

THE CRIME SCENE IN THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS ON CRIME

Nenad Milić

Academy of Criminalistics and Police Studies, Belgrade

Summary: A great deal of time and effort has been invested in trying to understand crime, most notably examining why some people engage in criminal behavior and others do not. Theories which place offenders in the center of their research focus have dominated in criminology for a long time. However, in recent decades theoretical approaches whose focus is space and time where victims (targets) and offenders converge during the commission of the offense, increasingly come to the fore. These approaches, which all share common interest in understanding how the environment shapes criminal activity, belong together under the umbrella of what is called environmental criminology. Environmental criminology seeks to explain how the environment affects the creation of crime opportunities and offender decision making regarding committing crime, in an attempt to establish patterns of offender's and victim's behavior in relation to environment (space) where they meet and where the offense is executed. In addition to highlighting the essential characteristics of different theoretical approaches that now constitute the environmental criminology (e.g. routine activity theory, rational choice theory, crime pattern theory, CPTED etc.), this paper also shows how situational (micro) context of the crime came into the focus of theoretical thinking about crime. In this context, the paper starts from the ideas of the so called. Cartographic and Chicago School and design theorists, in the aftermath of World War II, who inspired the research about crime and place that lead to the emergence of the environmental criminology in the early 80's of last century. By providing a significant contribution to understanding the dynamics of performing criminal activities, theoretical approaches of the environmental criminology are significant factor in designing effective methods in combating (preventing) crime today. Practical application of crime prevention through environmental design, situational crime prevention, hotspot policing, geographic profiling, etc., confirms this.

Pages 141-159