

Disputes over the protected area.  
Social and political aspects of nature conservation  
and environmental pollution in Świder Nature Reserve

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**Abstract:**

The research is situated in the area of Otwock county in central Poland. It is located nearby the river Świder which is protected by a nature reserve. However, environmental protection laws are not fully respected as there is a recurring problem of waste disposal taking place in forests and river.

Fly-tipping in the Świder Nature Reserve is a social and administrative problem. On the one hand, it is tolerated by the society, and on the other, the personnel of the municipality seems to be unable or unwilling to face the problem.

Another issue is the sewage plant that the town of Józefów intends to build nearby the river. Environmentalists claim that it might pose a threat to the Reserve's ecosystem and its cultural values for the local community, but their arguments cannot get through in the politicized dispute between municipalities and NGOs.

Using the method of participatory observation and interviews, I looked deeper into the issues around the Reserve and focused on the social and political factors that impede its conservation. For the conceptual framework of the research I refer to the theory of "the Tragedy of Commons".

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# 1. Introduction

Świder Nature Reserve is located in central Poland and belongs to a complex of parks and reserves called Masovian Landscape Park. It was founded in 1978 to protect 41 kilometers of the river Świder and 5 kilometers of its tributary Mienia along with 20 meters of land on both sides of the rivers. At the time of its foundation, Świder Nature Reserve was appreciated as a habitat for many species of fauna as well as for the quality of water in the river. But even then it was struggling with problems such as fly-tipping and poaching (Łaszek 1988). Some of the precious qualities of that area survived to contemporary times, while others have suffered damage due to human activity. Analogically, some of the dangers the Reserve was initially facing persisted, while others lost their importance, but still new ones emerged due to the development of infrastructure and industry over the time of more than three decades.

Initially I thought that my research will be entirely dedicated to the problem of fly-tipping, that is, illegal waste disposal in places such as forests or rivers. A brief account on the impact of fly-tipping is given by Williams and Simmons: “The implications of riverine litter are not just limited to aesthetic degradation. Bankside litter is likely to constitute a significant threat to wildlife due to the possibility of entanglement and is also potentially hazardous to man if riverine areas are used recreationally” (1999, 197).

Soon it became evident that although fly-tipping is indeed the most easily recognizable environmental issue in Świder Nature Reserve, there are also other problems, for instance, the sewage disposal which affects the river. Each environmental problem has social and administrative dimensions, since it is an object of local environmental activism and also it falls under the scope of decision making of numerous institutions.

My fieldwork resulted in obtaining an overview of political and social relations. These relations were not always marked by conflict or distrust, but nevertheless there was a striking amount of animosity between activists, institutions and administrations, and therefore I decided to make it my new focus. The river Świder constitutes an administrative border between the municipalities of Otwock and Józefów. Before starting the research, I used to take that fact for granted and did not see it as problematic. Nevertheless, there are some tensions between the two administrations which are at least partly caused by economic issues. I realized that the lack

of cooperation caused by mutual prejudices contributes to the deterioration of the situation of the Reserve.

Many paragraphs of the thesis are focused on the issue of the sewage treatment plant which does not exist yet, but is scheduled for construction by Józefów municipality. It is not my intention to focus on the sewage plant, although it will bring about the risk of serious environmental problems, for example river contamination, and disturbing the naturally shaped riverbanks. My research is rather aiming to describe and analyze the different approaches towards nature conservation and environmental threats expressed in utterances made by members of different social groups in the area. Within this framework, the construction of a sewage treatment plant serves as an example of an issue provoking strong and conflicting opinions. Some residents are for the building of the sewage plant, some of them are against the project, and still some are not aware of it – there is some percentage of each group among the residents of both Otwock and Józefów, and I am careful to avoid the simplistic generalization of the sort that all the residents of Otwock are against the plant and all resident of Józefów are supporting it. It would be easy to make such a biased judgment, and indeed some persons whom I observed during my fieldwork developed this kind of prejudice. However, the issue is more complex, and having false assumptions can easily lead to misunderstandings, as will be shown in the main part of the thesis.

The body of the thesis where I present the findings and supply them with analysis and commentary is divided into three parts. The first two are dedicated to environmental problems (fly-tipping and sewage plant) and the third one to the social discourse. The conclusion is focused on two issues: the social and political conflict, and the legal situation of the Reserve, to which I propose two solutions.

## 1.1. Aim of the study

The goal of my research is to analyze the social and political factors influencing the conservation of Świder Nature Reserve and to understand their relations with environmental pollution. There are other works dedicated to the Reserve, but their authors focused on hydraulic engineering or ecological characteristics of the river Świder and their influence of fish population (Cios and Stępnik 2011; Łaszewski and Jeleński 2013). To my best knowledge,

this thesis is the first one to elaborate on the environmental situation of Reserve from the perspective of social and political discourse.

## 1.2. Research questions

The problem studied in this thesis has a double nature: on the one hand, it is about the environmental pollution and its detrimental influence on the Reserve. On the other hand, the research concerns the social discourse around the Reserve, and therefore requires an understanding of social and political relations. Therefore the primary research question is:

In what ways do the social and political relations hamper the effective protection of the Świder Nature Reserve?

In order to elaborate on this issue I also reflected on questions such as:

What is the cause of pollution and what kinds of social arrangements allow it to happen?

How is the issue tackled by environmentalists and officials, and are they effective in their actions?

What are the social and political relations that affect the Świder Nature Reserve?

What is the approach of the administration towards the Reserve and the execution of laws concerning the area?

How does the cooperation between the municipal administrations and the NGOs look like?

## 2. Theoretical framework

This thesis is an empirically driven case study, therefore I mostly focused on preparing my methodology and carrying out the research, and then on presenting the findings. Theory serves as a tool to enhance the understanding of the findings and to relate them to a broader conceptual

framework. In this chapter I will briefly present the sources that supply my thesis with a theoretical background.

Fly-tipping and environmental pollution could be seen as the result of people treating nature as a waste reservoir. Such concept was presented by Garrett Hardin in his famous article “The Tragedy of the Commons” (1968). The author claims that environmental devastation is the result of a society in which each individual is motivated to strive towards their own success, whereas the sum of independent actions contributes to depletion of the common resources. Therefore even though the actions seem rational from the individual perspective, the common good eventually suffers deterioration. The process consists either in taking, i.e. extracting resources, or in giving, or rather disposing of waste. It is also inevitable, unless concrete countermeasures are applied. The problem is aggravated by human population growth which is unsustainable given the finite resources. It demands a solution that, in Hardin’s words, cannot be merely technical, but should include a change in morals. The author states that the access to the commons, such as national parks, eventually has to be restricted if their condition is to be preserved. Hardin considers several solutions but in the end he suggests that the law and social arrangements will be more effective than education or appeals to conscience. His suggestion that privatization could be a way of avoiding the tragedy of commons evoked a lot of critical comments. According to Patricia K. Townsend, privatization is not the answer to environmental degradation, because “owners of private property do not always behave in ecologically responsible ways (...), often discounting future use in favor of present gain or simply making mistakes in managing their resources” (Townsend 2009, 94). Another critique of privatization as a way of managing the commons comes from Rhodante Ahlers and Margreet Zwartveen, who strongly oppose the commodification of water and analyze it in terms of the capture of resources by the elite, and the detrimental impact of neo-liberal rationality on the environment and social structures. The authors state that the “appropriation of resources carries the danger of their depletion and risks producing (...) marginalization and exclusion” (Ahlers and Zwartveen 2009, 414).

The book “Environmental problems and human behavior” (Gardner and Stern 2002) is to a large extent a commentary to Hardin’s theory. It discusses the causes of the tragedy of the commons as well as actual examples. In the subject of solutions, the authors differ from Hardin. They point to four different options: laws or regulations, education, community management, and ethical or religious approach. Their claim is that none of the solutions will work by itself,



but only their combined impact can be effective. I found this book very insightful and helpful in the analysis of my findings.

In my thesis I use the word “ecocide” which I borrow from Polly Higgins (n.d.). The Eradicating Ecocide Global Initiative, which is led by Higgins, gives the following definition on their website: “ecocide (...) is the extensive damage to, destruction of or loss of ecosystem(s) of a given territory, whether by human agency or by other causes, to such an extent that peaceful enjoyment by the inhabitants of that territory has been or will be severely diminished.” (Eradicating Ecocide Global Initiative n.d.). My research is limited to a specific area, and therefore I adapted the term ecocide to mean mostly poaching and fly-tipping, that is, crimes against the environment which do not entirely destroy it but contribute to its gradual deterioration. The overall condition of Świder Nature Reserve is also affected by pollution by sewage, or the product of sewage treatment which is referred to as wastewater. These three types of ecocide have not been effectively constrained, and quite the opposite, they have a potential to cause further damage in the Reserve, since a new sewage plant is about to be built and pour wastewater into the river. Among other issues, this thesis elaborates on the phenomenon of ecocide impunity in its social and administrative aspects.

My research is also informed by the field of political ecology which critically analyzes the influence of global capitalism on natural resources while paying attention to issues like power dynamics, local struggles, politicized environment, and the interconnectedness of economy, ecology and culture (Escobar 2006; Paulson and Gezon 2005). The thesis shows how the economically-driven political decisions influence ecosystems that are supposed to be protected by law. The local NGOs attempt to counteract environmental degradation and simultaneously struggle to maintain their mission under political pressure. The thesis also critically analyses the situation in which natural resources are only valued in terms of their utility (as waste reservoirs or recreational areas).

My thesis would not be complete without sources specific to the Świder Nature Reserve. Czesław Łaszek used to be a nature conservator and a great supporter of creating new protected areas in 70s and 80s. He contributed to the foundation of the Reserve, and his articles present a deep knowledge of the Masovian landscape. He points out the aesthetic and cultural values of the Reserve as a recreational area but also stresses its importance as a habitat for numerous wild animals. He also diagnosed the main environmental threats such as hydraulic engineering,

poaching, fly-tipping, parking cars on the riverbanks, and vandalism (Łaszek 1988). Another problem mentioned by Łaszek is the lack of a professional, paid service to take care of the Reserve and implement the environmental regulations. It was important for my research to find out that although these issues have already been recognized more than twenty years ago, they have not been taken care of. Łaszek also states that environmental protection should involve the participation of the whole society, and not only the activists or administrators.

### 3. Methodology

During my fieldwork, I used “Introduction to qualitative research methods” by Steven J. Taylor and Robert Bogdan (1984) as a methodological guidance. I decided to conduct a qualitative research because my goal is to show environmental issues as an object of a social discourse, where members of the society represent different perspectives towards that object. In quantitative research, people’s ideas would be reduced to variables, whereas qualitative approach allows a contextualized study (Taylor and Bogdan 1984, 6). I decided not to conduct a survey because statistical data showing opinions detached from the subjects who hold them would not be useful in my research. I refer to the informants in an anonymous manner, but their positions as stakeholders are maintained, so that I can describe the context of interactions between environmental NGOs and administration. I am not interested solely in opinions, but also in who is holding them.

My fieldwork aimed to show a variety of approaches which are sometimes contradictory, like in the case of activists and town officials. This discrepancy of perspectives and plurality of stakeholders is an interesting issue in itself, and could have both positive and negative outcomes concerning the management of environmental issues in Świder Nature Reserve. I was also aware that fly-tipping might be a sensitive subject, therefore I decided to interview informants personally, in an unstructured way, in order to get a better chance of receiving honest responses. The desired rapport might not be achievable if I asked them to fill out impersonal surveys. In conclusion, I assumed that carrying out qualitative interviews will bring better results than conducting a survey which would only give me statistical data.

At the very outset of their book, Taylor and Bogdan point out the distinction between positivist and phenomenological research perspectives. Positivism is interested in analyzing social phenomena as things in themselves, that “exercise an external influence on people” (1984, 1). In this approach, social phenomena are considered independently from individual perspectives. On the contrary, phenomenological approach concentrates on understanding the point of view of an individual. “The phenomenologist views human behavior, what people say and do, as a product of how people define their world” (Taylor and Bogdan 1984, 8-9). What positivist approach misses out is the human agency behind social phenomena. Fly-tipping does not happen by itself, it involves people who have certain motivations behind their actions. Analogically, the question of reducing environmental pollution is actually a question about how to address, influence and change people’s beliefs, attitudes or habits – and that involves understanding them in advance. Therefore, in my research I decided to adhere to phenomenological approach.

In my pursuit to understand the perspective of the informants, I have found the advice to avoid imposing my own ideas especially useful. Although I already had some assumptions before starting the fieldwork, it was important to me to learn that I should not take them for granted and instead of searching for confirmation of my own opinions, I have to listen to what informants have to say about the subject. “For the qualitative researcher, all perspectives are valuable” (Taylor and Bogdan 1984, 6). The book by Taylor and Bogdan is a valuable methodology guide because they state that the aim of researcher is to understand the subjects she observes, as well as their perspectives and motives.

### 3.1. Fieldwork

My fieldwork took place in February, April and June 2014. To acquire contact with local environmentalists I used the “snowballing technique” (Taylor and Bogdan 1984, 24) that is, after the initial talks with a small group of informants I asked them if they could give me contact information to other persons. I also wanted to interview some officials, therefore I called the division of county administration responsible for nature conservation. When I asked them for an interview about the Reserve I was rejected, and then I decided to get in contact with a similar division in Otwock town hall, and this time I managed to arrange an interview with municipality employees. Apart from the interview at the Otwock town hall nature conservation department,

I conducted interviews with local environmentalists and participated in discussions (in person as well as on phone) with members of local NGOs. I attended two meetings of local environmental associations and a meeting organized by Józefów municipality. I visited the area of Świder Nature Reserve and took pictures of garbage that I found there. I also visited the Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection and the Museum of Otwock, and in both institutions I got access to archives to look for source materials about the Reserve.

