

# Rubbish Rules

A Critical Discourse Analysis of neoliberalizing processes in  
Swedish waste management

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**LUCSUS**

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## **Abstract**

A linear system – one that extracts materials and then puts them in landfills and incinerates them, thus creating a demand for even more materials – is fundamentally unsustainable. Swedish waste management is thought by many to be progressive and at the forefront, when looking at the waste hierarchy. While there is a ban on landfilling non-hazardous and organic waste in Sweden, around 50% is incinerated in so-called waste-to-energy plants, the second-to-last favored option in the waste hierarchy. My research aims at investigating how the project of neoliberalization, understood as a complex process of deregulation and restructuring of the state apparatus, has affected Swedish waste management, and specifically waste incineration. Subscribing to the idea that language shapes our reality and dictates which problems and solutions that are possible and which are not, I conduct my research by using the analytical tool Critical Discourse Analysis, based on Norman Fairclough's ideas. The data consists of transcripts from interviews with employees at municipalities and waste incineration plants in the south of Sweden. My analysis shows that municipalities have become competitors; there has been a corporatization of municipal waste companies; that language is skewed in a market direction, etc. These results indicate that waste management in Sweden has indeed been affected by neoliberalization. This means that neoliberalization acts on waste incineration, for example through discourse, and this by extension reproduces the linearity of the system. If we are to move to a circular system, a *kretslöpp* as it has been called in Sweden, we need to move away from waste incineration and towards recycling, reuse and prevention. To do this, however, we first need to acknowledge that neoliberalism is present in Swedish waste management, and that this might indeed hinder any attempt at progressing Swedish waste management even further.

**Keywords:** waste incineration, waste management, Sweden, discourse, neoliberalization, linearity

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## 1 Introduction

Every second, 1744 tons of new materials are extracted (OECD, 2008, p. 240), and 70 tons of waste is produced globally (UNEP, 2009). To sustain all of humanity, 1,6 Earths would be required (GFN, 2016). If everyone lived like a Swede, 3,7 Earths would be needed (WWF, 2016).

There are many factors that make a society unsustainable – a linear system is a major one (Haas, et al., 2015). A linear system extracts materials, produces and sells products, and then throws them away when their utility life has ended (EC, 2014). Such a system requires a constant inflow of new materials – an operation with large environmental impacts – and a constant outflow – filling thousands of landfills and hundreds of waste incinerators across the globe. These practices not only cause impacts on site – mines, timber forests, oil rigs, fields, oceans, landfills, waste incineration plants, etc. – they also produce huge amounts of greenhouse gases, causing climate change, which damages, and will continue to damage, societies and eco-systems everywhere on Earth (OECD, 2008, p. 241).

Many problems in society are often attributed to neoliberalism (Flew, 2014). This ideology advocates a love for deregulation, fondness of markets, and admiration of private ownership. It is frequently argued by critics from both within and outside academia that it is the root of the fundamental concerns facing society today. While sometimes difficult to grasp and hard to understand, neoliberalization has over the past four decades made huge impacts on policies ranging from housing, to labor, to waste; regulations regarding everything from environment to social welfare; international cooperation and competition concerning trade, financial aid, etc.; and markets for everything imaginable, including previously state-run operations; etc.; even in countries like Sweden. The effects – the ones that are visible so far – are profound and have reached far and wide (Harvey, 2005).

Swedish waste management is (often by Swedes themselves) considered to be the best in the world. The recycling rate for material was 35,6% in 2015, 16,4% of the household waste was treated biologically, and 47,3% was incinerated in waste-to-energy plants. Only 0,7% was sent to landfill (Avfall Sverige, 2015). This might sound good, but incinerating waste is also a linear practice, putting continued pressure on new materials. This happens even though Swedish waste policy applies the waste hierarchy and is directed towards a circular thinking – *kretslöppstänk* (NVV, 2012).

## **1.1 Research aim**

Beginning with the understanding that a linear system is unsustainable, this thesis looks at how neoliberalizing processes affect local waste management in Swedish municipalities, particularly waste incineration. Acknowledging that language holds power, shapes our reality, what becomes true and real, and which solutions are favored, I apply Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the overarching, guiding methodology. Following its five steps, I identify: a problem; obstacles to solving the problem; if someone needs the problem; possible ways past it; and finally, I critically reflect on my analysis (Fairclough, 2001, p. 237). My research questions follow these steps, which will be elaborated on later:

1. How might neoliberalization have affected local Swedish waste management, specifically waste incineration?
  - a. Which neoliberal practices and discursive elements can be found?
  - b. Does anyone need the problem?
  - c. Are there potential ways past the problem?

The *problem* refers to the linearity of the system – this will be elaborated on under *What is the problem?* (section 6).

## **1.2 Contributions to Sustainability Science**

According to Jerneck et al. (2011) there is generally a discrepancy between the natural and the social sciences – social scientists misunderstand or misinterpret natural sciences, while natural scientists might lack knowledge about and insights into more theoretical concepts, such as power and discourse. Sustainability science aims at bridging this gap.

My research contributes to sustainability science through applying a social science methodology and approach on waste management - Critical Discourse Analysis is usually used to analyze social problems, but I remodel it slightly to fit to an environmental issue. While not directly investigating the environmental impacts of waste management, I ground my argument and problem focus on the unsustainability of a linear system. What I hope to achieve through this, is bridging a knowledge gap in how external and global forces, such as neoliberalization, can affect local practices, such as waste management and planning, and in particular waste incineration.

## 2 Background

### 2.1 Waste management in Sweden

The waste system in Sweden is regulated through *Avfallsfördordningen* – the Waste Decree (Avfallsförordningen, 2011). Among other things, this decree defines waste, recycling, incineration, and certain types and sources of waste. It also stipulates who is responsible for what, how waste is allowed to be handled, etc. (Avfallsförordningen, 2015).

The waste system is divided into two types of responsibility: producer's responsibility and municipal responsibility (NVV, 2012). A producer is anyone who imports, fills, packages and/or sells a product. The producer's responsibility is grounded on the idea of PPP (Polluter Pays Principle) and the purpose of it is to ensure that the producer uses minimum resources, and that any waste created through a producer's product is taken care of, and handled in such a manner that health and environmental aspects are considered (FPF, 2014). Producer's responsibility covers recovered paper (such as magazines), packages (including metal, plastic, glass, and cardboard), electric and electronic waste, tires, batteries and medicine (NVV, 2015). The system is financed by the revenues from recycling, along with a consumer fee paid on each product purchased (NVV, 2012), except for recovered paper, where the producers pay for the collection and recycling process (FTI A, n.d.). The municipal responsibility covers the collection of the residual household waste that is not covered by the producer's responsibility (NVV, 2012). This system is financed through a yearly waste fee on every household (NVV, 2012).

When this system was devised in the 1990s', producers created a company for every packaging material, tasked with the management of the waste created through the products – Plastkretsen (for plastic), Pressretur (for magazines), RK Returkartong (for cardboard), Svensk GlasÅtervinning (for glass) and Svenska Metallkretsen (for metal). Eventually, these companies merged under one bigger organization - Package and Magazine Collection (Förpacknings- och Tidningsinsamlingen – FTI) (FTI B, n.d.). What does not end up with this company, ends up in the households' *combustible* or *residual* waste bins, which, under the responsibility of the municipalities, gets transported to incineration facilities (NVV, 2012).

There are a number of different ways that the municipalities organize the collection of household waste. These include a completely or partially owned municipal company tasked with waste management; through the municipal administration itself; or through regionally handled waste companies (although the municipals included in these regional companies are still the considered as

the executing bodies) (Avfall Sverige, 2015). 71% of the municipalities outsource the collection of curbside waste to private enterprises, 25% handle it themselves and 4% use a combination. After the collection, the waste is taken to recycling and/or incineration facilities (Avfall Sverige, 2015).

## 2.2 Waste hierarchy

The European Union's waste directive and the Swedish waste policy include the so-called waste hierarchy (see figure 2.1) (EC, 2008). This is meant to show in which order waste management policies are desired. Prevention of waste is the most important step, as this puts the least pressure on the rest of the steps and the environment. As figure 2.1 shows, prevention is a non-waste policy level – meaning that this is before waste is created – it has to be the focus of *other* policies, not waste policy (EC, 2008). Policies aimed at this level should promote decreased production and consumption of goods and services that in any way produce waste. The second and third step – reuse and recycling – belong in a circular system, as these include feeding back used products and materials into the loop again. Policies on these levels should aim at removing stigma regarding reuse and second hand and increasing awareness around and incentivizing recycling (Hultman & Corvellec, 2012). The last two steps – energy recovery (waste incineration) and disposal – belong in a linear system. Even though some of the energy is recovered through incineration, this still results in demand for new materials to be introduced to the system (Hultman & Corvellec, 2012).

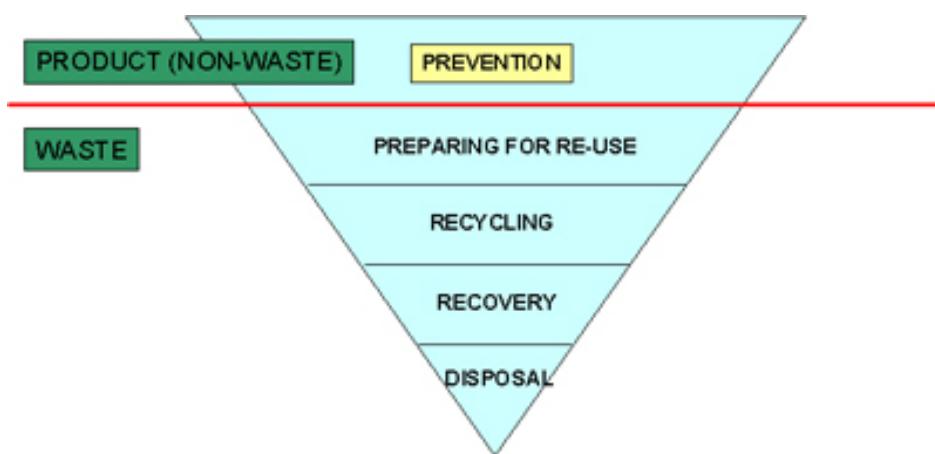


Figure 2.1 The European Waste Hierarchy (EC, 2016).

## **2.3 Waste incineration in Sweden**

Even though Swedish waste policy is aimed at implementing the waste hierarchy, a surprising amount of Swedish waste is incinerated – around 50% (Avfall Sverige, 2015). In fact, the capacity of Swedish waste incineration plants is far too high for Swedish waste volumes. This is a result of the ban on landfilling waste that came in 2001 (NVV, 2016). This overcapacity has led companies (both private and municipally owned) to import, in various degrees sorted, waste from, for example, Norway and the UK (Nilsson, Eklund, & Tyskeng, 2009). According to Avfall Sverige, around 1,4 million tons in total were imported to and incinerated in Sweden (Avfall Sverige, 2015). It is estimated that around two thirds (2/3) of the waste incinerated could have been recycled for material or composted (Lunds Renhållningsverk, n.d.)

The incineration companies procure waste on a market, created for all incineration operations in Sweden, both from municipalities and from private entrepreneurs (Avfall Sverige, 2011). The companies are paid to receive the waste, then paid to distribute heat on the district heating system and electricity on the electricity grid (Avfall Sverige, 2015).

