IMAGE OF THE PLACE AND PERCEPTION OF SECURITY[1]

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Abstract

Is there a link between the activity of a man, his creations, products and the occurrence of emergencies and crisis situations? What is the role (intentional and unintentional) in this context of the human intervention in the face of the landscape? How does the perception of a particular place (residence, workplace, schools, etc.) affect an individual's feeling of safety or that same feeling within a subculture? Is there a link between the growth of unemployment in a specific location, the growth of crime and, for example, the trends in population migration? Although collecting and interpreting this type of data may be taboo for some politicians and experts, a truly unbiased researcher cannot afford such attitudes. The text summarises the specific observations on this topic both from home and from abroad with the aim to illustrate the complexity of this issue.

Keywords
Security/safety, mapping technologies, socialy excluded residence areas, psychology.

Introduction

All living creatures (plants, animals) understand their existence in the context of the environs they are living in, thus perceiving their own place in ecological relations in a derived way: nica (literally „alcove"), or „living" or **personal area.**[3], [4], [11], [17], [19], [20], [23], [31], [32], [35]. In this context, the term territoriality can be characterised in brief as „intolerance connected with space". In humans, just as in animals, overcrowded space can invoke nervousness and uneasiness, or vice versa, mass behaviour, for example during sports events [16], [23], or during demonstrations which cannot be fully suppressed by any institutional patterns, like cultural socialisation efforts.[1], [10], [13]

The issue of territoriality in relation to animals and humans has been examined since the early modern times, but it was only in the 20's of the 20th century that it was described in more detail. Delimiting personal space is one of the essential features of human behaviour. **Creating and understanding one's personal space, however, is not affected merely by the qualities of the individual, but in a broader sense, by the culture in which the individual has been brought up.**

The fact that people are living and working in a specific territory has influence on them and, without them even realising it, it determines them considerably. It is natural that an individual protects his own personal space against other people (or impacts) penetrating it and, depending on specific patterns of cultural behaviour, he finds it justifiable to prevent such penetrations and punish the attempts on them accordingly.

The term „**social" or „societal" safety and/or security**" often mentioned in this context refers to affiliation to a community or a place (location) in which you feel safe, or at least in the values and territory of which you „safely orientate yourself".

On the basis of one's own individual experience with the movement in a territory, all creatures construct their own **mental maps**. The form of such a map (model of world) is in case of humans most significantly shaped by cultural and civilisation affiliation. Its central position is assumed by home (this is clearly evident in children's drawings), and its appearance and largeness impact the perception of distance, directions, shapes and other indicators which form the capability of territory reflection in a human being or in a group defined in whatever way. „Home" in particular contexts may stand for an individual or a family, or any community, region, state/nation, supranational region, cultural area etc. The mental map primarily serves for orientation within one's own personal world (i. e. the things at which in the geographical meaning of the word the day-to-day life of an individual focuses on) and helps the individuals to avoid, for example, taking a wrong way on their way from home to work, a store or entertainment facility.

Much of the research focusing on the ways in which town or district citizens perceive the place they are living in often forms the ground for municipal councils to decide upon their policies to be taken.[28]

Terms such as „image of the place" or „good address" are the good examples to describe the link between political geography, psychology and economics, as well as security studies.

In a vast majority of towns there are districts the inhabitants of which you may become automatically biased against either „positively" or „negatively" when it comes to their income level, education level etc. A demanded location costs something – but on the contrary, the fact you are living in it itself will help you to „earn" a better position during a job interview and in salary negotiations.

Similar rules as with the city districts highly or less demanded for living or for running a business apply to whole regions and states.[18] The national advertising campaigns for Panama and Puerto Rico were led in the same vein, trying to present these countries as attractive tourist destinations.[24]

From the viewpoint of civil protection, one issue clearly stands out and that is – why people continue to stay in the areas with repeated emergencies. The impacts of such incidents are often devastating – and they may include not only the floods or the flood areas. What may raise fears is the density of population near

nuclear plants or other industrial facilities in which, for example, dangerous substances are being processed, manufactured or stored.

People in these locations usually cannot feel completely safe. Therefore, their communication with security experts as well as their active effort to remain informed of the recommended behaviour in case of emergencies is all the more important (on-going trainings, the knowledge of evacuation plans and procedures, awareness of the methods of warning and notifying people of an emergency by the responsible authorities)[2].