In April I visited Świder Nature Reserve again in order to take more pictures. At the site, I interviewed a member of Otwock town council. I also managed to get in contact with a group of anglers who regularly visit the Reserve. Two of them I interviewed in person, with one I had an interview on a phone, and one of them preferred to contact me through e-mail. Apart from that, I also had a phone conversation with a person who rents kayaks nearby the river. In June, I participated in a public consultation meeting organized by Józefów municipality.

Throughout my fieldwork, I followed the method of participatory observation, defined by Taylor and Bogdan as a “research that involves social interaction between the researcher and informants in the milieu of the latter, during which data are systematically and unobtrusively collected” (1984, 15).

Since my research concerns a specific area, I found it necessary to provide some images of it for the reader. Therefore, as was mentioned above, I collected pieces of visual data; that is pictures of the Reserve taken by myself, pictures taken by informants, and also maps and schemes. In March I gained permission to use screenshots of maps from the General Directorate for Environmental Protection website. Informants kindly allowed me to use that documentation for the purposes of the research, therefore the pictures in the appendices are there under authors’ permission.

By combining different methods (participatory observation, interviews and drawing from visual data) I achieved the effect called triangulation (Taylor and Bogdan 1984, 68-69). Uwe Flick writes about triangulation in the following way: “combining interviews with observation focuses on subjective knowledge and experience and allows issues of the past to be introduced in the first approach. Observation rather focuses on practices and interactions at a specific moment and thus adds a new perspective. The data obtained from both approaches are located on different levels” (Flick 2009, 448). The three different methods I used in my research gave

different results which are nevertheless complementary. The pictures document the physical state of affairs within the Reserve, and therefore serve as examples of the phenomenon of fly-tipping, or the way the Reserve serves the community as a recreational site. Observations and interviews give a context to the pictures and embed the phenomena in the social discourse.

## 3.2. Interviews

Before each interview, there was a preparatory phase where I introduced myself as a student doing a research about environmental issues concerning Świder Reserve, and asked if a person was willing to talk with me about the subject. In this phase, which often consisted of a phone conversation, I also noted down some remarks the informants made and based on that, I later formulated general questions I was about to ask in the main interview. Before interviewing, I reassured the informants that their personal data will not be disclosed. In cases when I recorded the interview, it was done under the informant's consent.

The main goal of interviews was to gain informants' personal views on environmental issues in the Reserve as well as insights to social and political processes concerning those issues. Therefore I decided to design my sampling in such a way to obtain a variety of perspectives. In my research, the civil servants from Otwock municipality represent the administrative approach towards the Reserve, and the members of local NGOs hold the environmental and social perspective. I decided to interview the environmentalists first in order to have a better background knowledge before I spoke with the officials, to be able to confront the ideas from activists with the administration policy, and to address questions and arguments used by activists in my conversation with the officials. In order to make the research more complete regarding the political issues, I attended two meetings (in February and June) where officials from Józefów were present and expressed their standpoint in a dialogue with residents.

Thanks to the information obtained from the environmentalists, I kept my research down-to-earth; that is focused on the current problems faced by the Reserve. I was continuously learning through the research, and from my own preconceptions I initially had about the site, my concern was shifted to the problems the activists pointed me towards. I also owe to the informants that they advised me to contact institutions like Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection.

Before each interview, I had a set of questions or topics to cover, but I did not arrange them in a manner of an ordered interview guide, and I did not follow them strictly. Sometimes I decided not to ask some questions, when I saw that they would seem odd in the conversation or when the informant was already giving me information which was much more important or relevant. I had some assumptions and ideas in mind before interviewing, but I did not use them to limit or define my research but rather as general themes for framing my questions during the interviews, while keeping in mind that the informants may have different outlooks and see other problems as more urgent. I did not seek for confirmation of my assumptions but rather for opinions and perspectives of the people I interviewed. Initial assumptions were useful as a pretext to start conversations, but I was open for different directions the conversations would lead us.

I modified the practical aspects of interviews depending on a situation and adjusted to what seemed to be most convenient for the interviewee. In a chapter dedicated to unstructured interviews Bernard states that “The idea is to get people to open up and let them express themselves in their own terms, and at their own pace” (Bernard 2006, 211). In line with that statement the place, time and duration of an interview was in most cases decided by the informant, and in the rest of cases it was a mutual agreement. In the case of the interview in Otwock town hall, I was invited into an office which was the workplace for two civil servants, and therefore what I planned as one-to-one interview became in fact a group interview – an unexpected situation which nevertheless did not have any adverse effect on the quality of the research.

Not all interviews were recorded. In some cases I decided not to use dictaphone, because Taylor and Bogdan warn that using a recording device may hinder the rapport (1984, 54). However in such cases I wrote down fieldnotes directly after the interview to preserve the informant’s statements.

In most cases I only had one occasion to carry out an interview with a given informant. Although in some cases I kept the contact through phone and on-line conversations, I only had time to have one full-length interview per person. One may argue that meeting each informant several times would bring a deeper understanding of their personal experiences. However, my research consisted of participant observation and interviews, and both had to be contained within a limited amount of time. It can be said that I sacrificed deep rapport and thorough

knowledge of informants for the sake of obtaining information on a wide set of problems from many points of view.

I sought for confirmations of claims made by informants by crosschecking. I decided that in order to regard an information as reliable, I must hear it from at least two informants. For example, if during one interview I heard a statement, then during some other interview I retold the statement as an anonymous opinion and asked the interviewee to comment on it.

In the end of this section, I would like to note the method of unstructured interviews in which the researcher lets the informant speak freely has both advantages and drawbacks. One disadvantage was that it took a longer time to achieve the information I was looking for, because informants talked about many subjects and not all of them were directly relevant to the subject of the thesis. It was however outweighed by the merits of gaining background information and a historical context as well as achieving levels of rapport that would not come as easy if the interviews were structured.

### 3.3. Anonymity of informants

During the research I realized that the subjects I was writing about, especially the prejudice between some NGOs, were sensitive and therefore I decided to grant anonymity not only to persons but also to the organizations. I developed a system of coding that replaced names of NGOs with the names of Greek letters: Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, Epsilon, and Zeta. The names of members of a given NGO are replaced by initials, so that whenever a name A1 appears in the text, it signifies a member of the organization Alpha, B1 should be understood by the reader as a member of Beta, G1 as a member of Gamma, and so on. In order to refer to the statements of other informants, I state their occupation (for example: “employee of a sewage plant”, or “angler”). The persons whom I interviewed in the Otwock town hall are referred to as “civil servants”, “Otwock municipality employees”, or individually as O1 and O2.

## 4. Glossary

For the sake of clarity as well as for the Polish informants who expressed the will to read the thesis, I hereby present a small glossary of terms and names used in the thesis and their original Polish equivalents:

Conservation plan – plan ochrony

General Directorate for Environmental Protection – Generalna Dyrekcja Ochrony Środowiska

Józefów town / Józefów municipality – miasto Józefów

Municipal Guard – Straż Miejska

Otwock county – powiat Otwocki

Otwock town / Otwock municipality – miasto Otwock

Polish Angling Association (PAA) – Polski Związek Wędkarski

Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection – Regionalna Dyrekcja Ochrony Środowiska

Świder Nature Reserve – Rezerwat Przyrody Świder

Town hall – urząd miasta

Warsaw University of Life Sciences – Szkoła Główna Gospodarstwa Wiejskiego

Otwock county should not be confused with the municipality of Otwock, as they have separate administrations. Otwock county includes the towns of Otwock, Józefów, Wiązowna and other nearby municipalities.

## 5. Situating myself with respect to the subject of study

I was born and grew up in Otwock, a town of less than 50 000 residents, which is situated close to the Polish capital city Warsaw, but surrounded by woods and peat bogs. Interaction with nature and especially the river Świder and the neighboring forests has been a significant part of my childhood. My personal relation to this area influenced the decision to write my master thesis about Świder Nature Reserve. I wish its beauty could be preserved and I believe that it can be achieved if people's interactions with nature were less harmful and more responsible.



Therefore I shaped my research so that it studied environmental problems in the context of human behavior and attitudes.

I am aware that studying places and people related to one's own home might result in giving a somewhat distorted image because of a phenomenon which in anthropology is called a "home blindness". However, I had a strong motivation to carry out a research in a subject that had a personal value to me. At the outset of my work the knowledge I had about the Świder Nature Reserve was very limited; I knew it was there, but I did not know where its borders are or how much area it covers. It is not indicated at the site and there are no information boards that I know of. Also all the informants quoted in the thesis are persons that I became acquainted with during the research; I had no knowledge of local environmental NGOs beforehand. From my previous visits in the Reserve I knew about the pollution by fly-tipping, but I was not aware of the problem with sewage in the river nor the plans of Józefów municipality. I have been acquainted with some local newspapers, but the research gave me a reason to actually give them some more attention. Therefore I entered the field as a student looking for a new knowledge, and not as a resident basing on her previous experiences.

The research underwent a conceptual development and gradual departure from my own general preconceptions into the discourse of social and political relations. My intention was to research the anthropogenic pollution in the Reserve, mainly fly-tipping, and how the local environmental NGOs and administration tackle the problem. As environmentalists pointed to the sewage plant as the more urgent issue, I followed their lead, and got involved in the dispute between the administrations of Otwock and Józefów, which was for me completely unexpected.

Since the problems that I studied in my research could be perceived as sensitive, I had to put a special effort into being impartial. First of all it was necessary for my research to be reliable, and second, I was in contact with both environmentalists and officials whose standpoints, I suspected, would be conflicting. I had to appear trustworthy to all sides and develop rapport for the sake of obtaining valuable insights during the interviews. The fieldwork impression management also involved avoidance from being labelled as someone siding with Otwock agenda. I was careful to remain impartial in the sense that I neither supported nor condemned the policy of Otwock or Józefów a priori. However, I do evaluate them in terms of how those policies affect the Reserve.

There is a dispute over the question of how the gender of a researcher affects the study. There are many ways in which it can happen, as it might influence the perception of the researcher by the informants and the content of information they decide to share. As far as I know, the dispute did not reach a decisive conclusion (Robben and Sluka 2007), but it is nevertheless valuable to be aware of the issue. Apart from the civil servants interviewed at the Otwock town hall and the members of Epsilon association, most of my informants were male. I asked one of them if it is a pure coincidence, and he seemed surprised and stated that in his experience, environmental NGOs are a feminine domain.

All the interviews were carried out in Polish. I translated the content of my observations and interviews as well as excerpts from textual sources such as newspapers. I was careful so that the translations preserve the sense of the original utterances, but I acknowledge that I bear the responsibility of an interpreter, and since the utterances are not cited in their original language, a factor of interpretation is present, even though I tried my best to remain neutral, impartial, and not to interfere into the meaning of what other people said or wrote.

## 6. Findings and discussion

### 6.1. Fly-tipping

This chapter is based on an interview with civil servants which I conducted in Otwock Town Hall on the 17th of February 2014. I use quotations from civil servants as the core findings to which I add analysis based on Gardner and Stern (2002) and also confront them with statements made by other informants.

On the way to the meeting on the 11th of February, I took a couple of pictures of garbage lying at the river bank in the Reserve. Six days later, I showed those pictures to the civil servants during the interview at the Otwock town hall. They were not surprised, and reacted to the pictures as if they were showing something completely normal. Indeed, littered ground is a common sight in the Reserve, as well as in forests and urban areas. But since in my interview I asked the civil servants about natural conservation, I was expecting that in their response, they would condemn the phenomenon of fly-tipping and the offenders. Instead, O1 said that the view

on the pictures “is something obvious”, and O2 stated that “Apparently [the garbage was left] after consumption” and “It is a typical symptom of culture.” O1 also stated that such form of fly-tipping (scattered garbage) is not something that they would worry about, and it will be cleaned up later in the spring, during a routine cleaning up action – therefore it does not need any urgent intervention.

When I asked the civil servant to explain what she meant when saying that fly-tipping is connected to culture, she said the following: “Whether in Otwock, or in any other town, what can you do about men or youth who go into a forest, and leave trash after their parties? It looks like this not only here, but everywhere, not only by the river Świder, but also in forests, in residential districts, and in other places. (...) Common people walk on the street and throw [trash]. It is simply a question of culture.”

Many social aspects of fly-tipping are suggested in these statements, and in the following paragraphs I would like to elaborate on them. First of all, it seems like the civil servants connect the phenomenon of fly-tipping with certain social groups, or certain behaviors. O1 also said: “Often it’s the adults who throw trash around. Very often we see some drunkard littering, and then what [can we do]?” This statement suggests that the “consumption” mentioned by O2 a while before meant *alcohol consumption*. A recurrent theme in the civil servants’ statements about fly-tipping are men, or youth, who are partying or being drunk, which somehow leads to littering. It might be then concluded that by connecting fly-tipping with alcohol consumption, civil servants marginalize the subject in a way.

However, the second theme that keeps on resurfacing in civil servants’ statements is that the garbage scattered on the ground is “something obvious”, something seen widely and often, which is even perceived as an intrinsic part of culture. One can deliberate whether by the term “culture” they actually meant a *lack* of culture, or whether they meant personal manners of the littering individuals, or rather a general practice among the members of the community. Regardless of the interpretation, one thing remains certain: littering, or fly-tipping, is a phenomenon that happens on regular basis, and the offenders are “common people”.

