

Psychological Effects of Environmental Degradation in Slovenia

Peter Umek, Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor, Slovenia

Igor Areh, Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor, Slovenia

Vlado Odar, Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor, Slovenia

Jerneja Šifrer, Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor, Slovenia

Purpose of the research was to determine the extent of psychological impacts of environmental degradation on the population of environmentally degraded communities as well as to determine the extent of linkage between pollution on one side and corruption and crime on the other, all through subjective perceptions of people living in affected areas. After brief overview of most polluted areas in Slovenia was made, four areas struggling with different forms of environmental degradation were chosen to take part in research: Celje (pollution of air and soil), Gornja Radgona (noise pollution), Tenetiše (problems with communal waste centre) and Zasavje as most polluted area in Slovenia. Gathering, analysis and interpretation of various primary and secondary sources on pollution in those areas was followed by a postal survey conducted in several communities in selected areas.

Analysis of data gathered shows strong anxiety among respondents and lack of trust in institutions responsible for environmental sanitation. Pollution has the strongest impacts on respondents in Zasavje, followed by respondents of Celje, Gornja Radgona and Tenetiše. Most serious psychological traumas suffered in Zasavje are anxiety, annoyance and depression. Results also show that 37,5 % of all respondents believes there is corruption involved in pollution practices in their community and 47,3 % believe there is linkage between pollution and crime. Findings of the research supplement the broader picture of environmental problems in polluted areas and open possibilities for further research on fields of environmental protection in Slovenia. At the same time, results serving as *vox populi* of these environmentally degraded areas can be used in development of environmental sanitation plans and environmental policies in these areas.