

Preface

This book is about the unit of analysis in studies of crime and place. The quick expansion of this field demands a reflection on what the units of its analysis are and should be. Crime analysts working for the police or government are confronted routinely now with the dilemma of identifying what the unit of analysis should be when reporting on trends in crime or crime hot spots, or when mapping crime and drug problems in cities. Also, in the field of policing new developments can be observed in place-based policing instead of offender-based policing in which the choice of the level of aggregation plays a critical role.

We hope that this volume will contribute to crime and place studies by making explicit the problems involved in choosing units of analysis in the criminology of place or in crime mapping. Although the chapters have been written by experts in the field, the book has not been written for experts only. Those who are involved in the practice of crime mapping and academic researchers studying the spatial distributions of crime and victimization can learn from the arguments and tools presented in this volume.

The book is the result of a three-day workshop on the unit of analysis held in September 2006 at the Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement (NSCR) in Leiden, the Netherlands. At the workshop, all participants presented the first drafts of their papers and others commented on them in the following discussions. After rewriting, all the papers were subsequently reviewed (single-blind) by three other workshop participants and by us, the editors. Besides the authors of the volume, we would like to thank Lieven Pauwels of Ghent University, Belgium; Danielle Reynald, Margit Averdijk, and Henk Elffers of the NSCR for their time and efforts to review the papers.

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