

# Advances in modelling particle transport in urban storm- and wastewater systems

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**Abstract:** Suspended solids in sewers not only carry organic and inorganic pollution but are also the preferred vector for heavy metals, hydrocarbons, many hydrophobic micropollutants and pathogens that are preferentially attached to them. Their behaviour in sewer systems has thus been object of many studies, but, unfortunately the predictive power of the available models remains limited due to the complexity of the processes that determine their transport, sampling and measurement. This contribution summarizes 10 years of research at Université Laval that took advantage of the ViCAs measurement set-up that allows for characterizing the wastewater particles' settling velocity distribution (PSVD) to come up with a conceptual modelling framework of storm and wastewater transport systems in which mass balances are made of particle classes, each with a characteristic settling velocity. The models have been calibrated and validated for stormwater basins, combined sewer retention tanks, primary clarifiers and complete combined sewer systems, from sewer catchment to stormwater basins outlets, sewer overflows and primary clarifier effluents. The ViCAs experimental set-up is simple to build and work with, and has intrinsic quality control indicators that allow evaluating the quality of the obtained PSVD's.

Keywords: Conceptual sewer model; particle settling velocity distribution, ViCAs,

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Urban stormwater composition changes a lot from the moment it hits the ground to its discharge into the receiving water, both in combined and separate sewer systems. Water pollution can be split in soluble and particulate components, the latter often being characterized by the concentration of total suspended solids (TSS). TSS is often correlated with turbidity, which can be measured online, providing then continuous information on this aspect of water quality, and allowing development of controllers that take advantage of it. This paper focuses on particulate pollution of stormwater which is a key parameter to evaluate the stormwater's impact on the environment. Indeed, particulate material not only leads to visual pollution, but also contains considerable organic matter, leading to oxygen depletion, and nutrients, causing eutrophication. Moreover it carries adsorbed pollution (pathogens, heavy metals, hydrophobic micropollutants, ...). Despite years of efforts (Ashley et al., 2004), understanding the processes affecting particulate pollution in the system, especially in sewers, and predicting its fate remains a considerable challenge. This paper summarizes some of the salient results of the research conducted over the last ten years at Université Laval.

In view of improving the receiving water quality, it is essential to consider the integrated urban wastewater systems (IUWS) as a whole. Indeed, interactions between the sewers, the treatment plant (WWTP) and the receiving water bodies can be significant. When dealing with such complex systems, mathematical models have been proven particularly useful. Models allow scenario elaboration to simulate management strategies and their impact, enabling the engineer to better understand the system, yielding better informed decision-making.



In this paper, particle settling velocity distribution (PSVD)-based models, using a relatively simple wastewater characterization method, the ViCAs method are presented. They allow better prediction of water quality in terms of TSS along the system. Anticipated benefits of water quality-based control in an integrated setting are briefly introduced.

## 2. PSVD CHARACTERIZATION AND MODELLING CONCEPT

#### 2.1 Software and Modelling Approach

The ViCAs-TSS characterization protocol ("Vitesse de Chute en Assainissement", French for "Settling velocity in wastewater management", Chebbo and Gromaire, 2009) originally developed to characterize stormwater particulates was adopted in our work to characterize particulate matter throughout the urban wastewater system. A ViCAs lab experiment consists in filling a 60cm column with 4.5L homogeneous sample of storm- or wastewater, which is then subject to static settling. A series of cups is placed sequentially underneath the column to collect particles that settle from the column. At pre-determined instances (e.g. after 1, 3, 7, 15, 30, 60, 120 minutes), a cup is withdrawn and substituted by another one. The TSS collected in each cup is weighed and the cumulative mass of settled TSS is interpreted to yield the socalled particle settling velocity distribution (PSVD) of the water sample (Figure 1). This PSVD enables assigning settling velocities (Vs) to different mass fractions of particles.



**Figure 1.** Examples of Particulate Settling Velocity Distributions (PSVD) along the IUWS and typical PSVD region observed at the inlet of the primary clarifier (PC). Alum addition 'lowers' the PSVD curve in a chemically enhanced PC (from blue to purple). Inlet RT (retention tank) curve characterizes combined wastewater during wet weather.

Over the last ten years, a large number of ViCAs experiments have been performed with samples collected at different locations within the urban storm and wastewater systems and this in different cities in Canada and Europe. Key information extracted from this extensive experimental work is that:



- the PSVD is not constant in space nor time. However, the PSVD of a sample taken under specific conditions (location, same operational conditions...) will be situated in typical regions (see, for instance, Figure 1 for the inlet primary clarifier region);
- within a specific region, the PSVD of a sample is quite well correlated with its TSS concentration (Bachis et al., 2015).