As has been noted by Gardner and Stern, “Tragedies of commons usually involve ordinary people doing ordinary things, rather than villainous or greedy people doing especially nasty things” (2002, 26). Fly-tipping falls under the definition of tragedy of the commons, described

by the authors as depletion of resources and environmental pollution caused by individuals advancing their own interests (2002, 23-25). The authors also state that “the destruction of ecological capital is now more the norm rather than the exception” (2002, 11).

The apparent normality of environmental pollution has significant consequences. The phenomenon itself becomes naturalized, in the sense that it is performed and perceived as a common thing to do. Not only the damage done to the environment is greater because of the quantity of people involved in waste dumping, but the action itself and its consequences lose their negative meaning. When confronted with pictures of garbage in the Reserve, the civil servants were not surprised; they did not explicitly condemn it, and neither did they call for an intervention. On the contrary, they said it was something typical and obvious.

Another consequence of fly-tipping becoming the norm is that no one can be condemned as the offender. When there is a great number of perpetrators, the responsibility gets diluted, it is impossible to blame one person when everyone else is doing the same. Therefore normalization can lead to impunity. The same mechanism can serve to rationalize and justify one’s own behavior: if other people do this, then why should I feel guilty? Thus, the normalization of fly-tipping contributes to downplaying of the problem and loss of the sense of responsibility.

The third component that draws attention in the civil servants’ statements about fly-tipping is the repeated question of what can be done about it. The civil servants described the phenomenon as something common, which makes it hard to be stopped. It is a part of culture, and apparently it is not easy to react to the problem, or to prevent it. It is important to note that they work in an environmental protection division of the municipality administration, therefore they represent the municipal power and ability to tackle the environmental issues in the area. They have the formal power to call for an action and make the Municipal Guard react to what is happening in the Reserve seemingly on a daily basis. And yet, from their own words it seems like they feel helpless. In a similar tone, Gardner and Stern write that in the case of tragedy of the commons, “the process can not be stopped by unilateral individual action” (2002, 26). If environmental pollution is the norm followed by common people, then even if some individuals realize the damage resulting from their action, they are unable to stop the process by themselves. In the context of fly-tipping in the reserve, the above statement is true for the offenders as well as for the civil servants. The former are actively contributing to the pollution, the latter are contributing by their inaction.

But perhaps it is not fair to claim that the administration is doing nothing against fly-tipping. It is true that there is no direct reaction against the cases of littering, therefore the offenders go unpunished and the phenomenon itself is widespread. Nevertheless, it has been mentioned at the beginning of the chapter that there are routine actions of cleaning up that take place within the Reserve. According to what the municipality employees told me, the most popular places in the Reserve where the residents come for recreation are cleaned twice a week during summer. Furthermore, one of the civil servants said that „alongshore the entire Świder river, it is cleaned about four-five times a year, mostly in the summer season.” Otwock municipality commissions these tasks to be done by external companies, or supports cleaning-up actions organized by volunteers. And yet when I told other informants that the area of the Reserve is regularly cleaned from the garbage, they reacted with disbelief. The activists from Epsilon who were organizing an event during the previous summer said that they had to clean up the beach by themselves. Furthermore, an angler who has been visiting the area of the Reserve stated that “Some of the garbage that lies there has clearly been there for several years.” These statements challenge the claims of municipality employees that the area of the Reserve is regularly cleaned from garbage. There is a possibility that despite the regular clean-ups, the Reserve is constantly littered because of trash left again and again by tourists. Perhaps it is true to some extent. Nevertheless, according to the abovementioned angler, some pieces of trash are visibly old, lying in one place for years. It indicates that if there actually are regular cleaning-up actions, then either they are ineffective, or they constantly omit some places in the Reserve.

Another angler made the following observation about trash in the Reserve: “Evidently it is thrown out by people living there.” This statement points out two issues: first; there are human settlements nearby the river, and second: the residents throw away their trash within the area of the Reserve. Basically, there are two groups contributing to pollution by waste around the Świder river. These are tourists, who come for short visits, mainly in the summer season, and leave scattered litter, and residents, who live nearby the Reserve and throw out their household waste in the forest or into the river. According to the angler, one can see objects like sofas, tv sets, rubble and cables gradually rolling down the riverbanks. In such cases, it is justifiable to blame the residents for fly-tipping, because it would be unreasonable for someone living far away to come into the Reserve and throw away such big and heavy things; it would not be worth the effort. People who come to the Świder river only for short visits can be rather associated with small-sized trash like food packaging, cigarette stubs or bottles.

The municipality employees suggested that in the case of residents living nearby the Reserve, the main incentive for fly-tipping was money. The old system of waste management was constructed in such a way that a household could avoid regular payments: a contract with a trash hauler was voluntary, and there was no external control over the waste management in a given household. In practice it meant that some people decided not to have a contract, and throw their trash away in inappropriate places such as forests or rivers, therefore avoiding the trash tax (Oleszkiewicz and Pytlakowski 2013). However, in 2013 a new law was implemented (Polish Parliament 2011), making the local administration responsible for the waste management, and a contract obligatory for each household. The implementation of the law was hard and took several months, but the civil servants hope that the new regulations will help to prevent fly-tipping.

## 6.2. Sewage plant

Initially I thought that fly-tipping will be the type of anthropogenic pollution I will focus on in my research. It was because it is the most visible one, and I could document it just by going into the Reserve with a camera. Very soon however, the focus of my research was retargeted as a result of the first few interviews I made in February. Although fly-tipping remains to be a significant environmental and aesthetic problem, I learned that there is an issue which, at the time, has not been directly visible yet, but already gained some publicity in the local media, and has been growing as a part of already existing economic and political conflict between the municipalities of Józefów and Otwock. Both A1 and D1 suggested that the sewage plant which is scheduled by Józefów municipality to be constructed nearby the Świder river is currently the most serious and urgent problem concerning the Reserve.

So far Józefów, among other municipalities belonging to the Otwock county, channels its liquid waste through pipes to a sewage plant in Otwock. After the treatment, the wastewater is directed to the Vistula river, which is the greatest river in Poland. At least since 2012 Józefów municipality is planning to build its own sewage plant (Otwock Town Council 2013), to manage its liquid waste independently from Otwock. According to the plans, it would be situated nearby the Świder Reserve [see Appendix 5], and have the outlet pipe leading directly to the Świder river. Although the scheduled localization of the main building of the plant is outside the

Reserve, there is a shared opinion among environmentalists and some residents that the plant will have a detrimental influence on the whole area, including the river.

On the 11th of February, I participated in a meeting with residents organized by the Józefów municipality, where the issue of the sewage plant was about to be discussed [see Appendix 3]. In fact, the meeting was rather meant as a presentation of urban planning projects, some of which were designed to rearrange the area on the Józefów side of the river for recreational purposes. Although that area would be adjacent to the place where the sewage plant is scheduled, this aspect was completely omitted in the projects. The parcel of land where the plant is going to be built was left blank in the presentation sketches. I took a chance of pointing it out during the discussion time, but the Józefów mayor was unwilling to give any clarifications. Instead, he stated that the meeting was not meant for discussing the sewage plant. However, it turned out that among the people attending the meeting, there were more residents who openly opposed the sewage plant investment. They stated that it will cause an aesthetic nuisance and a threat for the Reserve by polluting the river. Confronted with such criticism, Józefów mayor claimed that Świder river is already polluted by wastewater, running into its tributary Mienia, from sewage plants in the towns of Wiązowna and Mińsk Mazowiecki. He asked why, if other towns let wastewater flow into Świder, should he refrain from doing the same. Faced with further pressure from the public, he promised to organize consultations for the subject of the plant in March.

After the meeting was officially over, the discussion was continued by people supporting the idea of the plant. Among them was a Józefów representative who stated that the plant will be constructed using a very modern technology that ensures flawless and unproblematic functioning. Moreover, she accused Otwock municipality of interfering with Józefów plans for the sake of keeping the income from the fees Józefów must pay for treatment of its waste in Otwock [see Appendix 3].

The event of 11th February was thoroughly discussed in my later conversations with B1 and on the meeting between Beta and Epsilon. According to the members of Epsilon, the presentation of projects for a recreational area between the sewage plant and the riverbank was actually a trick played by Józefów municipality in order to make the residents believe that the Józefów representatives care about the river. Following the Epsilon's opinion, the presentation was a

part of a positive PR built around the sewage plant to “show that the plant is so environmentally-friendly there can be even recreational area built alongside.”

Attending the meeting of NGO Alpha on the 20th of February, I heard again that there is an atmosphere of competition between Otwock and the neighboring municipalities. According to a member of Alpha who used to be an administration representative, there is a shared view among other municipalities in the area that Otwock restrains their development. As he stated, the neighboring towns argue that without the hindrance caused by Otwock, they would be way ahead of their current situation. This claim goes in line with what the Józefów representative said at the end of meeting nine days before. Both statements described a political tension between the municipalities in Otwock county, and specifically between Otwock and Józefów. As a result of this tension, administration representatives on both sides tend to accuse each other of having ill will. The outcome is that the discourse around the sewage plant in Józefów is dominated by political issues, and the sewage plant itself becomes only a part of a greater conflict. As the officials of each town strive to prove their own cause, the environmental issues are marginalized. In the dispute between Otwock and Józefów, the Reserve is placed on a lost position. Any argument against the plant is automatically discarded by Józefów as being produced by Otwock lobby.

The sewage plants in Wiązowna and Mińsk Mazowiecki are placed outside the Reserve, but they do have an impact, as they channel post-treatment wastewater into Mienia river, which is a tributary of Świder. Otwock municipality and association Beta commissioned tests for the quality of water in Świder at several posts nearby Otwock area. As stated by Otwock municipality employees, the results varied depending on a given day and the specific place in the river where the samples were taken from. Nevertheless, some of the results revealed that the norms for the presence of E. coli bacteria were exceeded. Such results indicate that the river is polluted by sewage, although it would be hard to prove who is the polluter. Wiązowna and Mińsk Mazowiecki are not the only ones to outlet liquid waste into the river. According to A1, there are multiple sewage inlets into the river, which can be noticed in the winter season, because water does not freeze in such places due to their higher temperature. Also the anglers whom I interviewed stated that there are many illegal and smelling sewage inlets along the river.

However, even if there are multiple polluters, some of them can be seen as more problematic



than others. The case of the sewage plant in Wiązowna can be seen as analogical to the current situation in Józefów, except that the investment is already finished and the plant is running. During the interview in the Otwock town hall on the 17th of February, civil servants told me that “In the case of sewage plant in Wiązowna, there also has been objection from the side of the residents” and from the Otwock municipality as well. Moreover, from what I heard from A1, the sewage plant in Wiązowna appeared as an investment forced by Wiązowna mayor, who insisted on it even in spite of legal restrictions. However, regardless of the circumstances surrounding its construction, nowadays the area suffers from intense odors produced by the plant. E1, who often passes by the place, described the smell as making it hard for drivers to wait at the streetlights in the plant’s proximity. Many of the environmentalists whom I interviewed also claimed that the quality norms for the post-treatment wastewater flowing out from sewage plants are often neglected, which leads to severe contamination of rivers – but in these statements they generally referred to sewage treatment systems in Poland, not only to the plant in Wiązowna.

As I learned from D1, Wiązowna municipality is expanding its settlements, which will cause the sewage plant there to receive and process more liquid waste. In consequence, more post-treatment wastewater will flow into Mienia river [see Appendix 2]. The theory D1 shared with me is that the greater amount of wastewater will cause the stream to become much stronger, and it will smooth out the river’s natural meanders and transform the riverbed. As Mienia’s current will be reinforced by the wastewater, it may become the main river and Świder will become its tributary instead. The protection of meanders and natural riverbeds as well as the water quality of Świder and Mienia was one of the crucial arguments for the establishment of the Świder Nature Reserve. Therefore, if they will suffer such devastating changes, the very existence of the Reserve will be challenged. (The fact that purity of water in the river is crucial for the Reserve’s functioning was pointed out already at the time of its foundation (Łaszek 1978)) If what D1 told me is true, then Wiązowna plant running on its full capacity will result in a situation when there will be nothing left to protect in the Reserve. Moreover, if Józefów mayor knows about it as well, then the possible decline of the Reserve is in fact a chance for him to push his own investment forward, because all the environmental arguments against the sewage plant in Józefów will indeed lose their validity. There will be no sense in protecting the river from additional wastewater inflow from Józefów, if the whole river will already be turned into a sewage drain. The above theory is what I heard from D1, but it appears to be quite

accurate and justified, because Józefów mayor himself referred to Wiązowna at the meeting with residents on the 11th of February.

But even if this theory is left aside, there is something inherently wrong with the way in which Józefów mayor referred to sewage plants in Wiązowna and Mińsk Mazowiecki. Although he did not mention environmental pollution they are causing, he used them in his argumentation as examples of investments that already have impact on the Reserve. From his point of view, their existence is supposed to somehow justify his own plans. In addition, the way Józefów representative was talking about the investment only showed its positive aspects. In her opinion, the advanced technology applied in the construction will rule out any possibility of a breakdown. Józefów administration representatives either deny the probability of environmental pollution, or they avoid talking about the subject. Summing up, they are very partial in speaking about the plant.

