

ABSTRACT

Title: Sustainable waste management – From international policy to everyday practice. Experiences from two Swedish field studies. English

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Increasing amounts of waste are currently recognised as a serious threat to the environment. Agenda 21 describes the waste problem as related to life-styles and consumption patterns. In this perspective households should be considered as critical actors and, potentially, as important agents of change. This thesis aims to provide insight into the interdependencies between households and new waste management systems by describing and analysing purchase and waste behaviours of households and the development of motivation, behaviours and waste weight in relation to the introduction of new programmes. Study I deals with perceptions and behaviours related to home composting. Data were collected by means of the three consecutive interviews carried out over a one-year period. In Study II, the introduction of weight-based billing is investigated. Self-reported data, collected among households in "single-family houses" and "multi-family houses" in two consecutive interviews, and surveys covering aspects of "green shopping", composting, source separation and weight-based billing are complemented by outcome data in terms of waste weight.

General attitudes towards composting remained strong over time while specific perceptions related to the households' own handling of compost changed between the phases of initiation and routinisation of the new behaviour. This highlights the necessity of using longitudinal approaches when studying implementation of waste behaviours. The results also show that purchase and waste behaviours cannot be understood as a question of solely motivation. Other factors such as habits, knowledge and physical opportunities also have an explanatory value. Findings illustrate the need for a good fit between

these factors for behavioural change. Further, the use of combinative techniques for measuring waste-related behaviours and outcomes illustrate general methodological problems associated with the use of self-reports. Findings also demonstrate the importance of a contextualised understanding as in-put on systems design. Another finding relevant to policy and programme development is the initial decrease in waste followed by an increase over time which gives reason to question the common belief that economical incentives are a simple way of achieving change towards sustainable waste behaviours.