## **2.4 Perspectives on Swedish waste management**

This section is included to show different perspectives and conceptualizations of Swedish waste management. It is useful for the understanding of the starting point of my analysis.

Nilsson, Eklund and Tyskeng (2009) describe the decision-making process and policy procedures regarding waste management as being complicated through shifts in governance approaches – the ‘old’ version being based on the state and centered around laws and regulation and the ‘new’ version being based on multiple actors and around market-based instruments. A further observation is that waste incineration has grown immensely during the last decade and a half, even without it being a part of a policy or goal. The authors thus conclude that there are other drivers for this increase (Nilsson et al., 2009). Some general threads were identified – these were mainly centered around management discrepancies, but also around market influences on the decision-making process. It is observed that the main reason for building a waste incineration plant is economic incentives – the potential to make money from receiving the waste and then selling the heat. Nilsson et al. (2009) further write that “[energy and waste systems have] made a recent transition to an industrial-market logic where municipalities see little possibility to influence either supply or demand” (p. 14) and that the waste sector has moved “from an essentially societal service sector to a mainstream industrial sector operating under market logic” (p. 15).

Corvellec, Campos and Zapata (2013) understand waste management in Sweden as a systemic lock-in, in which the waste system is locked-in into waste incineration by a number of rationales: institutional (including legal and political factors), technical (referring to the complex technology and relatively long lifespan of waste incineration plants), cultural (being a part of the cityscape and the idea of a functional waste management), and material (as the heating system is usually one of the biggest infrastructural projects in Swedish municipalities). A lock-in is a technological system, which operates in a highly social context and in an intricate network of industry, private, and public institutions (Unruh, 2000). These networks are what create the conditions for lock-ins in “dynamic webs of technologies, legislation, standards, physical infrastructures, politics, and cultural norms, inclusive of institutionalized rules-of-thumb” (Corvellec et al., 2013, p. 33). They conclude that getting out of a lock-in is difficult, but indeed possible – by, for example, a counter-weight in the public debate or an alternative view on waste other than a resource (Corvellec et al., 2013).

Hultman and Corvellec (2012) look at the European Waste Hierarchy (EWH) from a sociomateriality perspective – i.e. the relation between material (waste) and humans/society – in a Swedish context. Applying the EWH with its focus on recycling and reuse, can have both negative and positive outcomes. Negative because (1) if you term waste a resource, it can reinforce consumption as the solution and reduce efforts to lower it overall; and (2) should waste management become deregulated, this might lead to a maximization of the amount of material being circulated, thus leading to “unnecessary” recycling. Positive outcomes of the EWH are identified as (1) still promoting circularity in opposition to linearity; and (2) “unblackboxing” waste management, i.e. removing stigma and negative, social conceptions of waste (Hultman & Corvellec, 2012).

Having looked at Swedish waste management from different perspectives, these authors show that waste incineration can be understood in more than one way. All three teams touch upon market relations and how economy is an important factor in decision-making and decision rationale. From this, I take my departure into the lens and perspective I have chosen – discourse and neoliberalization as influencing and guiding factors.

### **3 Theoretical framework and understanding**

#### **3.1 Discourse theory**

Since this thesis is based on discourse analysis, the theoretical framework has to be discourse theory. My main method of analysis is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as understood by Fairclough. CDA takes much of its theoretical underpinnings from Foucault (Fairclough A., 2001, p. 239), which is why his understanding has been given some extra attention here.

Discourse theory is itself subject to the very idea underpinning it – that our reality and how we understand the world is shaped by our language and what we can and cannot express. Therefore, there is no one clear definition of what a discourse is. However, the theorists Winther Jørgensen and Philips (2002) propose to define discourse as “a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)” (p. 1). Wetherell, Taylor and Yates (2001) define the job of a discourse analyst to study “language in use” and look for patterns (p. 6).

Discourse theory is based on the quite broad concept of social constructionism, which can be said to have four basic pillars that most discourse theories subscribe to (Winther Jørgensen and Philips, 2002, p. 5):

- Criticality towards knowledge – knowledge is never objective and we can never know the truth about reality; we know reality through categories and language, which ultimately do not perfectly reflect the external world.
- Historical products – the way the social world is constructed is through history and discourse. This is an anti-foundationalist and anti-essentialist view, which means that it is not assumed that we can ground knowledge on a basis exterior to human actions; and that the social world is not determined by externalities and that no one possesses an inherent set of essences.
- Knowledge and social processes – how we understand the world is produced and reproduced through social processes; we constantly conjointly construct and compete over the truth of definitions.
- Knowledge and social action – according to a specific worldview or discourse, certain types of actions are accepted, they become natural, making others “unnatural”.

The starting point for discourse analysis is that we can only access reality through language and that language is never only a reflection of reality, but is always helping in constructing and creating it

(Winther Jørgensen and Philips, 2002, p. 9). It is neither a “neutral information-carrying vehicle”, but must be understood as the site where meanings are both created and changed (Wetherell et al., 2001, p. 6). Furthermore, all discourse theories agree that languages are structured in patterns (discourses), that these patterns are reproduced and transformed in discursive practices, and that discourse analysis should be aimed at exploring this reproduction and transformation (Winther Jørgensen and Philips, 2002, p. 12). Language is always situated – to understand what is going on, you often have to look at what has already happened (Wetherell et al., 2001, p. 7).

Since CDA takes much inspiration from Foucauldian discourse theory, this section will explain this in more detail. Discourse is what creates the rules for what is acceptable to say, what is meaningful and what makes sense. These rules automatically determine what is unacceptable and what becomes false (Winter Jørgensen and Philips, 2002, p. 13). For a statement to have effect, to be meaningful, it has to follow the rules of the discourse, otherwise it will not be accepted as a “serious speech act” (Diaz-Bone et al, 2007, p. 2). According to Diaz-Bone et al (2007), “[t]hese rules are said to be ‘responsible’ for the organized [...] ways of using ‘concepts’, of referring to ‘objects’, of thinking in strategies and of formatting the ways of speaking” (p. 3).

Foucault does not see the individual and their utterances as the object for discourse analysis, but sees discourse rather as something that happens on a wider social arena, that is constituted by a collective. This does not mean, however, that individuals are not impacted by the constructing qualities of discourses (Diaz-Bone et al, 2007, p. 2).

Foucault, furthermore, sees power as something productive, rather than oppressive; it is something spread out over the web of the social world, rather than something belonging to individuals or the state. Through power, discourses, knowledges and practices become possible. Power helps in shaping our social world: what we understand and how we understand it (Winther Jørgensen and Philips, 2002, p. 13).

### **3.2 Neoliberalism and neoliberalization**

As stated in *Research aim* (section 1.1), I investigate how neoliberalization has affected Swedish local waste management. I draw on a number of theorists, but mainly use Peck and Tickell (2012) and their understanding of the neoliberal project.

While Peck and Tickell (2012) hold that the neoliberal project is complex and shifting in its local extensions, there is benefit to starting with identifying global trends and processes, as neoliberalization is, in its core, a global phenomenon. Neoliberalism is the ideological and

philosophical school of thought, while neoliberalization is an ongoing project, not a state or an end in itself. The character of this project is ever-changing and deeply adaptive to external pressures and to the very crises it produces itself (Peck and Tickell, 2012). Harvey (2005) describes neoliberalism as the doctrine that came to guide and steer economic thought and policy from the 1970s onwards (p. 2). Its first, and most influential, proponents were Friedrich Hayek and later on Milton Friedman, who created the so-called Chicago School (Harvey, 2005, p. 8). The very basics of the neoliberal project are to liberate the individual through property rights, free trade, and free markets, which are all upheld and protected by a minimal state (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). It is a fundamentally restructuring enterprise, and “has provided a kind of operating framework or ‘ideological software’ for competitive globalization, inspiring and imposing far-reaching programs of state restructuring and rescaling across a wide range of national and local contexts” (Peck and Tickell, 2012, p. 380). It shows institutions how to structure themselves and how to behave – the ideal form for society is promoted as that of a company; it promotes competition, rather than cooperation; supports the market instead of correcting it; and wants to limit state power overall (Flew, 2014). It has reached hegemonic status and become common sense – anyone who does not believe in neoliberal values or strategies is seen as backward or dismissed as a dreamer or collectivist. The religion of neoliberalism “combines a commitment to the extension of markets and logics of competitiveness” (Peck and Tickell, 2012, p. 381). Marketization and commodification, meaning the process of putting something on the market that was previously non-economic, have been facilitated and strengthened under neoliberal influence (Brenner, Peck & Theodore, 2010). Discursive successes for the neoliberal project have thus been to naturalize market conditions and the logic thereof – to make it seem as something uncontested, something that just happens. It has become self-actualizing, which further contributes to the idea that what its proponents preach is *true* (Peck and Tickell, 2012). The neoliberal project allegedly aspires to set all individuals free – a notion that speaks to us, because there is something so profound about freedom. State intervention is seen as threatening this freedom and thus the state and all state-led operations, except the bare minimum ones, are termed ‘evil’ (Harvey, 2005, p. 5).

Neoliberalization is a global, structural project. While it has outspoken proponents and more or less influential followers, it is mostly an agent-less doctrine that operates subconsciously in and through states, institutions, and individuals (Peck and Tickell, 2012).

Brenner et al. (2010) emphasize the interconnectedness of the local and the global – neoliberal processes are both patterned and situated, both stable and unstable. The localities of neoliberalism are constituted by a wide array of versions. It has been mixed and mutated in localities,

while always keeping its fundamental characteristics – deregulation, marketization, and promotion of privatization (Peck and Tickell, 2012). It has further spurred an interlocal competitiveness between not only actual market actors, but also by non-market actors, such as different public sectors and institutions (i.e. cities and municipalities). These interlocal relations, with profound effects on local politics, have become reshaped in “competitive, commodified, and monetized terms” (Peck and Tickell, 2012, p. 385). This type of competitive, urban entrepreneurialism undermines any type of alternative or resistance and leads to public structures mimicking market conditions and giving into and adopting market logic in various decision-making instances. The neoliberal project has colonized more than just isolated localities – also the “spaces in between”, thus setting the frame for how interlocal relations even *can* look and how the competition is measured – which is indeed through monetary value, flexibility, performance, shareholder value, etc. (Peck and Tickell, 2012).

Through the normalization of neoliberalism, it has shifted from being a purely economic project into being one, whose rationalities and logics have extended into the non-economic realm as well. This has led non-market actors to assume the role of a market actor and think in terms of what makes sense to do on a market, even when the topic for decision is not economic (Peck and Tickell, 2012). Under the marketization process, which has closely followed in the neoliberal wake, there has been a general decline in the quantity and quality of environmental and welfare policies (Peck and Tickell, 2012; Harvey, 2005, p. 3). Due to its competitive nature and the diversity of the world system, it has further led to a spatially uneven development on both a local and regional scale (Peck and Tickell, 2012).

While neoliberalist policies have strongly opted to downsize public spending, and increase deregulation in order to ‘free up’ markets and potential markets, they have at the same time created a type of metaregulation – a strict system of rules for how to not have rules. So in creating the minimal state in terms of environmental regulations and social welfare policies, a new state has risen out of the ruins of the old ones – where the state itself is subject to market logic, a type of logic which is in its very essence individual, where a seemingly actor-less control apparatus makes sure that all its components – states, institutions, companies and citizens alike – follow its logic too (Peck and Tickell, 2012).