When asked about the sewage plant and its potential threat to the Reserve, Józefów mayor tells people to visit a sewage plant in Lesznów, which, according to him, is very modern and efficient. Thus he stipulates that the sewage plant in Józefów will follow the high standards set by that other plant. Nevertheless, some residents doubt about that, and they do not trust mayor's promises that the wastewater will not negatively affect the river. They suspect that the plant will emit odours, and pollute the water in the river, so that it will lose its qualities and will not be suitable for swimming or any other recreational use. Their uneasiness might be explained by the case of the sewage plant in Wiązowna, which is notorious for its intense odour. During my fieldwork, I repeatedly heard from the residents of the Otwock county that the construction of the plant in Wiązowna was not entirely legal and that its construction was protested, but the Wiązowna mayor insisted on it. The example of Wiązowna shows how burdensome such plant can be both for people and the environment, and therefore the residents are justified in being concerned about the future impact of Józefów's investment on Świder Nature Reserve.

Another issue to consider is the fact that the liquid waste from Józefów is already processed in Otwock sewage plant. The dispute between Otwock and Józefów and its economical background will be clarified in another section of the thesis, but the following discussion will be dedicated to the explanation of the difference the sewage plant in Józefów will make for the condition of the Świder Nature Reserve.

As was mentioned before, the environmentalists I interviewed claimed that the quality norms for wastewater flowing out from sewage plants are generally neglected, which leads to contamination of water reservoirs. Nevertheless, they all share the opinion that from the point of view of natural conservation, it would be better if the liquid waste from Józefów continued to be piped into Otwock sewage plant to be processed there. This opinion stands in conflict with Józefów administration, and it clearly favors Otwock sewage plant over the one scheduled by Józefów. According to G1, who told me he has visited the sewage plant in Otwock, there has never been any failure, and the plant is functioning in a continuous and flawless manner. In April I spoke with a member of Otwock town council, who confirmed that statement, and on the 11th of June, after a consultation meeting in Józefów, I had an occasion to speak with an employee of the sewage plant in Otwock, who also confirmed that there have never been any infringements on the quality norms for the post-treatment wastewater there.

G1 also stated that the quality norms for the post-treatment wastewater released by sewage plants are less strict in case of smaller plants, such as the one planned by Józefów. But even if the discussion about the wastewater quality is left aside, there is still a fundamental difference between the environmental impact of Otwock sewage plant and the one planned by Józefów municipality. The difference results from their geographical location, and specifically, where the wastewater is released. As was mentioned above, the plant in Otwock directs the post-treatment wastewater into the Vistula river, which – being the greatest river in Poland – receives wastewater from many other towns. In contrast, the plant which is about to be built in Józefów will have the outlet pipe leading directly into Świder river. The amount of water in Świder is subject to seasonal fluctuations (Łaszewski 2014); it is increased in the winter, and reduced in the summer. During the interview I conducted with an informant who made a hydrological research on Świder, he explained the fluctuation as influenced by many factors. The rise of the level of water during the winter season is caused by thawing snow, whereas the low level in the summer is associated with low precipitation, high evaporation and anthropogenic factors, like drawing the water out from the river for irrigation purposes. The summer season, with its high temperatures and low levels of water, is difficult for some species of fish present in Świder. Moreover, according to an angler I talked with, several species of fish migrate from Vistula to Świder for spawning season. The concentration of wastewater in the river may be detrimental for them. According to the angler, “even if they survive the upstream swim through that part of the river and arrive to the spawning place, they will be ill.” Additionally, from the social

perspective, summer is the time of more intense recreational activities around Świder, with some people deciding to take a swim in the river.

The point of the above paragraph is that the sewage plant in Otwock releases wastewater into Vistula, so that its overall impact is mitigated by the amount of water running in this great river. On the contrary, Józefów is planning to release wastewater into a small river, which at times carries particularly small amounts of water. In other words, Świder is much more vulnerable to contamination than Vistula. The possible pollution will be especially harmful in the summer season, when the population of fish living in the river is already exposed to detriment, and when people are in direct contact with water.

Residents have good reasons to be concerned about the Józefów administration plans. They articulated their objections in February, and the mayor promised to organize public consultation meeting in March. According to my best knowledge based on regular contact with Epsilon and Beta, there were no public consultations about the sewage plant in March nor in April. This raises a question about the transparency of Józefów policy.

On the 21st of March, Otwock county administration issued a document informing that on request of Józefów municipality a legal procedure has been initiated for approval of clearing out the trees on the parcel of land where the sewage plant will be constructed (Otwock County 2014). The trees are already marked with a purple paint [see Appendix 8]. During the official meeting on the 11th of June it was stated that there is 1044 of trees to be cut down, but the Józefów representatives immediately claimed that they will compensate it by planting more trees elsewhere. A forest of painted trees is the first sign of the Józefów investment that can be directly observed nearby the riverbank.

### 6.3. Antagonisms

The above discussion was dedicated to the two examples of environmental threats in the Świder Nature Reserve. The third part of the body of the thesis concerns the political and social dispute in which the standpoints of various parties are often sharply contrasting. In order to understand this complex state of affairs it is useful to keep in mind the situation presented by Hardin (1968),

where the actions of each individual seem rational from their own perspective, but the common good is nevertheless squandered.

In the context of antagonisms, the Reserve could be portrayed as a battleground, that is, a place destroyed as a result of a struggle between political powers. Each power fights for its own cause, and perceives the benefits to achieve in the strife as outweighing the costs. The damage done to the land is counted among other losses. The battleground suffers devastation because it is not valued enough to be preserved.

### 6.3.1. Conflict between municipalities of Józefów and Otwock

The first signs of antagonism between the municipalities of Otwock and Józefów that I came across in my research were the remarks about Józefów administration made by environmentalists from Otwock. They were complaining about incompetence of the officials and their unwillingness to cooperate with social initiatives. But those remarks could be interpreted as pertaining to administration in general, and not only to the representatives of Józefów.

The meeting on the 11th of February, which was described in the previous section, was also a good opportunity to observe and analyze the attitude of representatives of Józefów towards Otwock. Before the meeting began, I had a conversation with B1 and one of the first things he told me was that if I decide to speak up before the public, I should not disclose that I come from Otwock. I followed his advice. By the end of the meeting, I observed how the subject of animosity between Otwock and Józefów was brought up in the discussion by a Józefów representative. She suggested that the arguments criticizing the sewage plant investment in Józefów are supported and fabricated by the Otwock lobby. In her account, Otwock strives to keep the financial profits it obtains from processing the liquid waste from Józefów. Therefore it is in Otwock's best interest to block the investment and prevent Józefów from building its own sewage treatment system. She also accused Otwock of greed.

As I observed during the meeting, there was no chance of making a point against the sewage plant in Józefów by appealing to environmental arguments. Any such attempt was labelled by Józefów representatives as produced by Otwock agenda. The discussion concerning the plant

is politicized to such extent that it makes any environmental argument appear as irrelevant. As a consequence, issues regarding the Świder Reserve and nature conservation are marginalized. Concerns about the possibility of environmental pollution are one of many aspects of the discussion around the plant, and the plant itself is only a part of the conflict between the municipalities. The conclusion is that the decline of the Reserve is not assigned as much importance as political, economic, or personal interests of the decision makers. Therefore the Reserve and the natural resources it protects are likely to fall as victims of political struggle.

In the following paragraphs, the background of the conflict will be described. This section of the thesis will be focused on examples of conflict, reluctance, and lack of will to cooperate, which mark social and political relations between Otwock and Józefów. These phenomena take place not only on the administrative level, but also occur between the institutions of power (for example, police) and the society. Therefore, the conflict has many levels and takes many forms, such as lack of trust, lack of transparency, or disappointment – all of which impede communication and cooperation.

### 6.3.2. Manipulation, disinformation and lack of transparency

Epsilon is one of the NGOs interested in Świder Nature Reserve for its cultural values for the local community. The Reserve is traditionally a leisure place for the residents of Otwock county, and organizations Beta and Epsilon used that potential to organize social and cultural events in the area assigned by Otwock municipality for recreation. I met with activists from Epsilon on the 22th of February 2014 during an appointment set by B1. In order to find out how the sewage plant in Józefów would affect the Reserve, they have met with officials from Otwock and Józefów and asked them about fees charged for liquid waste treatment. Although the sewage plant located in Otwock receives waste from both towns, fees are higher in Józefów. However, a fee does not depend solely on the prices set by the sewage plant in Otwock, as it also includes the costs of pipelines maintenance. When the activists tried to obtain exact information on what specific charges are included in the overall fee, the officials denied them access to such knowledge. Even though the information about the fees is classified, Józefów administration accuses Otwock of overpricing the service, whereas Otwock representatives claim that the maintenance of the pipeline system in Józefów contributes to the higher prices there. The discussion about fees may be subject to disinformation, because Otwock and Józefów

officials blame the other side for overcharging, whereas they deny the residents access to specific information in the subject. Moreover, when the members of Epsilon met with the mayor of Józefów to talk about the sewage plant, he asked them where they come from. They answered in an evasive way, to avoid the bias which could emerge if they admitted that some of them are from Otwock. According to B1, there was a negotiation meeting where Józefów representatives demanded a reduction of the fee, but their claim was unfeasible for the sewage plant in Otwock.

If Józefów administration is supporting the investment by the argument that it aims at reducing the liquid waste tax, then then the project might be perceived as justifiable by the Józefów residents. However, both Epsilon and a member of the Otwock town council independently pointed out that building the sewage plant in Józefów will not necessarily reduce the fees. The investment includes great costs that will have to be covered at least partially by taxes paid by residents. According to a member of Otwock council, in order to realize the project, Józefów has to take a loan that will require decades to be repaid.

B1 also said that there was a rumor in Józefów that the sewage plant investment is in fact a faked attempt, and there is no real intention to realize it. According to that rumor, Józefów mayor feigned the investment to use it as a bargaining chip in the power game to coerce Otwock to reduce the fee. I cannot estimate how popular that rumor was among the residents, but it might be important to elaborate on its consequences. The sewage plant is a major investment which, if it gets realized, will influence the landscape, and infringe on the natural area protected by the Reserve. The fact that it was a subject of rumor that put in doubt its authenticity suggests that there was a considerable disinformation among the residents, perhaps because the town administration did not make an effort of informing them. Furthermore, the rumor might be to some extent useful in explaining the lack of major protests from the residents that declared their objection against the investment. Gardner and Stern cite a research suggesting that “Members of the general public (...) must perceive the negative consequences of an environmental or other threat as sufficiently serious and probable before they can become concerned about the threat and take actions against it” (Gardner and Stern 2002, 246). The above quotation implies that if the residents of Józefów have heard that the sewage plant is feigned, they did not take the issue seriously, which undermined the social potential of protests against the plant. To cite the authors once again: “a person will not take action against certain threats – regardless of the threats’ severity – if the person perceives the probability of the threats’ negative consequences as below some threshold level” (Ibid., 247).

B1 told me about that rumor during the meeting on the 22nd of February. In May, after I gained access to some official documentation regarding the investment in Józefów, it no longer seemed like a faked attempt. Nevertheless, it might be successful in convincing Otwock officials to be more flexible in the negotiations over the fee for processing liquid waste charged from Józefów. When I talked with a person from Otwock town council in April, he admitted that the tax paid by several thousand households in Józefów is a significant income that Otwock does not want to lose. He also expressed the opinion that after the approaching local government elections, a new set of officials in Otwock might be more determined to challenge the investment in Józefów by proposing a reduction of fees. However, the elections are planned in autumn, which might be too late to actually stop the building of the sewage plant in Józefów, which is going to affect the Świder Nature Reserve.

### 6.3.3. Power relations, distrust and disappointment between the administration and NGOs

An interesting perspective on the cooperation between local NGOs and administration was shared with me by D1. He used to belong to the association Delta, before it was disbanded due to, as he said “a conflict of interests”. According to D1, as soon as the town administration becomes aware of the existence of a new NGO, they attempt to control its activity. One of the means to achieve such control is to place a town representative as an insider within the NGO. Such a person can then inform the administration about NGO’s actions and use one’s authority to influence its agenda. As a result of such strategy, Delta had Otwock mayor as a board member. Another example of power relations between administration and NGOs is the dependency in terms of resources. As explained by D1, one of the basic conditions for functioning of an NGO is to have a space for regular meetings. It may turn out that the only way to obtain such space is to rent it from the town, which makes it difficult to take any decisions against the town policy. Analogically, any major action requires some budget, and sometimes the members cannot afford it on their own, and thus the NGO can become financially dependent on municipality funding.

Sometimes, during a decision making procedure, the town administration is obliged to hear the opinion of an environmental NGO. Even if the NGO has some objections towards the town



policy, there are some ways in which the administration can minimize the resistance. To illustrate such a situation, D1 used the following example: if the time of negotiation meeting is set within working hours on a weekday, most of the NGO members are at their workplace and are not able to attend the meeting. Those few who have the time for participation are often the elderly members, who might find it difficult to firmly oppose the town officials. Thus, the administration can push forward its own agenda, and still claim that they have “consulted” the environmentalists.

When I asked about the cooperation between administration and NGOs during the interview with Otwock municipality employees, they said that it happens only occasionally. Otwock administration has a coordinator for managing the cooperation with NGOs, but the civil servants themselves stated that such cooperation only takes place when the administration organizes a contest for carrying out a specific task. The procedure looks as follows: if the municipality agenda includes some tasks (for example, promoting tourism or organizing a recreational area) then it organizes a contest for fulfilling the assignment and provides funding for the winning NGO. In this manner, Beta, on behalf of Otwock municipality, adapted the area on the riverbank so that in 2013 it served as a place for recreation and social events.

