

THE IMPACT OF SETTLEMENT STRUCTURE ON CRIME

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Abstract: Unfortunately, in most cases, geographical factors are not given sufficient weight when examining the factors influencing crime. Among the geographical factors influencing crime, the present study aims to address the settlement structure. The importance of this factor is indicated by the fact that even almost a hundred years ago, some researchers discovered a close connection between the settlement structure and the number and structure of crimes. Among the Hungarian settlements – due to its size – Budapest is the settlement where the connections between settlement structure and crime can be presented most sensitively.

Keywords: criminal geography, crime, geography, law enforcement, spatial crime

INTRODUCTION

The investigation of crime has a rather long history. Even centuries ago, researchers tried to find connections between the structure, number, distribution, etc. of crimes. This was sometimes depicted on a map to make it even more illustrative and to discover as many correlations as possible.² The sociological and geographical study of crime, however, dates back to recent times. These researches have already shown a clear correlation between the settlement structure and the closely related social environment, as well as the extent and quality of criminal behaviour. Structural analysis of settlements can

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² See more: André Michel Guerry (1833): Essai sur la Statistique Morale de la France.



bring significant results in case of larger settlements, where duality characterizes the crime situation, because of the size and structure of settlements. So, when starting the criminal geographic analysis of a settlement, it is essential to examine the structure of the settlement.

The paper aims to present the main stages of the urban development of the Hungarian capital (Budapest), and to answer whether typical crimes can be observed in typical settlement structures. A further research question is whether certain stages of urban development have affected (and are currently influencing) the structure of crime significantly?

Why do I consider it necessary to write my study? Because, in most cases, researchers do not consider the impact of geographical factors at all or with sufficient weight when examining the factors influencing crime. I feel that there is no particular need to justify why the relationship between urban structure and crime is illustrated by the example of the capital. Due to its size, it is the capital where the correlation between crime and settlement structure can be presented the most sensitively amongst all Hungarian settlements. The social, settlement and spatial structure and criminal differences stand out here the most.

Nor can we ignore the fact that in the case of Budapest, not only one centre can be observed in the city (as in the case of most of our cities), but also, due to the development characteristic of the city, many centres, sub-centres and peripheral areas can be observed. The reason why the studies of the capital particularly engaging is that the individual districts are at different stages of urban development.

What makes the research particularly interesting is the fact that there is a very significant social, economic, demographic, etc. difference among the districts. Differences can be discovered, which creates radically different criminal geographical conditions. Therefore, it is not expedient to manage the uniform database of the Budapest Police Headquarters (containing the criminal statistics of all districts) in a homogeneous way.³ If we examine the criminal geography of Budapest, it is definitely worth examining the subcultures that have developed there (i.e. subcultures that is different from the usual ones in the given environment.)

A city of the size of Budapest already has separate settlement parts with inhabitants of different value systems and social statuses. Here, differences in criminality can already be detected, and the distribution of crimes is adapted to the nature of the residential area.

At the end of the introduction, I definitely want to mention that the present study is the first half of a more detailed research. The first part can be considered as a theoretical introduction and a historical overview, while in the second part of the study, each district and major part of the city is presented in detail.

HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS OF THE STUDY OF URBAN STRUCTURE AND CRIME

The first major studies of the relationship between settlement structure and crime was examined in Chicago in the United States (see the Chicago School), where such studies were conducted as early as the early 1900s. Why were the studies needed? The city of Chicago in the early 19th century was a small settlement of only a few thousand people (1840: 4470 inhabitants), which by the end of the century had become a world city with more than one million inhabitants (1890: 1.09 million inhabitants).

3 Mátyás, Szabolcs (2014): 93-103



However, the population growth in such a short period has had not only beneficial effects, but also a number of negative consequences, including an increase in crime. The Hungarian capital is suitable for similar research, even though the rate of population flow was not as great as in Chicago.

