

Antal Forró

Ph.D. student, University of Debrecen Department of Social Geography and
Regional Development Planning, antal.forro@yahoo.com

**CRIMINAL GEOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH IN THE
ADMINISTRATIVE AREA OF GYULA CITY WITH PARTICULAR
ATTENTION TO LATENT CRIME**

Keywords: crime, criminal geography, latency, police headquarters

1. Introduction

Social-economic changes in Hungary since the change of regime at the turn of the 1980-1990s in particular the growing crime and the deepening of the the subjective sense of security of people justifies the social geography of crime.

The spatial distribution of crime in different administrative units (regions, counties, cities and their catchment areas) is different. There has been a very unfavorable change in the quality, tools and methodology of domestic crime. Crime has become more dangerous, more violent, more rough than before. For this reason, the exceptional cases of crimes have been given more prominence in the media, which has also severely impaired people's sense of security.

The unfavorable change of domestic crime is indicated by the fact that previously unknown or exceptionally occurring crime phenomena have been introduced. In Central European countries, including Hungary, foreign criminal organizations have built their trade relations and base. Therefore, the examination of these negative phenomena became especially important in terms of getting to know the structure of the changed crime.

Because of my high interest in the topic, I have tried to select an area and city where geographic research of crime has not been carried out before. The chosen region was the jurisdiction of the Békés County Police Headquarters and the administrative area of Gyula. My decision was primarily based on the isolation and border position of the county, and the availability of extensive study opportunities that are prerequisites for effective research.

My research objectives included placing the jurisdiction of the Békés County Police Headquarters in Hungary's crime map and explore the structure of crime in Békés county. Then conduct comparative analyzes of space and temporal aspects belonging to the jurisdiction of

the Békés County Police Headquarters' eight police stations' criminality, examine the effectiveness of police work. Continuing the research at settlement level, analyzing the criminalization of Gyula city, conducting a questionnaire survey among people to uncover latent crime.

My research was partly based on police reports published on the Internet. I used the data of the United Criminal Investigation and Prosecutor's Office and the 2001 and 2011 population census data of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office.

2. The definition of criminal geography

Before defining criminal geography, I consider it necessary to briefly describe the definition and phenomenon of crime. „Crime is an expression of the relationship with the society at the time in a behavior that violates the political, economic, cultural order of the given society, the prevailing social values, and through the criminal norms.” (Vigh J. 1998, p. 14.). So crime is a social mass phenomenon that „already shows a disorder of the society” in the event of a massive rise or fall (Vigh J. 1998, p. 48.).

„Criminal geography examines the tendency, dynamics, structure, as well as social, economic, and demographic background of crimes and criminals within a delimited geographic scope.” (Forró A. 2012, p. 14.) Criminal geography is basically based on the science of criminology, sociology, and social geography. Criminal geography „doesn't satisfy the comparison of geographic space and crime statistics but ask the question: what are descriptive indicators that determine the growth of crime, and which explain the attractive impact of a given geographic location on crime.” (Herold H. 1973, p. 82.)

3. The crime situation in Hungary

The crime of our country, like many other social mass phenomena, has increased dramatically since the 1989-1990 political regime change, it has achieved several highlights in the past quarter century. This is mainly due to the introduction of previously unknown or exceptional occurrences of crime (international organized crime, drug trafficking, oil mafia, smuggling, etc.) and due to unfavorable economic processes.

The relationship between registered crime and the number of victims can be established, while there is greater latency in the stagnant tendency of the registered crime offenders. We call latent crime the difference between actual and known crime with bogus simplicity, „whose extent, structure, spatial and temporal changes are unknown.” (Patkós Cs. – Tóth A. 2012, p. 251.)