## **4 Methods and methodology**

### **4.1 Epistemological considerations**

As follows from the choice of discourse analysis as theory and method, I assume a social constructivist view of science and research. I hold that no research can be value-free or completely objective. The researcher will always affect the outcome of the research and researchers should never claim to have uncovered the truth or what actually *is*, reality. This follows from three assumptions (Wetherell et al., 2001, p. 12):

1. The social world is far too complex to make any kind of predictions about it – the aim of research within the social sciences is not to predict, but rather to study meaning and significance of practices and interactions.
2. When the object of study is people or the institutions that people create, there can be no truth.
3. Reality is neither single nor regular, which means that no truth can claim to be single or regular.

This means that the type of knowledge gained through research such as this, presented in this thesis, must be regarded as partial and situated, meaning that it does not claim to be a universal truth, applicable to all times and places; and relative, which refers to the presence of the researcher (Wetherell et al., 2001, p. 12).

### **4.2 Discourse analysis**

According to Winther Jørgensen and Philips (2002), discourse analysis is a “package” – if you use discourse for theory, then you should also apply it as a method (p. 4). I have already outlined much of the theoretical underpinnings of discourse theory under *Theoretical Framework*, and will here go into how I will perform the actual analysis. First, however, I will outline some of the theoretical parameters for the *method* discourse analysis.

Using discourse analysis is a way of systematizing worldviews and starting points for when knowledge is created; of investigating how language produces and transforms our realities; and of revealing the consequences of talking about phenomena in certain ways (Talja, 1999). Talja (1999) further writes that the “endpoint of analysis is the systematic linking of descriptions, accounts, and arguments to the viewpoint from which they were produced” (p. 8).

As stated under *Research aim* (section 1.1), my main method is Critical Discourse Analysis. While there are many ways of doing a CDA, I take inspiration from Norman Fairclough. Fairclough (2001:A) writes that the term *critical* in CDA comes from that CDA looks at how language produces and is reproduced by “social relations of power and domination, and in ideology” (p. 229). It is further critical in the sense that the researcher determines the problem that they want to research in advance and that they “pick a side” – usually the side of the marginalized (Fairclough B, 2001, p. 125). Almost all CDA approaches focus on *social* problems, inequalities and harmful consequences for the marginalized groups in society, for example women, the poor, homosexuals, non-whites etc. (Wodak and Mayer, 2001). My research is, however, not linearly related to a social group, but rather focuses on the negative environmental effects of a linear system, which, by extension, has a negative effect on many groups in society, including future generations.

The analytical framework of CDA, designed and used by Fairclough, is based on five steps (see figure 4.1 for visualization):

1. Choose a (social) problem with a semiotic aspect – you start with picking an issue or a problem, rather than picking a research question (Fairclough A, 2001, p. 236). This follows from the criticalness described above. What constitutes a social problem and who is marginalized is of course open to both interpretation and discussion, and has been the topic for many controversies and debates for CDA (Fairclough B, 2001, p. 125).
2. Identify reasons for why the problem persists and obstacles for why it is not resolved, for example through the analysis of:
  - A. The network of practices within which the problem is found
  - B. The relationship between language use to other elements within the relevant practice(s)
  - C. The actual discourse and language use, by looking at the text as a whole; doing an interactional and an interdiscursive analysis; and doing a linguistic and semiotic analysis (Fairclough A, 2001, p. 236). This step requires a more thorough explanation, which will be given in part after this list numbered 1-5, and in part in the text alongside the actual analysis.
3. Consider if someone or something actually “needs” the problem – if someone or something is benefitting from the problem not being solved (Fairclough A, 2001, p. 236). Does it help sustaining powers and ideologies? (Fairclough B, 2001, p. 126).
4. Are there possible ways to solve problem or getting past the obstacles? This step refers back to step 2 in large part and is important for the critical part of CDA (Fairclough A, 2001, p. 236).

- Being self-critical and reflecting over the analysis, so as to show oneself and one's own perceptions and stances (Fairclough A, 2001, p. 236).

#### **4.2.1 Step 2C – text, interdiscursivity and linguistic analysis**

Fairclough says himself that the actual text analysis comes quite “late” in the whole analysis process, since you first analyze practices, networks and larger structures within which the texts under analysis exist and operate (Fairclough A, 2001, p. 238). For step 2C in Fairclough’s conceptualization, you perform three subtypes of discourse analysis – text analysis, interdiscursive analysis and linguistical analysis. These will here be explained in more detail. Texts (understood as what is under analysis – it could be policy text, laws, interview transcripts, speeches, commercials, etc.) should be analyzed in two ways – paradigmatically and syntagmatically. Paradigmatic refers to, and this is based on a Foucauldian notion, what is possible to say, if there are any alternatives and what is not possible (what is within the *paradigm*, what is true). Syntagmatic means that you look at how the text and words are organized (Fairclough A, 2001, p. 240). These two sides of analysis are more or less present in all of the following three subtypes of discursive text analysis.

- Text analysis. The starting point here is to see texts as an activity that shapes and reproduces reality – Fairclough calls this “work”. The textual work is analyzed by looking at the following (Fairclough A, 2001, p. 240-241):
  - How is the world/state of things represented in the text?
  - How does it describe the relations between people, between processes, between practices, etc.?
  - Who and what is identified in the text? How is it identified?<sup>1</sup>
  - What is valued and how is it valued?
- Interdiscursive analysis. In this step, the text is related to other texts outside of it. Genres (Fairclough understands genres as different types of text that are available in a given culture) and discourses are analyzed – which genres are present and which discourses are visible? Fairclough does not rule out, rather on the contrary, the existence of multiple genres and (competing) discourses in the same text (Fairclough A, 2001, p. 241).
- Linguistic analysis. In this step, the pure text is under analysis. These four categories of text characteristics are looked at (Fairclough in A, 2001, p. 241-242):

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<sup>1</sup> Since this particular question in the analysis is grounded on the notion of *social* identities, which is outside the scope of my thesis, I will leave it out of my analysis.

- Whole-text language organization – how is the text structured? Is it a narrative, is it argumentative, is it a dialogue?
- Clause combination – how are clauses and sentences linked together? Is there a difference between them?<sup>2</sup>
- Clauses/sentences – here you look at the grammar – the transitivity, action verbs, voice, mood, modality, etc.
- Words – the choice of words, the relation between words, the use of metaphors, etc.

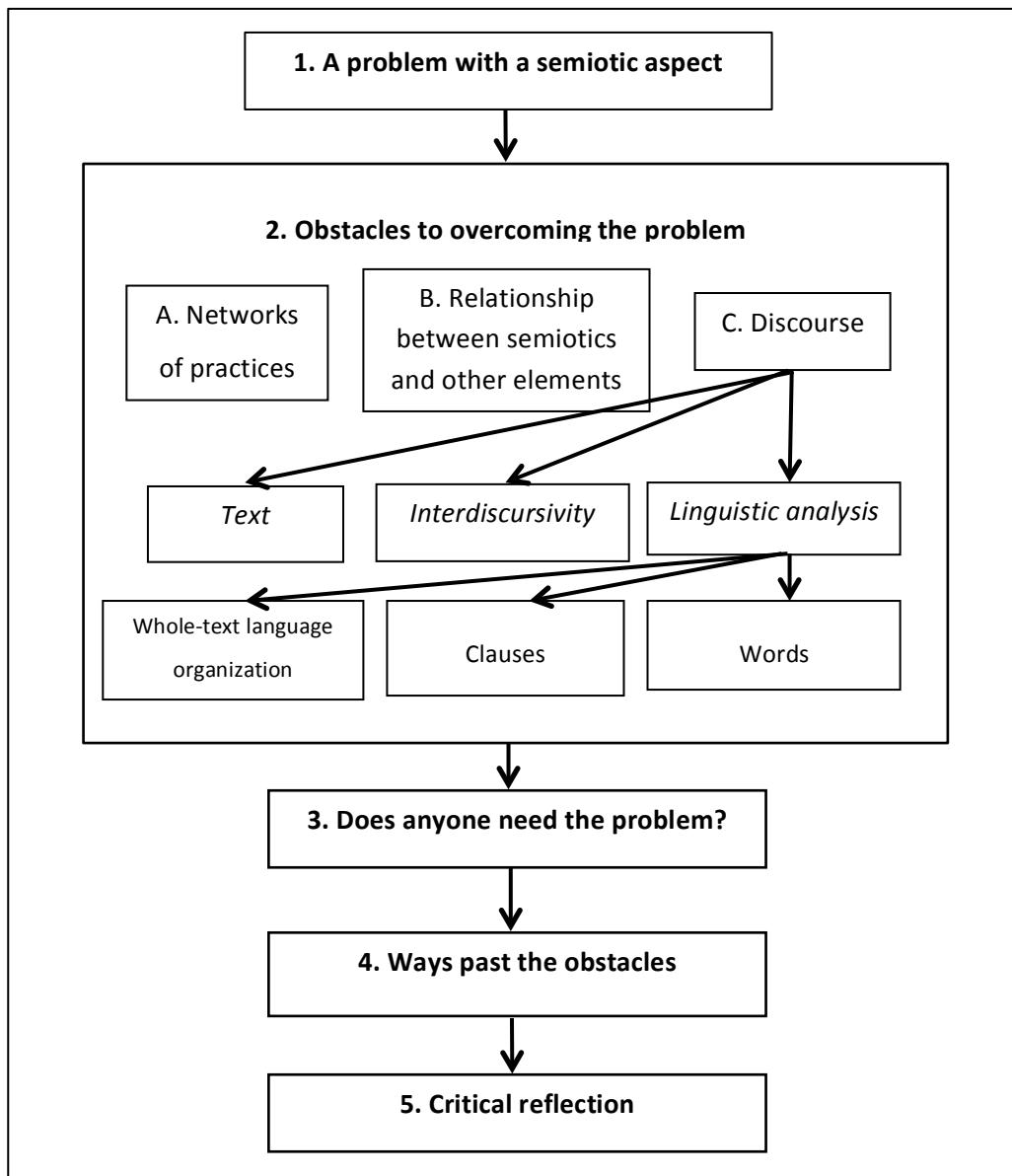


Figure 4.1. This figure visualizes the steps of the CDA.

<sup>2</sup> Due to my data being interviews, I will leave this part of the linguistic analysis out. In the reading of my interview transcripts, I realized that clause combination in everyday speech is more based on general semantic practices of the Swedish language, rather than anything that is relevant for a discourse analysis.

### 4.3 Interviews

The choice of main method for data collection, or rather data *construction* since I take a social constructivist approach, was interviews. Initially, the choice was discourse analysis of policy documents and waste plans. However, a probing reading of these documents showed that these did not seem to be the obstacle of working towards a circular system – these were (quite) progressive already. Therefore, I instead hypothesized that the gap between policy and practice must have its origin in the human, non-written world. That was the basis for the choice of interview as method.

