

## 1 Trouble Seeing: The Community, Place, and Crime Problem

The Barksdale Market, as we will call it, was the most popular store on the block, yet few shopped there. From the street you would see a mom-and-pop convenience store that sold sugary beverages, snack foods, lottery tickets, and cigarettes. But the owner did not earn much of his revenue from the sale of these goods. Inside you would see that many of the items, long past their expiration dates, were amassing dust. Instead, the store was the hub of a retail drug market, the center of an organized shoplifting enterprise, a money laundering front, and the nucleus for street robberies on the surrounding blocks.

The blocks surrounding the Barksdale were some of the least popular in the city. Many buildings were vacant and several had plywood covering broken windows. Trash cans sprinkled along the sidewalks were always overflowing and litter was scattered around. Lettering from the signage above several storefronts had fallen off. Graffiti appeared on many of the buildings. Men loitered in the area but had little to do. In fact, the few who seemed to benefit most from the disorder on these blocks were the local drug dealers. They worked in tandem with the owner of the Barksdale because of its favorable location.

The Barksdale was close to a central intersection in Walnut Hills, a neighborhood located a couple miles northeast of downtown Cincinnati, Ohio. It saw ample automobile and foot traffic. Two bus routes stopped near the front of the store and two other routes had stops a block away. It was near an alley that connected a commuter street to a lane behind the store. Across the street were two major franchise businesses, a pharmacy and a grocery store, surrounded by a paved parking lot. Drug dealers could sell easily near the Barksdale: by the bus stop in front, in the alley to the side, and in the parking lot across the street. The Barksdale's owner got a cut. He stored the drugs, laundered the money, and stashed the weapons behind the seemingly conventional goods sitting on the shelves. But the dusty goods had nefarious origins too. When drug users had no money to purchase drugs, the owner traded money for goods users had shoplifted from the pharmacy and grocery store across the street. Laundry detergent, for example. The Barksdale's owner then placed these items on his shelves at discount prices.

The owner's business model was sustainable for quite some time. Yet today the Barksdale is gone and crime at and around the property is almost nonexistent. In fact, crime in the area is the lowest it has been in decades (Linning, 2019). If you walked down the same block today, you would never guess the story we have just told. So what happened?

The police department appointed a new district captain to oversee policing efforts in the neighborhood. He was troubled by the Barksdale and several other properties nearby. These places kept reopening despite persistent police efforts to close them using raids and many arrests of local offenders. The new captain understood the secret to these criminal enterprises: property rights and the powers of ownership. They could sustain their criminal activities because they controlled the infrastructure needed to do so. No number of arrested dealers could touch these owners. No number of door-kicking raids could displace them. Even if they were arrested, they could transfer ownership to a confederate and reopen with a new name on the door and the same dusty goods on the shelves.

The captain sought to understand the history of the property, who used it, and how. After gathering information from the local nonprofit redevelopment foundation, city officials, and legal records, he discovered that many noncrime related problems also plagued the property. It had unpaid tax liens to the city, but the tax department had yet to collect them. It had several building code violations, but the codes department gave it no priority. It also fell short of several health code standards, but the health department did little. And none of the city departments that could have done something were aware that they shared the problem with each other. When the captain put all this information together, and presented it to the separate departments, the city became motivated to shutter the business.

The captain organized a joint effort with the local police, redevelopment foundation, city, building inspector, health inspector, and a local prosecutor. After another raid, the city seized the property for outstanding taxes and building and health code violations. This dramatically reduced crime at and around the Barksdale, an effect that persists today. Street dealers no longer had a nucleus for their activities. Drug users no longer had a place that would take their robbery and shoplifting proceeds in exchange for drugs. The city sold the property to be remodeled into a legitimate business (Linning, 2019).

All cities have their Barksdale Markets. So its demise teaches us an important lesson: bad addresses can drive neighborhood crime. The redevelopment of the Barksdale and other sites nearby teach the converse: local businesses create much of the orderly activity in neighborhoods. On the surface this may not seem like a major revelation. After all, the crime and place literature has consistently shown that a small proportion of places account for the majority of crime (Sherman et al., 1989; Weisburd et al., 2012, 2016; Wilcox & Eck, 2011). This phenomenon is so common that criminology has accepted it as a fundamental law (Weisburd, 2015). But this literature is largely devoid of how crime at places influences crime in adjacent areas. Place management

theory (Eck, 1994) is the only explanation we currently have to account for the criminal activity occurring at places. But the theory provides little insight into the wider neighborhood influence that a place like the Barksdale had on Walnut Hills.

