

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES LOCAL PRACTICE DEVELOPMENTS IN LATVIA: PRO-ENVIRONMENTAL BEHAVIOUR STUDIES IN MUNICIPALITIES

Introduction

Long term studies in Latvia recognize that there is not sufficiently effective environmental governance integration into statutory municipal development governance, with related planning, implementation and its monitoring practice, towards achieving necessary progress for pro-environmental behaviour (PEB) eventually at all municipal governance segments and sectors, in practice action of all target groups. Here we are aiming to provide insight into sustainable consumption governance multi-step interdisciplinary study in Latvia and related action policy practice developments.

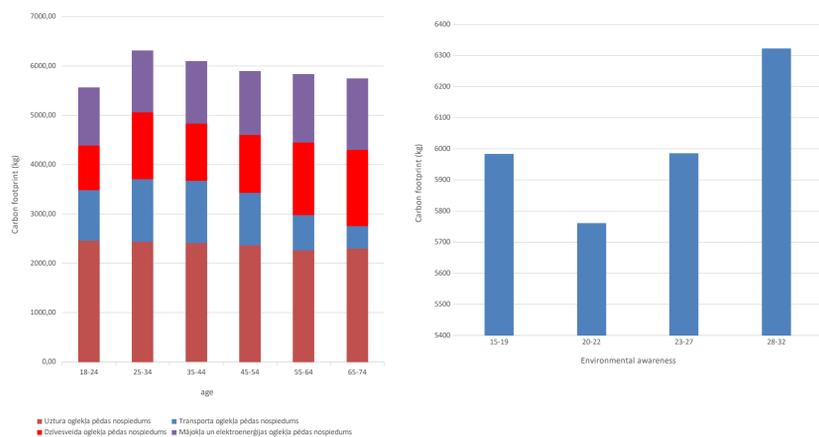
There was applied research-and-development framework overall approach and case study research method, including document analysis, semi-structured deep interviews with each stakeholder group representatives, and particularly, household pro-environmental behaviour questionnaire at national level (n=1004) and in two case study territories, as well as structured observations. Main attention was on PEB development in Latvia, taking into account individuals, households, communities and all other local society target groups, also business sector, but particularly local municipalities' PEB development situation, perspectives and necessary instrumental requirements. Besides, PEB in the municipal practice was approached in the context of environmental (sustainability) communication action oriented approach, complementary and successively studying and planning to enhance environmental information and environmental education instruments, environmental participation and pro-environmental behaviour practice instruments, thus attracting also behavioural communication.

Keywords

values-actions-loads, households, environmental communication, research-and-development framework, instruments

Approach

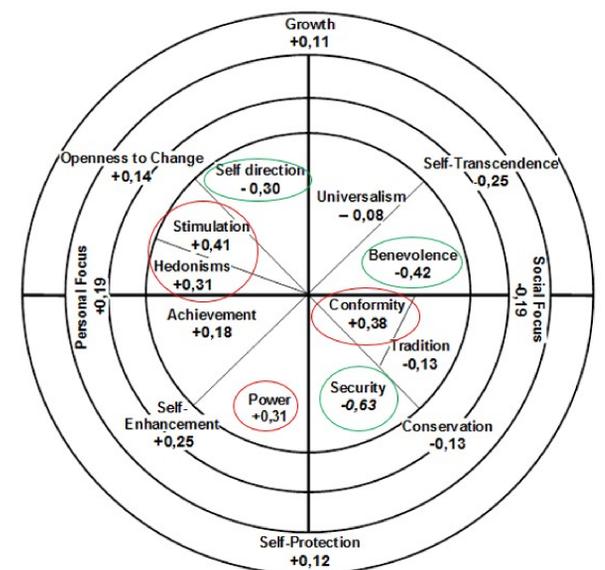
Carbon footprint



Environmental values

Latvian society sees itself as green-minded and ready to engage in reducing environmental pressures. However, this human readiness is not always put into practice. Most respondents use animal products in their daily diets, as this is common practice and often commute by private transport, as it is easier to get to the right place, while public transport is used by those who cannot afford the private.

Stern value orientations in Latvia's society: There is a correlation between values, ecological footprint and WAI.



