

**A LIFE IN WASTE -  
BUT NOT WASTED!**

**Albert Koenig**

**October 30, 2010  
20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of  
HKU M.Sc.(Environmental Management) Programme**

# OUTLINE

- **Introduction**
- **Book 1**
- **Book 2**
- **Book 3**
- **Book 4**
- **Book 5**
- **Book 6**
- **Outlook**

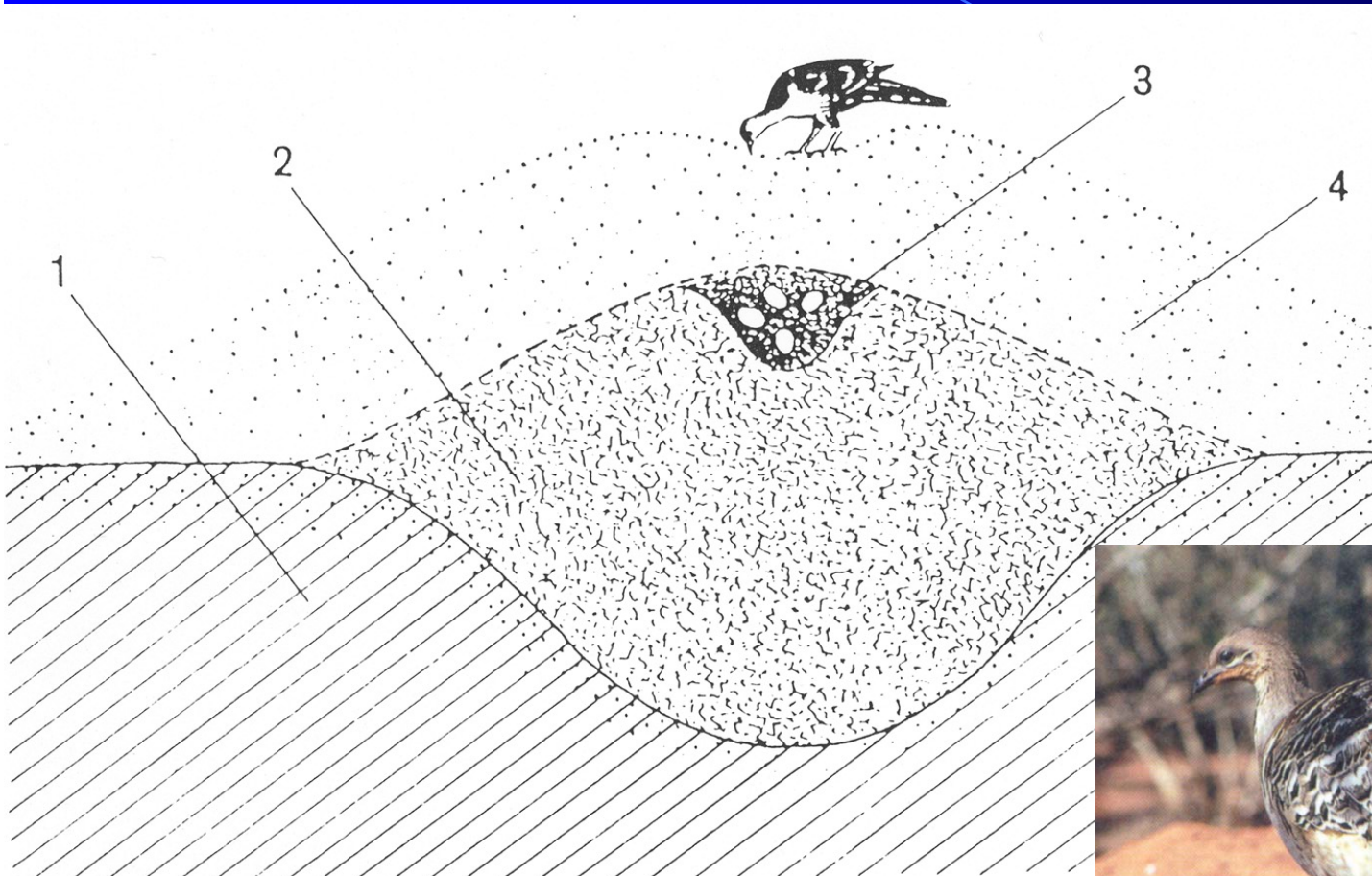


**Dung beetle (*Scarabaeus sacer*) pushing a ball of dung;  
Inset: Scarab Amulet from Tutankhamun's Tomb**



**Two dung beetles fighting for a dung ball**

# The Australian Thermometer Bird (*Leipoa ocellata*)

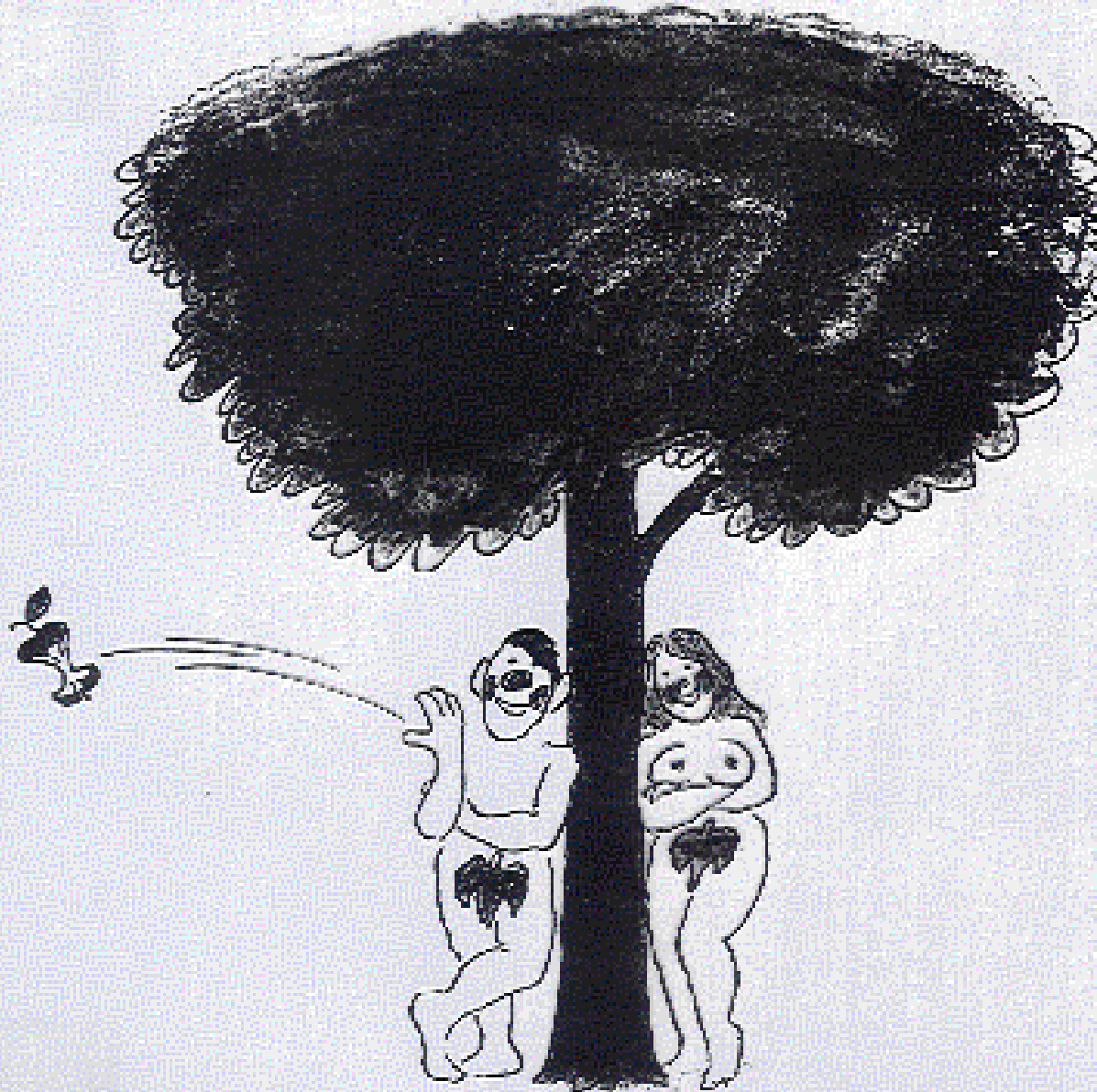


**Brooding mound (34 °C)**  
(1) Natural soil, (2) the composting plant mass, (3) egg chamber, (4) sand

Source: K. v. Frisch, *Animal Architecture*, 1975

Source: NZZ Folio, August 2001

# Homo sapiens



# Human development and waste generation

- 1. Subsistence society (Economy of scarcity)**  
goods produced locally, provide bare necessities of life  
→ almost no waste; waste is naturally assimilated
  - 2. Consumer society (Keep and repair)**  
all needs met by demand  
→ goods wasted only if they can't be used any more
  - 3. Affluent society (Throwaway society, Apobolic society)**  
more consumed than needed  
→ goods wasted after short (or no) use;  
don't keep and don't repair
- Note: Apobletology = Science of throwing away!**