Apart from such occasional examples, there used to exist a Centre for Ecological Education, organized by Otwock municipality as a forum for interaction between the administration and environmental NGOs. Initially, it was quite popular and triggered some ideas which were realized in collaboration. In the civil servant’s words: “in the beginning, it had a great attention. (...) But eventually, after some years when propositions of cooperation were only initiated by us, and the other side [the NGOs] did not respond, and there was no suggestion about the subjects which could be brought up during the meetings, it gradually declined”. She also stated that “unfortunately, environmental organizations defined their interests differently than in terms of cooperation”. Nowadays, “propositions from organizations wanting to do something specific are really rare”.

The story of the Centre for Ecological Education shows that after the initial phase of enthusiasm, the cooperation between Otwock administration and NGOs gradually turned into the present state of occasional contracts. On the other hand, the story of Delta and other remarks shared with me by D1 show that the environmentalists have some reasons to distrust the municipality representatives. Both stories took place several years ago, and what emerges from

them is a picture of mutual disappointment between NGOs and officials. According to D1, Otwock administration repeatedly showed its controlling intentions. In comparison with NGOs, it has the upper hand regarding power and resources, therefore it can easily realize its own agenda regardless of environmentalists' objections. Taking that into consideration, it might be hypothesized that environmentalists became increasingly distrustful and reluctant to cooperate with people in the position of power. Such supposition was confirmed by how A1 referred to the representatives as people abusing their authority [see Appendix 1] and by the statements of other activists.

On the other hand, the administration noticed the gradual loss of interest in cooperation from NGOs. There was a tone of disappointment in how the civil servant described the situation. She blamed NGOs for the lack of initiative. Indeed, in order for cooperation to work, all sides have to be willing and engaged in the project. But the municipality's reaction for the withdrawal of the NGOs was simply to withdraw as well. It is hard to assess whether the administration was not aware that the NGOs perceive its attitude as controlling, or whether they did not want to admit it in the interview. Nevertheless, what can be certainly stated is that they blamed the NGOs for the lack of cooperation and only proposed very formal, limited and occasional forms of collaboration in the form of assigning NGOs to fulfill prescribed tasks. From the perspective of local NGOs, the overall attitude of Otwock administration cannot therefore be described as encouraging or supportive, but rather as formal and controlling.

#### 6.3.4. Distrust between NGOs

The atmosphere of distrust is not limited to the relations between NGOs and administration; it also pervades the interactions between different NGOs. Gamma, which applied to the contest organized by Otwock municipality, was heavily disappointed when Beta won the contest (Lach 2013). A local newspaper issued an article quoting G1, who pointed out that Beta is based in Józefów and accused Beta of using support from its municipality officials to win the contest. In the article, G1 says that Gamma "holds a reasonable supposition that [Beta] works on behalf, and in the interest of Józefów municipality" (Ibid.). In the context of the sewage plant investment, Józefów municipality is pictured as a wrongdoer planning to pollute the river, and thus an adversary for Gamma. Therefore accusing Beta of collaboration with Józefów municipality has a pejorative meaning and challenges its role as the organizer of recreational

area on the Otwock side of the river. As B1 told me, a member of Gamma made similar accusations during a personal conversation with B1.

Even though Beta is indeed based in Józefów, the supposition that it covertly supports the plans for building the sewage plant nearby the river is an overstatement. Since the 11th of February, when I met B1 at the meeting with residents in Józefów, he introduced me into the details of the investment issue, and became one of my main informants by providing significant data and arranging a meeting with Epsilon. Association Beta is engaged in observing the procedure of the investment and looking for opportunities to oppose it. In this respect, it shares the purpose with Gamma, but the reluctance of the latter generated distrust in the former, and became an impediment for their future interaction. Gamma is committed to objecting Józefów's investment, but perhaps this commitment made G1 extrapolate the conflict between municipalities to their residents. To say that all people from Józefów support the construction of sewage plant is a hasty generalization. Even at the meeting on the 11th of February, on which G1 was present, there was a person who introduced himself as a representative of residents who will oppose the investments by all means [see Appendix 3]. The core of the problem is that the mentioned generalization has led Gamma to develop a prejudice against Beta.

The last few paragraphs were to illustrate how the alleged conflict between the municipalities can overshadow the interactions between NGOs that – apart from being located in different towns – have similar goals. The atmosphere of competition between the NGOs might be fuelled by the attitude of Otwock administration which was mentioned above, namely that it cooperates with and provides funding only for the few selected NGOs. In such a state of affairs, collaboration with the antagonist municipality is a heavy accusation, challenging the legitimacy of Beta's activity. The urgency of Józefów investment prompted G1 to establish an assembly of organizations to make a common standpoint and a stronger opposition against the sewage plant which might endanger the river Świder. However, even this attempt of cooperation is marked by distrust, as the members of Epsilon and Beta stated that they do not believe in G1's authority and are not willing to attend the assembly's meetings. G1, on the other hand expressed his doubts about the good intentions of Beta – therefore the distrust between Beta and Gamma is mutual.

### 6.3.5. Internal conflicts within an NGO

Conflicting interests also have an impact on the inner functioning of NGOs. This fact was suggested to me by D1, when he told me about the disbandment of Delta. I also had an opportunity to witness a clash of opinions within one association on the 20th of February. On that day I attended a meeting of Alpha, where I observed that discussions within one NGO can be intense and boisterous. The meeting was dedicated to discussing numerous environmental and political issues in the area of Otwock county. There have been many strong opinions about the discussed subjects and sometimes the NGO members interrupted each other. Some of the disputants were backing up their statements by appealing to their academic background or high-rank position. At some points, it seemed like the discussion came to a standstill, since there was no compromise between different points of view. Although the meeting had a previously fixed schedule, it was impossible to proceed according to the plan because of the ongoing argument. Some members of Alpha were trying to dominate the discussion, whereas other persons remained silent throughout the three-hour meeting. The subject of the sewage plant scheduled by Józefów was brought up several times in the discussion. However, each time the chairman replied that this issue has been previously decided upon, and it should not be discussed at the moment because it has not been included in the schedule – even though the meeting was not going according to the plan anyway.

Later in my research I found out that a woman holding an important position in Alpha is also a member of another organization, Zeta. At the meeting described above, she was one of the persons who dominated the discussion and prevented the meeting from moving on to other issues by persisting in her own opinion and refusing to acknowledge other points of view. According to a member of Otwock council, she is in conflict with the manager of the sewage plant in Otwock. It could be therefore inferred that from her perspective, the sewage plant in Józefów should not be opposed, because it challenges the interests of the sewage plant in Otwock. By such reasoning, the member of Otwock council explained to me why Alpha did not organize any major protests against Józefów's investment. Also A1 told me that the standpoint of Zeta member hindered definite actions of Alpha against the sewage plant in Józefów.

On the one hand, during my research I was told by many informants that Alpha is the most important environmental organization in Otwock. On the other hand, D1 claimed that their

capacity of bringing about real progress in the subject of local environmental policies is significantly limited, not only by external factors, like the stubbornness of the administration, but also by internal ones, such as insufficient potential of Alpha members to organize an effective action. From the perspective of a researcher interested in the NGOs' contribution to nature conservation, that opinion was hard to accept, because I hoped that Alpha would be the strongest protector of Świder Nature Reserve. However, my research confirmed D1's statements, as I found out that the activity of even the greatest NGOs in the area is hindered by conflicts of interests, both on formal and personal levels.

### 6.3.6. Impunity of crimes against the environment

Many informants were referring to the fact that crimes against the environment are not investigated by police nor prosecutors. D1 and A1 share the view that the police is reluctant to investigate cases of environmental destruction. Even when a crime against natural environment is evident, such cases either are not examined by the prosecutor at all, or are declared negligible and closed by the court [see Appendices 1 and 3]. The anglers whom I interviewed made similar statements based on their experience. They notified the police multiple times about various crimes against the environment, to no avail. As one of the anglers said: "We tried to call the police, but they ignored the problem." According to him, even when police received the notification, they did not take any further action: "We called many times about poaching. They accepted notifications, but nobody arrived. This is a standard case (...) On one occasion they said they will come [with a patrol], but no one arrived within an hour, so we did not wait any longer, because the person who has been poaching already escaped." Even when the case is reported to the police not by citizen, but by a municipality representative, it is not likely to be further investigated. As a civil servant told me during the interview: "On several occasions we tried to notify police [about cases] not only of fly-tipping, but also about damage on scarps by various investments in the Reserve and in the end the proceedings were discontinued by the police." She then explained the procedures applied to a crime against environment: "There are no administrative penalties, but the investigation is conducted by police, then the prosecutor can direct the case into the court, and there were cases which were discontinued." An angler went even further and stated that crimes against the environment generally remain unpunished. "How many acquittals there were, because the crimes were declared as negligible? Courts acquiesce for widespread law violation. The penalties were ridiculous, and they did not even

compensate the losses caused by poaching.” He stressed that impunity and acquiescence for breaching environmental regulations are one of the main problems for natural conservation. Offences against the environment are common, and there is no reaction from the administration, therefore the perpetrators are not discouraged.

Informants’ statements gathered in the above paragraph give a picture of how the investigations of crimes against the environment can be discontinued on any stage of the procedure. Persons who made the effort of calling the police to report such crimes were faced with inaction, even if they represented the town administration. It indicates that the police officers downplay cases of this sort, or they do not regard them as important enough to be further investigated. Therefore the case can be written off at a very early stage. Even if it is directed to the court, the offender might be acquitted, or the case altogether can be declared as negligible and discontinued thereafter. Indeed, according to informants, any crime against the environment – whether it refers to a damage done to the riverbank, poaching, or other forms of ecocide – eventually comes to a standstill at some stage of the procedure.

What follows from the above paragraphs is the feeling of disappointment from members of the society towards the police and the juridical system. These institutions have multiple times proven their inefficiency in tackling the issues of nature conservation. One of the reasons might be that such issues are continuously downplayed, and viewed not as important as other types of crimes. One could draw a conclusion that natural conservation is not sufficiently prioritized by the public institutions. However, it is not enough to say that legal procedures are inefficient in eliminating ecocide. Assuming that the society should trust the public institutions in how they approach complex problems like environmental protection, their idleness infringes on that trust. Police and courts are the ones who have the formal entitlement to secure environmental justice, and if they do not fulfill their duty, a common person can feel helpless. What is the sense of reacting to environmental crime, if such reaction is not supported by the representatives of law, and the offenders will not be punished? The problem is of a systemic scale: it consists in an institutional reluctance towards treating environmental threats seriously. It creates an obstacle for reactions against environmental crimes. People who would react are faced with institutional barrier and develop the attitude of disappointment and distrust, since they cannot count on support from law representatives. Such a state of affairs reproduces and reinforces indifference towards environmental problems in the society as well as in the institutions. As one of the anglers put it: “There is a lack of procedures for supporting the society’s reaction against various

symptoms of environmental devastation.” The witnesses of environmental crimes feel discouraged from admonishing the offenders. At the end of the interview with the civil servants, they admitted that reprimanding a stranger can be somewhat risky, because one can be alone in the woods and it can be hard to predict the other person’s response. An angler expressed the same idea in even sharper words: “If I react, he [the offender] will come and pierce the tires of my car.”

The relationships between a functioning juridical system, impunity and the society’s will to comply with the general norms are commented upon by Gardner and Stern, who link them to the issues of nature conservation. “Effective incentives are necessary to control the few who do not internalize the norms and others who usually follow the rules but may sometimes be tempted to stray. The ability to penalize the few violators assures the many that they will not suffer by controlling their own behavior. People need to know that violators will be discovered and dealt with in order to be comfortable doing what is good for the group” (Gardner and Stern 2002, 135). The chapter containing that quote is dedicated to the community management of the commons, and suggests that environmental crimes are simultaneously actions going against the good of community, thus breaking community rules. Therefore to prevent such actions, an incentive is needed, in this case, a negative incentive, in the sense that it means punishing the offenders (and not rewarding the desirable actions). “But without any incentives against overexploiting the common resource, some individuals could take advantage of other people’s self-restraint with impunity, and the system’s whole basis in trust would begin to unravel (...) and people would become less willing to exercise self-control, leading to a vicious cycle ending with the tragedy of commons. (...) It is necessary to have a system of sanctions to protect the group members from anyone (including themselves) who might be tempted to violate the rules for personal gain” (Ibid.). As was mentioned in the chapter of the thesis dedicated to fly-tipping, the offenders had a financial gain from avoiding to pay the trash tax and leaving their waste in wild areas instead. Any crime against the environment could be interpreted as an attempt to forward the offender’s interests at the expense of the common good, if the idea of common good is considered to include unharmed natural resources. The quotations from Gardner and Stern serve to explain why a system of sanctions against environmental crimes is vital for natural conservation. However, there are some limitations to the effectiveness of community sanctions against ecocide. The authors point out that Garrett Hardin claimed that human egoism will always override the regulations (Gardner and Stern 2002, 136). In such a scenario, crimes

against the environment would still be committed, regardless of resulting punishment. Moreover, for the sanctions to work properly, a strong community is needed (Ibid.) which would include relationships of trust, responsibility and shared values. It is not certain if this can be granted in the context of Świder Nature Reserve. Furthermore, a fair juridical system might be an independent factor, even if the community itself is strong and coherent. What I mean here is that the official institutions can be subject to bias or even corruption (Hardin 1968, 1246), which might result in unfair trials or punishing only some offenders, while others are acquitted. The complexity of the issue of crimes against the environment and their impunity reaches many levels of social structure and is related to the issues of trust, responsibility and values, therefore it can be said that the problem is systemic.

