Title: Governing chemical recycling for the circular economy in Asia: Legal clarity, economic governance, and Global South implications

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Abstract: Chemical recycling is increasingly promoted across Asia as a pathway to circular-economy transitions, yet its economic performance varies widely despite similar technological adoption. This article argues that these divergences arise less from technology or finance than from failures of legal clarity that disrupt coordination in circular-economy governance. Positioning Asia as a theory-generating region, the study conceptualizes legal clarity as an economic signal within economic governance shaping investment incentives, material flows, and distributional outcomes. Using Bangladesh as a focal case, the analysis combines comparative evidence from Asia with regulatory benchmarks from the European Union, Japan, and the United States to show how definitional ambiguity enables greenwashing, carbon lock-in, and the exclusion of informal actors. The article introduces the Legal Clarity Framework (LCF) as a diagnostic tool and demonstrates that coherent legal design is essential for credible circular-economy transitions and transferable governance insights for the Global South.

Keywords: Circular economy governance, Legal clarity, Chemical recycling regulation, Economic governance, Environmental justice, Material circularity, Investment governance

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