

*Littered roads and pavements  
and their influence on citizens*

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## **Littered roads and pavements and their influence on citizens**

Roads and pavements are integral part of our cities, towns and villages. Without them everything would stop. As we can remind times when cities were working without electricity, gas heating or without running water. But there is no possibility of imaging the city without any roads or pavements. These always accompany our lives, creating good or bad memories. Since the early morning roads and pavements give us access to our work places, schools, hospitals and all places that we want or need to get to. Very first memory from each country visited is a state of roads and pavements and how well these are upkept creating at the same time the first impression of the city.

In Scotland the problem with littering is very big. The report “Scotland’s Litter Problem” published by Zero Waste Scotland in July 2013 says that at least 15.000 tons of litter a year is disposed of into our urban and rural environment which is subsequently cleared by local authorities (Zero Waste Scotland, 2013 p.4). This is around 41 tons of litter per day which equates to approximately to 250 million easily visible items per year and almost 700 000 litter pieces per day. At least 26.000 tons of waste is illegally fly-tipped in scale of a year and dealt with by local authorities (71 tons per day) with an estimated 61.000 incidents occurring per year (Ibid.). However this estimation excludes the vast majority of cases occurring on private land. We still need to remember that the total amount of litter and fly-tipping is higher than this. There is no data showing the amount of litter cleared from private lands. It is also the case that in some instances material can lie uncollected and uncounted for long periods of time. I would like to go further and ask a question what influence can have living in the city with a big litter issue. Does it affect us in a good way or a bad way?

In the article prepared by Kingdom Services Group we can find out that littering is a huge problem affecting us in many aspects. Littered environment is affecting many different aspects of our lives. Firstly, it affects residents where the litter issue is taking away people’s pride of living in their own city. Residents do not want to spend time there and area becomes uncared for, making the community spirit suffer in a result impacting people’s wellbeing as well as mental health. It means that people worry about other problems connected with the problem of littering, such as its impact on economy or crime and anti-social behaviour. As

much as 62% of English people are concerned about appearance of their area, with 57% pointing litter to be a problem in their area. This dirty problem is also influencing our health as increasing litter problem brings more rats to the area, which then creates a health hazard.

Studies are showing that living in green and clean areas is much better for our mental and physical health than living in the areas which are having litter problem. People who are living in such messy places are more likely to have mental health problems, including anxiety and depression. Additionally, people who live in a poor quality environment are less likely to be physically active which makes them more likely to be overweight and obese, bringing associated health risk including diabetes, heart attacks and strokes.

Littering not only impacts our lives but it also impacts the environment. It can be dangerous for domestic and wild animals. RSPCA receives more than 7000 calls per year because of animals which have been injured by litter. The problem is much bigger because we do not know how many wild animals have died and have not been found. A lot of rubbish is being taken down the streams to end up in the ocean and feeding and killing unconscious sea creatures. As a result of this, 1/3 of fish caught for human consumption in the English Channel contains microplastic, which will lead us to health issues.

To keep English streets, parks, roadways and public spaces clean the taxpayer has to spend almost 1 billion pounds and we still do not see any big changes. This 1 billion per year could be spent elsewhere if we would be clever enough to keep our 'nests' clean. A survey prepared by Keep Britain Tidy of local authorities and other land managers showed that 71% felt that money which are being spent to keep cities clean could be reinvested or even they would be able to reduce the council tax. Actually this amount of money could be used to fund 39 thousands of social care workers, 301 thousands of primary school places, over 4 thousand libraries, 33 thousands of nurses, 30 thousands paramedics, 32 thousands of firefighters or 1 billion of school dinners (Kingdom Services Group, n.d.).

The litter problem is also affecting local business and tourism. Areas with big amount of litter are less likely to be visited because cities, towns, villages, parks or forests which are full of rubbish are not pleasant places to be, which directly decreases the income from businesses and tourism. Nobody wants to go and spend their free time between piles of rubbish. If the area is seen as having a litter problem, people will not visit it and that means

that the area will not experience any growth. Littering has another negative impact on businesses. It has been proven that we are less likely to buy the product of the brand that we saw before as a piece of litter. It has been estimated that this could lead to a 2% drop in a company's turnover. An area that is littered and covered with graffiti can start leading to more crime and anti-social behaviour. When the area seems to be affected by litter, people will be more likely to drop the litter – with “everybody is doing it” as an excuse. If the whole area is covered by litter, who would care about one piece of rubbish? Studies show that this attitude leads to further anti-social behaviour like vandalizing phone boxes or bus stops, and then to trespassing and stealing money. A survey of land managers shows that 8 out of 10 felt that dealing with minor crimes like litter and graffiti would help reduce larger crimes and improve public safety.

The Brook Lyndhurst review identified a wide variety of potential causes of littering behaviour. For an individual factor we can include: people's perception of spaces (if it is seen as “clean” and “cared for” littering is less likely, which can be supported by Zimbardo's field study thesis); some people being more likely to litter because they wrongly do not see some things as litter, for example an apple core or banana peel; and some people littering because of laziness and the inconvenience of using an available bin or taking it home. Social factors are influenced both by what people see (the state of the location they are in, and the behaviour of others) and what people believe is expected of them. The most obvious factor is material factor, so whether there are some bins provided. Adequate provision of well serviced facilities can certainly reduce the incidences of littering. However, even in well provisioned areas the problem of littering occurs, so they should not be considered as only one solution to tackle the problem.

