CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

Urban spaces and socio-spatial interaction pattern in those spaces had no explicit and significant influence on geographical research related to crimes in India until date. Earlier research on crime and urban spaces focused primarily on the structural elements of the neighbourhoods. Conceptually, such research provided a satisfactory explanation of crime causation, but its failure to address the role of mediating socio-spatial processes within the structure of society reduces its acceptability in present context. In the discussion of these processes, Bourdieu's model, as early as the 1980s on social inequality and his definition of 'social space' has experienced a renaissance among social scientists. According to him, in urban context, models are no longer considered to be complete unless they include a description of the social spatial forces that change and form urban spaces. This is because urban conditions effect residents' assumptions and belief about integration so as to affect the level and pattern of interaction. The interactive dimension of space defines spaces that are available for use by various resident groups for communication and willingness to work towards understanding and negotiating with others. Thus, social spaces provide frameworks within which residents' behaviour and the social climate become mutually constitutive through complex dialectics.

As detailed out in the introductory chapters, such understanding of space promotes a theoretical development away from the universality experiences towards a greater sensitivity to difference and local discourses, which on one hand revives the question of areal differentiation and on the other foregrounds local narratives ungoverned by general rules (Cooke 1989; Gregory 1989). Also, space gets conceived as 'social space' or more precisely as social spatiality. The basic idea is that the spatial forms an integrated part of social practices and/or social processes and that practices and processes are all situated in space (and time) at all scales of social lives. From 'things in space' to the actual 'production of space' is a shift attributed to the French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1991) although it was the 'spatial turn' in the social theories that the importance of space in understanding social and cultural phenomena was fully explored.
The complex interplay of space with place is a complex phenomenon and the discussion on this issue has been wide ranging. Increasingly, however, it has been accepted that material environment cannot be an independent part of social theory unless there is an active mediation between material environment and social practices—several discourses have already been addressed earlier.

Many studies have argued that neighbourhoods can be seen as microcosm of social spaces. It further posits that social networks, which are spatially embedded, contribute significantly in the making of such neighbourhoods. In addition to conceptualising neighbourhood as a social space and social network as a constituent part of social space, what has also been termed as ‘social spatiality’, the concept has been further used to deconstruct several social behaviour including crimes. At the risk of simplification here (see, earlier chapters for full exposition), the working principle has been that a socio-spatially embedded network would have an ameliorating effect on crimes. That is, if neighbourhoods are networked spatially, they may act as informal social checks on socially deviant behaviour and vice versa. Of late, such a conceptual framing of violence has also been loosely linked with local social capital theory.

Incidentally, these propositions are not new, however it can be recalled that such studies have largely been attempted in the western context.

With this background, the present study deals with issues of social spatiality and its implications for crimes with the help of secondary and primary data from Delhi and its eight neighbourhoods drawn from areas with high and low crimes as well as from rich and poor localities. The analysis is carried out at three levels: state for all India pattern; ward-level for Delhi, both on the basis of published data locality-wise on the basis of field-survey. The localities are called neighbourhoods in the study.

Briefly the objectives are as follows:

1. a) To identify consistently high crime prone areas in Delhi;  
   b) To trace the socio-economic profile of such areas;

2. a) Define and determine the socio-spatial network of informal interaction and formation of spatially confined social space and
b) To interrogate the interface between social space and crime.

Following research questions were posed in order to achieve these objectives.

- Various types of crime have distinct spatial pattern (Quetelet 1835; Bhusan 1997; Mary 1996);

- Crime-prone and/or relatively safer localities reflect absence/presence of socio-spatial interaction (Saegart and Winkel 2002; Pain 2001; Kanan and Pruitt 2002; Barnett and Mencken 2002);

- Higher the intensity of spatially embedded interaction and working trust, lesser the incidence of crime and vice versa (Wurff et al. 1988; McIntyre 1997; Sampson et al 2001).

The study consists of five chapters. First chapter deals with literature review with a view to place the later discussions in a conceptual framework. It also contains discussion on research framework including the statement of the problem, research design, database, methodology, and sample design. The second chapter is about the spatial distribution of crimes in India with special reference to Delhi and its districts. The third chapter draws from content analysis of newspaper. This chapter provides various details of crimes within the spatial framework. The emphasis is mainly on the processes. These three chapters together not only throw light on the spatial patterning of crimes in Delhi, but they provide the crucial background information against which the subsequent analysis has been placed. The fourth chapter explores spatially bound social interaction and its implications for crime occurrence in various sites signified by different socio-spatial characteristics. The fifth which is also the final chapter is about the major findings and conclusions drawn from the study.

