

6.1 CRIME IN PRAGUE

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Cities are complex systems characterized by high social diversity with specific structures and social relations (Musil 1967). They accumulate not only people, economy or services, but also negative phenomena associated with them. One of them is crime. The Chicago school studied links between crime and socio-spatial structure of cities already in the 1920s. Research has revealed that crime is concentrated in certain areas, including the inner city, which also show a high turnover, ethnic diversity and poverty (Park 1925). According to the social disorganization theory, factors influencing criminal behaviour include the role of economic deprivation, physical deterioration, migration and fragmentation in addition to the already mentioned factors (Fyfe 2000).

Research on crime in Prague had not drawn much attention until the turn of the 20th and 21st century. One exception is Karabec et al. (1976) who assesses not only crime, but also other socio-pathological phenomena, such as alcoholism, prostitution and suicide rate. However, the study considers Prague as a whole and does not take into account its internal differentiation. In the 90s, the Institute of Criminology and Social Prevention issued several publications focused on selected criminal offences and case studies (e.g. robbery, Osmančík 1992). Čermák (2008) publishes one of the first articles differentiating Prague at local police department (hereinafter LPD) level which allows for more detailed analyses. Research conducted by Temelová et al. (2012) and Jíchová and Temelová (2012a, b) uses similar territorial division in combination with the division of the city into zones, based on the Chicago school studies.

The map sheet aims to assess the development and spatial differentiation (based on LPDs and city zones) of recorded crime in Prague with an emphasis on the period since the mid-90s up to the present. The maps use a typology which is a combination of crime index (number of criminal offences per number of residents) and detection (number of criminal offences in which the identity of the perpetrator is known). Although detection is closely linked to the structure of crime (in some criminal offences it is easier to identify the perpetrators), it provides a unique insight into the crime differentiation in Prague. The map sheet is closely related to the map sheet from section B 6.2 Structure of crime in Prague explaining the trends in crime in more detail.

The data on crime is primarily acquired from the Czech Police Presidium statistics (Statistical Recording System of Crime) covering the period from 1995 to the present. LPD is the basic unit of monitoring and currently there are 50 LPDs in Prague. Another source of valuable data are the Public Security Criminal Yearbooks from the 60s¹ which, however, only use the differentiation into former Prague districts. The statistics include only recorded crime which may differ substantially from the real situation. In the case of certain criminal offences, the undetected (latent) crime may constitute up to 70% of the real crime (see also Marešová and Scheinost 2001). The number of cleared offences does not refer directly to the number of offences committed in a given year. Thus, it usually includes some of the criminal offences committed in the previous year and does not

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include offences committed towards the end of the year due to the investigation process, administrative procedures and the nature of the criminal offence. Long-term monitoring of crime may encounter several methodological pitfalls, e.g. legislative changes and other government interventions (amnesty) which produce "artificial" year-over-year increases/declines (see also map sheet section B 6.2 Structure of crime in Prague). Unfortunately, the definition of LPD is not compatible with the administrative division making the cartographic representation even more difficult. In addition, LPD boundaries are not fixed, new LPDs are created and old ones are dissolved and these changes are not always evident and published. Therefore, in the map of the evolution of crime in 1995–2009 some territories are merged so that they could be compared over time². The newest period is not included in the map due to significant changes in the LPD boundaries. For this period, the LPD definition is taken from www.mapakriminality.cz. Georeferencing (GIS function *spatial join*) was used to create a unique code frame for the conversion of basic settlement units (hereinafter BSU) into LPDs. BSU located on the territory of more than one LPD were assigned to the LPD covering the largest part of the territory. Apart from LPDs, the map sheet also divides the city into zones (originally in Ouředníček et al. (2012); see also map sheet section B 9.2 Typology of residential areas).