Unlike the situations in which a particular problematic operation in a highly populated area has been in existence for a long time and the population had to cope with the fact, we cannot omit the phenomenon of the so called NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard). The public often complains about a number of intentions concerning for example the building of waste incineration plants, nuclear waste repositories but also the solar or wind power plants, refugee centres or the expansion of airports.

"Mapping the Poverty"[3] and its Relation to Distribution of Identified Crime[4]

The link between the territorial incidence (concentration) of poverty or unemployment and criminal activity (let alone terrorism) is a big issue. In many cases, we may say that such considerations are often tabooed.

"*Society on a whole has a general misconception of the link between poverty and crime. Although crime is often committed by those who are impoverished, all those who are poor do not commit crimes.*"[7] "*The relationship between poverty and crime has been a controversial subject over the years. Many scholars argue that poverty does not have a causal relationship to crime because there are countries in which poverty is very high but the crime rate is relatively low. Sometimes it would be hard to argue that there is not a relationship between crime and poverty. In United States of America, poor people make up the overwhelming majority of those behind bars as 53 % of those in prison earned less than USD 10,000 per year before incarceration.*"[34]

Anyway, it seems intuitively acceptable that there is some causal link between crime and poverty, in both directions. So dealing with crime without dealing with root causes of crime such as poverty, and only focusing on punishment is indeed not the best option.[30]

"*A study by the U. S. Government Accountability Office released in 2007 showed that those who are in areas where poverty is abundant had **fewer options in life**. People who were in poverty-stricken areas were more likely to have adverse health issues due to unaffordable healthcare, risky behavior and the lack of proper education. Those who experience poverty are more likely to suffer from health conditions due to being closer to freeways and industrial buildings that are not usually welcome in higher-income areas. There is also a notable historical rise in property damage that parallels the unemployment rate throughout American history.*" [7]

The link is often manifested in both directions. Locations that are infamous for being crime-stricken are likely to discourage most investors who might be in a position to elevate those particular areas: "*Drug- and gang-infested neighbourhoods of today often do invest in their own downfall through discouraging new growth and an infusion of economic and social relief through unsavory acts of crime.*" (Does Poverty Cause Crime?).

It must be highlighted, however, that in the context of economic problems that specifically in USA began in 2007 "*the drastic rise in the level of poverty extends beyond the traditional ghetto and reaches to suburban and rural communities.*" [34]

Many observations pointing out the link between poverty and crime can be applied only to certain forms of crime. "*Conclusions to some theories is that people living in poverty are far more likely to commit property crimes such as burglary, larceny, or theft.*"[30]

On the other hand it must be said that a range of other types of crime that entail considerable economic impact, "*such as fraud, crimes of passion, serial murder etc. bear absolutely no link to poverty. There may be even an inverse link, since poor people are not in a position to carry out a crime like fraud or insider trading.*"[30]

„*Poverty can also be an indirect cause of crime. As it leads to under-education it may make the choice of a criminal lifestyle more likely.*"[30]

No less important is the link between crime and under-education in some locations. "*The city of Detroit, is one of the poorest large cities in America. Detroit Public Schools graduate only between 25-40 % of its students depending on which report you take. Low education rates, by the way, are also linked to high crime rates.*"[34]

The same issue is also connected to the process of the gradual emerging of new immigrant communities.[9]

Research in numerous cities has shown that social problems such as crime, public disorder, school dropout, high welfare usage, and child maltreatment are significantly clustered and correlated with concentrated poverty, family instability, and residential turnover.[29]

The social problems that cluster in low-income neighbourhoods also tend to be correlated with developmental problems among children, school readiness and achievement, dropout rates, teenage childbearing, and emotional, behavioural, and delinquency problems, even after controlling for family characteristics such as income, parental education and family structure.[26]

It has become clear from the previous review of the literature that where people live plays an important role affecting the quality of life and the overall well-being of the individuals and families reside there. While it is generally true that people who live in low-income neighbourhoods experience more adverse social conditions than their counterparts in affluent neighbourhoods, not all low-income neighbourhoods are alike. In addition, neighbourhoods are subjected to changes due to population movement and displacement. In order to adequately capture and monitor the dynamic change of neighbourhood conditions, improvements in

technology and an increased emphasis on accountability have led many agencies to collect and report on a range of social and economic data. **The development of geographic information system (GIS) technology now makes it possible to map many indicators of social and economic well-being at the community and neighbourhood level**. [26]