**Uncollected garbage in Naples, Italy (2009)**

Source: Spiegel



**How did I end up in waste and become  
an apobletologist?**

***When I was just a little boy  
I asked my mother what will I be  
Here is what she said to me:***

***Que sera, sera***

***Whatever will be will be***

***The future's not ours to see***

***Que sera, sera***

**Popular nursery rhyme**

Compact  
**Oxford**  
Dictionary  
& Thesaurus

Powered by  
+ Oxford Corpus

**Book 1**

The world's most trusted dictionaries

# New Terminology in Waste Management

Carbon life cycle assessment  
Carbon neutral city  
Climate change manager  
Corporate social responsibility  
Decision support system  
Environmental change manager  
Facilitation manager  
Innovative behavioral change  
Integrated waste management  
Key stakeholders  
Outcome-based recycling  
Public engagement process  
Policy toolbox  
Producer responsibility scheme  
Psycho-social impact assessment  
Risk-based eco-toxicological guidelines  
Sustainability performance  
Waste bulk reduction facility

→ Dynamic keyword phrase generator tool or Bullshit generator

<http://www.rustybrick.com/keyword-phrase-tool.php>

<http://www.dack.com/web/bullshit.html>



*Robert Stone*  
NIGHTMAN & RUBBISH CARTER  
*At the Golden Pole the Upper End  
of White Cross Street, near Old Street*

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*And Decently Performs all he Undertakes  
most carried on by his Daughter*

MARY BURNET.



*John Hunt*, (Successor  
to the Late M.<sup>r</sup> In.<sup>d</sup> Brook)  
NIGHTMAN & RUBBISH CARTER,  
*near the Waggon and Horses in  
Gofwell-Street, near Mount-Mill,*  
L O N D O N.

## Old terminology

Muckraker, rubbish carter, ragpicker, garbage dump, burning, incineration, compost pile, ashes, horse manure, etc.

**Book 2**



HISTORY OF  
*shit*

DOMINIQUE LAPORTE

**MIT Press, 2000**

# BIBLIOTHECA SCATOLOGICA

OU

CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ DES LIVRES TRAITANT DES VERTUS  
FAITS ET GESTES DE TRÈS NOBLE ET TRÈS INGÉNIEUX

MESSIRE **LUC** ( A REBOURS )

SEIGNEUR DE LA CHAISE ET AUTRES LIEUX

MÈMEMENT DE SES DESCENDANTS ET AUTRES PERSONNAGES DE LUI ISSUS

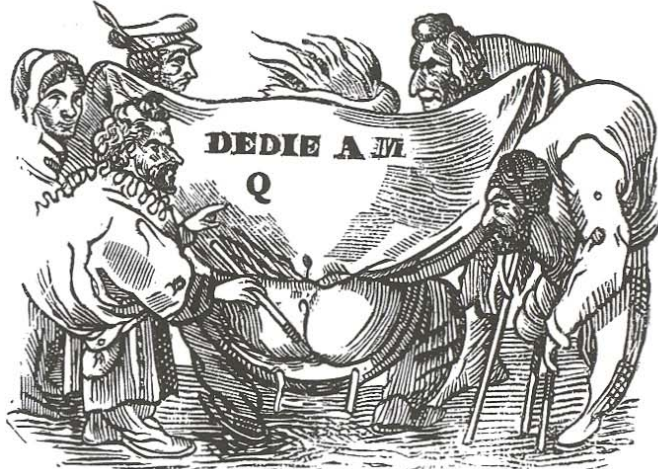
OUVRAGE TRÈS UTILE

POUR BIEN ET PROPREMENT S'ENTRETEAINDRE ÈS-JOURS GRAS  
DE CARÈME-PRENANT

Disposé dans l'ordre des lettres

**K, P, Q**

TRADUIT DU PRUSSIEN ET ENRICHÉ DE NOTES TRÈS CONGRUANTES AU SUJET  
PAR TROIS SAVANTS EN US.