Kvale (2007) defines an interview as “a conversation that has a structure and a purpose determined by the one party – the interviewer. It [...] goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views as in everyday conversation, and becomes a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge. The qualitative interview is a construction site for knowledge” (p. 7). While this definition holds true in many aspects for my research, what deserves some attention is the wording of “obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge” – I do not expect to obtain an account, or knowledge, of *the reality*, but rather data about one out of many representations of reality, which I will then analyze. In a way, I will obtain knowledge, but I am not interested in only the situated knowledge my respondents will have. ‘Interview talk’, according to the constructivist tradition, is not supposed to be approached as we have learnt to approach everyday talk. What participants say cannot only be interpreted as descriptions of actual processes and events, the meaning of what is said is always more complex than what is visible and audible on the surface (Talja, 1999). Therefore, the purpose of these interviews is not only to gain insight into or analyze the life-worlds of the participants, meaning the situated knowledge they each possess. Rather, the participants are seen as carriers, or performers, of one or more discourse(s). This type of Foucauldian-based discourse analysis is not interested in looking at the ordinary talk of people, but instead at the type of language that can be seen as “serious speech acts” or institutionalized talk (Talja, 1999). Talja (1999) writes that

*“In discourse analysis, interview data are analyzed at a macrosociological level, as social texts. Discourse analysis is an approach which surpasses the dichotomy between subjective meanings and objective reality, as well as the dichotomy between user-centered and system-centered research. It concentrates on the analysis of knowledge formations, which organize institutional practices and societal reality on a large scale.”* (p. 2)

Participants are not regarded as coherent and consistent data generating units, because the traditional approach towards qualitative analysis has been abandoned in a discourse analysis. Individuals can have opposing views and opinions about the same thing, which differs depending on the interview question, how the subject is framed, who is asking, etc. (Talja, 1999). This variation can also be seen as an expression or manifestation of contradictory discourses.

The interviews were a mix between structured and qualitative interviews, with a set of questions formulated before, but which were partly open-ended (Yin, 2011, p. 133-134). I also made room for more follow-up questions, and in practice, many interviews turned out more like talks. The interview questions can be found in Appendix 14.1 and 14.2.

#### **4.4 Selection and participants**

To answer my research questions, the municipal level was the obvious choice. The sampling was not randomized, but was done from a practical point of view. From a list of Swedish incineration plants on the webpage of Avfall Sverige (Avfall Sverige, n.d.), I contacted eleven incineration plants on the selection criteria that (1) they were geographically located in the south of Sweden (so that I could, if the potential interviewee wanted to, travel there to do the interview in person, with relatively short notice); and (2) they were municipally owned. Out of these eleven incineration plants, six answered and interviews were consequently planned. When an interview was decided, I contacted the corresponding municipality to get an interview with someone there. The purpose of doing interviews with one employee on either side, was a measure to ensure a greater representation of the different expertise, knowledges and positions that are included in the decision-making and knowledge-generating process of these plants and municipalities. Eleven interviews were performed in total (see Table 4.1). While communicating with the incineration plants and municipalities, I expressed that someone that makes decisions and/or has insight into the local waste plan would be preferable as interviewee. This was based on my initial hypothesis that these people would be able, to a greater extent, to talk about waste management and incineration both in general and on a local level, reason about how decisions are made and which factors are important, and talk both about the past and the future of waste incineration, etc.

Since all interviews have been in Swedish, I have performed the analysis in Swedish. The quotes I include in the analysis have been translated from Swedish, as close to the original as possible, but with correct grammar. Certain words that require extra explanation or are interesting have been given footnotes.

| <b>Location</b> | <b>Incineration facility</b> | <b>Municipality</b> |
|-----------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| Borås           | X                            | -                   |
| Hässleholm      | X*                           | X                   |
| Linköping       | X                            | X                   |
| Ljungby         | X                            | X                   |
| Malmö (Sysav)   | X                            | X                   |
| Uddevalla       | -**                          | X                   |

*Table 4.1. Showing interviews with incineration facilities and municipalities. \* = performed two interviews at this facility. \*\* = interview was performed, but audio recording was lost.*

#### **4.5 Ethical considerations**

Since this thesis involves people, it is necessary to consider ethical implications and how to handle them. The topic of my thesis is not that controversial, that it would risk harm to any of my interview participants, should their names become known. However, to make sure that my respondents felt safe and freer to speak their minds, I promised to keep them anonymous. I have used quotes from the interviews, but they are assigned the letter R for respondent and a random number.

My respondents were further briefed about the circumstances of the interviews and my thesis, though I did not reveal the full research aim, as I feared that this would cause them to be more careful and considering in their speech and in their answers. On a few occasions, when respondents probed further for more information, I explained that I did not want to reveal more, and they all accepted this.

#### **4.6 Reflexivity**

It is impossible to separate the discourse analyst from the research, and it is therefore crucial that I, as the researcher, make myself visible in the process. Researchers are data collecting (constructing) and analysis instruments in themselves (Yin, 2011, p. 270). The concept of reflexivity holds that “the world acts upon the researcher and the researcher acts upon the world” (Wetherell et al., 2001, p. 17). I, according to this concept, must be aware that I influence the research in a number of ways, for

example the selection of topic (according to interests, sympathies or political beliefs, etc.); how the data collection is being done (constructing interview questions, appearance at interviews, etc.); and which knowledge, worldviews and preconceptions I bring to the analysis (Wetherell et al., 2001, p. 17). I must aim at being self-aware and make assumptions and possible preconceptions visible to the reader. Yin (2011) suggests that I, as the researcher, report on the circumstances of my data collection/construction and analysis by: my cultural orientation, and how that could influence my research; potential relevance of physical attributes; personal motivation and interests; and how I gained access to what I am researching (p. 270).

Both my cultural orientation, and any physical attributes I have are not relevant for my research. My choice of focus area, theory and methodology already speak of my interests. Taking a critical stance on neoliberalization might also indicate to the reader where I come from, politically. I further believe that a zero waste, circular system is preferable and possible, why I am, from start, critical towards waste incineration, even though it might replace the even more detrimental practice of landfilling. And lastly, I have already explained how I gained access to my interview participants under *Selection and participants* (section 4.4).

#### **4.7 Evaluation**

There have been debates about the so-called double crisis of representation and legitimization when it comes to constructivist research. At the same time that the researcher cannot claim to offer any objective and universal knowledge, it is difficult to evaluate the knowledge gained, since the research rests on the assumption that objective knowledge is impossible, because there is no objective reality (Wetherell et al., 2001, p. 12). This has led to talk of “methodological anarchy”, referring to a state where no one and everyone make claims to truth (Wetherell et al., 2001, p. 324).

In positivist or post-positivist research traditions, the criteria of reliability, validity and replicability are important for evaluation of the research. As already stated, discourse analysis and theory belong to another tradition of regarding and doing research, which does not subscribe to the same values and criteria. Seale (1999) comments on this issue: “conceptions of reliability and replicability... are rooted in a realist view of a single external reality knowable through language” and “[v]alidity in this tradition refers to nothing less than truth, known through language referring to a stable social reality” (p. 41). These are claims that theories of discourse reject. Therefore, the formulation of other criteria for evaluation is necessary.

Wetherell et al. (2001) bring up a number of criteria or tools for evaluation, among them are locating the new research in relation to previous research (as I have done under *Perspectives on Swedish waste management* - section 2.4), looking for deviant or inconsistent cases (data), richness of detail (which I will achieve through including quotes, details on translations and linguistics, etc.), an explained research process (which I do throughout the text), etc. (p. 320-321). When it comes the quality of the analysis, this is more difficult. Wetherell et al. (2001) suggest insider status (speaking the same language, belonging to the same social group, etc.), member checking (involving interview participants in a feedback process) and triangulation (using more than one method or form of data to research the same issue) (p. 321-322). The only (relevant) feature I share with my interview participants has been speaking the same language, which does make the data collection, transcribing and analysis easier and by extension, possibly more robust. I will not include my participants in a feedback process in the analysis, as I do not investigate them *per se*, but rather their conscious and non-conscious language use. While I will not use another set of methods, CDA is, in its essence, a varying method, where I study more than the pure linguistics of my data.

Fairclough (2001:A, p. 241) writes that it is advantageous for the analyst to have a background in linguistics, but not necessary. While I have not studied linguistics *per se*, I have studied many languages and have an interest in etymology and grammar, which might increase the quality of my analysis.

#### **4.8 Limitations**

Even though I am satisfied with my interviews and the data I could construct from them, there are some things that could have been done differently to improve the outcome. The first one was the way I constructed my interview questions – in the thesis process, the interviews happened too soon, I had not had enough time to prepare. With more preparation in terms of reading, deliberating, and practicing, I believe I could have gotten even more from the interviews. The second limitation was the choice, or rather non-choice, of my interviewees. Since I was unsure of exactly how the municipal waste management and the decision-making were structured, I emailed the municipalities with a request to interview someone with an insight into the municipality's waste policy, and they proposed someone. In hindsight, I can say that I am pleased with all my interviews, but I believe it would have been even more fruitful to interview politicians, decision-makers for bigger decisions, and board members.

For my analysis, it would have been ideal to have had two analysts, thus increasing the quality of the research. However, given that this is a master's thesis, that would not have been possible.

## **5 Outline**

After this, I will present my results, analysis and discussion of these in the form of the CDA steps. The reason for this is that these parts of the thesis are all interwoven under each step, and there is no clear distinction between them.

## **6 What is the problem? [Step 1]**

The problem, from which this thesis begins, is *the linearity of the system*. With this, I mean what has already been stated in the introduction – that new materials are extracted and end up in landfills or become incinerated, once their utility life is over, thus creating a continued demand for new materials. This system is unsustainable in the long run (Hultman & Corvellec, 2012). I will, however not look at the linear system *per se*, but rather the related factors between neoliberalization and waste incineration. In the end, I aim at showing how these affect one another and which potential effects this might have.

## **7 Obstacles to overcoming the problem [Step 2]**

### **7.1 Network of practices [Step 2A]**

**The network of practices**, within which waste incineration and the language used are located, ranges over many scales and levels. On a governance scale, they include the municipalities and the municipal system, which are the owners, the regions, the state, the EU, and the global system as a whole. These intricate networks work to influence, facilitate, hinder, dictate, regulate, structure, punish, incentivize, and encourage different practices, choices, language uses, and solutions, both on the global and the local level.

Neoliberalization has changed many of these settings. For example, there has been a trend in recent decades in Sweden to *corporatize* previously publicly managed operations (Jonvallen, Berg & Barry, 2011). Some (such as the formerly state-owned pharmacies) have been sold to private businesses, some (such as health and elder care) have been allowed competition between privately owned and publicly managed, and some (such as waste, water, and sewage etc.) have been made into publicly owned companies (Burström, 2015). Some of my respondents talk about this trend as inevitable and that this market-oriented management style is better than the public one – the idea that the market solves problems better than public policy is present here – the market has been naturalized. Further, this management shift has made it possible for the municipalities to demand profit from their companies. One municipality writes on their webpage that having a (waste incineration) company makes business transactions easier (Ljungby kommun, 2014-04-11). The naturalization of the market has made it logical to look at waste management as business transactions. One respondent talked about how the Norwegian system had failed:

*"It's like with every other market. But of course, if you have a ton [of waste], where you know that this can fuel a boiler, and then you put the price you need to run it. But then you've compromised the market."* (R5)

As a sign of the presence of neoliberalization, Peck and Tickell (2012) identify increased interlocal competition, i.e. competition over resources, capital or any other valued aspect on or around the market between different local, public operations and instances. This trend, which, it seems, has become part of the networks of practices around Swedish waste management, is evident in the way the respondents speak about their counterparts in other municipalities, the relations between them, and the climate on the market:

*"There are more and more [companies] that burn [waste] and then there will be a war over the garbage, I almost said, but you will at least get another value on the garbage."* (R6)

*"Since the waste came in here [the district heating system and electricity production], we have been able to expand and become much more competitive"* (R3)

Since the system is structured the way it is – see *Waste incineration in Sweden* (section 2.3) – with constant auctions and procurements from other municipalities, it comes as no surprise that there seems to be a spirit of rivalry between the municipal companies. Respondents talk about winning and losing contracts *to and from other municipalities*, other municipalities *take contracts*.

