

The issue of illegal dumps is part of the mass littering of the Planet by humans, which, along with global warming, air pollution, and the destruction of the biosphere, is currently one of the hottest ecological problems of the contemporary world. Awareness of this problem is increasing, yet the problem is still unsolved. We need to go beyond what we already know from the literature, prevention manuals, and research outcomes and look at the complexity of the relationships in which the phenomenon of illegal dumps operates. We need accurate knowledge of the materiality, spatiality, and temporality of this problem and its relations to human behavior, beliefs, and conditions of life.

The study aims to provide knowledge about illegal dumping and formulate recommendations for counteracting and preventing this phenomenon. The research concerns a particular city – Lodz in Poland – assuming that focusing on limited space enables the collection of rich and contextualized field data on the studied phenomenon. However, researchers’ reflection goes beyond this particular context, aiming at a deeper understanding of more general social phenomena and generic processes related to *the constitution of space*, the persistence of *non-normative behavior*, and the *creation of social order and disorder*. We ask six research questions:

[Q1] On *RELATIONS*: *What is the relational context of the constitution of illegal dumps?*

[Q2] On *MATERIALITY*: *What is the material content of illegal dumps?*

[Q3] On *LOCATIONS*: *What are the geographical locations and spatial distribution of illegal dumps?*

[Q4] On *CHANGES OVER TIME*: *What is the temporal order of illegal dumping sites?*

[Q5] On *SPACE*: *What spatial, visual and experiential features of a spot afford for trashing or keeping it clean?* [Q6] And on *PEOPLE*: *How do inhabitants contribute to the phenomenon of illegal dumping?*

Operating in Lodz terrain, we employ several data-gathering methods. **TRACKING MEDIA CONTENT** – we gather articles, interviews, notes, and broadcasts related to illegal dumping in the local press, radio, television, and social media. Based on a map of illegal dumps created in cooperation with residents as a pilot study in 2021-2022 (<https://five.epicollect.net/project/dzkie-wysypiska/data>), we plan to perform regular **INSPECTIONS OF ILLEGAL DUMPS** to capture their changes over time. Addressing the materiality of waste, we will conduct the **MORPHOLOGY OF ILLEGAL DUMPS**, selecting 10 of them for content scrutiny. Using a drone equipped with AI-trained software, we will scan the city’s terrain to perform **AERIAL DETECTION OF ILLEGAL DUMPS**, and then, based on the gathered data, we will apply **GIS ANALYSIS** regarding the locations and other spatial features of problematic spots. We will create the **WALKING LABORATORY**, using walking as a research method that engages the whole body and senses and connects us directly to the territory. Doing so, we ask how strollers experience space. Collecting the memories, stories, images, impressions, and objects during the walks will help us understand how illegally dumped trash affects the inhabitants who use a given area. We plan to conduct walks appointing the “hot spots” – places recurrently wasted by illegally dumped trash – for closer inspection. Yet, juxtaposing them with places never reported as dumped to capture and indicate their particular features. We also plan 10 **INTERVIEWS WITH EXPERTS** and 30 **IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS** among various space users: a) residents who live in various types of buildings (blocks of flats, skyscrapers, tenement houses, single-family houses); b) private entrepreneurs, owners of small and medium-sized companies operating in Lodz, especially production, renovation, and construction, transport and service companies, grocery/alcohol stores. **SURVEY RESEARCH** on a representative sample of the Lodz population using the face-to-face questionnaire interview will inform us of the problems people have with unwanted objects and the readiness of Lodz inhabitants for the circular economy. **A QUERY OF COURT FILES** regarding judgments for illegal waste dumping is also planned, which will help understand the perpetrators’ incentives.

By analyzing collected data, we expect this study to unravel the processes of spatial order and disorder creation and provide a better understanding of the dynamics of the studied phenomenon.

This recognition will not only expand our knowledge on better detection and prevention of illegal dumping but also contribute to overcoming the impasse and making a positive change in this regard.