According to a field study ran by a psychologist, Philip Zimbardo, in 1969 when he left two cars in two different places in the United States. One of them was abandoned in mostly poor, crime-ridden section of New York City, and the second in a fairly affluent neighborhood of Palo Alto in California. Both of them were left without license plates and with opened up hoods. The car from New York City just after 10 minutes had been noticed by passersby who began vandalizing the car. Firstly, they stripped it for parts, beginning the random destruction of the car and finishing on smashing windows. At the same time, the car

from Palo Alto remained untouched for more than a week. Zimbardo decided to make the first move: He took a sledge hammer and he simply smashed a window in the Californian car. After that, passersby quickly ripped the car apart the same way as they had done in New York. The psychologist in this simple field study shows how something that is clearly neglected or abandoned can quickly become a target for vandals and trigger anti-social behavior acts.

Very important for the meaning of this experiment is actually understanding it. After thirteen years after the Zimbardo's study, two criminologists George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson wrote an article for *The Atlantic*. They were truly fascinated by what had happened to abandoned cars and they thought the findings could be applied on a larger scale, to entire communities.

The article says that police departments should change their focus. Instead of putting all resources into solving major crimes, instead they should try to clean up the streets and bring back the order to the streets. For this purpose they were expected to tackle the problem of people smoking pot in public and start dealing with subway fare beaters in a more severe way. When in 1993 Rudy Giuliani won election, he promised to reduce crime rate and clean up the streets. The promise was liked by the conservatives because of the idea of restoring the order, as well as the liberals because of this enlightened way to prevent the crime. Firstly, the idea was applied on a small scale; Giuliani and his new police commissioner, William Bratton, decided to clean up the subway system. Shortly after it was successful Giuliani scaled up the idea for the entire city of New York. Police started massively arresting people for any misdemeanors, such as smoking marijuana in public, spraying graffiti and selling loose cigarettes. Soon after this they were ready to announce the success. Crime rate was falling and the amount of murders dropped, what seemed like a miracle.

In 1997 Giuliani was re-elected. The Broken Windows Policy seemed to be flawed when the drop of crimes happened in different parts of US which were not cover by this policy, even in places where police department was corrupted and widely seen as dysfunctional, such as Los Angeles PD. Kelling acknowledges that broken windows may not have such a dramatic effect on crime rate but he thinks that the policy still have a value.

*Even if broken windows did not have a substantial impact on crime, order is an end in itself in a cosmopolitan, diverse world. [...] Strangers have to feel comfortable moving through communities for those communities to thrive. Order is the end in itself, and it does not need the justification of serious crime (Vedantam, et al., 2016)*

There was another big problem with the Broken Windows Policy. Bernard E. Harcourt an American critical theorist specialised in the area of punishment said:

*We immediately saw a sharp increase in complaints of police misconduct. Starting in 1993, what you're going to see is a tremendous amount of disorder that erupts as a result of broken windows policing, with complaints skyrocketing, with settlements of police misconduct cases skyrocketing and of course with incidents, brutal incidents, all of a sudden happening at a faster and faster clip (Ibid.)*

The whole idea, which was already deviated by Giuliani, gave a base for new changes embraced by a new Mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg, who won election in 2001. The whole Broken Windows Policy has morphed into "Stop and Frisk". We can find some people's statements, for example one of them was simply arrested for 10 days because of opening the subway gate for friend who did not have a ticket, which was worth 3 dollars.

In August of 2013, Stop and Frisk strategy was announced as unconstitutional by a federal district court because of the way it singled out young black and Hispanic men. Later the same year the city of New York has elected the first liberal mayor in 20 years, who was Bill DeBlasio. New mayor was celebrating the end of the Stop and Frisk practice, however he did not put away the idea of Broken Windows policy, instead he reappointed Bill Bratton – a police commissioner who was chosen before by Rudy Giuliani when he was a mayor. Just after a few months Bratton's Broken Window Policy came under fresh scrutiny because of the death of an African-American who was cold-bloodedly choked to death by New York City police officers. "*So do I worry about the implementation about broken windows? A whole lot because it can be done very badly*" – claims Kelling, the author of the Atlantic's article. (Kelling and Wilson, 1982)

As we can see on the example of the City of New York, a good thesis which is supposed to help the community can be deviated and used against citizens to criminate them. It is a shame that Giuliani – a person responsible for sticking so much to the problem studied

by Zimbardo, did not do more research about this psychologist and his previous experiment and understand the matter of Stanford prison experiment. In the Stanford prison experiment, a group of students assigned to be the guards abused their privileges. The life of the other group of students (prisoners) was under risk, so the experiment had to end early. Maybe if Giuliani knew the result, he would think twice about mentally degrading all police officers and sending all of them on the streets to enforce the horrendous understanding of such a good idea. But no one knows if it was used to keep up the streets clean or to do the ethnic cleansing with a reasonable excuse for the rest of the New York City community.

In conclusion, the litter problem in Glasgow is huge and it can cause a lot of damage to our physical and mental health as well as its put local and even global wild life in danger. The question remains, how can we deal with it? It can be concluded that we do not need to arrest anybody for misdemeanors, but instead we can educate people. We should teach people about the impact of littering on local scale as well as its effect on the environment around the world, our history, respect to the community and to our culture.

From an architectural point of view, the problem with littering on roads and pavements could be solved or decreased with a garbage can shed. Garbage can sheds are used in many countries to decrease the amount of litter on the streets by keeping the bins in one closed, separated place. This way, all the litter from overloaded bins is easier to clean and maintain, keeping streets tidy. Applying such a simple solution as garbage can sheds into the design of housing and public buildings would stop the bins blocking pavements and the stockpiling of trash bags in front of the doors of commercial spaces such as shops, cafes, and offices. The bins on pavements and trash bags outside buildings not only affects the look of the buildings, but also spread litter and disease through the city by seagulls and other birds.

We need to remember that architecture is not only about designing constructions but it is also about solving the problem of upkeeping them and their surrounding areas in the best quality possible.

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