What did researchers at the Chicago School find? Among others, “that the place where the offense was committed clearly determines the affiliation of the particular criminological event or series of events and, in general, its material circumstances”⁴. “In their work published in 1925, they point out that in understanding the phenomena of urban society and society in general, environmental conditions, the material conditions of life, and especially the structure and physical structure of space have an explanatory power; regularities can be demonstrated in the spatial organization of society.”⁵ It was primarily Burgess whose research made the concept of zone theory (or concentric circle theory) known (1926). In his research, Burgess pointed out the inverse relationship between the number of crimes and the distance from the city centre. It is not the purpose of the present study to analyse Burgess’s zonal theory in detail, but it can certainly be forward-looking when examined in parallel with some of its research findings, even though it is known that zonal theory has been widely criticized decades ago. Criticism was partly due to the unanimous recognition of pioneering results because, after a time, Chicago researchers were no longer able to give an exact explanation for certain social phenomena, and so many people criticized the theory after World War II.

The criminal geographical analysis of Budapest is still pending, and many studies have already touched on the Hungarian capital, but such study has not yet been conducted. In the case of the capital, one of the most comprehensive analysis was performed by István Kobolka and János Sallai (2008), who examined the whole of Budapest for the period between 1960 and 1985.⁶ The main database of the research was provided by BRFK (Budapest Police Headquarters) reports, which are extremely incomplete for today’s needs, and by the statistical data of KSH (Hungarian National Statistical Office), between which quantifiable differences could be observed. These greatly influenced the follow-up of contemporary criminal processes, yet a number of problems that have been present for decades still need to be addressed today (football hooliganism, organized crime, juvenile delinquency, etc.).⁷ The question may arise of why Budapest has not yet been fully analysed from a geographical perspective on crime. The answer is very simple. The capital can be considered a complex and diverse area that researchers did not “dare” to explore. The present study does not undertake a complete analysis of the capital either, it only seeks to introduce the relationship between settlement structure and crime.

SPATIAL STRUCTURE AND CRIME

Numerous social science trends have shown a clear correlation between the settlement structure, the social environment, which is closely correlated with this, and the extent and quality of criminal behaviour. Therefore, in most cases the duality characteristic of the crime situation in an area can be understood only by getting to know the structure of the settlement. So, when starting a settlement-level crime analysis, it is essential to examine the settlement structure.

The structural analysis of the settlement structure can yield spectacular results mainly in the case of larger settlements, where due to the size and settlement structure of the settlements the crime is dual:

4 Michalkó, Gábor (2002): 68

5 Szirmai, Viktória (1995)

6 Kobolka, István – Sallai, János (2008): 86-102

7 Mátyás, Szabolcs – Sallai, János (2014): 335-353



both metropolitan and rural – and in some places farm – crime is present. Metropolitan crime is mainly characteristic of the ancient settlement core and housing estate area, while the latter is mainly characteristic of suburban and peri-urban areas, where completely different modes of crime and types of crime occur. Separate areas are inhabited by people of different values and social status, among whom significant differences in crime rates can be observed.

The above is especially true for Budapest. To understand the current crime situation in the capital, we must first get to know the natural geographical conditions and development of the settlement, which can later serve as a kind of crutch for a clear view of the current criminal and settlement sociological processes. In the case of Budapest, local and situational energies played a prominent role – to quote the words of Jenő Cholnoky and Tibor Mendöl. Among the most important settlement factors of the city, we emphasize that the capital is located at the junction of landscapes with different natural geographical features (fairway), the Buda Castle Hill is located in a well-protected place, and the Danube is an important transport route.⁸ Our ancestors found the most favourable crossing opportunity on the river in the vicinity of today's Budapest, which also marked the present location of the city.