Respondents further speak of the procurement market as enabling an unstable operation – losing a contract might cause the need to import waste to fill boilers, and if that is not possible, you might have to accept a lower efficiency rate, which might be at odds with the profit-demand from the owner municipality. This constant state of uncertainty is another trait of neoliberalization – you are always subjected to the whims of the market and have to be flexible (French, Wainright, Leyshon, 2011). One respondent said:

*"That moves all the time, because the contracts expire, and it's not certain that we... A municipal procurement that you lose, it goes to someone else, and then you take someone else, so it moves back and forth all the time"* (R5).

Another important network, within which the Swedish waste incineration operates, is the European setting, which facilitates the flow of goods and people (EC, 2014). The larger waste incineration facilities in Sweden import waste from European countries, mainly Norway and the UK. This has proven to be an important part in the reasoning for my respondents. They talk about that waste incineration in Sweden as responsible for lowering emissions from landfills<sup>3</sup> in Europe, that Sweden *provides* this service. One respondent said: "Instead of [British] waste lying in a landfill and leaking methane gas, it comes to us and to others that can recycle for energy" (R10); another said: "It is an important part of the European community<sup>4</sup>, where a lot is put in landfills, so the Swedish waste incineration facilities are an important part in decreasing the waste mountain in Europe" (R1).

Respondents – mainly from the municipal side – often spoke of *the consumerist society*, with a resigned tone, saying that consumption is the problem. One respondent said: "We have a consumerist society, so we have to put the things we don't want anymore somewhere" and then continued "Then they talk about that you have to have consumption, otherwise society will die" (R9). This part in the network of practices is a large one, with diffuse and difficult-to-change origins and reasons, which might explain the general pessimism found among my respondents.

Other practices that influence and play important roles for the waste system in Sweden include local politics, local waste management plans, Swedish waste and environmental law, the Swedish waste organization (for actors in the waste sector) Avfall Sverige, European law, etc. These are all involved in hindering and/or facilitating the practices of the municipalities and their waste incineration companies, though due to spatial and focal concerns, they are left out of this thesis.

## 7.2 Relationship between language use and other elements [Step 2B]

Fairclough (2001:A, p. 237) explains **the relationship between language use (or semiotics) and other elements** as the ways in which language is used within the practice itself. One example is how newspapers can sometimes use racist or sexist language to get more readers (Fairclough A, 2001, p. 237). When reading through and analyzing my transcripts, certain patterns of language types emerged. Many of my respondents – mainly those who worked on the waste incineration facilities – used a very technical language. Speaking like this to me seemed to convey an aura of seriousness and complexity. The language was also not only technical, but was oriented towards a market

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<sup>3</sup> My respondents use the Swedish word *deponi*, which is much more neutral than the word landfill, as it connotes more of a depot than a garbage dump, a storage place, something that is clean and far removed from the dirty business that is waste.

<sup>4</sup> Community is here translated from the Swedish word *gemenskap* (which is close to the German word *gemeinschaft*) and signifies a deeper connection than the English word *community*.

perspective, as will be shown later. Using this type of technical and/or market language can further strengthen both the perception of the owners, the industry, and the public, that waste incineration is a serious business, something we want, something that is associated with a modern and technological society, and that the market is a natural part of waste management.

In between this technical market language, arguments, reasonings, and narratives of environment popped up. This seemed to be targeted more at me, as the interviewer, potentially because the respondents interpreted my interest as being centered around that waste incineration plants are directly damaging to the environment.

### **7.3 Discourse [Step 2C]**

#### **7.3.1 Text**

In this part of the analysis, I have looked at the **texts as wholes**, what each is **representing, relating to, and valuing**.

As has been hinted before, waste is generally **represented** as a resource. This might come naturally from burning it – everything else that you burn and use – for example oil, coal, wood, etc. – are seen as resources. Sometimes ‘waste as a resource’ is used without thinking – this particular representation has become so naturalized that it does not strike the user as strange or triggers extra thought. Other times, ‘waste as a resource’ is used consciously, for various reasons. One respondent said: “There is no waste. There are only resources” (R8). It follows logically that resources are *used* – according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary the very definition of a resource is something that is useful (‘Resource’ - Merriam-Webster, n.d.). I will elaborate on ‘waste as a resource’ further down.

Waste incineration is often represented as *energy extraction* or *energy recycling*, leading away from thinking about this practice as burning trash, and rather activates a sense of usefulness and purpose. *Extraction* also leads us back to the thoughts and practices associated with resources. One of my respondents even, jokingly, told me to call it *energy recycling* instead of waste incineration.

The market is represented as something natural, through adopting a market-oriented language and for example, through the use of the word *resources*. Resources are a natural part of a market – buying and selling resources sounds better than buying and selling trash. There was also no questioning or critique of that the waste system has become more and more marketized – this seemed to be the natural order of things.

**In terms of relating** – according to the waste hierarchy, waste incineration comes in fourth place. Since there is a ban in Sweden on landfilling non-hazardous and organic waste, this actually means that waste incineration is the least favored option for Sweden – since the otherwise least favored option is outlawed. When my respondents spoke of the waste hierarchy, they were quick to say that they employ it in their decisions, and that it is very important. While not dwelling too long on the fact that their operation came in last place, they swiftly moved on to highlighting that incineration is better than landfilling. Conceptually, and on a European or global scale, this makes sense and is a legitimate answer. In a Swedish context, this is redundant. After having pointed out that incineration trumps landfilling, respondents go on to compare the European and the Swedish waste management, stating that the Swedish one might indeed be the best in the world. This chain (see figure 7.1) of argumentation has proven to be quite common when reasoning about waste incineration.

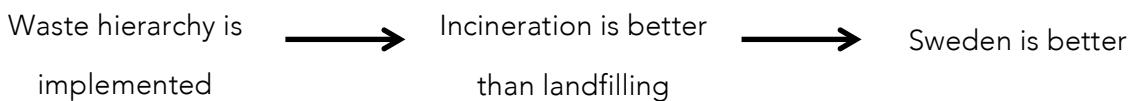


Figure 7.1. A common argumentation chain.

Waste incineration is put in relation to landfilling – an outlawed practice – and this is aimed at increasing the listener's/reader's/receiver's view of incineration as something positive. That Swedish waste management is better than everyone else's serves a twofold purpose – it invokes a sense of competition again; it also indicates that we do not have to change anything, since we are already better. This is also an example of a contradiction and of interlocal competition – there seems to be a sense of both comparing and competing with other countries, while the waste incinerating companies term themselves as *saviors* or *helpers* from a European perspective.

When asked if there could be an even better system for dealing with waste, than there is today, respondents mentioned some improvements. Many of them were just details of the system. No one said that waste incineration was bad or unwanted; that the market is not the ideal system to deal with waste; or that the company form was not the best arrangement for municipal waste management. Even though Peck and Tickell (2012) say that the process of neoliberalization has gone beyond the notion of TINA – the acronym for the famous saying of Margaret Thatcher: There Is No Alternative – there seems to be something along those lines still present here. Any alternative has become – or rather remains – if not unsayable and unthinkable, then at least improbable. One respondent said: "What's the alternative? Put it in a pile... These old landfills, they're no alternative."

Then it's recycling for materials, and that's tricky to get to function in a big system" (R4). This type of relating is almost the opposite – the absence of relating. Where the respondents could have suggested or reasoned around a whole new, innovative, or alternative system, they did not.

When it comes to **valuing**, much has already been said – how waste incineration is valued over landfilling, how the Swedish way is valued over other ways. Those of my respondents who were more critical towards waste incineration (or consumerist society in general) still said that waste incineration is good and serves an important purpose. One respondent said that the public thinks waste incineration is good too, and that they especially think it is good<sup>5</sup> that 'their' waste is burned and used in 'their' incinerator. This again activates a sense of competition.

### **7.3.2 Interdiscursivity**

Interdiscursive analysis in CDA is the identification of **different genres and discourses** and how they act together. As I have noticed many contradictions both within and between my respondents' answers and reasonings, I have also decided to include Talja's (1999) understanding of **interpretative conflicts** – sometimes referred to as discursive struggles – which are contradictions, inconsistencies and paradoxes, which can indicate that there are more than one discourse at play and that they are conflicting (Talja, 1999).

First, going into which **discourses** are at play this early on in the analysis, I believe, is to be too hasty, even though it is the order suggested by Fairclough (2001:A, p. 237). Thus, I present the discourses I have identified under *Emerging discourses* (section 7.4).

In terms of **genres**, the most common is interview for academic purposes, which cannot be left out of the analysis. This is the foundation of the text I am working with and has had an impact on which answers and reasonings my respondents have given. Another genre that sometimes took form was that of a casual conversation or chat – I interpret this as a positive sign that we strayed away from the stricter genre of the interview and that the talk thus became more naturally flowing, and less planned and rehearsed. Other genres that figured were lecture-styled answers (the respondent assumed a 'lecturing' rhetoric, where they 'told' me about 'facts' and the 'state of things'); and political argumentation (some had a very political – meaning evasive and multi-faceted – way of answering and talking).

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<sup>5</sup> It can be noted here that there are two different words for *good* in Swedish – one is *god* and signifies either taste of food or something that is morally good; the second one is *bra* and is used for describing what is good without meaning it in a moral sense. It is the second one that is used by my respondents.

I have further identified four **discursive or interpretative conflicts**. The **first** one is between having a profit interest – incinerating as much waste as possible within one's capacity – and being responsible for the implementation of the waste hierarchy, i.e. striving towards recycling, reuse and prevention. This contradiction has its origin in the municipalities building lucrative waste incineration plants with profit demand and still having the legal responsibility to promote more circular practices. This contradiction was the only one that was identified by asking a direct question (see Appendix 14.1 and 14.2). Some of my respondents said that there is a potential conflict; some said that it is even possible to see sometimes (without specifying how), but most answered the question with a blank “no”. This quote is an example of someone who could see the potential conflict:

*“It’s self-evident, that if you look at, yes, the municipality can make money on this operation, but it’s good to make [environmental] demands at the same time, but if I make demands here, the amount of waste that they can use over there will decrease, and then it’s a problem” (R11)*

One respondent said: “No, there is absolutely no conflict between energy extraction from waste and collection of producer’s responsibility material [packages of paper and plastic, magazines, etc.]” (R5), while another respondent stated: “But on the other hand, if people get better at sorting out packages, the energy content will drop” (R3). Further, there seems to be a disconnection between applying the waste hierarchy in a Swedish context and a European context. Many respondents reason that if we become better at sorting and recycling our waste in Sweden, there are still enormous waste flows in the rest of Europe. No one seems to be able to think that if we manage to develop our recycling system into functioning on a large scale, we could also import waste to recycle it for material. This contradiction could be interpreted as a linguistic manifestation of the actual conflict – employees have to make sense of their double mission.