There are many sources and types of data that can be used to calculate indicators of well-being – as well as crime – however the local nature of neighbourhood level data often requires agencies to pool and maintain this information from various sources. While an abundance of information on social and economic conditions is available at the county level through state, federal, and non-profit databases, neighbourhood level data is often elusive given smaller area sizes. While county level data may be useful in providing an overall level picture of conditions, these measures frequently mask important variations in well-being, such as differences in rural areas, suburbs, inner cities, as well as small geographic neighbourhoods.[26]

Local institutions may be able to better locate services and target strategies for neighbourhood intervention by developing a set of indicators in the domains of well-being for which significant neighbourhood effects have been demonstrated. The implementation of a neighbourhood-based information system involves at least the following four steps:[26]

- **Step 1: Identify and disaggregate existing welfare-to-work participant data:** A critical first step to implement a neighbourhood assessment is to have a capacity to identify the addresses of current and former welfare-to-work services participants. While many local county social services have already identified the geographic location of these families, the total number of enrolment is typically used as the indicator.
- **Step 2: Acquire data from multiple sources:** The adverse social conditions in many low-income neighbourhoods are often multifaceted and complex. A neighbourhood assessment should be comprehensive in nature which requires data collection from multiple sources. The periodical censuses data provide the most detailed information on the demographic, socio-economic, and housing characteristics of the population and household residing in a given area. In addition, the administrative data collected by other public agencies (housing, public health etc.) can be used to understand the characteristics of the areas. The task is to identify the agencies that have access to neighbourhood-level data needed to create the indicators for analysis.
- **Step 3: Compile and standardise data in common geographic unit:** The neighbourhood-based assessment should contain data at the small-area level so that geographic areas with various levels of needs can be compared and targeted. However, different agencies often have different boundaries or target areas for data collection and reporting. The task is to have a common

identifier with fixed geography or uniform boundary for all the data elements. As a general rule, a lower level of geographic aggregation provides greater flexibility for data manipulation. The ideal is to store the original data with actual street addresses. The addresses can then be assigned a census code in reference to its spatial location through geocoding (e. g. an x-y coordinate such as longitude and latitude). Census tracts are the optimal choice as the unit of analysis because they are already defined and widely used. They tend to be stable over time, can be easily aggregated to larger geographic areas, and can be geocoded by existing computer mapping programs.[8]

- **Step 4: Analyse data for informed decision:** Once the comprehensive neighbourhood indicators are in place, the next step is to analyze the data so that informed decisions can be made. The relationships of indicators in various geographic localities can be examined for program planning and development purposes. For example, program strategies at the neighbourhood level would be different in areas where a large proportion of long term welfare-to-work participants are concentrated as opposed to those areas where there was a high proportion of former welfare-to-work participants. In addition, weighting the relative importance of different indicators, a composite index of area needs can be determined and compared across neighbourhoods.

Residential Security Mapping: Segregation and „Ghettos"

Concentration, segregation and isolation of groups of people in some city have been here since the very beginnings of human civilisation. In the cities, people have gathered themselves and this has led to people grouping either by their cultural habits or by appearance. Living among "one's own folks" makes people feel safer in foreign environment and better allows them to maintain their identity and their traditions. Moreover, this trend emerges not only from the minority's wishes but also from the wishes of the majority (local residents) that is afraid of different cultures or the economic power of newcomers.

A specific example is the emerged segregation of Protestants and Catholics in Belfast, Northern Ireland. In 1750, only 6.5 % of Catholics lived there and until the first half of 19th century, segregation in Belfast had not existed.

In 1861, the share of Catholics in the city population was already 34.1 %. The conflict between the two communities escalated and resulted in the creation of physical barriers, the so-called "peace line" (line of peace).

At present, segregation is almost complete (99 % of Catholic households are located in neighbourhoods where the proportion of Catholics exceeds 90 %).[36], [6], [37]

Although in the United States of America the right to defend against the alleged discrimination has been officially in existence since 1968 (Civil Rights Act), still there will be nobody in the "white quarter" willing to sell their land to Blacks as the quarter would lose its value. The white population usually moves out

at the moment when the proportion of Blacks in the district amounts to 30 % at the latest (so-called "tipping point"). It is a matter of interpretation whether we should talk about discrimination in this respect. Quarters/suburbs still may defend their interests, which means, for example, that they will not sell land to someone whose presence would reduce the price of land in the area (similarly, a particular school may not accept a student who might "decrease" the level of education provided here etc.).