In a geographical sense, we cannot speak of a unified Budapest, as Buda and Pest are two areas with radically different natural geographical features. However, even this factor, considered by many to be insignificant, results in significant differences. Just think of the formation of the settlement structure. On the Pest side, the road network was practically free to develop, while on the right bank of the Danube, the development of the road network was strongly determined (see, for example, the location of the capital's boulevards). One consequence of this is the significantly different population density, which should be considered as a relevant factor in crime. What especially justifies the study of the relationship between settlement structure and crime in the case of the capital is that due to the size of the settlement, each centre, sub-centre and peripheral area is currently at different stages of urban development, which makes the study particularly interesting. It is also important to note that in the case of Budapest, the city itself should not be examined alone. It is also necessary to study the agglomeration living in an organic unit with it, as it greatly influences the criminal situation in the capital. Of course, the above can also be observed in the case of other, smaller settlements, but they can be less discovered in settlements with a smaller population and size, compared to such a sharp, almost textbook example.

THE MAIN STAGES OF BUDAPEST'S URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND ITS CRIMINAL GEOGRAPHIC ASPECTS

Due to length constraints, the study cannot cover the formation and morphological development of the city in detail, but the most important developmental stages, which are still relevant today, should be mentioned, even if only schematically. Prior to the unification of the capital (before 1873), the city consisted of three large parts (Pest, Buda and Óbuda), which later grew into one settlement as a result of centuries of organic urban development and became the "Queen of the Danube". Out of the functionally existing districts, the Castle District is the one that has undergone the slightest change in recent centuries. Partially the topographic conditions marked its location, which did not allow further expansion later. The castle district can therefore be considered as one of the most constant points of the Budapest city structure for almost seven centuries.⁹

8 Szűcsné Kerti, Anita – Szűcs, István (2007): 103

9 Gábor, Anikó



The development of the town was hampered by the fall of Buda to the Turks in 1541, which caused significant destruction both in the settlement structure and in the population. The city was recaptured in 1686, but after more than a hundred years of Turkish rule, the city had a hard time finding itself, and for decades both the population and the building stock had hardly grown. At the end of the 17th century, however, new germs of development unfolded in the area of the Water City (Buda), which became the engine and core area of the city's rebirth a few decades later. The Pest part also gradually revived. Initially, within the medieval city wall, and then in the first half of the 18th century, parts of the city began to form. The significant increase in the population, the expansion of the building stock, the road network, and the construction of other infrastructures laid the foundations for the preparation of the unification of Pest and Buda.¹⁰

We jump to a few decades in time to reach a compromise (1867), which gave an impetus to the development of the capital that truly unparalleled its pace of development in European cities. In a few decades, Budapest, as it is known today, was practically born. The infrastructure networks providing the primary connection, the buildings and public institutions that create and define the cityscape, the bridges providing the crossing of the Danube were built, and let's not forget the population growth (1851: 151 016, 1873: 296 867). At the beginning of this amazing phase of urban development, the decision-makers decided to unite Pest, Buda and Óbuda (1873), which gave further impetus to the development. Of course, the expansion of the city did not stop behind the medieval walls, but was so dynamic that the "ingestion" of the surrounding settlements also began. Thus, after a few decades, many settlements (e.g. Kispest, Újpest, Erzsébetfalva, Pestszentlőrinc, etc.) became an integral part of the now unified Budapest. This chapter in the history of the capital can be seen as a period of urban development in terms of the stages of urban development (urbanization), when not only the city itself but also the agglomeration underwent significant development.

Decades after the "happy times of peace" left relatively few positive traces on the spatial structure of the city, unfortunately. World War II wreaked havoc on the infrastructure and population of the capital's settlement, the consequences of which can still be traced to this day. This is partly due to the slumminess of some parts of the central districts. Among the population of these areas were large numbers of Jewish descent who either died during World War II or chose to emigrate after returning home.¹¹ As a result, the properties they maintained "in the manner of a good owner" became abandoned, and in a few years – partly as a result of the devastation of the war – deteriorated physically. After World War II, the municipality (council) was never able to invest a significant amount in the rehabilitation of these areas, which were, therefore, considered neuralgic points in the city centre for decades. Empty properties were often taken over by people with unfavourable social statistics and above-average fertility coefficients, which still results in significant criminal contamination in these areas.