The **second** contradiction is also related to the Sweden-Europe nexus. As is evident at this point, many respondents bring in the European argument. However, there is also a thread of being concerned with transports, but only regarding *domestic* transportation of waste (for example when talking about organic waste or increased recycling for material), and not regarding transports from Norway or the UK. This inconsistency might stem from both the “general” environmental perspective that transports are bad (Baeten, 2000), and in the fact that these waste incineration plants have a long utility life (respondents have stated 20 to 50 years for the different facilities), but that Swedish waste policy is officially targeting increased circularity (NVV, 2012).

The **third** paradox was one in which the respondents struggled with deciding if waste incineration was beneficial or detrimental to the environment. Many of my more critical respondents said that waste incineration is a necessary evil and that it should decrease to eventually cease. Next, they could say that waste incineration was good and that it served an important purpose. This general ambivalence possibly derives from the double-edged sword that is the waste hierarchy – when comparing downwards, to landfilling, waste incineration is very beneficial for the environment; when comparing upwards, to recycling, incineration is detrimental.

The **fourth** and final conflict is one where respondents talk about waste incineration as a move away from fossil fuel dependence and as a way of becoming fossil free. At the same time, respondents state that much of what is imported is plastic waste, that plastic is combustible, that energy content drops when more plastic is sorted out, and that they have to pay for emission rights for the amount of plastic that they burn. The idea of what is combustible – or burnable as the literal translation from Swedish is – seems to be very flexible and to have a changing meaning (this will be elaborated on further down).

### **7.3.3 Linguistic analysis**

In this section, I will go deeper into the purely linguistic traits of the texts. I will start by presenting the *whole-text language organization*, i.e. the structure of the text – is it a narrative, is it argumentative, etc.? This is in a way related to genre, but goes more into the linguistics. Next comes *clauses* or *sentences*, which refer to the grammar used – mood, modality, voice, etc. are included and scrutinized. Semiotics is not just spoken or written language, but can also include other forms of communication, such as images, body language, or sounds (Fairclough A, 2001, p. 239). This is where I will make a few brief remarks about non-spoken semiotics. Last is *words*, where I look at the choice of words, use of metaphors, etc.

#### ***Whole-text language organization***

Here it is important to keep in mind that the way the data was constructed was through semi-structured interviews, i.e. I held most of the control of what was going on and which questions that were asked and answered. Even so, the structure of the texts differed somewhat between my respondents, but it was common for example that they interpreted my questions as accusations, and therefore took an argumentative and defensive stance.

There is further a general positivity towards waste incineration, and arguments for why it is good were often laid out (see common argumentation chains in figure 7.2). Some respondents

presented a quite pragmatic or pessimistic narrative, in which people, and society in general, were spoken of as egotistical and short term-minded.

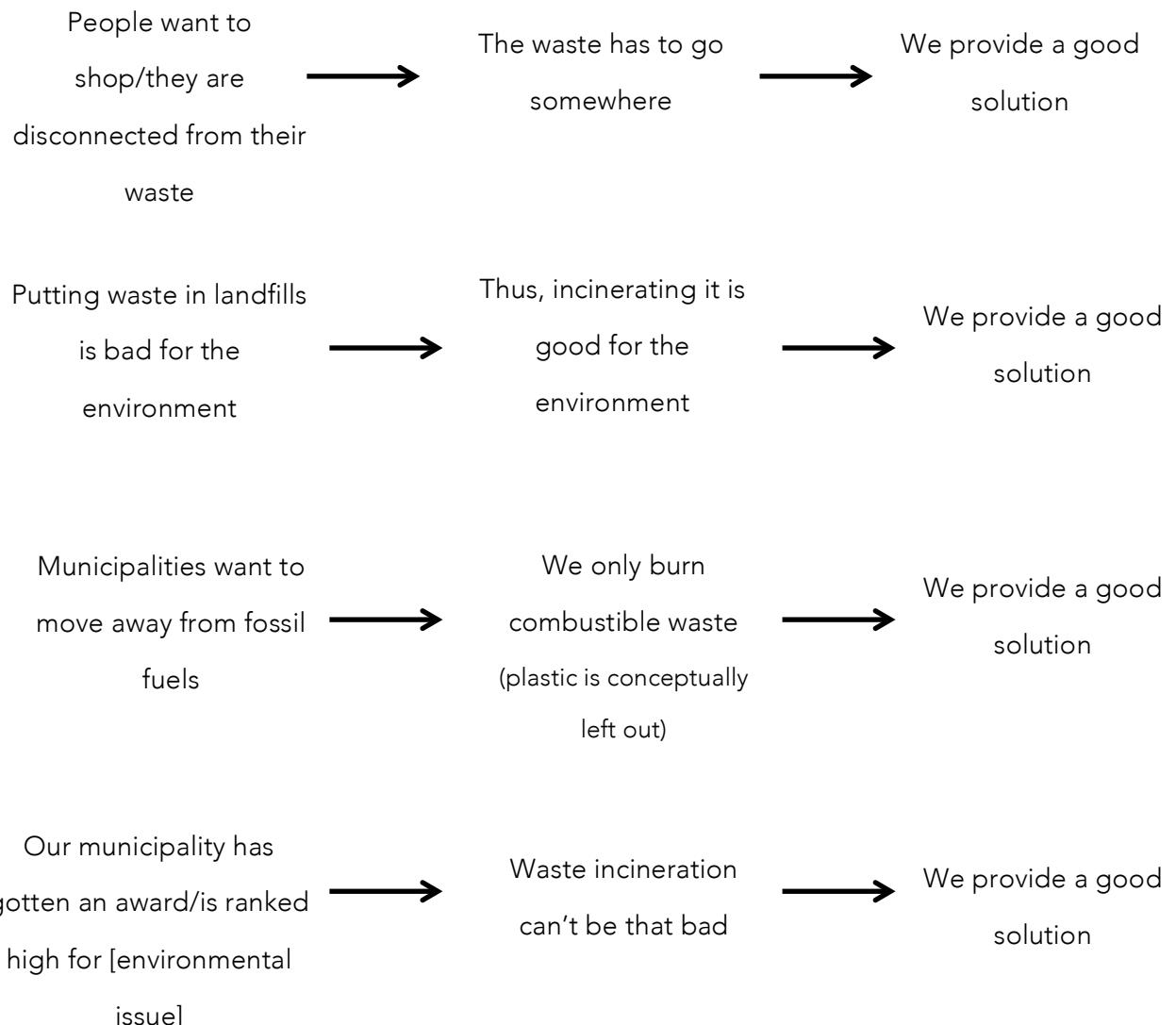


Figure 7.2. Common argumentation chains.

### Clauses

The (grammatical) mood was, as has been mentioned, usually argumentative or declarative. Respondents talked in a way that they knew what they were talking about and believed in what they said. When I asked if the municipality had a profit demand on the incineration companies, many

answered in a quiet voice, sometimes hesitantly, and often gave very short answers. When I asked about the potential conflict between profit and moving away from incineration, some laughed or smiled, as if they had themselves thought the same.

(Epistemic) modality refers to the level of commitment to or confidence about truth, necessity, probability or possibility (Kheovichai, 2014) – modulating a sentence can be, for example, adding words such as *usually*, *often* and *sometimes* to indicate that you do not mean that something *is* in a certain way all the time – you lower the level of commitment to truth.

There were two different trends of modality – one was identified in that the respondents from the incineration facilities displayed higher commitment to truth and used fewer modulations; the second one was that when talking about certain topics, respondents tended to modulate their sentences more or less than at other times. That respondents from the incineration facilities expressed higher commitment to truth and necessity, can have different reasons behind it – education, work environment, age, gender. The topics, about which respondents spoke with lower level of truth claim commitment, were for example when talking about the future or municipal waste plans – using words such as “want to” and “should” connotes something noble at first, but when analyzed for modality, it expresses something less certain and not binding. Some respondents repeated parts of sentences to strengthen their commitment to what they were saying, often when speaking about waste incineration in positive terms, for example: “I think it’s really good that we have an energy facility that burns waste in [municipality], I do think that. It’s really good” (R6).

Related in a way to modality is the quite common Swedish sentence adverbial *ju*. There is no direct translation for it to English, but it is sometimes used to strengthen one’s argument and sometimes because the speaker assumes that the person they speak to, already knows what you are stating or agreeing with what you are arguing for. In my translations I will use *as you know* to signify when *ju* has been used, even though it might lose the original touch. Here are a few examples of when the respondents used *ju*:

“*You can’t, as you know, recycle everything forever, there will always be, as you know, a flow that always falls away.*” (R6)

“*It is, as you know, climate smart to import waste.*” (R7)

“*And we’re not, as you know, interested in becoming one [with water and sewage], that’s, as you know, a zero-sum game. They can’t, as you know, make a profit, as you know.*” (R3)

When translating this word into English, it sounds strange. In Swedish, this word is small, many times not consciously used, but still quite powerful. It indicates to me, as the listener/reader/receiver, that I should know and should be reasonable enough to agree. I want to make one disclaimer to my argument, however – it is quite a common word, and may not necessarily have a deeper meaning than being a filler word.

The voice of my respondents was in general more passive than active, though some of the respondents from the waste facilities more often spoke in terms of “I” or “we”. A passive voice can be a conscious or unconscious attempt to hide agency or responsibility, a manifestation of a complex system where it is difficult to attribute agency or responsibility (Kazemian & Hashemi, 2014).

### **Words**

By using certain words, we demarcate and denote from other words, we imply a certain meaning or view that is associated with the word. Regarding waste, there are many word choices that are interesting and that should be the subject of analysis. The Swedish word for combustible is one example. This is a word that is used by everyone – from policy makers, to waste collectors, to students. The Swedish equivalent is *brännbart*, which means burnable, i.e. it signifies that it is something that you can burn. Technically, everything burns at a certain temperature (though some things vaporize). This makes it a nonsensical and redundant term – if everything is burnable, then why try to demarcate this type of waste from others? The word *brännbart* can signify that you, as a household, can throw everything in the burnable bin. When respondents use *brännbart*, they often refer to the fact that they do not want anything in their incinerators that is not part of the *brännbart* section and that they want to reduce the amount of *brännbart* in general. Even though the Waste Decree stipulates that households should sort out plastic packaging (Avfallsförordningen, 2011), this is indeed burnable. Using this word can have a confusing effect, at the same time that it reassures sorters in households that putting a plastic package in the burnable bin is ‘quite alright’.

The next word is actually more than one – it is the many, already touched upon, euphemisms for burning trash. The one I use most frequently in this thesis is waste incineration – it is indeed a euphemism, because it sounds more ‘clean’ than burning trash. ‘Burning trash’ draws the thoughts to an unfiltered, dirty, possibly illegal, operation. As mentioned earlier, one respondent told me to stop saying waste incineration and start using energy recycling<sup>6</sup>. Another common term is energy extraction. These words serve the purpose of hiding the unclean parts of waste incineration, as well

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<sup>6</sup> An interesting side note of the word recycling is that the Swedish word for it – *återvinning* – literally means *rewinning*. *Återvinning* is a configuration of the word *utvinning*, which means extraction.

as drawing attention to the positivity of it – they do not only burn waste, but rather extract and recover energy.