A brief overview of the state level pattern of crime in India depicts that existing social environment is responsible for high violence in the states. In general, cities with high crime rates are located in high crime states suggesting the importance of larger social context. Over the years, there has been some weakening of spatial co-variation as states were ranked on the basis of moving averages of crime rates. The weakening of spatial concentration is much stronger in women-centric crimes. That is to say, women are not particularly safe in any states. Cases of sexual harassment are mostly in south Indian states. This, however, can be consequent upon higher literacy and
better status of women in the south as compared to north, which on one hand result in backlash in the form of increasing violence against women or perhaps more importantly to better reporting. Overall crime rates in India interact significantly with population density and urbanisation both of which are positively related to crimes. Urbanisation and dense population tend to result in anonymity and declining interpersonal relations and may encourage crimes – associations which could only be indirectly established in the study. Literacy has an intriguing association with overall crime rates; it is positively related with overall crime rates suggesting better reporting as literate population increases and yet this association becomes negative as far as the property crimes are concerned. If there is an increase in the number of people per household, total crime rate tend to fall, which may be related with a hypothesised association in literature about the availability of capable guardians (at homes) most of the time leading to reduction in targeting such households. Household density has a positive bearing on property crimes, an observation that has been made elsewhere as well.

The discussion pertaining to overall and different typologies of crime establishes Delhi’s reputation as the high-crime state for the average number of incidence reported in this union territory has always remained above the national average. This dubious distinction does not change when crimes are categorised in different types; in case of property crimes, Delhi continues to occupy the highest rank with not much difference as far as sexual harassment cases are considered. Though the magnitude of violent crime is comparatively moderate, it is still higher than the national average. There is a marked variation as the scale moves from Delhi as a whole to its districts as in terms of proneness to crimes Delhi’s south areas continues to occupy the most vulnerable location through the entire reference period whereas the northern districts across river Yamuna have relatively lower reporting of crime.

Following the place-centric approach to crimes, i.e., crime as an event that is situated in the local details of individual circumstances and processes operating at the moment of the crime occurrence - the situational approach to the exploration of crime and victimisation - the scenario changes in its finer details. After evaluating several variables, it can be said that major and minor sites of crimes defined in terms of high, medium and low crime regions do share some similarities across space. Some of them
are linked with broader context of socio-environmental safety for women. Contrary to
general perceptions, the available data in this study explode the myth that home
spaces are safe for females as compared to males. Strangers posed the major danger to
males befitting the image of 'stranger danger' for them. It is not unexpected therefore
that a significantly higher percentage of men face crimes in public spaces.

It can be argued that these crime-spaces are interlinked with spatially confining
gendered roles of males and females for men's activity spaces are largely confined to
public spheres as are women's to homes, particularly in Delhi. Subsequently, given
the social spaces that females predominantly occupy, acquaintances and relatives
together emerge as the main offenders for them, an observation that is supported in
various researches as well. The fact that young adults are most vulnerable is linked
with the fact that they are potentially the most exposed age cohorts; women in this age
groups suffer additionally on account of sexual harassment because of their gendered
location whereas the set of crimes men face are not intrinsically associated with what
sex they belong to and yet both are susceptible to crimes even as the specific nature of
crimes committed against them vary over time, space and relations.

When the various attributes are individually seen, as indicated earlier, it is observed
that the young adults are the most vulnerable age-cohort, overall gendered locations
do not matter much, but during the post-midnight and day hours more females than
males face crimes. During the post-midnight hours the residential spaces are where
maximum numbers of males faced crimes. This pattern can be linked with easy
availability of targets at particular sites at particular time, i.e., daytime.

Overall, it is the darker hours at night that about half of the crimes take places. While
strangers are predominant in committing day-time crimes, people known to victims
are major perpetrators of crimes during the night time. It is true in case of all the
regions; however, among the various regions greater frequency is observed in the high
crime area although strangers invariably target male victims across all the time
periods.

However, when the spatial scale changes, i.e., from the aggregate Delhi data to
district-wise and then to neighbourhoods' probe, some of those specificities change.
For example, the predominant significance of night hours repeatedly brought about at the Delhi level remains no longer valid in the East District where females are targeted during the day hours also. The Eastern District shows difference in yet another matter as it is the only district which has the highest incidence of sexual harassment as also acquaintances forming the most dominant fraction of offenders. However, other parameters do not show any change at the disaggregated level of districts. From the brief discussion here and the detailed expositions earlier it is clear that social events like crimes have their own spatial expressions and are organised within the local socio-spatial imperatives. This reasoning is based on the principal that different places, regions or localities are different in a material as well as in immaterial sense - these differences constitute various conditions for the performance of social practices and social processes, which in turn create areal differentiations across spaces and places.

