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**Occupy Climate
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FORMAS



Dumpster diving as a protest of the production of food waste in Sweden

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Where is this grassroots initiative implemented? Who are the promoters? Who are the beneficiaries?

The phenomenon ‘Dumpster diving’ is occurring all over the world where people use webpages and Facebook groups to inspire new people and to gather people who dumpster dives in different countries. In Sweden, there are Facebook groups for different areas or big cities where people can show their findings, places to dumpster dive at or just to get to know other people. The two Facebook groups with the most members are in the bigger cities, Stockholm and Gothenburg, both having more than five thousand members, but also one main group which is not location-based with 16 thousand members.

The promoters are the group of citizens who do dumpster diving, in Sweden there are also some influencers doing dumpster diving which could be seen as main promoters. For example, Andreas Jakobsson, who could be seen as the face out for the movement in Sweden, he has written a book about his history of dumpster diving and how it is done but do also blog about his experience of Dumpster diving. Also, there is an Instagram profile “Dumpsterdivan” who shows her findings on her Instagram with over 8 000 followers.

How this initiative engages with climate? Does it tackle mitigation, adaptation, both or other dimensions of climate change?

The initiative can be seen as a mitigation strategy of climate change since the people practicing dumpster diving aims to minimize the waste in the society which are reducing the pressure on the earth’s resources. Furthermore, it is a reaction to the unsustainable consumption of food and production of food waste in society and many dumpster divers, like Andreas Jakobsson aims to inform citizens and stores about the large amount of waste they contribute to (Jakobsson, 2015).

What are the main objectives? What are the main values?

Dumpster diving is a protest on the discourse about food, waste and consumption. Where the people who dumpster dive challenge norms in society by avoiding them (Larsson & Rosengren, 2012). Larsson & Rosengren also states that dumpster divers are both conducting an unorganized, individual everyday resistance, but is at the same time a social movement. The

main objectives of the movement are to illuminate the problems with a consumption-based society and the large amount of waste which are produced in this kind of society.

What is the timeline? Are there already visible effects?

As long as there has been waste, there have been people diving in the trash to find usable things, this early kind of dumpster diving was on the other hand based on the economy of the diver rather than making a statement. The connection to a political movement came in the mid-90s when the freeganism movement started, where people aimed to reduce their contribution to the consumption-based society, this by living on free things, for example society's waste (Larsson & Rosengren, 2012).



Showing a person dumpster diving in Markham, Toronto, ON, Canada. (Doctorow, 2008)

Available at: <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/doctorow/2456019463>>

Which limits (institutional, physical, social, etc.) does it encounter?

The laws related to dumpster diving is discussed in many articles, since the activity is challenging the social norms, there are many people questioning the legality of diving in others garbage. There are no laws directly limiting people to dumpster dive since it is not illegal to take other people's garbage. But on the other hand, there are other laws which may be broken. For example, if the dumpster diver does harm on the container or if the container is locked or in an enclosure and the person break the lock or go in this enclosure. Another law that can be applied on dumpster diving is littering, since store owners often see that the divers do not clean up when they are done (Jakobsson, 2015).

There are also social limits for dumpster divers, where people not familiar with the concept may be skeptical to people going through others garbage. Often this skepticism comes from unawareness of the condition of the food and things that is in the garbage and they may be surprised when they become enlightened of the situation. This skepticism is something Andreas Jakobsson writes about in his book 'Svinlandet' (2015) both for people in his vicinity but also himself before he started dumpster diving.

Are any shortcomings or critical points visible? What other problematic issues can arise from its implementation?

Except for the discussion about the legality and the skepticism of dumpster diving, there is also need for a discussion of class regarding this phenomenon. Many of the articles which have been gone through have been interviewing people in the upper middle-class areas of Stockholm, and there are many people dumpster diving who do not do it for the economic benefit it comes with, but do it more as an environmental act. This shows the altruistic dilemma which comes with the activity of dumpster diving, that people who are not in need for free food go through these containers with food that could benefit people in vulnerable groups in society who would actually need free food for their survival. Jakobsson (2015) points out this problem where the people dumpster diving has a good economy and safety net and people in vulnerable groups such as immigrants, addicts or homeless do not. One solution for this gap could be to introduce these people to the activity, or by give this free food to people who are in more need of it. This is done to some degree by the initiative called "Food sharing Stockholm" a Facebook page who are holding events where they share food that is collected from restaurants and stores, even though they do not only restrict this sharing to people in need, but everyone is welcome to

collect food from this event. One shortcoming with this initiative is that it is located in an area where people in the middle class mostly live, and not people with limited economy.

How would it be potentially replicable in other settings?

Since dumpster diving is a broad phenomenon happening all over the world, it is applicable to many other settings. One thing that could be further applied in this activity is to make sure that the people who would benefit from the free food would access it, for example by having events like Food sharing Stockholm have, but in locations where people who are in need of it are located.

Is this initiative conducive to broader changes (law, institutional arrangements, long-term sustainability, or community preparedness, etc.)? If yes, which?

The concept of dumpster diving has not yet affected more than on an individual level, even though the phenomenon has enlightened the problem of food waste and that more people have been given awareness of how much food is wasted every day. Especially since the official statistics of food waste in Sweden have been excluding many aspects of food waste in retail, resulting in statistics where food stores seem to have much less waste than they actually do.

References

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