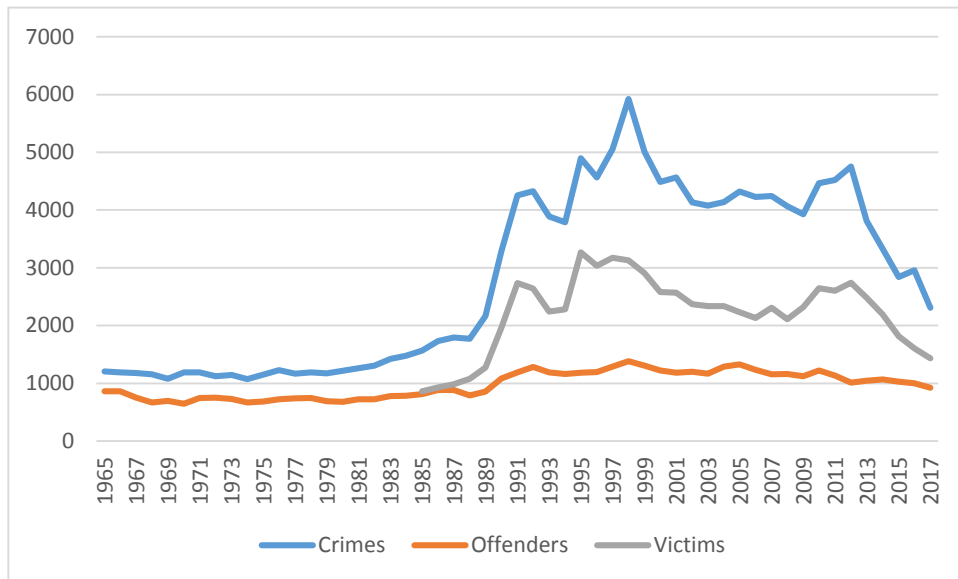


Figure 1: The number of registered crimes, offenders and victims per 100,000 inhabitants in Hungary (1965-2017)

Database: Based on data from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (own editing)

The number of registered crimes has dropped significantly (-48.87%) over the last 27 years, especially in the eastern counties, but we don't know anything about latency. Only with the territorial distribution of registered offenders, and with the trends of known crime can be estimated.

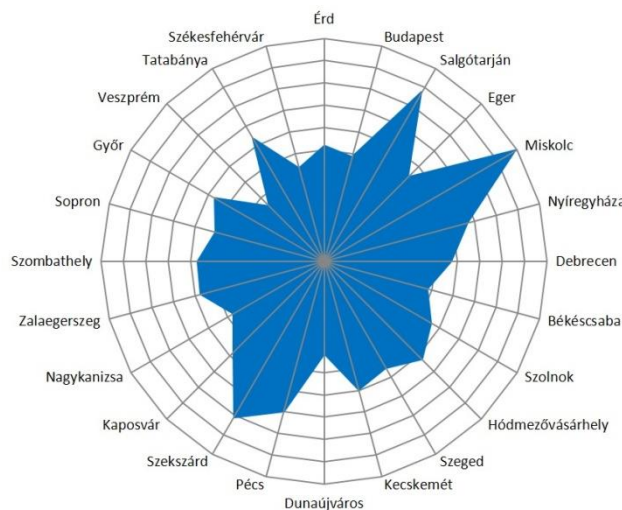


Figure 2: The arithmetic average of registered offenders per 100,000 inhabitants in the Cities with County Rights of Hungary (2001-2010)

Database: Based on data from the United Criminal Investigation and Prosecutor's Office and the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (own editing)

Interestingly, if we look at the number of criminals registered within the jurisdiction of Cities with County Rights over a 10 years period an east-west axis can be identified in the distribution of offenders. This is mainly due to unfavorable economic processes.

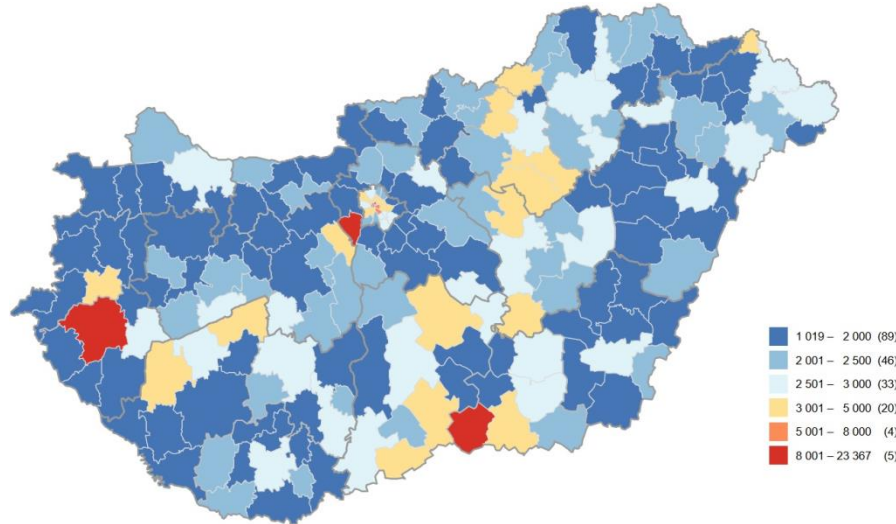


Figure 3: The number of registered crimes per 100,000 inhabitants within the jurisdiction of the districts in Hungary (2016)

Database: Based on data from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office

Although in recent years there are often mention of decreasing registered crime data, it should be mentioned that changing the limits of the infringement that in particular distorts the number of crimes against property, such as theft and burglary. The criminal group of crimes against property represents nearly two-thirds of the known acts.

