

the future

For poorer countries to adopt western sewerage systems, it would involve the use of technology, raw materials, energy, water and an enormous amount of money that they just don't have. As around a third of deaths in developing countries are attributable to poor sanitation and water-borne diseases, something needs to be done.

Compost toilets are almost definitely the best option – cheap, easily constructed and maintained, low resource use, and producing useful fertilizer. One possible barrier to their widespread use however, is a feeling amongst developing countries' populations and governments that compost toilets are somehow backward, and that flush systems are alright for rich countries but not for them. But Michael Rouse, formerly the UK's chief drinking water inspector, recently said that if Britain were planning sewage disposal from scratch today, "we wouldn't flush it away - we would collect the solids and compost it" (quoted in *New Scientist*).

Developed countries have to change first. They have the resources to test low-impact systems, and if they are accepted in richer countries, they will be more readily accepted elsewhere. We in the West have for too long been a model for developing countries of socially- and environmentally-damaging ways of living.

Although proprietary compost toilets are expensive for widespread use in developing countries, it's certainly a much cheaper option than a Western-style sewerage system, and they could initiate a self-build programme of twin-chamber compost loos.

As for the West - well there are some enlightened local authorities, and naturally they are in Scandinavia; the Swedish municipality of Tanum has decided that henceforth it will only give planning permission for compost toilets and not for conventional WCs.

There is a big opportunity for compost toilets in new-build housing. They can be quite difficult to retro-fit into existing houses, and they won't get used much if outdoors. We hope that one day, all new houses, instead of having a conventional sewer connection, will have a solid, reliable proprietary compost toilet (like a Clivus Multrum for example) as standard, as well as rainwater harvesting, greywater recycling (not to mention solar hot water, natural, local materials, photovoltaics, wind turbine - I could go on and on). The hatch to the chamber could be on the outside of the building, and be emptied annually by a local authority truck, which would then deposit the compost on agricultural land. Homeowners could be charged a fee for emptying, unless they wanted to use the compost themselves on their garden.

For now, the large proprietary models are expensive. Local authorities could introduce subsidies or grants, but until then, for real low-impacters, this course will help you to do it yourself.

Resources

For further resources, visit our website for updated content. Course tutor Cordelia (self-build), plus an off-the-shelf compost toilet provider, will answer your queries in the comments section of the topic introduction.

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- [Books](#)
- [Links to useful websites](#)