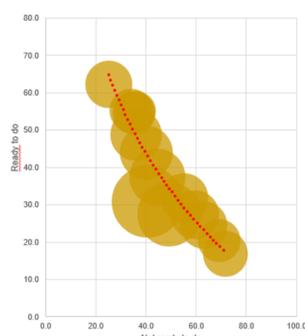
The Environmental Awareness Index

The Environmental Awareness Index shows that the majority of Latvian society has a medium willingness to act in an environmentally friendly manner. However, a fifth of respondents have indicated their willingness to actively pursue a range of environmentally friendly practices and almost as many are not prepared to do so:

- Concerning food consumption, more than 1/3 of respondents admit that they consume meat daily (38%); 49% of the respondents eat meat at least 2-3 times a week.
- Only 15% of the respondents live in fully insulated dwellings.
- Only 33% drive a fuel efficient cars.
- 60% of respondents do not sort waste. Half of those who consider themselves green-minded do not sort waste.

Willingness to act index

- Sort waste
- Eat more organic foods
- Insulate building / choose energy-efficient housing
- Improve knowledge of eco-friendly lifestyle
- Reduce waste
- Use renewable energy for heating
- Influence others to act more environmentally friendly
- Use energy efficient cars
- Drive less, choose public transport, walk and ride a bike more
- Engage in more public events related to the protection of the environment
- Eat less animal based products
- Use less electrical appliances
- During the heating season reduce indoor temperature by a few degrees
- Collaborate with neighbors, friends to share home electrical equipment, automobile, etc.

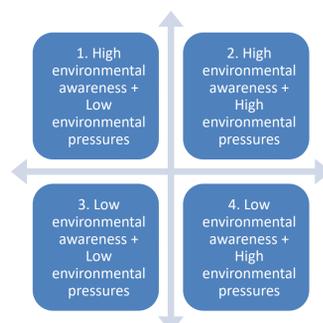


The most common environmental friendly actions in Latvia are waste sorting, consumption of local food and insulation of buildings. However, measures that require a reduction in comfort or a change in routine practices (diet changes, indoor temperature reductions, etc.) are not widely supported

Results of the cluster analyses

Cluster analysis reveals four distinct groups of consumers with different needs, capabilities and capabilities to implement sustainable consumption, as well as different environmental pressures and structures. Despite the relatively high environmental awareness of the majority of the population, environmental pressures remain high.

Clusters	Values (n)	Percent (%)	Environmental awareness (average)
Cluster 1	175	17.3%	27.85
Cluster 2	395	39.1%	24.62
Cluster 3	138	13.7%	22.76
Cluster 4	302	29.9%	19.60
Total	1010	100%	23.43



Main conclusion

Despite the high environmental awareness and theoretical readiness of Latvian society to act environmentally friendly, the study shows a significant mismatch between environmental awareness and actions - people are ready to act in words, but actions do not always follow these desires. In addition, there is a discrepancy between actions when the pro-environmental behavior of human choice fail to deliver a significant reduction in environmental impacts. The third mismatch is value - impact gap, when people's knowledge of environmental impacts is not always sufficiently motivating to provide pro-environmental behaviour. This is due to various psychological, social and physical barriers to pro-environmental behaviour. In order to overcome these obstacles, there is a need for a targeted policy response, which takes into account behavioral theories and develops a system of incentives to strengthen the pro-environmental behaviour in people's daily practice.

Information on eco-friendly lifestyle is an essential but insufficient factor for behaviors changing; household behaviour is driven by a complex set of factors and when dealing with household behaviour we should take into account the heterogeneity of society.

Pro-environmental behavior should be strengthened in social practice by facilitating tailored policy approach to bridge multiple behavioural gaps and overcome sustainable consumption barriers.

Some of the pro-environmental actions are more attractive than others. One person can easily accommodated environmentally damaging and sustainable behavior.

There are many obstacles to pro-environmental behavior. Some of them are linked to motivation, but most of the obstacles are relates to physical and social external factors:

- rarely sort waste, because of the poorly developed recycling infrastructure;
- often is traveling by private cars, because it is more convenient to get around;
- living in poorly insulated buildings, due to the lack of knowledge and resources for thermal insulation;
- often eat animal based products because it is a common practice.

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