Community criminology should explain this but does not. Macrolevel theories seek to explain why some large geographic areas – like neighborhoods – have more crime than others (Sampson, 2012; Shaw & McKay, 1942; Taylor, 2015; Wilcox et al., 2018). However, this research is unable to account for why high crime places exist within neighborhoods (Eck, 2018). Recent works that integrate place and neighborhood theories try to explain this. They offer a top-down approach whereby wider neighborhood effects influence offenders' microspatial target selection decisions (Tillyer et al., 2021; Wilcox & Tillyer, 2018).

But the Barksdale Market example suggests the reverse: a bottom-up process whereby criminal activity originates at places and radiates out to the surrounding areas. Evidence for a bottom-up process has been emerging for some time (Weisburd et al., 2006). Clarke and Weisburd's (1994) diffusion of crime control benefits paper showed that crime reductions at hot spots often drive down crime at nearby places (for other examples, see Anaheim Police Department, 2007; Edmonton Police Service, 1995; Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2002). Systematic reviews and meta-analyses have demonstrated the prevalence of the diffusion insight (Bowers et al., 2011; Braga et al., 2019; Guerette & Bowers, 2009). Bowers' (2014) analysis of thefts in the United Kingdom found that "risky facilities act as crime 'radiators', causing crime in the immediate environment as well as internally" (p. 389).

This evidence suggests that the impact the Barksdale had on its surroundings is not unique. Walnut Hills had several crime radiators like the Barksdale. They have since been systematically shut down, renovated, and restored as legitimate businesses. Linning (2019) demonstrated that these efforts reduced crime. Studying Walnut Hills indicated that what was going on was more than just shutting down hot addresses. It revealed a network of people and organizations that criminologists seldom discuss. The more we learned about who was enacting these changes and how, the more we realized that no criminological theories could fully account for what we were seeing. We had to pay attention to processes criminologists do not typically examine: redevelopment, property finance, urban planning, and history.

Prior to these changes, Walnut Hills was one of the poorest and most violent neighborhoods in Cincinnati (Gerard, 2016; Ghosh et al., 2009). It had some active businesses and many derelict buildings and vacant properties. The nonprofit Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation (WHRF) decided to hire

a new director who sought to transform the neighborhood. Short on funds, he decided to do this one place at a time, beginning along the neighborhood's three-quarter mile business corridor (Copsey, 2018; Wright & Nickol, 2016). The director lived in another state and the resources the WHRF depended upon to accomplish the changes came mostly from outside the neighborhood. He claimed that if the WHRF succeeded in redeveloping a few key addresses on a few key street segments, the benefits would permeate to the surrounding neighborhood.

The WHRF planned to work with property owners and developers. It would use local, state, and federal incentives found in various tax and financing laws to create incentives for redevelopment by public and private entities. This would underwrite the restoration of old buildings, converting them from abandoned shells to useful businesses and residences. And this would draw people onto the main streets of the neighborhood, helping the businesses thrive, making more restoration feasible, and encouraging further investment. The WHRF also did serious work with residents. It hired local people and solicited residents' opinions on development (WHRF, 2016), but this was to mitigate anticipated side effects and avoid harmful decisions. Though consulted, residents did not drive the redevelopment.

We were able to see much of the process firsthand. John had just moved into an adjacent neighborhood in the spring of 2015 just as the first few projects were starting. By chance, he saw the WHRF director present about his place-based strategy to transform the neighborhood. Intrigued by this approach, he wondered, would it work? If it did, what lessons could it provide about communities, places, and crime? Here was an opportunity to see a neighborhood change in real time. In the fall, Shannon began her doctoral studies at the University of Cincinnati. After conversations with John about the neighborhood she decided that she wanted to answer these and other questions. She gathered crime data from the police department and property data from the city and county. She interviewed people closely tied to the neighborhood, including property owners and developers, business owners, residents, police officials, and city employees. We both attended community meetings and neighborhood clean ups, and patronized the coffee shops, restaurants, bars, and stores in the neighborhood as they opened. We walked the streets with the active redevelopment, and the residential streets that were untouched.

Over the four years that we studied Walnut Hills, redevelopment projects grew rapidly. The place-based approach appeared to be working. Increasing numbers of people from outside the neighborhood frequented the street segments where WHRF focused its resources. It gained a reputation as a new vibrant area to relax, work, and live (Demeropolis, 2019; Rogers, 2018; Tweh,

2016). Walnut Hills shed its reputation as a drive through neighborhood and became a drive to neighborhood. The neighborhood felt safer to us, and judging from the increased use of the area, it seemed to feel safer to many others. The police department also observed a decline in crime (Linning, 2019).