Case study: Lexington riots in 1994[37]

The City of Lexington (Kentucky, USA[5]) was stricken by the riots at the end of 1994. Its catalyst was the death of a young African-American. He fled from police and hid in his girlfriend's apartment in the closet. When the police searched the room, his motion in the closet evoked a feeling of danger in the police officers. The young man was shot (by a White policeman), although it was later proved that he had not been armed. The unrest was triggered by the case itself but also by the subsequent statements of FBI investigators that the incident had been an accident. [2], [5], [15], [22], [25], [33]. In the context of riots, a number of alarming findings were established:

- The City is split by a major dividing line between the "Rich South" (almost exclusively "White") and the "Poor North" (industrial and ethnically diverse).
- Communities in the North of the city feel stigmatised by the police. It is irrelevant whether they are Blacks, Whites or representatives of other races.
- Even in the minds of the City's inhabitants, the South is fixed as "an oasis of peace", while the North is associated with terms such as "crime" and "violence". This fact is also reflected in the prices of real estates (a property of equivalent value is up to twice as expensive in the South as in the North[6]).
- Also media (press, radio, television), when referring to serious crimes, usually mention cases that take place in the North of the City.

However, the ex-post analysis of the situation reached additional findings:

- Although minor incidents concentrate in the North, the incidence of serious crimes is spread equally across the City[7].
- Great importance is ascribed to the "insensitive" role of the media that are de facto duplicating common stereotypes (synchronisation, stigmatisation, branding, creation of 'secondary reality', multiplication and mutual support negative factors) on "reputation" of certain areas of the city. Thus the media are indirectly advised to consider at all times whether their news "do not harm the delicate fabric of local social ties."

Conclusion

The sensitive work with the "hard data" about a particular territory may be of assistance to sociologists, criminal investigation specialists or civil protection experts. A range of information of this nature therefore remains stuck in the subliminal perception of a particular man or subculture. Although collecting and interpreting this type of data may be taboo for some politicians and experts (for example, seeking a correlation between the unemployment growth and the growth of crime in a specific region), a truly unbiased researcher cannot afford such attitudes. In the Czech Republic, there is still no single software communication tool that could connect all institutions that are in charge of civil protection so that they could mutually share relevant information on emergencies and thus ensure fast and adequate response in case they do occur.

NOTES:

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[1] Note: This article was prepared as a part of the research project "A New Agenda for European Security Economics" (EUSECON, No. SEC-2007-6.4-01).

[2] See for example the Act of February 2nd, 2006 on prevention of serious accidents caused by selected dangerous chemical substances or chemical products, amending the Act No. 258/2000 Coll., on public health protection, and amending some related laws, as amended, and the Act No. 320/2002 Coll., amending and repealing certain acts in connection with the termination of the activity of district offices, as amended (The Prevention of Serious Accidents Act).

[3] Poverty can be measured in a variety of ways: unemployment, high rate of divorce, single-parent households, dilapidated housing, poor school or concentration of minorities, are but a few examples.

[4] One of the very vigilant consumers of geography is the financial sector. The so-called "residential security mapping" shows a direct link to the investment and loan decision-making process (inhabitant of a „good district" will reach a specific loan relatively easily – „safely" – because it is a safe investment for the financial institution etc.).
Matthey, M. (1981). *Ethnic Segregation and the Urban Ghetto*. In: Carter, H., *The Study of Urban Geography*, Edward Arnold, p. 261-275.

[5] The City of Lexington has been promoted as a model for the entire United States as "a city with faith in their own future." From 1955 to 1995, Lexington has doubled its population (from 130 000 to 260 000 inhabitants). At local universities 30 000 students are studying. Large employers here are firms like Lexmark and Toyota.

[6] Higher price can be however accepted as one of the instruments that can discourage the "unwhite" population from purchasing the property.

[7] These are identified or reported cases. However, it cannot be ruled out that cases in the North are not reported since the potential announcers do not believe the cases will be properly investigated or because they fear the revenge from the perpetrators.

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