing and expenditures for developing as well as operating its facilities, adaptive SWM policy at local and national levels; and several positive and negative externalities including contributions to the climate change. It is expected that the case of SWM in Thai cities can represent environmental history of transitional economic countries in the Pacific, which also contributes to the understanding of relationship between urban SWM, policy and technology response to the urbanization and climate change.

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