After the Second World War, the settlement structure of the capital was greatly influenced by the establishment of Greater Budapest (January 1, 1950). In the course of this, Budapest and 23 other settlements were united, as a result of which a multitude of new centres and sub-centres were necessarily formed, the effect of which is still visible on the city's criminal map. Such a growth of the capital is presumably complete, but the full integration of the attached settlements is still in progress of spatial cohesion.¹²

Also, the "products" of the post-World War II period are the housing estates, which are determining elements of the spatial structure of the city. The need to build housing estates has emerged in many

10 Gábor, Anikó

11 Kovács, Tamás (2007): 73-78

12 Budapest városfejlesztési koncepciója (2011)



major European cities. The boom in Hungary after the Second World War occurred mainly in the capital. Budapest was one of the centres of forced industrial development, so this development, which cannot be called organic, resulted in a significant labour shortage in the city.

Of course, the capital, especially after World War II, could not provide housing for large numbers of people, so the government decided to build housing estates in the 1960s and 1970s. In the case of housing estates, we can state the fact that one of the negative consequences of this artificial and forced urban development has already been found in several sociological aspects of research. In the above periods, it was not only large-scale housing estates that modified the spatial structure of the capital. From the sixties onwards, the development of the metropolitan line infrastructure received a new impetus. It was then that many motorways, expressways and a number of infrastructural investments were built, which had a significant impact on the spatial relocation of certain urban functions, and are still an important part of the spatial structure of the capital.

Regarding the movement of the population, we can mention that in addition to the external population movement, a very significant internal movement can be observed from the sixties and seventies: wealthier people moved to Buda, the surrounding settlements and newly built residential parks on the outskirts of the city. Based on the stages of urban development, this period can be considered as a period of suburbanization, when people move to the suburbs and suburban areas, which provide calmer and healthier living conditions. After the change of regime, the population movement accelerated again. This was mainly due to the economic recession, as many of the capital's major factories closed permanently, leading to a deterioration in living conditions in Budapest, leading to an increasing number of people leaving the capital and settling in the surrounding settlements. As a result, most of the surrounding settlements were able to record significant development (economic, population, etc.). Thanks to the significant outflow, the capital's population of nearly two million has now shrunk to 1.7 million. The change of regime thus brought the stage of de-urbanization. As a result, the population of the central city is declining and the population of the periphery, the agglomeration, is beginning to grow. The last stage of urban development is re-urbanization, the early germs of which can already be observed in the case of the capital. In doing so, the slummy, segregated downtown areas are rehabilitated according to the needs of today (e.g. parts of districts VII, VIII and IX) and there is a qualitative increase in population, which in all cases results in a decrease in the number of crimes.

SUMMARY

The paper presents the urban development of Budapest. With urban development, the settlement structure has also changed, which has a significant impact on the number and structure of crime. In the first phase of urbanization the population has increased greatly. As a result, the number of crimes (mainly thefts, homicides) has increased significantly. Due to sub-urbanization, the individual social strata became more separated from each other. Wealthier people moved to the suburbs and outer districts. One could observe that in the suburbs people came home to sleep only. Therefore, suburbs provided ideal terrain for burglary during the day. During the period of de-urbanization, the population of the city decreased even more, resulting in a decrease in the number of crimes. As the number of crimes in Budapest decreased, it increased almost as much in the areas where people moved. That is why we cannot talk about an overall decline in crime. New housing estates and shopping malls have been built in the settlements around the capital. Home burglaries have occurred in residential parks, pickpockets and car burglaries have occurred in the parking lots of shopping malls. Re-urbanization is the last stage of the urbanization process. City centres were infected by crimes. This part of the city



renewed physically and socially. As a result, the number of crimes is significantly reduced. In case of Budapest, the number of robberies, pickpockets and bodily injuries decreased. Valuable new properties, in turn, attract home burglars.

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