Resource is also a word that has many connotations. Considering waste a resource enables a thinking around it as something that has to be used. According to Corvellec et al. (2013) terming waste as a resource implies that it should be used as efficiently as possible, and that it can steer away thoughts from reducing waste. Terming waste a resource further hides the detrimental impact of the production of what the waste was before it became waste – a resource has a positive connotation. Also, since natural – for the lack of a non-economic word – resources, e.g. wood, land, crops, water, are all *natural*, i.e. they appear outside of humanity's control, waste resources can also become naturalized, as something that just exists, away from our control. This economic way of thinking is evident in more than one case – respondents talk about being competitive, being 'right' on the market, selling a treatment service, dealing with resources, etc.

Another common type of wording is putting the term *environment* or *environmental* together with an economic term. Respondents have for example used *environmental profit*, *climate utility* and *environmental utility*. Here follow some examples of what respondents have said:

*"But naturally, since it got better and better, well, they saw the economy [of it] and naturally, environmental profit, very big environmental profits."* (R6)

*"What does the environment earn most from?"* (R6)

*"The environmental utility with waste incineration, from a EU perspective is, as you know, very big"* (R5)

*"That you can recycle is one thing, but can you recycle with environmental profit?"* (R3)

This economic language seems to have penetrated the way of thinking about the environment, with the cause potentially being a logic of the market that has reached other domains than the market, and the potential effect that it commodifies and monetizes the environment.

#### **7.4 Emerging discourses**

In my analysis, three relatively distinct strands of discourse have emerged. I call these three *anti-consumerist environmentalism*, *pragmatic environmentalism* and *economic environmentalism*. These take different stances on waste incineration, linearity, and profit.

The anti-consumerist environmentalism discourse emerged when respondents talked about the waste management system in Sweden in general. This activated a more idealist way of thinking in them – consumerism was to be blamed for waste incineration, environmental problems, and societal problems in general. Voices became sterner and words harsher. In anti-consumerist environmentalism, waste incineration is not necessarily seen as bad, the focus is more laid on the cause, rather than the symptoms – or the treatment of the symptoms. While respondents never mentioned the market, capitalism, neoliberalization or anything related to these, this strand of discourse inexplicably includes a critique of a deregulated, profit-driven, linear system. Example quotes showing this discourse are:

*"They talk about that you havet o have consumption, otherwise society will die"* (R9).

*"Waste is linked to the consumerist society that we have..."* (R9)

*"We consume so damn much, and it's like that, GDP... society benefits<sup>7</sup> from that we consume."* (R4)

Pragmatic environmentalism takes a step back – this is a resigned and more practical way of looking at waste incineration. Resignation and pessimism were common. Carriers of this discourse accepted the fact that there was waste – though less or no waste was of course the utopia – and that the waste had to be dealt with in one way or another. Waste incineration seemed then to be the best option, because recycling rates were not high enough – some respondents were more resigned than others and called it a necessary evil; some said that under the current circumstances, waste incineration is good. This way of thinking and speaking does neither critique nor embrace the market or neoliberalization – waste incineration is the focus as the temporary hero; if this is controlled or not by the market is unimportant. However, even if this discourse is based on the idea that waste incineration is good for the environment, this uncritical pro-waste incineration stance might, in the end, lead to worsened environmental conditions. Example quotes for this discourse include:

*"[Waste incineration is] an unwanted need."* (R8)

*"From a life cycle perspective, it's better to burn foreign waste in Sweden's waste incineration facilities than to put it in landfills on site, even though it's not the development you want."* (R8)

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<sup>7</sup> The Swedish expression used here is actually *mår bra*, which is what you say about someone who is healthy, but which can also be used metaphorically.

*"Relatively short into the future, there will be a problem with recycling all the plastic and all the metal and all the packages and all the paper up to a complete reuse and recycle level. And then it's better to make energy of it, than landfill it, which is to go down in the hierarchy again." (R11)*

The last strand of discourse – economic environmentalism – carries a greater stamp of the market than the other two. It was identified through: (1) that the language had been affected by an economic way of thinking; and (2) the market had become naturalized or was promoted as the optimal way. The stance towards waste incineration was that it is great and provides great environmental benefits, and makes it possible for municipalities to take care of their waste and make extra profit. This discourse can be tied to ecological modernization theory, for example, according to which technology and the market can solve most environmental problems (Jänicke, 2008; Buttel, 2000). Examples of this discourse are:

*"I consider partly the economic and partly the utility with the decision. And that can be both societal utility and climate utility and organizational utility." (R7)*

*"I think it's good that we have an energy facility that burn waste in [municipality]. [...] We have gained a lot of environment from that." (R6)*

It was not uncommon to be a carrier of two of these three discourses – they were either competing or helped the carrier to make sense of a complex problem. That two were present at the same time in the speech acts of my respondents does not, however, have to be interpreted as different discourses, but could also be seen as discourses in themselves. I chose to interpret it this way, because that is what emerged first, even during the interviews. Pragmatic environmentalism and economic environmentalism were the most common ones.

## **7.5 Concluding the obstacles**

In the previous section I have analyzed the network of practices, the relationship between semiotics and other elements within these practices, and the discourses, and their parts, themselves. All these help in creating the context, in which, and the necessities, by which, the problem – understood as linearity through neoliberalization and waste incineration – remains unsolved.

Some of these practices and language uses that I have identified indicate a neoliberal influence on – a logic of the market seeping into – local waste management in Sweden. Other practices are not necessarily or directly related to neoliberalization, but instead keep the system running – or locked in. So to summarize this section – the problem persists because the process of neoliberalization has entered Swedish waste management, which is indicated through, for example, corporatization, increased interlocal competition, the market becoming naturalized, and language use being skewed towards economic and market-related terms. Other factors that keep the problem from being solved – but are not directly related to neoliberalization or the market – are promoting waste incineration as environmentally friendly and as doing society – and the environment – a favor; using euphemisms, a ‘hiding’ or confusing language; using a serious type of language; etc. The three discourses that these can be divided into are anti-consumerist; pragmatic; and economic environmentalism – the latter two have the ability to reinforce and reproduce the structure that creates the problem.

## **8 Does anyone need the problem? [Step 3]**

This is the third step in the CDA approach, where I will briefly go into if someone needs the problem, even though much has already been said inexplicitly.

Through relying on short-termism and flexibility regarding markets and contracts, neoliberalism inexplicitly promotes contractors to exploit as much as possible before the contract expires, i.e. to maximize while possible (Harvey, 2005, p. 174). This way, neoliberalism becomes part of the rationalizing of a linear system. Through its preferment of deregulation and privatization, any attempt at stopping this system and setting up, for example, global environmental agreements becomes difficult (Harvey, 2005, p. 175). The linear system favors neoliberalization in return, because it creates the most optimal structure, within which it functions. In this sense, they reinforce and need each other.

Since the entire economy is structured in a linear and increasingly neoliberal way, most components need the problem to be unsolved – the companies that extract the 55 billion tons of new materials each year (OECD, 2008, p. 240) need this problem to persist; the people employed by these companies need their jobs; the economies within which these companies operate need the taxes and job opportunities they create. This does not mean, however, that it is impossible to solve the problem (see section 10).

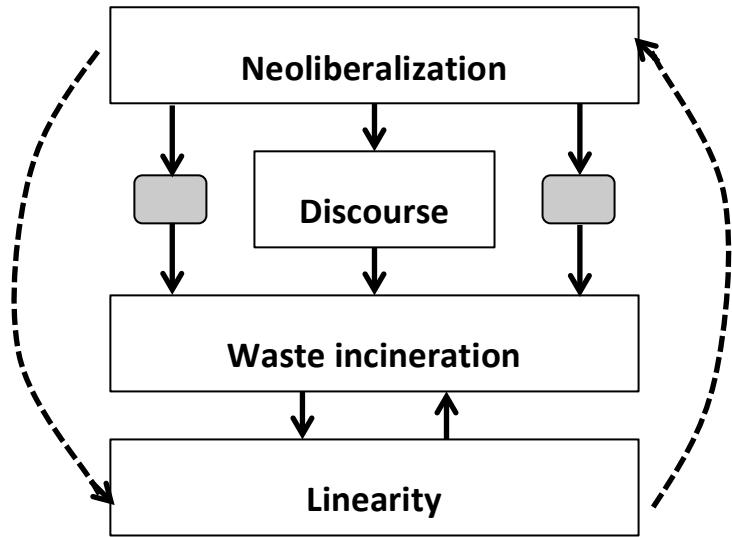
In a way, the linear system further favors the present generation, while doing damage to future generations. Restructuring the economy and society towards more circular practices might – though not necessarily – be uncomfortable for people living now and take time, energy, and money, which is why the current generation can be seen to ‘need’ the linearity.

## **9 Connecting neoliberalism, discourse, waste incineration, and linearity**

Neoliberalization is understood by Peck and Tickell (2012) as a deregulatory project on a global scale for all policy spheres. This could however be questioned for a Swedish context. While many policy areas have seen a deregulation and/or marketization trend, this does not necessarily hold true for, for example, environmental regulations. The Swedish version of neoliberalization has been described as “circumscribed” by Harvey (2005, p. 115), meaning that even though Sweden has experienced far-reaching policy restructuring, levels of poverty and social inequality are far from those in other parts of the world. Even so, the neoliberal enterprise is visible in many parts of the Swedish context, not to mention the waste sector. Increased demands for competitiveness and flexibility, marketization, market logic as the guiding decision-making principle, economic language having made its way into non-market areas, are a few examples of how neoliberalization has changed waste management, as indicated by my analysis.

Neoliberalization acts through many means, one of them is discourse. By studying discourse, we both acquire insight into what is happening, and we can analyze the effects of it. The starting point of discourse theory is that language shapes reality and dictates what is true and thinkable. By starting from a neoliberalization theory point of view, I have been able to show that neoliberalization has found its way into the different discourses and language uses around waste. Monetizing, commodifying, and marketizing waste management are all thus naturalized through the adoption of the appropriate discursive practices. That waste is profitable becomes true, and a society without waste becomes unthinkable, unrealistic, and even idealistic.

As shown in figure 9.1, neoliberalization can be seen to work through co-creating the optimal structure for linearity and through discourse to fuel the need for waste incineration, thus keeping the linear system alive. This means that waste incineration has become one of the many cogs in the neoliberal machine. In its contextualized and localized form, waste incineration keeps this machine running through providing an “environmentally beneficial” alternative to landfilling.



*Figure 9.1. This figure shows that neoliberalization can be understood to affect waste incineration through discourse, among other channels, thus reproducing a linear system. The linear system acts, by legitimization from an environmental perspective that waste incineration trumps landfilling, back on waste incineration, fuelling the need for it. Neoliberalization partly works as the creator of the optimal structure for linearity, while the linear system thus favors neoliberalism.*

## 10 Ways past the problem [Step 4]

The fourth step in a CDA is to identify possible ways past the problem and the obstacles. I have identified the core of the problem as the linearity of the system – it is in essence what makes it unsustainable. Waste incineration has been identified as both an effect of and a reproducer of the linearity, working through neoliberalization and specifically neoliberal discourse. I will focus on solutions to the causes and effects of the problem identified, as these were both intricately outlined throughout my thesis.