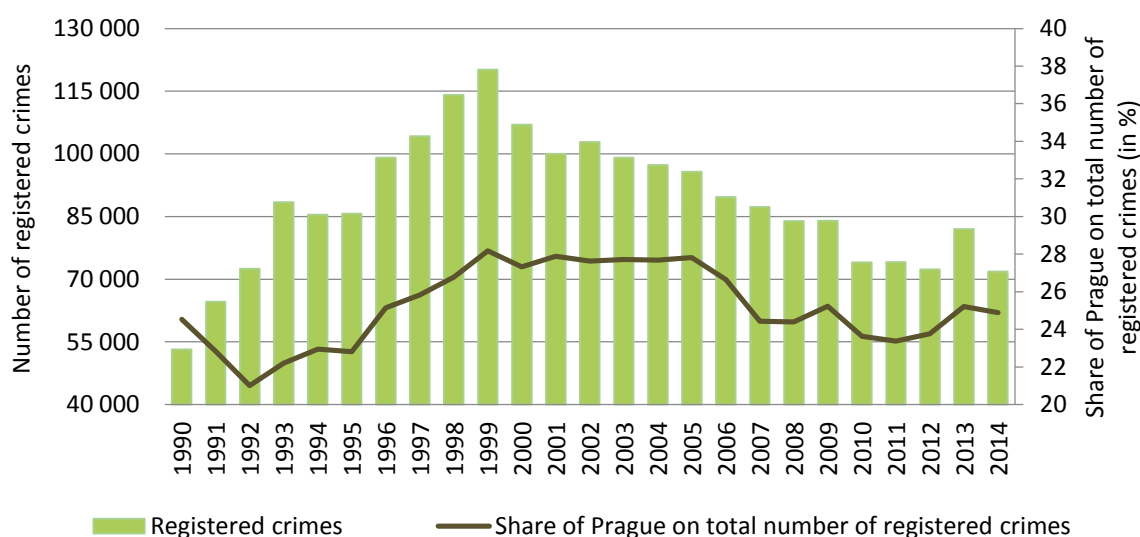


Figure 6.1.1: The evolution of crime in Prague

Source: Policejní prezidium, 1994–2014; ČSÚ, 2015

Prague accounts for approximately one quarter of all criminal offences committed on the territory of Czechia. Post-1989 period sees a sharp increase in the number of criminal offences in the 90s and also an increase in the share of Prague on the total number of criminal offences (see Figure 6.1.1.). The increase in crime is associated with social, political and economic changes after 1989. These include opening the borders and new possibilities in many areas of life, but also new opportunities for crime, to which the changing system could not respond adequately and swiftly. A certain stabilization came only after 1999, and since then there is an almost continuous decline (except for 2013

² One of the most significant changes is the emergence of new/ restoration of older LPDs, e.g. Výstaviště (since 1998), Újezd nad Lesy (since 2003) or Zličín (since 2005).

affected by the amnesty). The decline in the number of offences is also reflected in the crime index, which has decreased significantly when comparing 1995–1998 to 2010–2013. The detection in Prague reaches relatively low values in Prague and tends to decrease. While in the 90s it was over 25 % in most LPDs, in the last reporting period only a small number of LPDs reached this rate. Both the structure of crime and the prevalence of criminal offences in which the offender is difficult to identify have to be taken into account.

The spatial distribution of crime in Prague is uneven. Crime concentrates mainly in the city centre and inner city and the number of offences decreases towards the outskirts (see Table 6.1.1). However, this tendency does not apply to all types of crime (for more details see map sheet section B 6.2 Structure of crime in Prague). The evolution of crime is also spatially differentiated. While the outer city sees a decline since the 90s, the city centre and inner city only in the middle of the recorded period. Although the level of crime on the urban periphery has been low for a long time, the most significant decline occurred in the last reporting period. By contrast, several parts of Prague see an increase in the crime index, particularly in some housing estates or areas with commercial activities. The differences are partly due to the changes in LPD boundaries.

Zones of Prague	Crime index			
	1995–1998	2000–2003	2005–2008	2010–2013
City centre	344.8	344.8	292.0	240.6
Inner city	96.9	106.8	88.7	82.9
Outer city	76.2	68.6	61.9	44.7
Urban periphery	66.5	60.2	64.9	23.5
Prague	101.4	99.2	85.7	64.4

Table 6.1.1: Crime index by city zones

Source: Policejní prezidium, 1994–2014; ČSÚ, 1991, 2001, 2011

Note: The typology of municipal zones is adapted according to Ouředníček et al. (2012).

The city centre has had the highest crime index for a long time, starting from the 60s. One of the reasons is the low number of residents figuring in the index in comparison with the actual number of people present in the centre throughout the day (see also Pospíšilová 2012). A high concentration of people (including tourists, employees), shops and services provides more opportunities to commit criminal offences. This is also confirmed by high absolute numbers of criminal offences (see LPD Bartolomějská, Benediktská or Krakovská). High crime index is also observed in the inner city, especially in former industrial areas – LPD Libeň, Smíchov and Nusle. The outer city and urban periphery consist mainly of large LPDs with a lower crime index. Several housing estates show a higher crime index (e.g. LPD Jižní Město, Stodůlky or Letňany). Even on the urban periphery with a low crime index, a higher incidence of specific criminal offences related to the construction of family houses is observed. Therefore, the assessment of the overall crime index has to be complemented by information on the structure of crime (see also map sheet section B 6.2 Structure of crime in Prague).

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