This generated situation from the point of view of criminology, and the other unfavorable processes are coupled with an unexpected new negative phenomenon even with the decreasing investigative efficiency indicators, which have also been changed, while the definition of the unknown culprit reconnaissance indicator was removed from criminal statistics, and a new indicator was introduced. This makes it difficult to conduct long-term studies.

Table 1: Investigation results in Hungary and Békés county, and the position of the Békés County Police Headquarters in the county ranked with Budapest (%)

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Hungary	49,0	54,1	54,4	56,4	56,8	54,7	53,6	48,3	46,3	41,2	37,4	40,8	51,4	65,1
Békés	53,6	65,8	63,5	64,4	71,6	64,7	66,6	61,2	63,0	49,0	68,1	60,1	58,2	66,0
Ranked	14.	4.	6.	4.	1.	3.	2.	2.	1.	8.	1.	3.	9.	5.

Database: Based on the annual reports of the Hungarian Police Headquarters published on the Internet

(own calculation)

Police Headquarters that have not yet been the country's hot spots of their crime, there is a relatively well-defined range of values except for one year, just like in Békés county. This does not exclude the phenomenon of latent crime, but it refers to a contradiction, as besides decreasing crime data we should expect a relatively increasing efficiency indicator.

In the case of Békés County Police Headquarters, it can be said that the investigative effectiveness indicator was above the national average between 2002 and 2015, indeed, in three years (2006, 2010, 2012) the most successful police-office was in the national ranking. In addition, it can be established by examining criminal infections that the Békés County Police Headquarters ranked 16th in the national ranking with Budapest, in terms of offender rate was the 12th among police headquarters in 2017. Interestingly, the county's unemployment rate was only 4.15% in the year under review, and 8th in the national rankings.

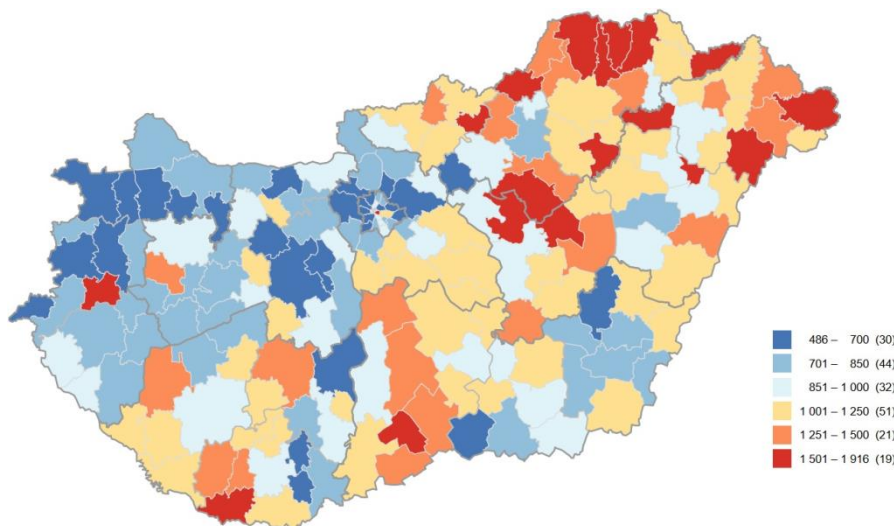


Figure 4: The number of registered crime offenders per 100,000 inhabitants within the jurisdiction of the districts in Hungary (2016)

Database: Based on data from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office

4. Crime and offender rate in Békés county

If we look at the Békés County Police Headquarters, it can be stated that in recent years most of the crimes per 100,000 inhabitants have been committed within the jurisdiction of Békéscsaba, Gyula and Szarvas Police Departments. In addition to the three police departments mentioned above the crime within the jurisdiction of the other two border areas, the Sarkad and Mezőkovácsháza Police Departments was outstanding in Békés County. Nearly one-third of the registered crimes were committed within the jurisdiction of the Békéscsaba Police Department, while in terms of the percentage of known crimes and the number per 100,000 inhabitants the Békés Police Headquarters was the lowest-infected police department in Békés

County. Examining the crime rate it can be stated the unfavorable situation of border police-office (Sarkad, Mezőkovácsháza and Gyula) as well as the medium infection of the Békéscsaba and Szeghalom Police Departments. The least infected police-office was also the Békés Police Department in Békés County in terms of the number of criminals per 100,000 inhabitants.

5. Crime situation in Gyula and the estimation of latency

„Unfortunately, in the research of crime, geographic factors are relatively small, although in many cases crime can be found among the basics of social geography.” (Mátyás Sz. 2018, p. 105.). Continuing my research at the settlement level, I analyzed the criminalization of Gyula, and I conducted a questionnaire survey among people from 2010 to explore latent crime. I asked 1663 people. I was wondering if they knew about crimes that were not reported to the Police. Some of the respondents – because they were victims of such acts – they were able to present the locations of these events geographically, however, it is often just an offense had been committed with them. That is why I have dealt separately with the bagatellized crimes (such as theft of less value), and most of all, I focused on the events that most affect the subjective sense of security.

