



RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 06/2021

Pre-project: Mass management and mass landfills in Oslo and Viken

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Purpose of the research

The purpose of this pre-project has been to carry out a mapping exercise to reveal some structures and practices connected to how mass management is conducted in Oslo and Viken. The background for this interest is that extraction, transport and storage of mass such as gravel, sand and stone are an increasing environmental and energy problem. Establishment of mass landfills threatens what remains of relatively untouched nature areas in the urban hinterland. The pre-project is based on an assumption that increased knowledge about the practices that result in these problems can in the long term contribute to reducing them.

Research question

Main question:

- Which practices typically characterise mass management in Oslo and Viken?

Sub-questions:

- Which practices result in extraction of the mass that is deposited?
- Which practices characterise the establishment of mass landfills?

Who participated in the research group?

Bjørnar Sæther at the Department for Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo, has carried out the pre-project. Viken County and Lillestrøm Municipality have contributed with valuable information. Other informants include Ullensaker Municipality, residents at Leirsund in Lillestrøm Municipality, Leirsund Neighborhood Association, Norges Naturvernforbund (Friends of the Earth Norway) in Lillestrøm and Pådriv. Participants at the Avfall Norge landfill seminar in the fall of 2021 gave access to valuable information. Oslo Municipality has to a lesser extent been available with information on mass management connected to new water supply. Public documents available on the Oslo Municipality web site have been used as a source. When it comes to plans for the Jølsen landfill, there has been a great deal of available documentation on the Lillestrøm Municipality website, as well as documentation from the Naturvernforbund in Lillestrøm.

What have we found out?

Mass management and mass landfills are an environmental and societal problem which are given little attention in public debate. Many who work with mass management in the private and public



sectors recognise these problems and have much knowledge on the problems and their causes. Some are willing to share their knowledge with researchers.

A large portion of the masses delivered to landfills is non-polluting, which means that they can be used in constructions instead of filling up limited landfill space. Due to lack of planning and time-space coordination only a limited portion of the masses are reused. Viken County point out that early planning is essential for more environment- and energy-friendly mass management. Project owners and developers should jointly make a plan for mass management which highlights using and re-using local mass and minimising the use of virgin mass and landfills. To what extent this early planning is carried out is uncertain. According to informants, it is often the case that neither project owners nor developers take into account questions of mass management. Instead, machine contractors are engaged to find a suitable landfill and drive the mass there. The use of landfills becomes an “end of pipe solution” which puts further pressure on limited landfill capacity, without the problem owner having made actual efforts to reduce the problem.

There is currently a lack of landfills within reasonable distance of Oslo, where ‘reasonable’ is about 50 kilometres. Large landfills are filled up faster than anticipated. Reliable sources have described that mass is transported by truck from Oslo to Notodden. There is not a shortage of initiative among land owners to seek permission to establish landfills, but municipalities are restrictive when it comes to granting permissions for good reasons. There can be a danger of landslides, valuable nature or disruptive noise for inhabitants. Oslo Municipality does not have a mass landfill, but instead relies on surrounding municipalities to handle the problem. There is a danger of an acute shortage of approved landfills, which will strengthen the grey or even black market for mass deposit.

Initiatives have been taken to achieve more sustainable mass management, among others a so-called “mass hub” in the new Hovinbyen area of Oslo. Certain contractors have as part of their business to offer reuse and recycling of mass. A shared problem for these initiatives is that this requires access to land located centrally in the region, such as Northern or Eastern Oslo. This kind of facility would be of a certain size and would have negative consequences for the surrounding area linked to noise, dust etc. Another problem are the high land prices in Oslo, which would give very high costs connected to obtaining land which it is uncertain whether the market can cover.

Implications

There are no simple solutions to the problems connected to mass management and landfills. The problems are inherently linked to the high building and construction activity in the capital region. Technically, there are alternatives to today’s practices, but due to lacking coordination, challenges connected to public regulations and vested interests it is difficult to establish more circular practices.