Chapter Eight

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8.1 Summary

1. Present investigation has been conducted after Professor Herbert’s framework centering around ecology in relation to production, distribution of resource and consumption of space. To study the ecology of crime, particularly, Herbert’s approach to establish a casual relationship between crime density and spatial characteristics has been followed here. Accordingly, the spatial patterns and the trends emerged out of those pattern were probed with special reference to reported crime rates and ascertained crime sensitivity of micro-level localities, or crime density (Herbert, 1982).

2. For the purpose of present study North 24 Parganas District of West Bengal was selected. This administrative division of old 24 Parganas District was created to tackle the growing complex problems in relations to different social systems caused by partition of Bengal in 1947 and intensified further by the political independence of the then East Bengal and formation of Bangladesh Democratic Republic – with Bengali as National Language and Islam as National Religion. The North 24 Parganas District covers a long stretch of Eastern Boundary of India along the Western Border of Bangladesh and which has increased its security importance to prevent unauthorised entry in India and several other illicit commerce and underground trafficking. Obviously, the district remains open to high crime risk with micro-level variations in the
rate giving sufficient scope to identify regional patterns, broad spatial ecology of offences and offenders.

3. In spite of the knowledge that crime is indeed twice as high as ‘reported statistics’ the present study has to depend on ‘reported statistics’ by setting aside ‘population survey data of the incidents’. In order to draw inferences the present investigator has to use statistical procedure – establish causal relationship between environmentally influenced social systemic facts (variables) and rate of reported index crimes or cognizable offences. The said facts or ‘data’ were collected here by the investigator from the latest Census Report (2001), Records of State Government (from the Bureau of Crime Records) as available and made accessible – and the risk related crime areas were found out by the method prescribed by Harries (1980), while certain research assumptions were verified by appropriate statistical methods, viz., correlation method and sign test. Lastly, attempt was made to verify “poor environment hypothesis” (Herbert, 1982) with reference to (i) adverse living conditions and (ii) socio-economic circumstances. For this purpose, a micro-level causal relationship was studied between crime density of localities and their three criteria, viz., crowdedness, excess of adult male member with high rate of unemployment and illiteracy.

4. The findings have revealed that the rate of reported incidents of six index crime or cognisable offences vary in the areas and localities, under the jurisdiction of both urban and rural police stations of both Barrackpur and Barasat Administrative Subdivisions for the span of 1996-2005. The above rate of incidents have revealed the following rank

Besides, micro-level scrutiny with reference to first three and last three ranks of crime rates for a span of ten years respectively, has revealed the following points:

(i) Highest rate of crime – *theft* has maintained its first rank in different microlevel localities, irrespective of spatial advantages or limitations throughout the district. On the contrary, residential burglary has no causal relationship of that nature. Further, theft rate has revealed positive causal relationship with urban, semi-urban and rural localities where the rate of unemployed and illiterate adult population is at least 40 percent of the total local population – throughout the district. The number of annual theft cases is high in township areas where the first two major modes of land use are homestead and industry in both administrative subdivisions.

(ii) Next high rate crime – *rioting* has maintained its rank in the police station areas with local industry (Mill area), and also in area – particularly on the spots which remain beyond easy reach or communication of the local police and subdivisional police H.Q. The frequency varies inversely with proximity factor. Rioting rate bears a significant positive relationship with neighbourhood having poor environment, i.e., illiterate and unemployed adults at least 40 per cent of total population. Localities with high rioting risk have revealed two major modes of land use, viz., cropping fields or waterface and industry.
(iii) Amongst the police stations in Barrackpur Unit, Belgharia and Khardaha police station areas are found highly sensitive to crimes like dacoity, robbery and murder. Amongst the urban police stations in Barasat subdivision, Barasat Police Station areas are found equally sensitive. More than 40 percent of the total of these three types of crimes, took place during 1996-2005 in the district, were reported to have committed in the above four police station areas. Next sensitive police station in the Barasat subdivision is Rajarhat. One of the significant ecological characteristics of these four police station areas is unique co-existence of urban, rural and uninhabitated plots with homesteads, industry having problems of quick communication. In each of the urban police stations of Barasat Subdivision the rate of incidents of robbery is high – mainly, they are highway robberies with incidents of murder.

(iv) Proximity of the police station areas having facilitative access to Bangladesh Border have made them highly sensitive to smuggling, white trafficking, illicit sale of narcotics and sale of unlicensed firearms and explosives. The apparently peaceful rural area police stations are alleged as the residences of quite a number of legally dangerous persons and underworld leaders of legally forbidden commerce. Almost all the unreported crimes and mysteries of “doer-victim relationships related to those incidents are known to the said legally dangerous residents of the localities concerned where local police administration has a paretic existence only. Those legally dangerous persons have brains to utilise, rather exploit, the limitations of the localities, viz., ecological limitations and sociopathic emergent effects of a prevalent “poor environment” both micro- and macro-
levels of the space, i.e., the North 24 Parganas District. Findings of opinion survey of common people, residents of the urban police stations of the district, have corroborated the said fact in their apprehensions for victimization by undesirable social elements and also victimisation of their younger generations by the growing unhealthy influences of gang life.