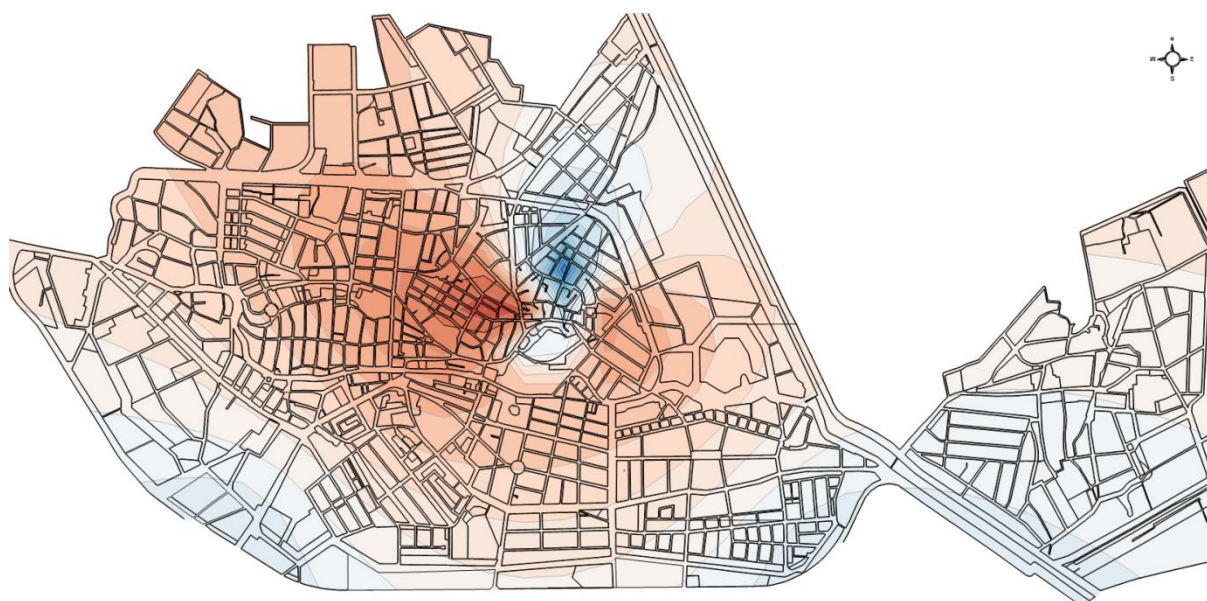


Figure 5: Territorial hot spots of latent crime in the administrative area of Gyula

Database: Based on data from questionnaire survey (own editing)

I have completed the evaluation of the results. On this basis, it can be concluded that the average latency rate was 13.31% in the examined period, which characterizes the city's police activity.

Interestingly, the average index was 4.18 on a scale of 1 to 5 of the subjective sense of security carried out by the Békés County Police Headquarters in 2013.

6. Summary

Summarizing the research, the crime and crime offender rate of the counties in Hungary has been quite varied in the decade after the Regime Change. The spatial distribution of crime in different counties showed a different occurrence. The change of the Law on Offenses in 2012 and the New Criminal Code make harder for long-term research. This will result a greater significance for the social geography of crime, especially at the level of the settlement, to give an accurate picture of the spatial spread of crime. Provide a basis for developing an effective crime prevention strategy, and help the Police's work even with the estimation of latency.

7. Bibliography

FORRÓ, ANTAL (2013): Kriminálgeográfiai vizsgálatok a Békés Megyei Rendőr-főkapitányság illetékességi területén. – Belügyi Szemle 61. évfolyam, Budapest, 2013/4, 14 p.

HEROLD, HORST (1973): Földrajz és bűnözés – Belügyi Szemle tájékoztatója 17., Budapest, pp. 79-85.

MÁTYÁS, SZABOLCS (2018): A településszerkezet és a bűnözés összefüggései a magyar főváros példáján. – Belügyi Szemle 66. évfolyam, Budapest, 2018/5, 105 p.

PATKÓS, CSABA – TÓTH, ANTAL (2012): A bűnözés néhány térbeli jellemzője a rendszerváltás utáni Magyarországon. – Területi Statisztika 52. évfolyam, Budapest, 2012/3, 251 p.

VIGH, JÓZSEF (1998): Kriminológiai alapismeretek. – Nemzetközi Tankönyvkiadó, Budapest, 48 p.