Settling is the most important process to consider when dealing with particulate pollution. Hence, the particle settling velocity is a key parameter to determine in view of modelling. Models that only consider a single, mean settling velocity to all particles do not allow embracing the heterogeneity of particulate pollution in storm- and wastewaters. The purpose of PSVD-based models is to improve the predictive capacity of models by fractionating TSS into a limited number of particle classes, each class defined by a mean settling velocity extracted from the relatively simple and inexpensive ViCAs experiments (Figure 2). The models of the different systems described below use dynamic mass balances of the different particle classes to predict the evolution of their concentrations.



**Figure 2.** An example of TSS fractionation in five particle classes is presented (class delineation in dashed line). Each particle class, characterized by a mean settling velocity (Vs1 to Vs5) is associated with its TSS mass fraction ( $f_1$  to  $f_5$ ).

## 3. APPLICATIONS

### 3.1 Stormwater Basins

In separate sewer systems, rain water is often discharged to the receiving water without treatment, even though it is not exempt of pollution. At some places, stormwater basins have been built to attenuate the hydraulic impact of a sudden wet weather discharge to the receiving water, causing increased erosion and sometimes even flooding. Although these facilities have not been designed with treatment in mind, improvement in water quality due to settling in the



basins was observed (Carpenter *et al.*, 2014). Hence, a better understanding of the phenomenon was deemed interesting to take advantage of. Vallet *et al.* (2014) developed a multi-layer stormwater tank model based on PSVD. The model has a varying volume and is able to reproduce settling and resuspension thanks to settling fluxes between the layers and a mixing model for resuspension. The model can reproduce both the particles' concentrations at the outlet of the tank and inside the tank. Indeed, the PSVD approach coupled with a discretization of the water column in layers enables to reproduce the TSS concentration gradient over the water column (Vallet *et al.*, 2014).

Gaborit *et al.* (2013) also demonstrated that a prediction of the TSS arriving at the stormwater tank inlet could be improved by taking over the PSVD approach for build-up and wash-off phenomena. They observed that consecutive rain peaks were not resulting in the same TSS concentration. By implementing various build-up and wash-off rates depending on particle classes (and thus particle settling velocity), they could reproduce TSS wash-off peaks of consecutive rain events.

### 3.2 Combined sewer retention tanks (RT)

When combined sewage is prevented from overflowing by storage in retention tanks (RT), it is not surprising that PSVD has proven a key property to take into account when trying to model the fate of TSS as the water resides in the RT. Very few studies have been carried out characterizing the settling process in RT. Métadier *et al.* (2013) and Maruéjouls *et al.* (2013) both highlighted the interest in observing particulate pollutant behaviour in RT in order to better understand and predict effective TSS removal in these tanks.

The calibration/validation work of the RT model of Maruéjouls *et al.* (2014) has proven the superiority of a model considering multiple settling velocity classes rather than a single average settling velocity. An important characteristic of the model is that it can accommodate for the fact that the PSVD of the TSS is not constant, but depends on a number of factors such as the time of the day – low TSS waters have a different PSVD than high TSS waters – dry or wet weather conditions, .... This highly enhanced the model adaptability to different case studies all the while keeping the calibration work limited since the PSVD model's parameter values are the direct result of ViCAs measurements. The model performance was compared with a former existing RT model from Lessard and Beck (1991) and found to be improved using the PSVD approach.

### 3.3 Primary clarifier and Chemically Enhanced Primary Treatment

The PSVD-based primary clarifier model of Bachis et al. (2015) is similar to the above RT model, with the exception that the volume of water in the tank is now constant. It was shown that the vertical gradient of the concentration of each of the particle classes in the settler can be simulated. To describe the vertical gradient, the settler is divided into a number of layers and a mass balance is calculated around each layer for each of the classes. Five particle classes with different (constant) settling velocities make up the core of the model (Bachis *et al.*, 2015). Again, ViCAs experiments allow simple calibration of the PSVD-based primary clarifier model.

Primary clarification is the first wastewater treatment process to suffer from the sudden changes in WWTP influent characteristics due to stormwater. To attenuate the negative impact of wet weather conditions, chemically enhanced primary treatment (CEPT) can be applied. Chemicals (usually alum as coagulant) is added to the primary clarifier influent, improving the TSS settling characteristics. By performing a ViCAs experiment on samples with and without alum addition, the impact of CEPT on the PSVD has been determined (Figure 1**Error!** 



**Reference source not found.**). CEPT tends to "lower" the PSVD curve implying that the fraction of particles with higher settling velocity is increased at the expense of classes with lower settling velocity. CEPT can thus be modelled by making the TSS fractionation dependent on the chemical concentration. The layer structure of the model enables reproducing the hydraulic conditions in the clarifier, which is essential to describe the observed delay between chemical addition and its effect on the outlet TSS concentration. Properly dealing with this delay is essential for the development of a chemical dosing controller which aims at reducing chemical addition without jeopardizing settling performance (Tik and Vanrolleghem, 2017).