Cas long inv. Fais-Ici del. O Gustus inc. Six-Vesses excu.

**SCATOPOLIS**

CHEZ LES MARCHANDS D'ANITERGES

L'ANNÉE SCATOGÈNE

5850

## Selected list of cited works:

- *De excrementis*
- *De egestionibus*
- *Dissertatio de expulsione et retentione excrementorum*
- *Dissertatio de medicina stercoraria*
- *Dissertatio de utilitate inspiciendorum ut signorum*

Paris, Scatopolis, 1849

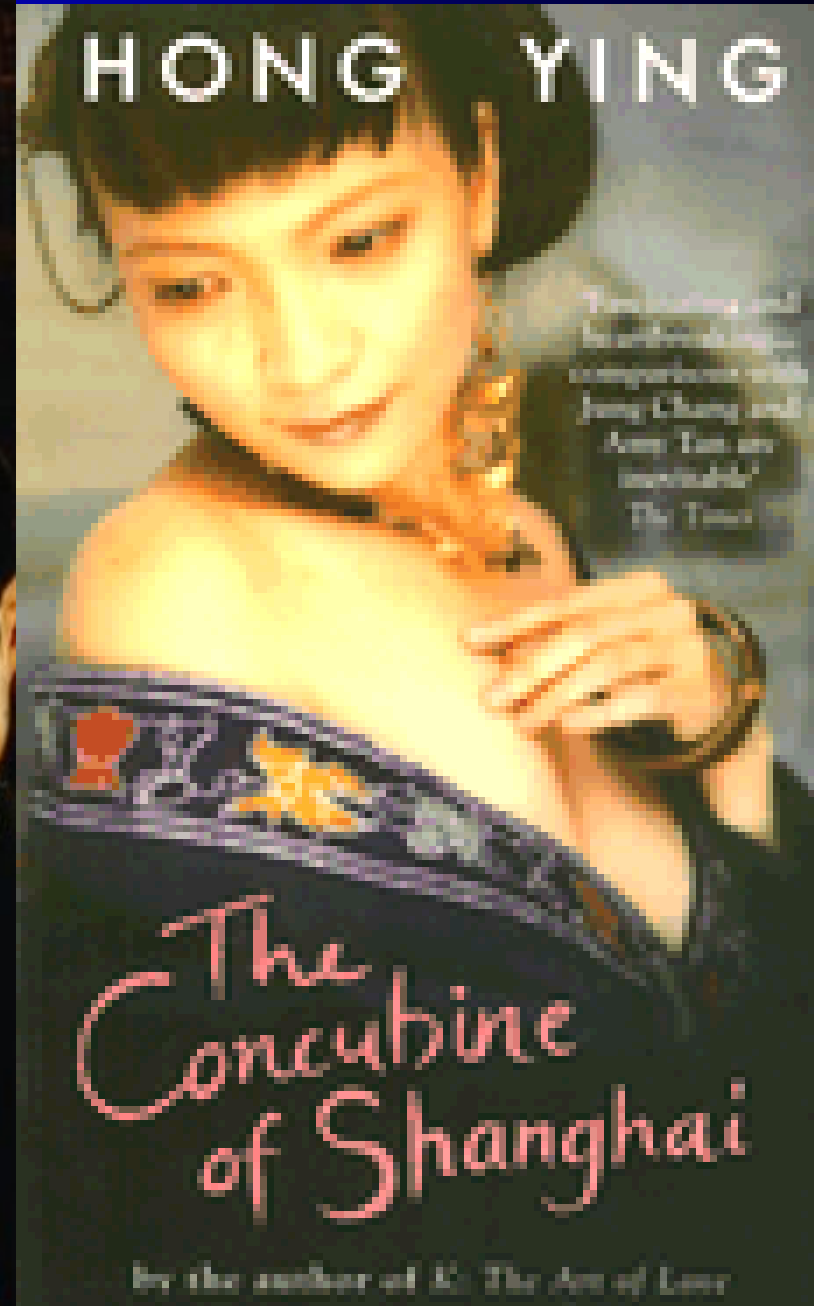
根据著名女作家虹影同名小说改编 一部讲述女性爱情传奇的经典故事

出品人 魏文彬  
制片人 郑晓文 林以政  
编剧 刘和平 黎莉莉  
导演 李少红  
主演 袁立 李光洁 王学兵  
摄影 曹郁  
配乐 田汉 田汉  
剪辑 田汉 田汉  
美术 田汉 田汉  
服装 田汉 田汉  
化妆 田汉 田汉  
道具 田汉 田汉  
特效 田汉 田汉  
音效 田汉 田汉  
字幕 田汉 田汉  
发行 田汉 田汉