### 6.3.7. Disregard and contempt from administration and public institutions towards NGOs

Another peculiar characteristic of social relations that kept on resurfacing in the interviews was the disregard from official institutions towards social initiatives. It was first suggested to me in a phone conversations I had with D1 in the beginning of February 2014 [see Appendix 2]. He told me about his experience in association Delta, where they had an initiative they consulted with an administration representative from Józefów. This initiative met with indifference from the administrative side, which was not interested in any cooperation with Delta. As D1 told me, the representative said that they can continue with the initiative, but they should not bother Józefów about it.

During my research, I interviewed anglers who used to be active in the area of Świder Nature Reserve. They have been engaged in voluntary work of protecting the place by cleaning up the riverbanks from garbage, patrolling, and reporting cases of environmental crimes such as poaching or fly-tipping. As I wrote above, there was no reaction from the police, but even the Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection did not take any action after the anglers sent pictures of illegal landfills they found nearby the river. As one of the anglers told me, local authorities were not interested in organizing any interventions in response to the reported infringements against nature conservation within the Reserve, however they supported the volunteer actions of cleaning up the area by making sure that garbage bags were provided and the collected garbage carried out.



In the interviews, anglers told me about their attempt to establish their own organization and to collaborate with Polish Angling Association, Warsaw University of Life Sciences and the Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection. They were also planning to cooperate with schools in educational projects, make information posts and maps about the Reserve, and control the fish population. These plans were not realized because of institutional obstacles. First of all, an organization should be registered by an appropriate authority in order to function legally, but anglers' application was repeatedly rejected. Also the Polish Angling Association (PAA) was unwilling to engage in a dialogue. One of the anglers who tried to contact PAA through correspondence and also participated in the PAA meetings, told me that they "weren't interested at all" in any kind of collaboration. He complained that Polish Angling Association did not accept his requests for transparency, and that its personnel is incompetent. He eventually resigned from his membership in PAA. Another angler stated that "there was no will for cooperation" from PAA. The anglers tried to get in contact also with the Nature Conservator from the Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection. In an angler's words: "I have sent an email (...) asking for confirmation of receipt and for a response. He neither confirmed, nor responded. I called something like ten times, each time the secretary said that he is busy, on a meeting, or absent, and so on. I left my number for him to call back, and he never called." Therefore the Nature Conservator, a person in charge of the Świder Nature Reserve, ignored offers of dialogue and partnership from an organization willing to operate within that area. The angler went on to say that the Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection "is not interested in the existence of any social factor whatsoever" in the conservation policy. In a more general remark about the attitude of decision makers, he stated that "The administration does not respect people nor the environment." Therefore the activists feel that the officials ignore them or look down on them and that there is no support for social environmental initiatives. The anglers whom I interviewed kept their association on informal level, even though their plans could not be realized because of stubbornness of other institutions. One of the anglers summed up the relations between official institutions and social initiatives in the following words: "Disregard for social organizations from the side of authorities and the state administration is one of the greatest barriers, because [social organizations] are treated contemptuously".

The fact that decision makers exclude social organizations from taking active part in conservation policies is also expressed in bureaucratic procedures. Throughout the time of my

research, I stayed in contact with members of social and environmental associations who kept me informed about the formal preparations necessary for the construction of the sewage plant in Józefów to be considered as legal. Józefów administration applied for the approval of the investment from the governor of the Otwock county and the Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection, and the procedure takes place mainly between these three institutions. It is possible to gain a status of a stakeholder and be considered as a party involved in the procedure only if one's application is accepted by the county governor. Interestingly, the town of Otwock applied for a recognition as a stakeholder, but its application was rejected along with applications made by a number of social and environmental organizations. A local newspaper published an article about the subject, with the title "Environmentalists are not stakeholders" (Wysocka 2014). According to the article, the recognition as a stakeholder allows a given party to "be actively involved in the procedure, have access to the documentation, make official statements..." and so on. Unfortunately, "the county governor's office refused to acknowledge environmentalists as stakeholders" (Ibid.). In response, the environmental associations are considering reporting to a prosecutor's office that the administration is "misusing the public financial resources" aiming to infringe on a natural site which is supposed to be protected by the law (Ibid.). Although the article only mentions Alpha and Gamma, during my fieldwork I learned that Beta also applied to be recognized as a stakeholder and to be involved in the legal procedures, but was rejected just like other associations.

The above paragraphs were dedicated to the way in which the administration and official institutions treat social initiatives and environmental associations. The statements of informants and the article from a local newspaper reveal a peculiar aspect of power relations pertaining to the Otwock county and specifically to the bureaucratic procedures around the sewage plant investment in Józefów. Although the stories refer to different situations, they have the common element, namely the administrators and decision makers looking down upon activists or ignoring their proposals of dialogue. As was written above, not only social associations but also the town of Otwock was rejected as a stakeholder in the bureaucratic procedure. Such approach of the county governor's office means excluding the parties affected by the outcomes of the decision from the process of decision making. The procedures are constructed in such a way that the policymakers are not obliged to take other parties into account. Therefore institutions and associations that might be skeptical towards the project are silenced and it takes them additional effort to get their message through the institutional resistance.

### 6.3.8. Neglect

Another problem regarding the Reserve is the lack of coherent and comprehensive set of rules that would regulate human behavior within its area in accordance with the general rules of nature conservation. Such set of rules specific to the Reserve was created at the time when it was established (Polish Ministry of Forestry and Timber Industry 1978). Since then there has not been any similar publication, even though the landscape underwent changes throughout decades [see Appendix 1]. The environmental protection law from 2004 requires that a conservation plan specific for the given reserve should be issued within 5 years from the time of the reserve's establishment (Polish Parliament 2004). No such plan has ever been issued for the Świder Nature Reserve. Furthermore, the mentioned law forbids almost any activity within the protected areas. Even entering reserves or parks is prohibited, except for determined trails. Trails and areas allowing human activity should be included in the conservation plan, but since there is no such plan for the Świder Nature Reserve, almost any activity – that is: walking, biking, fishing etc. is prohibited by law. In fact, this law exists only on paper, because the area of the Reserve is traditionally used for recreational purposes and there are plenty of frequented trails along the river. One could wonder about the legitimacy of a law that prohibits any activity in a given protected area, and yet simultaneously assumes that activity will be again allowed by specific regulations. Nevertheless, it is not the purpose of this thesis to challenge the law – even though in order to make a visual documentation, I had to enter the Reserve, and therefore break the rules. Rather, I would like to point towards two significant issues: first, there is no enforcement of the environmental regulations. Second, at the present stage, there is a discrepancy between the regulations and the actual mode of human activity within the Reserve.

I made individual interviews with four anglers who visit the Reserve on a regular basis, and each of them, independently, stated that there is insufficient supervision from institutions in charge of environmental protection. As one of the anglers said: “At the Świder river I have never met anyone responsible for nature conservation, any policeman, any representative of Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection, anyone, never. There is not even a single sign of care for that environment”. Another angler stated that the pollution of the Reserve could be reduced and even stopped if only the appropriate institution would organize patrols. As I learned during the interview with civil servants, it is a Municipal Guard's responsibility to react against fly-tipping, but its actual mode of operation is that the Guard must be notified first, in order to arrive at the specific point and take appropriate action, because it is not obliged to make

patrols in the Reserve. Its main area of concern is in the town, and not natural areas. However, as one of the anglers pointed out, the official law for environmental protection from 2004 practically forbids human presence within nature reserves (unless they have an individual nature conservation plan that allows it). Therefore a person who would notify the Municipal Guard, or any other service, about something wrong taking place in the Reserve, would also have to explain his or her presence there. Summing up, the Guard does not react to environmental crimes in the Reserve because it is not notified, and the possibilities of notifying are narrowed by the way the law is constructed.

The institution in charge of the Reserve is the Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection. According to some of my informants, it is doubtful if the staff of the Directorate is aware of the situation of the Reserve. Although the Directorate's approval is required for any major interference in the Reserve, there are opinions that its approach towards natural conservation is mainly bureaucratic. As one of informants said: "they are completely out of touch with the reality (...) There are no field patrols (...) They do not understand what is happening – or they do, but play dumb and assume that the problem does not exist." One of the anglers stated that Polish Angling Association urged the Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection for several years to develop a conservation plan for Świder Reserve, but it did not bring any effect. In result, the law from 2004 that forbids practically any activity in the Reserve is binding, but only on paper. In practice, the Świder Reserve is a popular recreational site for the residents of the Otwock county as well as for tourists.

The discrepancy between the actual state of affairs and the regulations seems not to concern the official institutions. One of informants suggested that the administration avoids the subject by simply refusing to acknowledge the situation. It is required by law that the conservation plan should be subject for public consideration (Polish Parliament 2004), which would mean additional work for the Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection staff. It is easier to just let things be as they are: the access to the Reserve is theoretically restricted, but there is no enforcement therefore anyone can be there, and there is only a very limited control over pollution and other environmental crimes. The outcome is that the Reserve as it appears in documentation and as it actually is are two separate realities, one of them fixed and stable, and the other – endangered and under a heavy anthropogenic pressure.

## 7. Conclusion and possible solutions

In my thesis, I focused on two examples of environmental threats affecting the condition of the Świder Nature Reserve. Fly-tipping is a constant phenomenon that both environmentalists and civil servants hope will improve over time, even if the improvement will take decades. Because of its constant appearance it is naturalized, in the sense that it is considered normal and not seriously problematic. The municipality workers do not have any specific countermeasures for it except for cleaning-up actions taking place several times a year, but the effectiveness of these actions is questionable. Fly-tipping is a widespread phenomenon taking place in towns, forests and within protected areas. It is not considered significant in economic terms, despite its spacio-temporal and cultural dimensions.

The sewage plant is a quite new issue that emerged in recent years and provoked a political dispute, as it will affect the economic relations in the region and also requires serious investments. Although opinions vary on whether the plant will be actually constructed, it seems that the Józefów municipality is determined to realize its plans and keeps on publishing new documents concerning the construction. If they fulfil their plans, the extent of destruction done to the Reserve will be irreversible and potentially growing, if the plant will not follow the quality norms and pollute the river. Therefore the environmentalists consider the plant a lot more important and urgent problem than fly-tipping. Nevertheless, it seems that it is not important enough for the organizations to really cooperate, or to organize protests together.

Apart from the conflicts of interests, there were also positive initiatives on the side of administration, such as the Centre for Ecological Education, as well as from the NGOs, such as the assembly of organizations. Both of them were aimed at facilitating cooperation for the sake of environmental protection, but their effectiveness was eventually challenged by bias and distrust. The meetings of the Centre were suspended, as the will to cooperate has gradually dwindled both in NGOs and the administration representatives. The assembly, on the other hand, has regular meetings and puts great effort in protecting the Reserve from the threat of the sewage plant, but is not free from prejudices that prevented some NGOs from joining it.

Assuming that the law and courts of justice are the proper way to fight environmental devastation, nature needs a representation (Higgins n.d.) or should be granted rights. The existing environmental regulations are often insufficient to prevent ecocide (Ibid.). In the

context of Świder Nature Reserve, the actors who have the motivation and formal legitimacy to protect the environment and its rights are the NGOs. However, their efficiency in doing so is limited both by internal and external factors. First of all, even if they have a common goal to protect the Reserve, or more specifically, prevent its potential destruction by the sewage plant, they might not be able to overcome personal conflicts or prejudices. Moreover, informal organizations can get stuck in the bureaucratic procedures and thus be prevented from obtaining the official status of an association. Being an officially recognized association is necessary for applying for a status of a stakeholder in the decision making that affects the environment, but it is not sufficient. Summing up, there are numerous ways in which the environmental activism can be suppressed by institutional barriers.

The NGOs who nevertheless attempt to express opinions differing from the plans of administrations have to face an already ongoing discussion between the municipalities of Otwock and Józefów. In the paradigm of political dispute, the dominant values are the protection of one's own interests and economic gain. The validity of environmental arguments is not recognized by the decision makers, and in result, the conflict over the sewage plant is reduced to calculation of financial gains or losses.

The lack of constructive communication between environmentalists and administrations is not only caused by institutional obstacles. It seems that there is a bias that causes environmentalists to think that they cannot treat officials as a partner. The bias is supported and reinforced by the examples of inaction or attempts of control from the side of officials. Another cause of the bias seems to originate from the difference in their approaches towards nature conservation. The environmentalists perceive fly-tipping and sewage plant in terms of environmental threats. They show personal or even passionate attitudes towards nature conservation. By contrast, the officials treat fly-tipping or the sewage plant as objects of decision making and management. Some of environmentalists' actions are in accordance with the municipal policies, but a significant portion actually opposes official decisions. They feel responsible for the environment, but this particular kind of responsibility is not the one of a workplace or an externally assigned duty. Rather, it comes from their own ideas of what is the right thing to do, or perhaps a sense of a mission. From the administrative perspective, nature conservation is a matter of laws, norms and directives that have to be fulfilled. Perhaps there is something missing in this formal approach.

Local authorities utilize their power and resources on realizing their agenda and are focused on securing their interests in the political struggle, therefore natural conservation as a goal in itself misses their attention. On the other hand, the NGOs that are willing to dedicate their efforts to the environment face difficulties caused both by institutional reluctance and their own conflicts. As the struggle continues, its object – the Reserve – is gradually destroyed by pollution. Hence the concept of a battleground, as a place that suffers damage as a consequence of confronting powers. The conflict itself is such an overwhelming and all-encompassing issue that it consumes the energy that could be used for cooperation and effective protection the Reserve.

