

An Attempt to Explain Crime in Transitional and Central European Countries

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The article analyses theoretical views of the influence of social changes on crime development, and draws the attention to the fact that there were several social and legal systems in Europe that went through a process of transformation in the 20th century: the first wave present the democratisation processes that after World War I, the second democratization processes after World War II, the third wave were the processes in the 70ies when authoritarian regimes of Spain, Portugal and Greece were overthrow. None of these processes, however, has been as complex as those in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of socialism.

The author presents theoretical explanations on these processes as put forth by mostly Western experts on the one hand (where American authors are also included) and Central and Eastern European authors on the other (with the exception of those from Russia). Theoretical models are presented on which the Western researchers (Offe, Eisner, Joutsen, Karstedt, Los) have based their views, such as modernization theory (Durkheim, Clinard), opportunity theory (Cohen-Felson) and civilization theory (Elias, Gottfredson-Hirschi). The views of a second group of researchers (Kossowska, Valkova, Levay) are also discussed who also employ models of Western criminology but at the same time emphasize the multi causal nature of these changes and their all-embracing nature.

The author puts forth her view that a multi-causal approach, which she calls the "shock approach", is needed since the changes that have taken place in all areas of society and individual lives, have meant for society as well as for the individual a shock, in which neither of them was able to act as they would have acted in normal circumstances.

Keywords: crime, social changes, explanation of crime

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