

Urban Climate Governance in Thailand: Case Studies of Thai Municipalities

Juthayod Kalyanavongs

Keywords: Climate protection, Urban governance, Local government, Civil society, Thailand

1. INTRODUCTION

There has been a growing movement of local governments and local communities working to place climate change on the local agenda. However, the movement concentrates mainly in the developed countries leading to a shortage of the study of local climate governance in the developing countries. In response to such the shortage, this study aims to explore the state of urban climate governance in Thailand by selecting Muang Klang and Trang municipalities as the case studies. The study is conducted through the lens of governance approach in order to find out implications for the development of Thailand's urban climate governance.

2. CONCLUSION

The study evidences the existence of urban climate protection initiatives in Thailand which has been emerged within supporting environment created by the surge of Local Agenda 21 at the international level and the establishment of Thailand's national climate change framework. The initiatives were implemented in waste management, energy, transportation, and urban greening sectors with several modes of governing. A characteristic and performances of the practices have been influenced by (i) the central-local governmental relations, (ii) the relationship between municipal governments and civil society, and (iii) the rate of urbanization and a size of population. Climate initiatives in the waste management and urban greening sectors have been preferred by Thai municipalities because the municipalities are obliged by Thailand's decentralization law to be service providers in these sectors. Thailand's urban climate governance has been also influenced by the relationship between municipal governments and civil society. Only municipal governments cannot bring about climate protection initiatives. Involvements of actors from civil society are also crucial. The climate governance has been further affected by a municipal character which is influenced by the rate of urbanization and a size of population leads to different priorities among Thai municipalities bringing about differences in the formation and implementation process of the initiatives. Large-sized municipalities are more influenced by these factors than small-sized municipalities particularly in terms of utilizing the modes of governing.

3. IMPLICATIONS

First, Thai municipalities have a potential to conduct climate protection initiatives. However, the study yields lessons for other Thai municipalities that it is rather knowledge barriers, not financial barriers, which are the main obstacles to the initiatives. Moreover, several modes of governing are needed to be employed for the effectiveness and the continuity of the initiatives. Second, it is questionable whether climate change is concerned seriously through the utilization of the co-benefit approach. The co-benefit approach may be suitable for Thailand at the moment. Nonetheless, if Thailand's GHG emissions keep rising, Thailand may need to find more meaningful ways of linking the global and the local in the future. This also implies the need to integrate climate change with other development policies especially transportation and agricultural ones. Third, climate change adaptation should be also paid more attention. Fourth, there must be policy changes at the national level. A specific governmental institution for local climate protection should be established. To the extreme, the central government may set a national target of GHG reduction. Such the target may encourage Thai municipal governments to mainstream climate change into their administrative affairs which can prevent an abolishment of urban climate initiatives when policy champions or mayors who are the key actors of climate actions are gone. Lastly, Thai municipal governments have to encourage more meaningful public participation. The roles of stakeholders should not be limited to giving approvals on municipal projects, but have to be extended to participating in the initial process.