It became apparent that Walnut Hills was not transforming via natural, ecological processes. Neither were greater changes in other Cincinnati neighborhoods that had started down this path earlier (Woodard, 2016). We saw little indication in community meetings, public functions, or in the news that residents had become more cohesive, more trusting of one another, or had greater expectations that their neighbors would act to preserve order. Attendance at community safety meetings showed little noticeable increases. Yet, crime declined.

The business and property owners seemed to be having the biggest impact. Shannon's interviews revealed a network of place managers – namely owners and delegated managers of property (Eck, 1994) – who were working together to improve the neighborhood. Property developers controlled blocks by purchasing vacant buildings and problem properties, like the Barksdale. They redeveloped them and carefully vetted the business owners to whom they would lease their storefronts. Ambitious first-time business owners were drawn to the neighborhood because rents were affordable and Walnut Hills was developing a reputation as an up-and-coming area. Established owners welcomed them, while also keeping tabs on their activities. Many owners were on a first-name basis with one another. They engaged in problem-solving together, kept watch of each other's properties during off hours, and shared security camera footage. They had a working knowledge of the problem places in the neighborhood and worked with the WHRF and police. They wanted to establish and maintain profitable businesses. To achieve this, they had to create a safe neighborhood with unique amenities. This would attract more customers to their stores and tenants to their residential units (Linning, 2019).

The more we learned, the more we realized our criminological background was inadequate. Community criminology theories could not explain the concentration of crime within neighborhoods. We saw few residents involved in the widespread changes compared to property owners. We saw the closing of problematic places, like the Barksdale, having a large impact on crime throughout the neighborhood. The impacts were also greater than place-based theories suggested. We met people who were not residents who influenced neighborhood change at the place level. And these people were part of a wider network that spanned the city.

With criminological theory being an inadequate guide, we looked to the urban planning, architecture, and business literature for insight. The works in

these fields came closer to explaining the processes we were observing, but there was one problem: these works seldom discussed crime. Another dark tunnel, but it had one glimmer of light. We noted that scholars outside criminology made repeated reference to architectural journalist Jane Jacobs. She was one of the few who explicitly discussed city processes and crime. Her seminal book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), shaped a turning point in urban planning. Scholars in that field heralded her for helping to kill off ineffective planning theory and practices of the 1930s through 1960s (Kanigel, 2016; Page, 2011; Siegel, 2016).

All we knew about Jacobs was what a few criminologists said about her. Namely, that she said we should design buildings in such a way that it creates “eyes on the street” whereby *residents* can survey their streets and intervene when unwanted behavior occurs (Browning et al., 2017a, 2017b; Hope, 1995; Mawby, 1977; Mayhew, 1981; Taylor & Gottfredson, 1986; Wortley & Townsley, 2016; Wilcox et al., 2018). We decided to give *Death and Life* a try. This led us to her writings preceding and after *Death and Life*. Throughout her works, Jacobs wrote about city processes and order. She was articulate, direct, and did not shy away from boldly challenging mainstream thinking in 1950’s urban planning. But much of what we read in *Death and Life* conflicted with what criminologists discussed about her work. We saw little evidence in Jacobs’ writing suggesting that *residents* were the primary actors to self-police the streets. Instead, we found numerous examples where Jacobs described *shopkeepers*, *property owners*, and *government agencies* intervening in the happenings of the street. This included anything from disputes between people to the purchase and purposeful redevelopment of buildings. Residents were absent from most of Jacobs’ examples. The “eyes on the street” referred to shopkeepers and property owners (Duneier, 1999; Linning, 2019; Manshel, 2020).

We discovered that Jacobs did not foreshadow defensible space or ecological theories, as many have asserted (Browning et al., 2017a; Cozens, 2008; Mawby, 2017; Merry, 1981; Taylor & Gottfredson, 1986). Instead, she foreshadowed a form of place management theory (Linning, 2019). Reading beyond *Death and Life*’s three early chapters on sidewalk safety and delving into Jacobs’ other writings, it became clear that Jacobs had made an economic argument of city functioning based on the economies of street segments and addresses. She created a bottom-up theory of city processes. Places matter to the functioning of streets, neighborhoods, and cities. Those who own places control them. The owners and their places are embedded in large-scale political-economic processes. This puts them in networks of other owners, financial institutions, and government regulators. It means that a small number of elites with money and

power could control a neighborhood's places and therefore a neighborhood's crime opportunities. This is exactly what we were observing in Walnut Hills and several other neighborhoods in Cincinnati (Linning, 2019; Woodard, 2016). Our observations suggested Jacobs' works provide a new perspective linking place management to crime patterns across large areas within cities.

