Measuring sustainability in households: Interpretations and strategies (23/12/2018)

The paper discusses the connection between "green behaviour" and the metering data of household consumption (electricity, heating, water), based on experiences from recent Danish studies. It is discussed, how everyday understandings of "green behaviour" are related to the overall household consumption. It indicates that the residents "green behaviour" often are overshadowed by consumption practices in other areas, and that such practices often are rooted in quite different rationales than environmental awareness. These findings are discussed in the light of Pierre Bourdieu’s "economy of symbolic goods" (Bourdieu, 1998) parallels are drawn between “green behaviour” and gift-giving. It is argued that the social structures underlying consumption and green behaviour should be recognised in the formulation of environmental policies, and that instead of “selling” the green message as “environmental awareness”, more reflexive strategies should be considered.

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