

Szabolcs Mátyás Ph.D.

police major, assistant professor, National University of Public Service Faculty of Law
Enforcement, matyas.szabolcs@uni-nke.hu

János Sallai Ph.D.

police colonel, professor, National University of Public Service Faculty of Law Enforcement
sallai.janos@uni-nke.hu

**CRIMINAL GEOGRAPHY AS A NEW SUBJECT IN THE HUNGARIAN
HIGHER EDUCATION**

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1. Introduction

In our study we introduce criminal geography, a discipline which has been around for almost three decades as a research topic among the Hungarian criminologists and geographers though it is still not widely known. Criminal geography will appear as a new subject in the national law enforcement higher education. The aim of its introduction is that future police officers would get to know a discipline which can be considered new in Hungary which can help the successful investigation and crime prevention. The representatives of criminal geography represent several disciplines thus the present study tries summarise the national and international scientific results so far.

2. Criminal geographical researches in Hungary

Thanks to *Béla Földes* the conditions of criminal geography were established already by the end of the 19th century. Földes was followed by many other researchers (*Albert Irk, Ervin Hacker* etc.), but these researches were ceased after World War II.

After World War II criminology was considered as „bourgeois science”, the statistic data was secretive, even researchers were unable to get access to it. 1960 can be considered as a milestone in domestic criminal geography, as the *National Institute of Criminology (OKRI)* – within the frame of Prosecution Service of Hungary – was established that year. In 1963 criminology became an obligatory subject on faculties of law. *Hungarian Society of Criminology* was established in 1983 with hundreds of theoretical and practical specialists.

Hungarian geographers had a chance to execute criminal geographical researches only later, starting from the 1980's. The territorial scene of such researches was mainly the Budapest. They have not analysed the whole capital from criminal geographical aspect, but they did examine some regions of Budapest as well as the main indicators of the settlement. *Zoltán Kovács* (1989) was the first geographer to deal with criminal geography. He executed inter-settlement criminal geographical researches – among others – in the 8th district of Budapest. *Gábor Michalkó* (1996) studied the criminal geography of international tourism in the Hungarian capital, and within the frames of his study he analysed the victimisation of tourists.

The research executed in 1999-2000 mainly by criminologists can be considered as a very important milestone. In this research the 5th, 9th and 22th districts of Budapest were studied and victims were in the focus. Researchers located the areas with the highest chance of victimisation by means of methods of spatial informatics, and they prepared concrete crime preventing proposals (Kerezsi-Ritter 2000). In the 9th district they prepared crime preventing proposals in connection with education and child protection at school (Kerezsi-Kó 2001), while in the 22th district crime preventing proposals relying on the local child protecting institutions (Kerezsi et al. 2001).

Andrea Balázs (2003) analysed the criminal geography of the 15th district of Budapest in relation to Rákospalota, Újpalota and Pestújhely. During her studies she concluded Rákospalota is the least, while Újpalota is the most infected parts of Budapest considering the numbers of criminal acts per 100.000 inhabitants (Balázs 2003).

Ferenc Irk (2005) compared the problems of inhabitants of Budapest and four European cities (Amsterdam, Hamburg, Cracow and Wien) and based on the results he determined the applicable crime preventing methods.

One of the most comprehensive analyses of the capital was made by *István Kobilka* and *János Sallai* (2008), who studied Budapest as a whole in the period of 1960-1985. During their analysis the researcher observed problems that had existed for decades and are still exist (football hooliganism, organised crime, juvenile crime, etc.). *György Ritecz* and *János Sallai* analysed the criminal geography of the frontier in many studies. They examined eg. the Hungarian-Ukrainian border line (2002), the effects of European Union as well as the possible effects of Hungary's joining to Schengen area on the Hungarian frontier (Sallai-Ritecz 1999). After the capital Debrecen is the second most studied settlement from criminal geographic point of view. It is *Gábor Kozma* (1997) who first such researches in Debrecen.

So far four doctoral theses have been made in the topic of criminal geography (2015). First, *Antal Tóth* defended his thesis at the University of Debrecen Földtudományi doctoral school (2007). The title of his thesis was *Sociogeographical examination of the spatial aspects of crime in Hajdú-Bihar county*. Mr. Tóth's doctoral thesis had a pioneering significance because such great research had not been done in the Hungarian criminal geography. The strengths of the thesis were the most important definitions of criminal geography and the introduction of research methods and trends. Antal Tóth's research area is extremely far-reaching, his publications are mainly related to Hajdú-Bihar county, Hajdúböszörmény, Debrecen, the border areas and Hungary.

Szabolcs Mátyás also defended his thesis in this discipline, its title was *Criminal geographic analysis of the Debrecen Police Headquarters* (2011). Mátyás focuses on the criminal geography of Hajdú-Bihar county, Debrecen and Hajdú-Bihar-Bihar Euroregion and the criminals catchment area research as well as on the historiography of criminal geography. *Zsuzsa Piskóti-Kovács* was a student at the University of Miskolc whose title of dissertation was *The adaptation possibilities of the modern trends of criminal geography in different regional levels*. Zsuzsa Piskóti-Kovács examines crime by applying GIS tools and regional statistics methods (Piskóti-Kovács 2014).

Finally, we need to mention *Gábor Erdei* – a student of the National University of Public Service Military Science Doctoral School – who received an academic degree with his treatise *The theoretical and practical correlations of criminal geography* (2014).

It is welcome news that many university and college students – mainly the students of University of Debrecen, Eötvös Lóránt University, National University of Public Service and Eszterházy Károly College – has chosen criminal geography as the subject of their thesis in the past years. Within the frames of their thesis they typically did criminal geographical analysis of the settlement they live in.