What follows from the above observations is that there is a competition among NGOs as well as administrations. The atmosphere of antagonism results from deep-rooted opposition between “us” and “them”, in the sense that each stakeholder assumes that others act against him. Perhaps it is something that none of the parties would easily admit, but it is visible in the numerous examples of unwillingness to interact and cooperate which I described in the main part of the thesis. NGOs as well as administrations put effort into securing their standpoints and not into protection of the common interest. This lack of teamwork and mutual understanding has a negative impact on the condition of the Świder Nature Reserve. Instead of developing solutions acceptable for all sides, parties waste their potential in personal conflicts and arguing with others.

A possible solution to the described situation would be to make the conservation of the Reserve a common goal. It would involve a re-discovering of its importance for the community of both Józefów and Otwock municipalities. The desired result would consist in NGOs and municipalities valuing the Reserve more than their particular interests. Although this ideal seems now improbable to reach, the stakeholders could work towards it with the help of Participatory Action Research. A necessary condition for Participatory Action Research is a will of change shared by all stakeholders, but it seems like a change in attitudes has to come this or another way if the Reserve is about to survive.

The findings from observations and interviews also suggest that in the present legal, administrative, and social system nature conservation is not sufficiently prioritized. Environmental actions are sporadic or limited to initiatives by volunteers, ecocide is either not prosecuted or acquitted, and there is a lot of inertia in how the institutions react to environmental

problems. The problem of impunity of crimes against the environment applies to the whole society; citizens do not feel safe or encouraged to admonish the offenders when they witness a case of fly-tipping.

It was shown above that law by itself is not enough to secure the environment from anthropogenic pressure, because it does not follow the actual situation “on the ground”. The only law that nowadays applies to the Reserve consists mainly of prohibitions. It forbids walking and biking in the protected area and excludes camp fires. All these activities take place in the Reserve on daily basis, but in fact they are not very detrimental, if they are kept on moderate levels and are not accompanied by more harmful activities.

The current state of affairs, where the law prohibits any activity inside the Reserve, and yet it is not obeyed, makes the protection of the Reserve ineffective. The law itself is too strict, and it lacks implementation. Instead of absolute prohibition, a set of rules should be established that would allow activity in the Reserve under some conditions. Breaking those rules should result, for example, in financial fines. Hardin proposes such a solution, and in his words, coercion should replace prohibition. He further explains that by coercion he understands “mutual coercion, mutually agreed upon by the majority of people affected” (Hardin 1968, 1247). The involvement of the community in designing the rules is crucial for their successful implementation.

Interestingly, it is required that designing a conservation plan for a reserve should involve social participation. The absence of such a plan for the Świder Nature Reserve is not only against the environmental law, but also suggests that Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection prefers to leave the situation as it is instead of introducing new regulations. However, as Hardin points out, “status quo is action” (Ibid., 1248). The fact that the responsible institution does not intervene does not mean that the situation is not deteriorating. The lack of a conservation plan is taken advantage of, for example by developers who constructed settlements nearby or even inside the Reserve, or polluters putting sewage into the river. Analogically, impunity of ecocide benefits the offenders. Therefore the inaction of institutions responsible for natural conservation contributes to the deterioration of areas that should be actively protected.

The conclusion of the above paragraph is that a conservation plan designed specifically for Świder Nature Reserve is necessary to stop its gradual devastation. However, additional



regulations are not enough by themselves. They should be implemented and supported by a professional and paid service. The commitment of volunteers is welcome, but the current situation shows that it is not enough, and there is a need of a service that would have a legitimacy to intervene in cases of ecocide. Another important issue is the participation of the community in designing the environmental regulations. Such a project would be a perfect opportunity to shape new attitudes towards nature. A publicly consulted conservation plan should facilitate the appreciation of the environment in itself, and not only as a recreational area.

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# Appendix 1

## Fieldnotes taken after phone conversation and interview with A1

### **February 6th:**

A1 talked about many issues connected to Świder and directed me to the Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection to look for documentation about the foundation of the Reserve. He said that there have been many changes since the Reserve was created. There has been hydraulic engineering, but also changes in land use, for example, there used to be pasturage on the river banks, but it does not take place now. A1 told me also that there are plans to build a sewage plant in Józefów, which is going to have a discharge pipe leading into the river, facing the recreational area situated on the river bank on the Otwock side. He was also talking about sewage plants upstream and he complained about the substandard quality of wastewater they pour into the river.

He also talked about municipality officials, and highlighting their lack of competence as they make decisions about issues, having insufficient knowledge.

I'm starting to be aware that there may be a serious issue between Otwock and Józefów which might involve not only lack of will for cooperation between towns' officials, but also some extent of hostility.

### **February 10th:**

A1 pointed out the weak supervision of construction inspectorate; buildings are planned and established in areas which are not suitable (examples of such objectionable developments were already pointed out and condemned in 80s by Czesław Łaszek). So far, Świder Nature Reserve did not obtain its conservation plan, (and this fact is problematic, as it shows a considerable extent of neglect from Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection) but even in areas which have their own conservation plan, construction investments are done in spite of such plans.

The police is reluctant towards getting engaged in cases of environmental destruction. Even when the crime against natural environment is evident, the case is either not examined by prosecutor at all, or it is declared negligible and closed.

A1 expressed the opinion that over the years, the Reserve has become "wild", and that is because it is not sufficiently popularized as a recreational site for the local community. If there was a conservation plan, there could be organized activities within the limits of such plan.

A1 also remembers the times before the river Świder estuary to Vistula River was artificially and severely reorganized in the 70s. Back then, the level of water was higher, and subject to fluctuations, so that sometimes, especially in the winter season, there were minor floods. He said that one of the reasons for establishing the Reserve was the preservation of landscape,

but that goal has not been fully achieved, since in the initial years of the Reserve, it was surrounded by rural areas. Since then, agriculture gradually receded from the landscape.

Liquid waste flowing into the river is a significant and even a growing issue. In the winter time, when the surface of the river is covered by ice, one can observe sewage inlets, because the water does not freeze there due to their higher temperature.

Another problem contributing to the pollution of water in the river is the fact that people can park their cars on the river bank (also mentioned in Łaszek 1988). Although it is against the rules of the Reserve, they go even further and wash their vehicles using water from the river. The rules of environmental protection are violated, but there is no one to prevent it or ensure compliance. Previously, people serving in the Environmental Protection Guard had the authority to intervene and reprimand whenever they witnessed someone acting against environmental regulations. The situation has changed since the disbandment of Environmental Protection Guard (2001). Nowadays there is no other service to fulfill that duty, and it is not as easy to admonish someone on the basis of nature conservation rules.

Environmental Protection Guard (Straż Ochrony Przyrody) consisted of volunteers and integrated other smaller organizations connected with nature conservation. It was governed by the regional Nature Conservator. After its disbandment, only minor organizations remained. There are professional services for environmental protection working on given areas, for example terrains belonging to State Forests are maintained by Forest Service, and landscape parks have their respective Landscape Park Guard. The advantage of Environmental Protection Guard was that they could schedule a patrol in any terrain, after consulting it with Nature Conservator (therefore they had experience and knowledge about different areas).

I asked A1 if there was any chance of developing a professional, paid service that could take over the duties left after Environmental Protection Guard. He said that there was such an idea, and it was even consulted with the Prime Minister (by the name of the PM, I concluded that the talks must have taken place between 2001 and 2004), but the negotiations came to a standstill.

A1 did not hide his antipathy towards administration representatives; in his words: “Nouveau-riche rabble grabbed political power after communism”. “Disrespect for nature is rooted deep in administrative circles.”

There is a lack of positive examples that officials could follow. One of the very few was the mayor of Terespol town, who – as A1 said – used to buy parcels of land to save it from environmental destruction.

A1 also pointed towards the connection between privatization, deforestation and development. He said that privatization has led to a situation where land is sold to construction companies, who clear forests for building investments. He suggested that there might be a construction invertors' lobby involved, and gave an example of hospitals in Otwock area which sold great areas of land covered by pine forests to a developer.

## Appendix 2

### Fieldnotes taken after phone conversation and interview with D1

#### **February 5th:**

D1 used to belong to association Delta, which was eventually disbanded due to a conflict of interests. When the association was functioning, they wanted to arrange a small bridge over the river, and asked an official from Józefów for an opinion, but she said that they can make the bridge but they should not bother Józefów about it. TJ also mentioned a right-wing politician from Józefów, who few years ago had a project of changing the administrative border so that the river would completely belong to Józefów. The motivation was that within one administration, the river could be better managed, but the project was not accepted.

#### **February 13th:**

The discourse about the Świder Nature Reserve, and especially about the sewage plant scheduled by Józefów is highly politicized. The administration of Józefów shrugs off any ecological argument against the sewage plant because they assume that it is only a cover-up for Otwock agenda.

I suggested that in order to reinforce ecological arguments against pollution of the river, there should be created a new association of ecologists, focused only on natural conservation. It should make a special effort to be perceived as apolitical, in the sense of not siding with Otwock, nor Józefów, and to avoid being labelled as a covert ally of either one. D1 explained that the administration wants to maintain control over ecological associations, therefore they adopted a strategy of placing a representative as an insider as soon as they become aware of the association's existence. Therefore the association Delta had the Otwock mayor as a member of its board, and was dependent on the town support to have a room for meetings and so on. The town administration patronized the association.

D1 described the mechanism by which the town pushes forward its own agenda regardless of the objections of environmentalists from Alpha. Town administration sets up a time for counseling the decision at, say, 13.00 in the middle of the week. Members of Alpha are working, so they do not come to the counseling, except for those who are old and on a retirement, who do not have the energy to form a strong opposition. Then, after the decision is made, the town can with a clean conscience say that the environmentalists had a chance to intervene and they did not use it.

D1 criticized actions for "cleaning up the environment" organized by schools. School children take part in these actions every year and collect garbage from forests and the area of the Reserve. These actions are organized with the intention of raising environmental awareness, but in fact they can have anti-educational impact, because children do not see any improvement after their interventions. They may think that their efforts are in vain, because each year they find garbage in forests again. There is no significant progress in reducing the pollution. The fact that each year school children collect a greater amount of garbage is

announced a success by the teachers, whereas, according to D1, a true success would be achieved if there was no garbage in the forest or river in the first place.

Other similar initiatives are also counter-effective; D1 gave an example of a school contest for collecting used batteries. If the aim is to collect as many batteries as possible, in consequence such a contest induces battery consumption.

According to him, ecology is not only about waste. Waste management is just one of many aspects of ecology, but the way ecological issues are presented to school children may suggest that it is the main aspect.

When I suggested that the Environmental Protection Guard should be restored, or maybe a new (paid) service should take its place, he said that the prevention of fly-tipping, interventions and making sure that the garbage is taken away from the Reserve belong to the duties of the Municipal Guard (Straż Miejska). Therefore the official reasoning goes like this: Why should the town administration support the formation of another service that would duplicate the duties? Therefore even though personally D1 would support the idea of creating a professional service for maintaining nature conservation, in his opinion there is no chance that the officials would embrace such a proposition.

Environmental Protection Guard was a voluntary service, and D1 is rather critical towards the way in which voluntary work is organized in Poland. He described his experiences with Otwock authorities who, when he wanted to organize some event, did not provide any support. He claimed that the core of the problem is that voluntary work is taken for granted, both by volunteers and structures which benefit from their work. As an example, he referred to older members of Alpha, who assert that in their times unpaid, voluntary work was something obvious.

When asked about the already non-existent association Delta, he said that the main motivation towards creating the association was blocking major hydraulic engineering planned for Świder's estuary to Vistula river. This part of Świder is not protected by the rules of Reserve (because it has been engineered in the 70's) so there would be no formal obstacles for major landscape modifications, except for objections raised by environmentalists. The project of reshaping Świder's estuary was supported by alliance between scientists from Warsaw University of Life Sciences and developer industry. Nevertheless, it has been suspended, even though its main adversary, Delta, was disbanded.

I asked if it would be possible to expand the borders of the Reserve in order to prevent future attempts of hydraulic engineering, but D1 stated it is impossible due to administrative inertia, and we should rather focus on protecting the Reserve as it is now.

Świder's tributary, Mienia, is polluted by sewage plants in towns of Mińsk Mazowiecki and Wiązowna. Wiązowna is expanding its settlements and in near future, its sewage plant will be receiving more wastewater, which then will be poured into Mienia. Mienia's reinforced stream will then smooth out the riverbed and flatten the meanders, and it may even turn out that Mienia will be the main river and Świder – its tributary. Conservation of natural riverbeds and meanders was one of the main reasons to create the Reserve in the first place, so the Reserve will lose its *raison d'être*, because there will be nothing to protect any more. D1's hypothesis is that the mayor of Józefów already knows what is happening, and in the possible



termination of the Świder Reserve, he sees the opportunity for realization of his plans regarding the construction of sewage plant.

I referred to the case I found in the archives of Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection, where landowners were forced to clean up a waste dump from their land. D1 agreed with my remark that those people were rather unfortunate. Usually nothing is done in such cases; it is hard to prove that the land owner was the one who littered, so it is also hard to make them responsible. Indeed, fly-tipping is not the most important environmental problem. For example, in the early 2000's, a day care institution was built in Otwock, on the river bank. During construction works, riverside was completely destroyed, modified and flattened. The transformation was irreversible, and yet there were no legal consequences, nobody was blamed. Crimes against the natural environment are ignored, and courts invariably declare such cases as negligible.