King of Shanghai

上海王

湖南电广传媒股份有限公司节目分公司 湖北新星影视有限公司 深圳市诗画春天影视有限公司 出品



HONG YING

"The writing and storytelling are comparable with Jung Chang and Amy Tan, are memorable."  
The Times

The Concubine of Shanghai

by the author of *Q: The Art of Love*

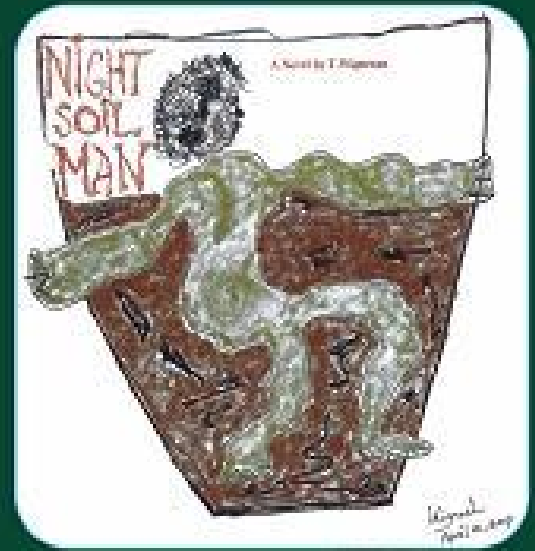
# The business of night soil

- **Cassia Ma, the “night soil queen” of Shanghai, concubine of Du Yuesheng, controlled the remunerative night soil business in the French concession (3000 night soil carriers in Shanghai!)**
- **In the North of China, night soil was often dried and used as fuel for cooking**
  - **night soil merchants = fuel merchants**
- **In Hong Kong, the reputed value of the night soil was such that Government received many tenders for collection and no public funds were used. The manure was conveyed away in junks to Canton. (see Osbert Chadwick, 1882)**
- **Food for thought:** In the past, night soil was handled as a solid waste, why has this lucrative business been left to the wastewater professionals?



**1,100 apply to collect night soil**  
ZHEJIANG (浙江) - More than 1,100 university graduates have applied for eight jobs collecting excrement from houses in Wenzhou (温州), the *Oriental Morning Post* reports. They will join a team responsible for collecting 200 tonnes of excrement each morning from areas of the city not connected to the sewage system. The city government's human resources department said only male university graduates born after 1980 could apply for the positions, which will pay 30,000 yuan a year.

## The Night Soil Man



to: [www.scmp.com](http://www.scmp.com)

Source:  
SCMP, 25.06.2010

Michel Serres

Le Mal  
propre

Polluer  
pour  
s'approprier ?



**Book 4**

***The real evil. To pollute  
in order to appropriate?***

***Editions Le Pommier, Paris, 2008***

**Question:**

**“Why do people pollute?”**

**Answer:**

**“They pollute in order to  
appropriate” as part of their  
animal origin**

**Example: tiger (dog, other  
animals) piss/pollute to  
mark/occupy their territory**

**The more humans pollute, the more of the earth they appropriate or render unusable for others.**

**The more wealth they create the more pollution they produce, hence wealth and waste grow in parallel.**

**→ Homo sapiens = Homo polluens**

**Hard pollution: human waste, wastewater, waste gas, solid waste, etc.  
Soft pollution: light, graffiti, useless information, useless research?**

