

Sanitation and government policy

- A local, national and European problem

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The Swedish example

- For at least 10 years, property owners have been responsible to ensure that their sanitation systems to not cause undue damage to health or the environment.
- The Swedish EPA recently estimated that:

>50% of homes not connected to municipal systems have substandard solutions

So, obviously we need the EU.

- Because Sweden cannot solve this problem on our own.
- And if even rich, experienced, environmentally aware Sweden can't, who can?

Right?

Not necessarily.

One problem: Cost

- Is it worth the money?
 - Cheaper if someone else does it
 - They usually have less money
- Who will pay
 - Property owners?
 - Local or national governments?
 - Finance ministers
 - The EU?

If property owners...

- How will they do it?
 - Knowledge of solutions
- Why should they?
 - Who will make/encourage them?
 - Added value?

A local problem

- Solutions tailored to the unique circumstances for each building.
 - Construction of building
 - Natural conditions
 - Physical infrastructure
 - Societal organisation options available

Local responsibility

- Individual solutions > local monitoring
- Local causes of local impacts
 - Environment
 - Public health

Local responsibility?

- But not very popular!
 - Excuses not to act
 - Don't have the people
 - Unclear what is to be done

National responsibility

- Regulations
- Monitoring local enforcement
- Financing
 - Measures (subsidies property owners?)
 - Local enforcement
- Responsible for implementation of EU regulations

EU role

- Regulations
 - Nitrate directive
 - Water framework directive
 - Marine directiveMonitoring national compliance
- Funding
 - Structural and cohesion funds
 - Rural development
 - Cross compliance?

Whoever does it...

- Need
 - Clear requirements
 - Measures
 - Timetables
 - Competent authority appointed
 - Adequate funding
 - System for monitoring
 - Adequate sanctions

The Swedish system

- In theory
 - Property owner responsible acceptable solution (handbook SEPA)
 - Local responsibility monitoring and enforcement
 - National government regional offices monitor activities of local administrations

The Swedish system

- In practise
 - >50% of homes not connected to municipal systems have substandard solutions
 - Local enforcement varies greatly
 - Regional monitoring of local enforcement ineffective

Explanation of the problems

- Official
 - Local administration lacks personnel
 - Local administration could use some more instruments
 - Regional administration lacks resources

Explanation of the problems

- Reality
 - Local administration lacks political will
 - Not want to upset property owners
 - Some property owners can not afford investments?
 - National government lacks political will
 - Could earmark money for regional monitoring
 - Could give regional offices explicit task

Warning signals

- Warning signals of lack of national will
 - Environmental quality goals bill delayed
 - Stronger teeth for action plans delayed
- Risk that the Commission will have to force compliance
 - Nitrate directive
 - Fisheries controls
 - NGO complaint air quality in Stockholm

Hot potato – Brussels solution?

- Local and national governments pass
- Must Brussels be "bad guy" so local, national politicians can avoid blame?
- Must Brussels pay, so property owners, national politicians don't have to?
- Brussels as Bully or Benefactor...
 - Heard it before?

Dangerous to rely on Brussels

- Dangerous to make Brussels take hot potato
 - Irresponsible abdication of responsibility
 - Contributes to "Brussels disdain" – Ireland...
 - Contributes to "democratic deficit"
 - Save Brussels for when we need them
 - Not local health, environmental impacts of local activities
 - Possibly cross-boundary impacts of local activities

Not just a problem...

- Need holistic perspective
 - Source of nutrients for agriculture
 - EU promote or prevent?
 - Problems solvable
 - Spread of contagious diseases
 - Medicines (better to break down in soil?)
 - Other toxins?
 - Source of raw materials for energy
 - Fermentation for biogas

Contribution to solution to climate change?

...if no one wants to take the hot potato, perhaps someone can seize the opportunity?

Thank you!

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