A citizen’s view

Wim Van Gils
policy coördinator
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Natuurpunt

- Largest nature conservation organization in Flanders
- 95,000 families are members
- + 6000’s of volunteers
- 160 local groups
- 120 nature study teams
- Natuurpunt manages ± 22,000 ha
- + 450 employees (majority blue collar)
- www.waarnemingen.be
- www.natuurpunt.be
Belgium: third richest country in the world
Belgium: water availability

Water availability index: average 834 m³/cap/year

Source: EEA
Proportion of classified river and lake water bodies in different River Basin Districts (RBD) holding less than good ecological status or potential

- < 10%
- 10–30%
- 30–50%
- 50–70%
- 70–90%
- ≥ 90%

Legend:
- EEA member countries not reporting under Water Framework Directive
- No data
- Outside coverage

Source: EEA
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People
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environmental Issue</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air pollution</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water pollution (seas, rivers, lakes and underground sources)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The impact on our health of chemicals used in everyday products</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The growing amount of waste</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depletion of natural resources</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural pollution (use of pesticides, fertilisers, etc.)</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortage of drinking water</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss or extinction of species and their habitats and of natural ecosystems (forests, fertile soils)</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our consumption habits</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban problems (traffic jams, pollution, lack of green spaces, etc.)</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land take (i.e. that more land is used to build roads or cities, and that cities expand into the surrounding countryside)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise pollution</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil degradation</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The spread of harmful non-native plants and animals (invasive species)</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (SPONTANEOUS)</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
People value water
Water = value (2)
Public Participation?

- Low response to first public participation initiatives
- Abstraction level
- Government credibility
  - slow progress, BAU
  - inefficiënt structures, separated budgets
  - not enough integration (spatial planning, CAP)
Public Participation !!

Source: www.sigmaplan.be
People … and their bills

- Test-Aankoop: “tap water is safe and healthy, but there are price differences”
- Network against poverty: “flexibel pricing is no solution for tenants”
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people & profit ?

People

Profit
(economy)
SERV: water pricing (tarif structures) should be:

• Fair and social
• Transparant for the user, applicable for the company
• Promoting rational use water
Fair? who pays what?

Urban wastewater
- High costs - cost recovery applied
- Challenges: efficiency, financing

Agriculture pollution
- High costs - no or little cost recovery
- Voluntary measures, payed for

Source: www.milieurapport.be
Transparant ? Fair ?

- Government budgets ↓
- Price for services ↑

→ transfers from waterbill to government budget
→ fair ?
→ Transparant ?
WFD and economics

• Strong incentives and instruments in WFD ...
  • Polluter-pays principle
  • Cost recovery of (all ?) water services ?
  • Cost-effective measures

• .. but implementation is incomplete / gets delayed
  • vested interests
  • complexity used as an excuse
  • socio-economic political agenda (“no gold plating”)
Green/blue economy!

- Reducing potential is huge
- **Innovation** and implementation of BAT offer direct and indirect ecological and economical benefits
- Economical instruments are very powerful

Where is the circular water economy?
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people & profit & planet?

Planet

People

Profit

(economy)
Ecosystem services

Functional Gradients
- Carbon Sequestration
- Floodwater detention
- Groundwater fed slope wetlands
- Floodplains modified for agriculture
- Natural ricer channel with levees

Nutrient & Contaminant transformation
- Marshland with drainage channels

Food chain
- Groundwater supporting recharge in estuary margins
- Water Marsh

source: uwatercoursesconvention.org
Green cities

Groen Loont!

Source: www.degroenestad.nl/
Space for living rivers

Source: www.sigmaplan.be
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Conclusions

• People care about water
  • ignoring public (participation) is unwise

• We NEED the economical instruments of the WFD
  • not only applied to citizens!
  • learning by doing

• Working with nature
  • creates more ecosystems services
  • important win-wins
  • crucial for adaptation