The fact that Jacobs' 1950's New York-based insights had currency seventy years later in Cincinnati suggests that her relevance to criminology is more than a few misplaced eyes. In this Element, we show that Jacobs provided invaluable insights to understanding crime at places and in neighborhoods. In Jacobs' (1961) arguments, safer streets depend on the density of small businesses. These draw people to the street. This provides economic resources. Shopkeepers watch these people. In over forty-five years of writing, Jacobs clung to the idea that shopkeepers are the optimal street watchers (Jacobs, 1956, 1961, 1969, 1985, 2000). She saw the centrality of what we now call microplaces (Weisburd, 2015) decades before criminologists realized their importance. For her, places were not merely potential loci for crime; they were the foundation of urban dynamics and macrolevel processes.

Widening our focus from residents to include owners and managers provides a very different explanation of spatial crime patterns. We call this a Neo-Jacobian perspective. It is a *perspective* because it offers a new way to understand crime. It is also a perspective of crime opportunities, not criminal propensity. It is not a theory specifying variables that will lead to particular outcomes. It provides a framework for creating such theories. It is *Jacobian* because it is based on the work of Jane Jacobs, not the Chicago School. And it is *Neo* because it provides a new way of integrating Jacobs into criminology. The Neo-Jacobian perspective links place management at addresses to their influence on street segments and larger areas. It explains how the influence of specific places radiate to larger areas. It provides a bottom-up framework; control at addresses helps give rise to control along street segments that then produces larger area effects. It also aligns criminology with adjacent disciplines of geography, urban planning and architecture, history, economics, and political science.

The Neo-Jacobian perspective provides three turning points for criminologists. But to understand our turning points, we need to reintroduce Jacobs' work first. Although Jacobs is not new to criminology, we argue, in Section 2, criminologists overlooked fundamental aspects of her arguments. We demonstrate that criminologists used a Chicago School lens while interpreting her work. Seeing through this lens, criminologists assumed that Jacobs described residents as the primary source of informal social control. We provide evidence from Jacobs' writings to show that Jacobs viewed property and business owners as the vital eyes on the street. In essence, using a Chicago School lens created

a “criminological blind spot” (Unnever et al., 2009, p. 396) that caused criminologists to overlook the centrality of place managers in her work.

After bringing Jacobs’ ideas into focus, we explain our Neo-Jacobian perspective and its three turning points. The first is a turn from residents to place managers as the vital source of informal social control. This is discussed in Section 2. It suggests the need to view cities from a more economic and political perspective than a sociological one. In Section 3 we review the twentieth-century US urban history that Jacobs highlights in *Death and Life*. She argued that governments and private business interests undermined order. Historical evidence shows that much of this influence comes from deliberate outside real estate and investment decisions at microspatial places and impacts larger areas. This provides evidence for the second turning point: a turn from ecological processes to outsiders’ deliberate actions creating crime opportunities. This turning point requires a switch in metaphors; neighborhoods are farmed fields rather than natural areas. Section 4 discusses the sources of control that exist through ownership. It suggests the third turning point: a turn from top-down macrospatial to a bottom-up microspatial explanation of crime patterns. This turning point suggests street segments and addresses are the optimal units of analysis for understanding crime patterns. In Section 5 we summarize the Neo-Jacobian perspective and its implications for methods and policy. Section 6 concludes with new questions for criminologists.

At times our statements advancing the Neo-Jacobian perspective may appear harsh. We, like Jacobs, do this for clarity. What makes Jacobs’ work so compelling is the direct and unapologetic way she presents her ideas. We chose to do the same. Like her, we make ourselves present. Like her, we take a stance that challenges conventional thinking. We do this to raise new ideas that may help advance understanding. Clarity can appear harsh, but it serves two important purposes. It reduces the chances that readers will misinterpret our ideas. It also puts our ideas at risk, making them easier to falsify.

The Neo-Jacobian perspective is also evidence-based, but not in the way that criminologists usually think of evidence. Other than the work by Linning (2019), our perspective is too new to have been tested. Nevertheless, our perspective aligns with existing evidence in criminology, particularly the work in crime and place. It is also supported by evidence that is readily available in other fields such as urban history, as well as in government documents and policies that influenced city processes. We cite this evidence. Our goal is to spur discussion and inspire criminologists to examine other aspects of cities that have previously gone unstudied.

We suggest that it is time criminologists take the turning point urbanists took so long ago. Our contention is that the eyes who create neighborhood social



control are the eyes of property and business owners, including operators of rental housing and their employees.