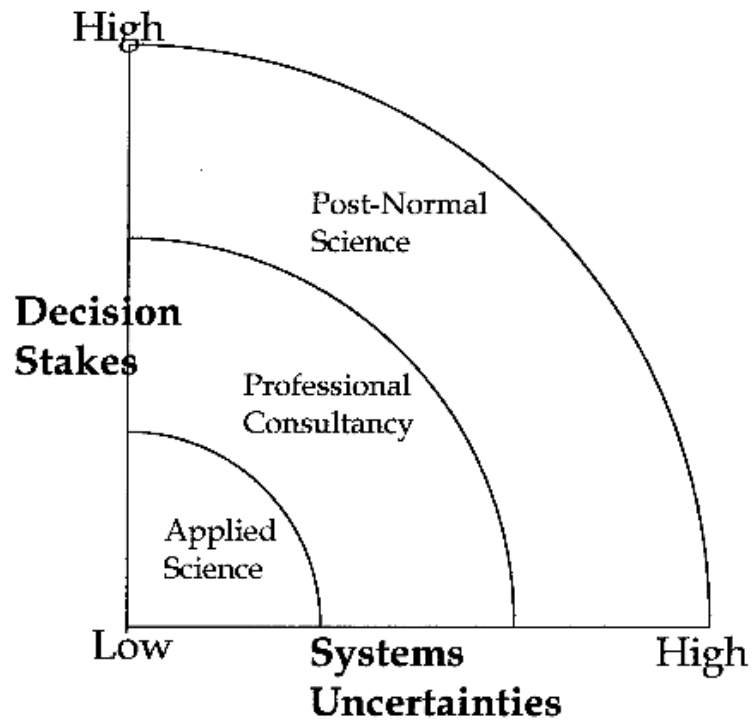
**Implications: Who owns the environment?  
In who's name is environmental management done?**

**Book 5**

ON BULLSHIT

*Harry G. Frankfurt*

**Princeton University Press  
2005**



Post-Normal Science Diagram

**Source:**  
**Ravetz, J. Post-Normal Science in the context of transitions towards Sustainability.**  
**Prepared for the International Workshop Series – Workshop No. 1, 'Transitions to sustainable development: complexity, co-evolution and governance', 20-24 November 2006.**

# Phenomena of Post-Normal World

- Interconnectedness of all things**
- Increased generation of bullshit terminology**
- Increased complexity of systems**
- Increased vulnerability to failure**
- Apocalyptic fear-mongering and green guilt**
- Increased risk-based management**
- Increased reliance on decision support systems and/or opinion polls**
- Expert culture**
- Problem of ultimate authority (decision making) and its control**
- Degradation/failure of systems**
  - Common good versus self-interest: ethics and corruption**
  - Incompetence (“Peter Principle”)**
  - Ignorance, uncertainty, certainty**
  - Outsourcing of responsibility and decision making (consultants)**
  - Trivialization of human and societal errors**
  - Wishful thinking and denial**
- Global systems failure/ societal collapse/ environmental collapse**

Modified after Jerome Ravetz: Global systems failures 06/09

**Book 6**

**Not yet written**

## **Some proposals (M.Sc. dissertation topics?):**

- Knowing Where the Bodies are Buried: Detective Stories from the Hong Kong Landfills**
- The Landfill Babies: A True Story**
- Conversion of Country Parks to Landfills: The Way Forward to Save the Planet**
- How to Get Rich Without Trying: Eco-Park Management in Hong Kong**
- From Rags to Riches: A Recycler's Dream Come True**
- The Nightsoil Tycoons of Hong Kong**
- The Kowloon Cultural District: Ideal Site for Post-Modern Incinerator**
- A Preliminary History of the M.Sc.(Environmental Management) Programme in Ten Volumes**



## Scavenger saves 18 babies

ZHEJIANG (浙江) - An 85-year-old widow in Jinhua (金华) who ekes out a living as a scavenger has retrieved 18 abandoned babies from city dumps in the past 40 years, the *Qianjiang Evening News* reports. She brought up three of them, helped treat those with congenital defects and took care of others before they were adopted by other families in the city. Most were close to death when she found them.

Source:  
SCMP, 15.07.2010

# OUTLOOK

**Will we move from a Throwaway Society to a Sustainable Society (Circular economy)?**

**keep high consumption, recycle spent goods;  
zero waste?**

**Observation: HK doubled amount of waste since it moved to Sustainable Society!**

***Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
where waste accumulates, and men decay.***

**After Oliver Goldsmith, 1770**

*Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
where wealth accumulates, and men  
decay.*

Original version

**Waste = Wealth  
or  
Wealth = Waste ?**

**2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference and Exhibition  
on Waste to Wealth**

27 & 28 July 2010 • Putra World Trade Centre  
Kuala Lumpur

**All is well in future, that is our hope;  
All is well at present, is an illusion.**

*Voltaire*

**Thank you!**

**To all graduates and students of  
the M.Sc. Programme,  
colleagues, friends, and guests**

**謝謝！**