### 3.4 Integrated model and (water quality based) control possibilities

All models presented above have been developed using the modelling and simulation platform WEST<sup>®</sup> (mikebydhi.com), facilitating their combination in an integrated model. Based on data collected in the field, the system represented in Figure 3 has been modelled (Maruéjouls *et al.*, 2015). It includes three catchment areas, each equipped with an off-line RT. These three catchments are connected to a main interceptor bringing combined sewage to the WWTP. The plant is modelled by a grit chamber, a primary clarifier with possibility of CEPT and three bypasses. Data have been collected at multiple locations along this system and the model performance is remarkable given the complexity of the processes affecting TSS.



**Figure 3.** Integrated model configuration in WEST<sup>®</sup> (mikebydhi.com). Insert shows results of a validation of the primary clarifier PSVD-model (Bachis et al., 2015).

Using the integrated model, different control strategies have been evaluated (Tik *et al.*, 2016). Scenarios were designed around the following control actions that only use water height, flow rate and turbidity data:

- retention tanks emptying flow rate
- activation of CEPT and chemical dosing flow rate
- flow rate sent to secondary treatment

The impact of each scenario, in terms of water volume and TSS load discharged in the receiving water vs. time to empty the RTs, have then been calculated (Tik et al., 2014). The results showed a significant reduction in volume of untreated or partially-treated wastewater discharged into the receiving water, but more importantly from an environmental protection perspective, a percent-wise greater reduction of mass of suspended solids discharged.



However, this indisputable benefit for the environment comes at the expense of an increase in

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RT emptying times. Weather predictions should therefore be used to prevent such slower emptying in case the retention capacity is needed for an upcoming rain event.

### 4. CONCLUSIONS

This paper presented PSVD-based models of the major subsystems involved in stormwater and wastewater transport and treatment. The PSVD approach allows significantly better prediction of water quality, in terms of TSS concentration, compared to the standard approach of assigning a mean settling velocity to all particles. By combining these models in an integrated model, the potential of improving system management has been evaluated. Results of relatively simple control strategies show that there is room for considerable reduction of environmental impact of discharged particles. Further real-time control ideas are currently examined.

#### 5. Acknowledgements

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	PSVD-model in storm wate	r basins
Journal of Environmental Engineering and Science Volume 11 Issue 154 A storm water basin model using settling velocity distribution Vallet, Lessard and Vanrolleghem	Aural of Environmental Engineering and Science, 2016, 11(4), 84-95 Inguide dia org/10.1680/genes. 15.00017 Program 2017 Product Science 2017/2016 Response Ingrand 2017/2017 Response I	
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	RESEARCH ARTICLE
Calibration and validation of	dynamic model for water quality in combined sewer retention tanks
T. Maruéje	uls*, P. Lessard and P.A. Vanrolleghem
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(Received 26	November 2012; accepted 12 September 2013)
As the integrated management of urban wastewater management subsystem models their interactions. In such a context, a review the water quality stored in off-line retention solids into three classes according to the part test. In this paper, a calibration methodology for 1) calibrating this new dynamic retention results show a good agreement between ol chemical oxygen demand.	astewater systems becomes more and more popular, the development of sppears essential to improve the understanding of the pollutant dynamics and of the literature reveals a lack of efficient models describing the dynamics of niks. A model has thus been proposed based on the fractionation of suspended cle setting velocity distribution measured in the field using the ViCAs settling is developed and full-scale field data sets from three different events are used ank model (two data sets); and 2) validating that model on the last data set. The served and simulated data both for the total suspended solids and the total
Keywords: combined sewer overflow; set quality; wet weather	ing velocity; stormwater management; urban wastewater modelling; water
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ABSTRACT		
Chemically enhanced primary treatment weather flow on wastewater treatment p pollution load to subsequent secondary u clogging by an overload of particulate ma take into account the effect of the additi strategies that optimize the treatment pr running simulations with this CEPT model	(CEPT) can be used to mitigate the adverse effect of wet vocesses. In particular, it can reduce the particulate init processes, such as biofiltration, which may suffer from itter. In this paper, a simple primary clarifier model able to on of chemicals on particle settling is presented. Control occess by chemical addition were designed and tested by I. The most adequate control strategy in terms of treatment.	Sovanna Tik (corresponding author) Peter A. Vanrolleghem Département de gérice olt et de génice des eaux, modelf.40, Université Lunal, Tods av. de la Medicene, Québice, QC Canada GTV 0.66 E-mait: sovanna.tik.19udaval.ca

