So far the concern has been with situational differences in which crimes were committed. Despite several constructs that attempt to address such differentiations, there are still several parameters, which remain to be explored. These relate to social space and the making of it as a social check to crime. The next part of the analysis has dealt with it.

At the outset, it may be mentioned that social networks defined in terms of neighbouring captured through the nature and frequency of support were indeed spatially entrenched and stronger in localities that were marked by lower rates of crime thus lending support to our hypothesised association between crime and social space.

For example, there is a marked difference surveyed found with localities in terms of friends within the neighbourhood, the overall frequency of visits to them as well as support sought between the low crime and high crime areas. Overall in low crime areas, respondents reported better connectedness in respect of socio-spatial interaction, which was also statistically substantiated.

Both in high and low crime areas, the particular localities reporting low incidences of crime have significantly better network that is also spatially confined to the
neighbourhood in which respondents resided. Although telephonic contacts were higher in high income areas, the overall frequency of visits was higher for low crime areas, more so in those areas that reported low incidence of crimes in otherwise high crime localities with high-incomes. Similarly, the frequency of regular support from neighbours existed on very regular basis in low crime areas in general, the percentage being the highest for the low-income areas of low crime region.

It has been observed that incidences of violence were related to the informal checks articulated through various recreational spaces located in the neighbourhoods as respondents were more likely to visit locally available common meeting places in low crime areas as compared to the high crime areas. Another attribute of informal checks, i.e., overall acquaintanceship pattern showed that low-income areas were not very different in terms of number of neighbours known and the type of relation existing between them as far as low/high incidences of crimes was concerned. Crucially enough, however, in case of high crime areas regularity of contact was significantly lower than the low crime areas. This may be driven by the fact that the high crime areas did not have a strong informal (check) system in the form of common local places such as temple, park, library or sports centre etc.

At the neighbourhood level also, there exists a clear variation in the type of relation shared amongst the local neighbours in that better relationships were observed in areas with low crimes within the otherwise high crime zones. However, it is not so in the case of low crime neighbourhoods in low crime zones.

Along with the informal social checks, formal organisations also impact on crime curtailment. In general, neighbourhoods characterised by low crimes have more formal checks as compared to high crime area, whereas there is a marked absence of such institutions in the low crime areas of the poor localities. Here, the element of strong neighbourhood ties put impetus to the crime checking mechanisms. It is also to be noted that presence of Residence Welfare Associations in the high crime reporting areas is greater in number than in the low crime prone areas. However, the participation in the neighbourhood associations’ meetings are significantly

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lower in the high crime areas although the number of people reporting the existence of such associations is higher, i.e., there is no dearth of the number of organisations and institutions in these areas, but interest of local people seems to be lacking.

Overall, the socio-spatial bonds developed among the respondents seem to be higher in the areas which are reporting fewer crimes irrespective of income differentials. It is interesting to see that informal social check is the main driving mechanism for the low crime areas with the exception of the low-crime-low-income areas because of lack of common civic amenities that might promote collective meetings etc. However, as already mentioned, strong local neighbourhood network in the low-income areas compensates for it so that formal crime check mechanisms do not seem to hold much importance as predictor of crime proneness and it is true for all kinds of areas.

Respondents’ perception of their surrounding neighbourhood reveals that experience of victimisation is greater in high crime than the low crime areas and the numbers are statistically significant. It is an important point to note that respondents have come across more indirect victimisation incidences rather than the direct ones. This is more pertinent in the high crime areas, which also correspond to high-income areas. In areas with high crimes, it was females who were less susceptible to crimes than males, which is not the case in the areas reporting low crimes. What is being hinted in higher male victims is the ‘target availability’, which has received attention in crime literature.

While the number of times help offered by the neighbours (when called for help) is higher for the low crime area, in answering the question about some incidences where people had offered help, the replies were often sketchy and were not affirmative. In low-crime areas, however, more than two-third of the respondents had reported that they felt safer. This was significantly different than was the case in the high crime areas.

The general structure of the interaction pattern in Delhi neighbourhoods demonstrates that interaction among respondents mostly takes place with friends rather than with
the relatives. In both high and low crime areas, respondents did not identify their acquaintances from their workplace although majority of respondents identified their friends from the same level of education and category of occupation.

It is always very problematic to convert individual responses to collective behaviour and difficulties compound if the data is of qualitative nature. At the same time, however, studies of this nature warrant some sort of 'validation'. It is with this in mind that the present study attempts to assess the interface between the variables of socio-spatial interaction and crime behaviour in the neighbourhoods of Delhi with the help of logistic regression analysis.

In short, the regression models not only affirm what has been discussed, but also bring forth some more details. As observed earlier, middle-aged respondents, particularly those who were recent residents (less than 10 years) in a given neighbourhood were more likely to experience crimes in comparison to the residents who were residing for longer period (more than 20 years of residence in the same area).