Are place managers' eyes the only eyes that matter? Probably not: no more than it is only the eyes of residents that matter. Like Jacobs, we see place managers as interacting with residents and stranger-pedestrians in the production of order. It is hard to imagine an urban world where residents have no role in order maintenance. Although traditionalists have made mention of local businesses, these local institutions have remained on the periphery of criminological thought. Theoretically, place managers remain unintegrated overall. By turning to Jacobs' work to understand social control, we see a road to integrating a variety of local actors in a theory of control. That integration is a long way off. We first must articulate how one particular set of actors – place managers – have an important role in the functioning of neighborhoods. That is the thrust of this Element.

## 2 Whose Eyes? Bringing Jane Jacobs Back into Focus

Jane Jacobs' work provides a foundation for resolving the problems faced by the community criminologists and crime-place researchers. She is one of the few theorists who took both urban processes and crime seriously and grounded her ideas of order at places. In a sequence of articles and books over forty years, she built an argument of city and national economic success on how shopkeepers and property owners keep people safe (Jacobs, 1956, 1961, 1969, 1985, 2000).

Jacobs' ideas have permeated urban planning. Her books, magazine articles, and political activism made her one of the field's the most influential figures (Flint, 2011; Harris, 2011; Kanigel, 2016). Some immediately embraced her ideas (Rodwin, 1961; Whyte, 1961 as cited in Kanigel, 2016, pp. 209–10). Others rejected them (e.g., Hoppenfeld, 1962; Mumford, 1962). Many of the early dismissals were due to her not being a well-behaved woman. In addition to being female, she was not an academic, and she used anecdotes to illustrate her ideas and challenge the entrenched planning theory of powerful men (Cozens, 2008; Cozens & Hillier, 2012; Harris, 2011; Mawby, 1977; Wortley & Townsley, 2016). Nevertheless, supporters of her ideas overcame the resisters and her ideas caught on. Today, Jacobs is at the forefront of urban planning theory and practice. About Jacobs, Page (2011, pp. 3–4) asks:

Is there any other urbanist whose ideas more people profess to understand who is less understood? And is there another urbanist whose influence is so widely felt even where her name is not well known? We suggest . . . that the answer is again "no": Many who profess to understand Jacobs's ideas don't,

and many more who profess not to know of her work have in fact been deeply influenced by it.

Page wrote about urban planners, but his claims are just as applicable to criminologists. In criminology, references to Jane Jacobs are rare. As Ranasinghe (2011, p. 65) states, “even when Jacobs’ work is acknowledged, many writers pay scant attention to the significance of it, briefly mentioning it in passing, which in many cases occupies a sentence or two at best, a footnote at worst” (for examples, see Sampson, 2012; Skogan, 1990; Weisburd et al., 2012). Many seemingly relevant works in criminology do not refer to her (e.g., Bursik & Grasmick, 1993; Kornhauser, 1978; Taylor, 2015). Some use the term “eyes on the street,” without citing Jacobs (e.g., McMillen et al., 2019). And when references to Jacobs are present, they are often misleading. For instance, there is the erroneous claim she was a precursor to Oscar Newman’s (1973) defensible space theory (Cozens & Hillier, 2012; Mawby, 2017; Merry, 1981; Taylor & Gottfredson, 1986); a point to which we will return.

To show how Jacobs’ ideas can help resolve the difficulties we recounted in Section 1 we need to dispel several misconceptions of her ideas. Therefore, we begin this section by examining what criminologists discuss about Jacobs’ work. Then we describe what she said based on the evidence in her writings.

Carefully examining Jacobs’ works reveals three turning points we will return to repeatedly in later sections. First, Jacobs set great store in the order-creating capacity of small businesses and shopkeepers. Second, Jacobs saw city functioning and change as the result of deliberate decision-making by neighborhood outsiders. We will develop this idea in greater detail in our third section. Third, she dismissed the concept of neighborhoods as understood in most community criminology research, a topic we elaborate on in Section 4. These three turning points form the core of our Neo-Jacobian perspective, which we describe in Section 5.

## WHAT CRIMINOLOGISTS SAW IN JACOBS’ WORK

Most people who have heard of Jane Jacobs associate her with the expression “eyes on the street” (1961, p. 35). To many criminologists, this phrase suggests designing buildings to increase the ability of residents to watch streets (Browning et al., 2017a, 2017b; Hope, 1995; Mawby, 1977; Mayhew, 1981; Taylor & Gottfredson, 1986; Wortley & Townsley, 2016; Wilcox et al., 2018). Seen this way, Jacobs is the godmother of “guardianship,” a term that entered criminology when Cohen and Felson (1979) introduced routine activity theory. But the term was not taken apart for careful examination until Reynald (2009) showed it had three components: availability to watch, watching, and acting.