## Appendix 3

### Fieldnotes from the 11th of February – conversation with B1 and meeting with Józefów representatives

#### **February 11th: meeting in Józefów**

I received a phone call from A1 who said that on February 11th, the Józefów mayor is organizing a meeting about the scheduled investment to build a sewage plant near the bank of river Świder. A1 suggested that I should go there and also he gave me contact information to B1. In spite of what A1 told me, the meeting was in fact about urban planning projects in Józefów, and it was not in the intentions of Józefów mayor to discuss the sewage plant.

#### **Conversation with B1:**

*(Member of association Beta, which cooperated with Otwock Municipality to create a recreational area on the Otwock side of Świder river. Although he comes from Józefów, he does not approve of the plans for building a sewage plant there.)*

Tests showed presence of E. coli bacteria in the river, which indicates that river water is polluted by sewage.

Józefów authorities do not appreciate the river and the Reserve as a natural resource. They take it for granted, but do not consider it as important in their plans, therefore they miss its potential.

On the other hand, Otwock administration insists on organizing a pool, even though at the place where they want to make it, it is virtually impossible to fulfill all the conditions required by law for allowing people to swim in the river. (It is not forbidden to swim in the river, but so far people do it on their own responsibility, whereas Otwock has an ambition to make certain place into a town-sponsored recreational area with a possibility of swimming).

In the summer season of 2013, association Beta organized a recreational area on a river bank on behalf of Otwock. A recurrent problem was littering; people left garbage on the beach even though garbage cans were nearby.

After Otwock organized recreational area on its side of the river, Józefów placed some garbage cans on its side. (I saw that some of them were vandalized and in some cases trash was left beside the can)

B1 expressed a hope that I will speak up against the planned sewage plant, but he also warned me that I should not disclose that I live in Otwock. (Suggestion about Otwock-Józefów animosity and that if I spoke as a resident of Otwock, my words could be discarded.)

## **The meeting:**

The first part of the meeting was dedicated to the presentation of urban planning projects made by students for municipality-funded competition. The projects included setting up a theme park at the river bank, opposite to the place where Otwock organized its recreational site. The place where the sewage plant had been scheduled was however omitted in the projects, or pictured as a blank area, and the plant was not mentioned in the presentations, even though it is going to be situated very close to the designed theme park.

After the presentation part was finished, there was a time for comments. I asked if the designers took sewage plant into account in their projects, and if the presence of the plant won't be a nuisance for the people visiting the area.

The lecturer who presented the projects replied that the sewage plant was not their subject, and therefore it was not taken into account. The Józefów mayor stated that the sewage plant is not supposed to be discussed during the meeting. He was visibly irritated. Nevertheless, the next person to speak up was a man who introduced himself as a Józefów resident and stated that some of the people attending the meeting came here especially for discussing the subject of the sewage plant, and that he represents the people who will oppose its construction by any means. After these firm words, he stood up and left, so I did not have a chance of talking to him.

Next person to speak was G1, who stressed the fact that in case of any breakdown, the liquid waste will have to be channeled directly into the river. He also pointed out that purity standards for the wastewater flowing out of sewage plants are often neglected, especially in case of small plants, like the one scheduled in Józefów.

The mayor of Józefów was very nervous to hear all those comments, and he kept on repeating that this meeting is not about the sewage plant. Nevertheless, he made a remark that the water of river Świder is polluted anyway, because of sewage plants in Wiązowna and Mińsk Mazowiecki, both of them putting wastewater into Mienia, which is Świder's tributary. He asked why he cannot build his own plant if other towns did it already.

I said "The residents demand a consultation meeting about the sewage plant." He answered that such a meeting will be held in March. (no consultation in the subject of sewage plant has been held in March nor in April)

The atmosphere was a bit heated, and when the meeting has finished, I found myself surrounded by people wanting to continue the discussion. They tried to convince me that sewage plant is not a problem. A woman, who, as I later learned, was the Józefów municipality spokesperson, said that the current advanced technology excludes any possibility of a breakdown (I found it interesting that speaking to me, she was in fact responding to an argument made by someone else a while before). Although she was seemingly upset, she tried to convince me that the discussion around the sewage plant should be calm and objective. She also said that Otwock lobbies against the plant in Józefów, because so far, the liquid waste from Józefów is transported to Otwock, therefore Józefów has to pay great amounts of money to Otwock for the refinement of its waste. Speaking shortly, Otwock is afraid of losing its benefits and does not want Józefów to have an independent sewage system.

# Appendix 4

## Fieldwork timetable

**February 2nd** – visit at the Reserve, taking pictures

**February 4th** – contact with the environmental association Alpha. The secretary invited me to their meeting

**February 5th** – conversation with D1

**February 6th** – conversation with A1

**February 7th** – visit in Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection (RDOŚ)

**February 10th** – interview with A1

**February 11th** – meeting in Józefów

**February 13th** – interview with D1

**February 15th** – visit in Otwock Museum, getting access to literature in the archives

**February 16th** – meeting a Warsaw-based NGO, getting background knowledge of the area

**February 17th** – interview with Otwock municipality employees in the town hall

**February 20th** – visit at the Reserve, participation in meeting of association Alpha, interview with G1

**February 22nd** – meeting between members of Beta and Epsilon and interview with B1

**April 11th** – contacted anglers by e-mail and arranged meetings. The angler who preferred to be interviewed through e-mail sent me back his responses on the 28th of April

**April 17th** – interview with an angler

**April 18th** – interview with an angler

**April 21st** – taking pictures at the Reserve, interview with Otwock town council member

**April 28th** – interview with kayaker

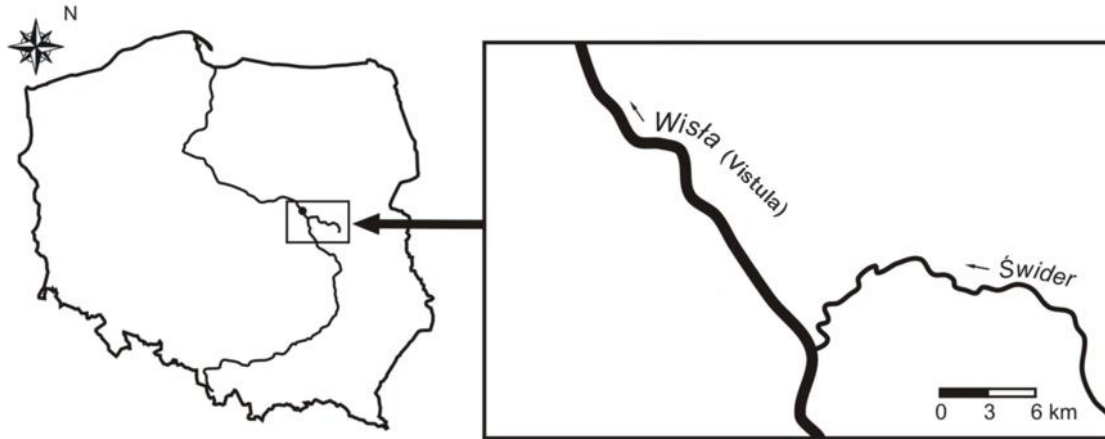
**April 29th** – phone interview with an angler

**April 29th** – interview with former mayor of Otwock

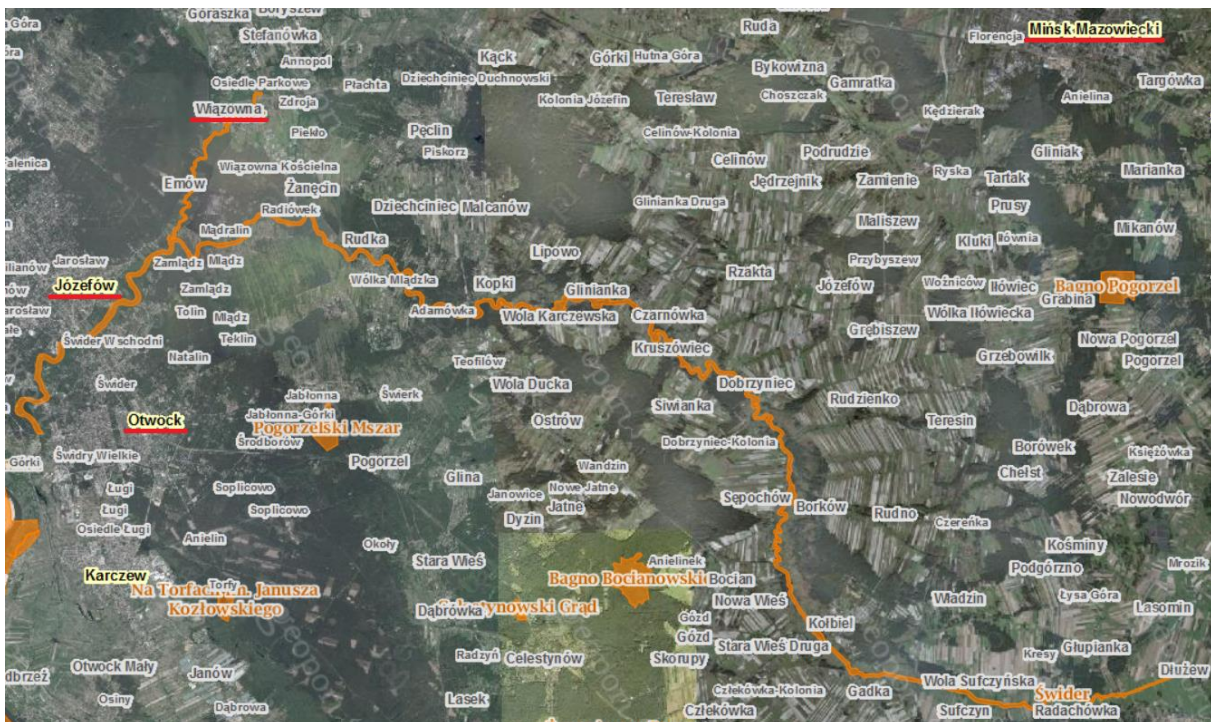
**June 11th** – participation in public consultations in Józefów

## Appendix 5

### Maps

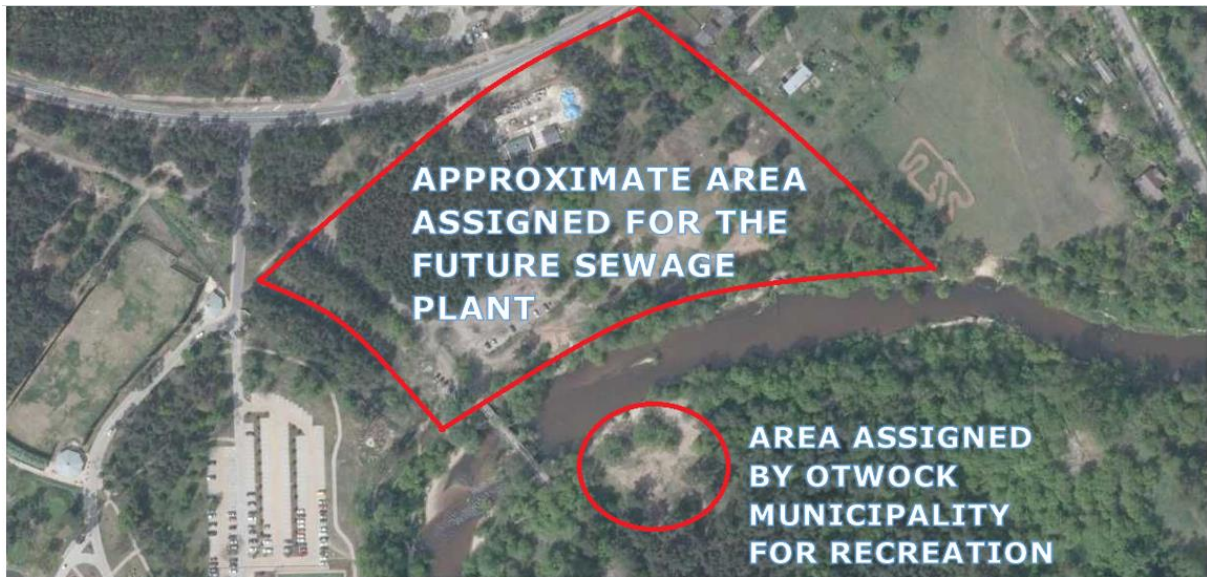


Location of rivers Świder and Vistula on the map of Poland. The original picture created and published by Łaszewski (2014, 48). Edited and used here under the author's permission.



Świder Nature Reserve and the nearby municipalities. Locations mentioned in the thesis (Józefów, Mińsk Mazowiecki, Otwock, Wiązowna) are underlined. The Reserve is visible as a thin orange line.

The original picture is a screenshot from the General Directorate for Environmental Protection website, which I used under their permission and edited.



Map showing the part of the Świder Nature Reserve located between the towns Otwock and Józefów. The outlines show the approximate borders of areas on the opposite sides of the River Świder and were drawn by me on the basis of information obtained from informants. The original picture is a screenshot from the General Directorate for Environmental Protection website, which I used under their permission and edited.



## Appendix 6

### Świder Nature Reserve and recreation



Picture taken by an informant on a kayak trip on the Świder river.  
Used under the author's permission.



The area assigned by Otwock municipality for recreation.  
Picture taken by an informant, used under the author's permission.



## Appendix 7

### Fly-tipping



Household waste on a trail nearby the Świder river. Picture taken by myself in February 2014.



Garbage lying beside the can. Picture taken by myself in April 2014.



## Appendix 8

### Preparations for construction of the sewage plant



The area assigned for building the sewage plant in Józefów. The trees growing there are marked with paint and are about to be cut down.  
Picture taken by myself in April 2014.