In high crime areas females were less prone to direct victimisation than males, which was not the case in the low crime areas. It could also be predicted that in the low crime areas, the probability of being targeted by the criminals reduces with social interaction for the set of indicators used to capture social interaction does show positive effect on reduced exposure to crimes by the residents. The magnitude of effect is highest in case of frequency of support sought regularly by the neighbours. As also were other factors like number of friends inside the neighbourhood, visits and telephonic contacts with them and percent of respondents with support network inside the neighbourhood.

High crime areas show that if respondents regularly have face-to-face interaction with their acquaintances then the probability of their facing crimes decreases. As was observed in the low crime areas, longer stay in the neighbourhood and higher frequency of support offered by the neighbours which show trust and reciprocity among them decreases the odds of facing crime significantly. These factors operate equally effectively as far as low-income areas within the high crime zones are concerned. For the high-income areas, telephonic interaction appears as a significant
factor, which is not surprising, as ubiquitous phones in these neighbourhoods have become a major source of interaction. Conversely, low crime/low-income areas throw face-to-face personal interaction as a better means for contacts. Frequent daily visit to friends/acquaintances and support seeking behaviour matter more than other predictors in low-income areas. Other than these factors, prolonged stay seems to result in stronger social ties that do produce identifiable socio-spatial spaces in both high and low crime areas, more so in high-income neighbourhoods as compared to the low-income neighbourhoods.

Perceptions as to whether their neighbourhoods are safe depend a lot upon respondents’ age, gender and structure of the interaction in a given neighbourhood. In high crime areas, younger age groups are less likely to report as feeling safe whereas the middle aged respondents felt safer in their respective neighbourhood than the old age group. It may be because these residents had developed effective network structure, which, among other associations, is also reflected in the positive relationship between the frequencies of times help was offered to them when they faced some sort of crimes. In areas reporting lower incidences of crimes, however, younger age respondents also experienced fewer incidences of crimes.

Overall, the duration of stay shows a positive increase in the perception of safety. However, perception on how safe the respondents’ neighbourhood is does not have positive association with the number of acquaintances residing within the neighbourhood or frequency of (telephonic) contacts although number of visits; support existing inside the neighbourhood and frequency of support offered etc. does increase the predictability of a neighbourhood being declared safe in high crime areas. In contrast, in low crime areas, the respondents reported that they felt safer in their localities irrespective of their income level. The neighbourhoods reporting low crime rates seem to utilise their stock of local social capital to prevent social disorder in their neighbourhood.

To conclude, the existing networks of interaction and situation of crime in the districts, wards and neighbourhoods of Delhi reveal several dimensions and yet several generalisations are possible. Both high income and low income localities seem to have their friends/ acquaintances primarily drawn from within the neighbourhood
although low-income areas have a higher share of them. More importantly, number of friends from inside the neighbourhood, visits to and telephonic contacts with them and having support networks from inside the neighbourhood did reduce the probability of direct experience of victimisation.

Females face crimes that are largely committed by acquaintances and friends within the confines of so-called safer places such as homes although public spaces are not completely devoid of danger for them whereas males are threatened by strangers in public spaces. As one would expect, all, but particularly younger age cohort of females report higher incidences of sexual harassment as compared to males who are often involved in property crimes. The types of crimes and spaces where they are committed and the involvement of males and/or females is very much an outcome of their gender and the activity spaces they occupy lending credence to several conceptual observations such as 'target availability', 'presence of guardians' and 'stranger danger' etc.

High crime areas have significantly lower participation in neighbourhood activities, i.e., association meetings etc. which may be interpreted as lack of interest on residents' part in local affairs related to their neighbourhoods. Interestingly, respondents from the high crime neighbourhoods agreed that cohesive and close-knit neighbourhoods do have a positive influence in lowering crimes in a given area.

Spatially bound social spaces are in evidence and they have developed over a period of time mainly through face-to-face interactive processes. Moreover, areas with lower incidence of crimes, irrespective of their income status, do demonstrate comparatively better-developed social spaces even as the characteristic features signifying such spaces across income levels may vary in finer details. For example, in general economically better neighbourhoods with low crime have more formal institutions that act as 'check' on crimes as compared to neighbourhoods with high incidence of crimes, but there exists a marked absence of such institutions in the low crime areas of the poor localities. In the latter cases, strong neighbourhood ties act as crime checking mechanisms.
In brief, withholding the limitations of various sources of data and complexities involved in measuring and assessing local social capital that were also to be located in a spatially confining setting as required by the conceptual and theoretical constructs of social space, it may be said that the study within its scope has been able to establish several hypothesised associations between social space and crime.

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