

Waste management is an issue most people do not think about. Most people simply toss their household waste in the trash can and don't worry about what happens to it. But modern society would not last long without an effective system of waste management. Think of the hygiene problems for modern cities when the waste is not collected regularly. When sanitation workers go on strike, or garbage collection is otherwise interrupted, life in cities becomes unbearable. Stench is everywhere and flies, rats, and other pests multiply. It is therefore important for sociologists to study this hidden but crucial aspect of modern life, and help people see the ecological implications of the "throw-away society."

The purpose of this book is to investigate the recent problem of illegal waste shipment from Germany to the Czech Republic from a sociological perspective. In addition to putting the issue in context by analyzing the waste-related policy implications of European enlargement, and the continuing problem of environmental injustice between European Union member states, an important thesis of this book is that waste management is a legitimate topic for sociological study. While waste may not be the most popular topic of research for social scientists, unique insights into social relationships and the environment can be gleaned from the study of waste systems. As we will see, the way that a society handles its waste can be seen as yet one more indicator of the health of its social and environmental relationships, and ultimately, of its social, ecological, and economic sustainability.