Corvellec et al. (2013) identifies waste incineration as a systemic lock-in, and from this perspective, a number of factors can prove to solve at least pieces of the puzzle – changes in legislation, either on a national or EU level; political changes (that give priority to ecology, rather than economy); the need for repairs or changes in existing technologies; new technologies, etc., are all examples of ways out of a lock-in. These hold true if you consider the wider linear system as a lock-in too.

Turning to my own analysis – on the level of waste incineration, a number of ways can be identified as potential, partial solutions. The network of practices, within which waste incineration is found, consists of corporatization; interlocal competition; and the European setting, to name a few. Solutions for these could be to *decorporatize*, i.e. restructure the system back to a public management operation; increase the cooperation between municipalities, instead of being competitors; and regulating the import and export of waste, thus (hopefully) incentivizing better waste management on site. The relationship between semiotics and other elements within the practices was identified as a technical and market oriented language, interpreted as to sound more complex and serious, thus conveying an aura of importance. Related to this are the findings from the linguistic analysis. Employees, politicians, journalists, etc. need to be careful with and vigilant about what kind of language they use, what they emphasize, and which words they choose. Calling waste a resource might actually defeat the purpose (if the purpose in the end is waste minimization). Recasting environmental issues in economic terms can have detrimental effects, for example in cases where something is environmentally beneficial, but not economically rational.

Peck and Tickell (2012) write that the neoliberal project is so global and diffuse in its essence, that only a large-scale attack could have an effect, and that even though local opposition to neoliberalism is important, it will not result in a systemic change. However, even though neoliberalization can be viewed as an agent-less machine, there are many examples of how individuals and groups have consciously facilitated the adoption of neoliberal thinking and policies. In the late 1960s' in Sweden, there was a proposition to increase the tax on corporate return and pay it back to laborers, thus shifting part of the ownership to the working class (Harvey, 2005, p. 112). As a response, the Swedish capital class started mobilizing, both in terms of people and capital, and had soon followed the American example, and launched a propaganda campaign, including demands on lowered taxes and downsized public spending on the welfare system (Harvey, 2005, p. 113). The banking elite in Sweden controlled the Nobel economic prize, and thus gave it to Friedrich Hayek in 1974 and to Milton Friedman in 1976 (Harvey, 2005, p. 22). These events were the beginning of the (circumscribed) neoliberalization in Sweden, and they were all started by one group. The point with this story is that neoliberalization does not only happen on a structural and discursive plane – at certain points in time, there are gaps where agency matters too. It is possible to turn the tide, to resist, and to choose new paths forward.

## **11 Critical reflection**

The fifth and final part in CDA is to critically reflect on my own work, and on its usefulness to other people and to society. Since everyone is part of practices and use semiotics, I am not free from preconceptions and interests, which I have already acknowledged under *Reflexivity* (section 4.6).

Even if this study is based on theoretical concepts, the findings can still have importance on a broader scale than the academic. It is important that the knowledge and insights gained from researching based on CDA are transmitted to the ones they concern and are aimed at proposing solutions for the problem identified. This thesis is written in an academic style and will not likely be published, not in an academic journal, nor in a non-academic medium. It is therefore important that I communicate my findings in some way. Besides forwarding the final thesis to my interview participants, one way of communicating it would be to simplify it and spread it over a wider forum – to politicians, policy-makers, environmental organizations, waste incineration companies, etc.

## 12 Conclusion

Starting from the linearity of the system as the underlying problem, which, in effect, creates an unsustainable society, this thesis investigates if and how neoliberalization has affected Swedish waste management, specifically waste incineration. Using Critical Discourse Analysis, I have looked at the network of practices, relationship between semiotics and other elements, and discourses, within which waste incineration is located. Through identifying practices, such as corporatization, marketization, and interlocal competition, and language uses, such as language skewed towards the market, even for environmental issues, I have been able to show that neoliberalism might indeed be present as an influencing factor in waste management and waste incineration in Sweden, thus reproducing the problem – the linearity of the system. While the conclusions made from discourse analysis must be seen as situated, both in terms of time, place, and the people involved in the research, my findings can still be tied to larger trends in policy restructuring related to the neoliberalization project. They are indeed relevant for Swedish waste policy makers, as they can highlight and suggest areas for meaningful change if Sweden truly wants to transition to a more circular system.

This thesis is not exhaustive. There are many other areas related to linearity, neoliberalization, discourse and waste management that could be interesting to look into. For example, it could be interesting to investigate channels other than discourse through which neoliberalization affects waste management (see figure 9.1), or how systemic lock-in (identified by Corvellec et al. (2013) as a major influencing factor for Swedish waste management) interacts with neoliberalization, or discourses around reuse and recycling, or a more thorough conceptualization of the underlying problem – the linearity of the system.

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## 14 Appendices

### 14.1 Interview questions for incineration facility employees

- Vad är din titel? / What is your title?
  - Vad innehållas i dina arbetsuppgifter? / What is included in your work tasks?
  - Hur länge har du arbetat här? / How long have you worked here?
  - Hur länge har anläggningen funnits? / How long has the plant been in use?
  - Vem äger anläggningen? / Who owns the facility?
- 
- Vilken typ av beslut är du med och fattar? (Om vad?) / Which kind of decisions do you make? (About what?)
  - Vad tar du med i beräkningen när du fattar ett beslut? (Vad tar du hänsyn till i beslutsfattningen?) (Kan du ge mig ett exempel?) / What do you consider when you make a decision? (Can you give me an example?)
- 
- Vad vet du om kommunens avfallsplan? / What do you know about the municipality's waste plan?
  - Vem är ansvarig för avfallsplanens utförande? / Who is responsible for the execution of the waste plan?
  - Vad vet du om kommunens miljömål? / What do you know about the municipality's environmental goals?
  - Hur vet du detta? (Är det något ni får information om?) / How do you know this? (Do you receive this information here?)
  - Är det något ni tar med i beräkningen eller i beslut? / Do you consider this when making a decision?
  - I vilken utsträckning kommunicerar du eller ni här med kommunen? / How much do you communicate with the municipality?
  - Om vad kommunicerar du eller ni med kommunen? / About what do you communicate with the municipality?
- 
- Hur mycket avfall tar ni emot per år? / How much waste do you receive per year?
  - Varifrån kommer det? / Where does it come from?
- Enbart om de importrar avfall från andra länder / Only if they import waste from other countries
- Kom avfallet enbart från Sverige i början? / Did the waste come from only Sweden in the beginning?
  - (Om inte) Jobbade du här när beslutet togs att importera avfall? / (If not) Did you work here when the decision to import waste was taken?
  - Minns du hur man tänkte då? / Do you remember the reasoning behind that decision?
  - Varför importerar ni avfall? / Why do you import waste?
- 
- Vad är det ni producerar här? Fjärrvärme eller annat? / What do you produce here? District heating or other?
  - Hur mycket produceras? / How much is produced?

- Hur mycket aska blir över? (I vikt eller procent?) / How much ash is left after incineration? (In kilos or percentage?)
- Vad görs med den askan? / What do you do with the ash?
  
- Vet du något om när anläggningen började planeras och byggdes? (Processen, vilka som var inblandade, varför den byggdes?) / Do you know anything about when the plant was planned and built? (The process, who was involved, why it was built?)
- Hur tror du att kommunen/företaget tänkte då? (Vilka var anledningarna?) / How do you think the municipality/company was thinking then? (Which were the reasons?)
  
- Får företaget gå med vinst? / Is the company allowed to make a profit?
- Har företaget gått med vinst de senaste åren? (Har det förändrats de senaste åren?) / Has the company made a profit the last few years? (Has that changed in the last few years?)
- — Vad händer med överskottet? / What happens to the surplus? —
  
- Hur tycker du att avfallssystemet fungerar nu? / What do you think about the Swedish waste system now?
- Hur tror du att avfallshanteringen kommer att se ut i framtiden? (Vad tror du om avfallsförbränning?) / What do you think waste management will look like in the future? (What do you think of the role of waste incineration?)
- Hur länge tror du att anläggningen kommer att finnas kvar? / How long do you think that the plant will be in use?

#### **14.2 Interview questions for municipality employees**

- Vilken är din titel? / What is your title?
- Vad ingår i dina arbetsuppgifter? / What is included in your work tasks?
- Hur länge har du arbetat på kommunen med det du gör nu? / How long have you worked at the municipality with what you are doing now?
  
- Tycker du att du har insyn i kommunens avfallsarbete? / Do you think you have an insight into the municipality's work with waste?
- Kan du berätta kort om kommunens avfallsplan? / Can you shortly tell me about the municipality's waste plan?
- Hur länge har den funnits? Hur länge sträcker den sig? / How long has it existed? Until when is it valid?
- Vem är ansvarig för framtagandet och utförandet av den? / Who is responsible for the development and execution of it?
- Ansar du att den är progressiv? / Do you think it's progressive?
- Varför?/Varför inte? / Why?/Why not?
- Hur arbetar ni med avfallstrappan? – återvinning, återanvändning och förebyggande / How do you work with the waste hierarchy? – recycling, reuse and prevention
  
- Hur ser kommunen på avfallsförbränning? / What does the municipality think of waste incineration?

- Vad tror du att kommunen tänkte på när beslutet fattades att en förbränningsanläggning skulle byggas? / What do you think the municipality was thinking when the incineration plant was built?
- Vet du hur ägarrelationen ser ut för X? / What does the owner relation look like?
- Går det bra, rent ekonomiskt, för avfallsförbränningens verksamheten? / Is the waste incineration profitable?
- Hur mycket vinstdriven är de? / How much profit do they make?
- Har ni något avkastningskrav på dem? / Does the municipality have a profit demand on them?
- (Om de importrar avfall) Vet du om det var planerat från början att importera avfall till anläggningen? / (If they import waste) Do you know if it was part of the plan from the beginning to import waste?
- Tror du att importen kommer att öka eller minska i framtiden? / Do you think that the import will increase or decrease in the future?
- Finns det någon miljömässigt relevant skillnad på svenska och importerat avfall? / Is there an environmentally relevant difference between Swedish and imported waste?
- Hur mycket påverkar politiska beslut/förändringar avfallsarbetet? / How much do political decisions or changes affect the municipality's work with waste?
- Ansvarar du att X kommun är progressiv när det gäller sitt miljöarbete? / Do you think that the municipality is progressive in its environmental work?
- Tror du att det finns några konflikter mellan att ha en vinstdrivande verksamhet och att sträva uppåt i avfallstrappan? / Do you think there are conflicts between having a profitable operation and to strive upwards in the waste hierarchy at the same time?
- Är det något som har diskuterats i kommunen? / Is it something being discussed in the municipality?
- Tror du att det finns bättre sätt att ta hand om avfallet som uppstår i Sverige/kommunen? / Do you think there is a better way of dealing with the waste that is generated in Sweden/the municipality?
- Hur tycker du att den svenska avfallshanteringens fungerar idag? / How do you think that the Swedish waste management works today, in general?
- Tror du att avfallsförbränning kommer att vara en viktig del av avfallshanteringen i framtiden? / Do you think waste incineration will be an important part of waste management in the future?