The nature of crime-sensitive areas in the urban, semi-urban and rural localities observed in the present study was reported in studies conducted earlier by Boggs (1966), Harries (1974), Lee (1996), Pyle (1974), Sivamurthy (1981), Ghosh (1988) and Piquero & Lawton (2002).

Some of the inference drawn here in course of hypothesis verification have earned support in the observation reported by a number of pioneer researchers, e.g., Morris (1957), Herbert (1982), and Morenoff & Sampson (1987) and Roberts et al (2010).

8.2 Conclusion

Present 4094.00 sq.km. (approx) area of the district, between 22°57' North and 89°6' East which is actually a part of delta of the Ganges – which has been separated from the original district 24 Parganas in the year 1986 only. Obviously, the district administration had no problems to supply information as recorded from 1987. In certain cases facts were collected from last Census Report to prepare the western side of North 24 Parganas is full of old built-in spaces with two major modes of land use, viz., homestead and industry and has several administrative H.Q.s of old Barrakpur Subdivision, while the eastern part is full of newly built-in spaces with several colonies, waterface, and no man’s land. Approximately, 50% of the wastelands has occupied the western part.
The present study was conducted on two administrative subdivisions, viz., Barrackpur with 14 urban police stations and Barasat with 7 urban police stations and 9 rural police stations, of them there are at least 6 police stations which have a peculiar composition of urban area, industrial and or cropping fields, fisheries and undressed squalids. Record suggests the presence of at least 12 crowded towns populated by at least 40% illiterate, unemployed adults – who remain susceptible to accept any means to earn money and in whom the social permissibility of crime and underworld activities are perceptibly high.

The rank order of crime rates, as determined, are (i) Theft, (ii) Riot, (iii) Residential Burglary, (iv) Murder, (v) Dacoity and (vi) Robbery. The findings have identified a positive influence of ecology over crime sensitivity of micro-level localities.

For Example:

1. Crowded urban localities with high percentage of illiterate and unemployed adults are sensitive mainly to thefts; and semi-urban localities of commercial importance fulfilling the above criteria are mainly sensitive to residential burglary.

2. Industrial urban localities and rural areas with intensive crop-producing lands and fisheries are mainly sensitive to rioting and where annual rates for dacoity and murder show rise and fall in the rates.

3. Areas situated at the far ends of the District or subdivisional H.Q.s of Police have high annual rate for dacoity and robbery with or without incidents of murder – the rate is growing since 1996. The probable cause is more administrative (poor human relations) than ecological.
4. Areas located on the roadsides of highways and linkways with Bangladesh Border are found highly sensitive to robberies with or without murder. The link road connecting Dum Dum police station areas and urban police station areas of Barasat administrative unit with the north end point of South 24 Parganas – Eastern Bypass has earned notoriety in this regard since 1988.

5. Areas having high crime – density for rioting, robbery and dacoity shows high rate for person-victim offences.

6. Public opinion and tacit approval of local police corroborates each other regarding high rates of unreported incidents of customs offence, railway offence, sex offence and white trafficking under certain police station areas of Barasat subdivision mainly since 1996.

In the district North 24 Parganas there are areas with improved ecological conditions while there are greater number of areas which yet remains deprived of that – they had lagged behind and are still lagging behind to promote the growth of poor environment and accelerate the speed of interactions of ‘poverty cycle’.

Spread of the said affected micro-spaces goes to the advantage of cunning legally dangerous brains to promote a subculture conducive to estranged behaviour, who may not be residents of these micro-spaces, necessarily. They are mainly interested to exploit the facilities like transport and communication, particularly. Besides readily available groups of estranged adults – who are unable to resist their immoral and legally undesirable urges and practices for their subsistence (who generally commit petty offences almost daily whenever they find opportunity).
Finally, as a concluding remark it is noteworthy to state that a great majority of the neighbourhoods belonging to the two selected subdivisions—Barrackpur and Barasat of the district North 24 Parganas, have been suffering from critical environmental deterioration in terms of high population density, illiteracy and unemployment, which in turn, either singly or jointly develop such a pattern of ecological characteristics having immense potentials to indulge a criminogenic climate that consequently affect negatively the ‘quality of life’ of the concerned inhabitants (Davis & Cherns, 1975).
8.3 Applied Value

1. The findings possess enormous resource materials to identify specific areas having criminogenic potentials so that police can take effective measure to minimize the occurrence of crime in those areas.

2. Administrative authority along with relevant planning bodies may take adequate steps to draw an integrated and comprehensive plan for the development and welfare of the community concerned (Newman, 1972, 1973 & 1976) and thereby to promote the Quality of Life of the inhabitants.

3. The methodology followed in the present investigation may also utilized to make further probe in the context of other districts of West Bengal or even in the other States of India.

8.4 Limitation of the Study

1. Because of the time-bound study of the present dissertation the investigator had to restrict her domain within only two subdivisions.

2. Collection of crime records from the police stations may not be accepted as the real crime records by the court of law during their final judgement.

3. It is also well known that the unrecorded crimes are at least three/four times more than that of the recorded crime but the understanding of which is beyond the control of the present investigator.