4. Higher education and criminal geography

One of the main objectives of every discipline is to have a textbook from which the students can get to know the given subject and the other is to be taught as a separate subject in the institutes of higher education. It has taken almost three decades after its appearance in Hungary to be ripe enough to become an optional subject at university and to publish its own textbook. The historical moment of the discipline happened in the second term of the 2013-14 academic

year at the Institute of Earth Sciences the University of Debrecen when about two dozen students signed up for the *Criminal geography* subject. The subject was very favourably received by both the students and the teachers of the institute so in the first semester of the 2014-15 academic year *Applied criminal geography* was also introduced as a subject for which several students signed up, as well. The subject is being taught continuously at the University of Debrecen. Until the publishing of the current study no textbook has been written in the topic of criminal geography though we must mention a milestone when the discipline was given a chance to introduce itself on a wider basis among the cultivators of law enforcement disciplines in the publication entitled *Tendecies and principles from the scope of criminal disciplines* published by NKE (National University of Public Service)². Criminal geography is among the optional subject on the MSc at the University of National Public Service, Faculty of Law Enforcement) from the 2018-09 academic year. The university is expected to publish an individual criminal geography textbook in spring 2020.

5. The most important sources of criminal geography research

Considering that the national criminal geographical research has only a short history the number of Hungarian specialized literature, practical guidelines and other sources is very low. Thus getting acquainted and following the foreign specialized literature (especially in English and German) is very important. Below we list which sources can be considered as the most important databasis of the criminal geographical research.

– Police conferences, annual evaluation meetings and work meetings

There are several police conferences, annual evaluation meetings and work meetings where not only police officers but the public (researchers, people who are interested) can attend. The annual evaluation meetings, which are held after the given year is closed, contain a lot of useful and valuable information

– Libraries and professional journals

Naturally any library can contain technical books and journals which can be used during the criminal geography research though the biggest volume of literature is available at the library of the Law Enforcement Science Faculty of National University of Public Service. A huge

² Péter, RUZSONYI: *Tendenciák és alapvetések a bűnügyi tudományok köréből*, Nemzeti Közszoalátati és Tankönyv Kiadó Zrt., Budapest, 2014, 391 p.

number of literature and journals are available at the law faculties of universities of sciences and the library of National Criminology Institute and national libraries.

– *Robotzsaru NEO Integrated Rules of procedure and Case processing system*

Robotzsaru Neo is a national computer system which helps the daily case processing work of police officers. The system can only be accessed by Police staff and it is protected by a password. People working at different fields have authorised access to different levels. Having the right command permission valuable criminalstatistical data can be extracted from the RZSNeo system.

– *Annual evaluation reports*

The number of the extremely poor national settlement – and county – level sources are increased by the so-called annual evaluation reports which despite not being written for a criminal geographic purpose contain several chapters which can be interpreted and successfully used from a criminal geographic aspect, as well. These reports are annual evaluations compiled by the kpaitányságvezetők and county chiefs of police which evaluate a specific year on the basis of key indicators.

– *Professional consultations with police chiefs*

On several occasions we can notice such distortions in the criminal statistics data which cannot be explained without those knowledge which can be obtained only through a personal, professional consultation. These background information obtained through the consultations can help to evaluate certain processes objectively. The personal contact with the police chiefs are not only necessary to discuss specific questions but can also pave the way for a well-operating future cooperation.

– *Getting acquainted with existing settlement-level analyses*

Four doctoral theses have been made in this topic which approached criminal geography from different aspects. Besides the dissertations several graduate these have been made in this topic which can be viewed at the libraries of higher education.

–*Data made available through primary research*

During the course of research several data can be used which are produced by the researcher himself. One of the methods of such data collection is the *personal observation*. Within the wide spectrum of research and data collection methods we have to mention *the population questionnaire and the case study* as an illustrative method.

– *Internet sources*

On the world wide web we can access several databases which serve as the right basis to make analyses (e.g. <https://prestat.lechnerkozpont.hu/bunmegelozes>, www.ksh.hu, www.police.hu, www.teir.hu). We should strive to choose such database though the data of which are precis, up-to-date and their sizes fit the research. Another important expectation concerning the database that it should bear an obvious content (should be user friendly) otherwise the user can draw the wrong conclusions.

6. How to use criminal geographical researches?

Just like in case of any relatively new disciplines, the question of the practical use of criminal geography often raises, too. What is feasible from the theory and applicable in everyday police work? These questions can be answered based on partially Western European and partially Hungarian examples. Criminal geographical researches can provide a lot of results that can also be used in practical police work. Adaptation of these results can help to increase police's ability to react and improve criminal efficiency.

Within the European Union we can find examples for the practical application of criminal geographical researches mainly in Germany. Amongst the German researchers special attention should be paid to the work of *Herold, H.* (1973), as the police offices of Nürnberg were changed radically thanks to the results of his researches. A few decades later (1990's) the analysis scheme elaborated by Bundeskriminalamt meant a major progress in the German criminal geographical researches. Later Bundeskriminalamt's analysis scheme was also applied in several big cities (Mühlhausen, Essen, Hamburg, Osnabrück, Rostock, and Lubeck) (Tóth, 2007). The practical criminal geographic work in Sweden (Stockholm) a Great Britain also worth mentioning (Pődör, 2006).

Comprehensive criminal geographic researches the results of which can be used widespreadly in police work have been executed in two Hungarian cities yet. Hajdúböszörmény was studied

criminal geographic point of view by *Antal Tóth* (2007), while Debrecen was examined from similar aspect by *Mátyás Szabolcs* (2011).

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