Crime, Place and Space

Key issues

- Why are some places more ‘crime-prone’ than others?
- What are the connections between crime, control and space?
- What does it mean to think spatially about crime?

Introduction

Where does most recorded crime occur? Where do offenders and victims live and spend time? Are particular places perceived as more threatening than others, and if so, when and to whom? Is it possible to prevent crime by changing people’s surroundings? How can we theorize the surroundings, environments or spaces in which we live? What does it mean to think ‘spatially’?

The aim of this chapter is to show how questions of space can enliven criminology. Social life is conducted in social space. Consider the range of different spaces you might spend time in or pass through on a typical day: home, street, college, workplace, shop, library, bar, sports centre, cinema, friends’ home. Consider by what means and at what times of day you journey between these spaces: bike, on foot, car, bus, train. Each space has its own internal rules of conduct – breaching these rules can create potential for deviance. Geographers argue that these spaces are not simply the ‘backdrop’ for our social interactions but that, by contrast, they help to shape the very nature of our social interactions (Gregory and Urry, 1985; Wolch and Dear, 1989). In other words, space has the power to shape social life.

What does it mean to think spatially about crime? A first stage is to ask where recorded crime takes place in addition to asking who commits crime and why. This helps to build up a profile of...
the places or environments where most crime and control encounters occur alongside profiles of offenders and victims. Criminologists began to focus on these issues in earnest in the 1970s, building on the earlier work of the Chicago School. Criminal justice practitioners now make routine use of crime mapping to allow them to observe spatial patterns.

A second stage is to consider how places can be altered in ways that might reduce crime. This can involve a number of factors, from definitions of what makes a particular location ‘crime-prone’ or ‘safe’ to the arrangement and purpose of buildings to local beliefs or memories about a place. It can also involve a number of agents, from planners, developers and politicians, who have the power to change spaces, to ordinary people who have the everyday task of negotiating existing spaces.

A third stage is to consider how we come to know about space and crime in the first place and what we do with that knowledge. Mapping statistics has been a central methodological tool in this kind of criminological research. This necessarily raises questions about the source of the statistics and the nature of mapping technology. More recently, the importance of the Internet in both areas has raised the issue of global public access to this kind of geo-data. This chapter looks at each of these three stages.

Offenders, offences and place

Social scientists interested in place and crime have identified themselves with different fields since the early twentieth century. Chicago School sociologists used terms such as ‘urban sociology’, ‘human ecology’ and ‘ecology of crime’. In the 1970s and 1980s, ‘environmental criminology’ was used until similar terms began to be more frequently used in relation to green issues (see Chapter 19). Around the same time, many criminological debates moved away from a traditional focus on the causes of crime to a ‘post-welfare’ focus on crime prevention and management. One of the results of this was new work on ‘situational crime prevention’ (SCP) and ‘crime prevention through environmental design’ (CPED). At present there is no single term to denote the study of crime and place. Mike Davis explores crime and control in Los Angeles as an extreme example of the ‘ecology of fear’ (1999). Others refer to ‘socio-spatial criminology’ (Bottoms, 2007) or ‘crime and community’ (Hughes, 2007). On the more quantitative cartographic side, ‘geo-criminology’ and ‘crime mapping’ (Vann and Garson, 2001) are more frequently used.

Park and Burgess’s work in Chicago in the early twentieth century foregrounded the relationship between urban environment, actions and values. They saw social science as a form of ‘human ecology’ (1925). Burgess’s ‘zonal theory of urban development’ suggested that Chicago – and other large cities – was structured around five concentric circles (see Figure 5.1). The non-residential ‘central business district’ was surrounded by the ‘zone in transition’, an area of cheap rented housing attracting different generations of migrants. Next came three residential areas of increasing affluence. Other Chicago scholars built on this model. Shaw and McKay’s (1942) studies of juvenile delinquency showed that a very high proportion of young offenders had grown up in the ‘zone in transition’. They explained this as an effect of the ‘social disorganization’ which characterized this area. A churning migrant population with shifting moral values, high levels of poverty and low levels of community cohesion produced teenagers prone to commit crime. More recent US criminological research (discussed below) linking a
community’s crime levels to its capacity for ‘collective efficacy’ has some clear links to these early Chicago studies.

If early work on crime and place focused on offenders and where they lived and socialized, later work from the 1970s onwards focused on offences and victims (Bottoms, 2007). One influential study argued that offenders tended to commit crimes in areas that were culturally familiar to them in some way but not generally their own neighbourhoods (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1991). Victim surveys (see Chapter 9) allowed ‘area victimization rates’ (the level of offences against a particular group in a particular area) to be compared with ‘area offence rates’ (all recorded offences in a particular area). Other studies, such as Baldwin and Bottoms’s (1976) on Sheffield, questioned the link between offenders and ‘zones in transition’ in the UK context, stressing instead the importance of the housing market in shaping community relations.

The connections between poverty, place and crime are still much debated by criminologists. Bottoms (2007: 561–3) reviews recent studies exploring the link between deprivation and offender rates. Weatherburn and Lind (2001) find that ‘economic stress’ contributes to criminality because of the strains it places on parenting. Oberwittler (2005) argues that the effect of deprivation on crime is greater in the United States than in Europe because the United States, with its weak welfare system, experiences greater levels of extreme deprivation. He also stresses the importance of looking at economic disadvantage in relation to parents, friends, schools and other networks which make up a ‘neighbourhood’. This emphasis on networks is echoed in the findings of Wikström and Sampson (2003). They identify two kinds of ‘behaviour settings’ in relation to crime: those that promote self-control and those which do not. They argue that it is not the setting (or space) alone which does this but the community connected to it. Communities with high levels of ‘collective efficacy’ – or high levels of cohesion and mutual trust – will be willing to intervene to challenge behaviour in a given setting and stop it from escalating. Communities with low levels of ‘collective efficacy’ – rather like those Burgess defined as living in the ‘zone in transition’ – will be less willing or able to intervene (see Bottoms, 2007 for further discussion).

### Spatial distribution of crime

So, what geographic patterns do we see in current recorded crime? Recent statistics for England and Wales show a very uneven distribution (Home Office, 2007a). Some local authorities have high levels of recorded crimes across a range of crime types. These tend to be large urban areas with a mix of richer and poorer residents: London, parts of the south-east, south Wales, the north-west and parts of the north-east.

However, patterns and concentrations of crime also vary by crime type. Figures for three types of more serious recorded crime – serious wounding, domestic burglary and robbery – across 376 local authorities in England and Wales demonstrate this. Robbery and serious wounding are both concentrated in a relatively small number of areas. Eighteen local authorities have robbery rates of more than three times the average for England and Wales (average = 1.9 offences per 1,000 population). Four local authorities have serious wounding rates of more than three times the average (average = 0.3 offences per 1,000 population). There is some overlap between these two but also some significant variations: for example, urban south Wales has high rates of
serious wounding but relatively low levels of robbery. Domestic burglary rates are more evenly spread across England and Wales with just one local authority with a rate of more than three times the average (average = 13.1 offences per 1,000 population). As these figures and the maps in Figure 8.1 show, crime can be highly localized.

**Figure 8.1(a)** Serious wounding in England and Wales. Rates by population at local authority level, 2006–7.

Criminologists and policy-makers increasingly use geodemographic information systems to provide a more detailed analysis of the broad spatial patterns displayed in these types of maps. British Crime Survey data, for example, can be used in conjunction with the ACORN information system (A Classification of Residential Neighbourhoods) which categorizes UK postcodes into

Compared with the average for England and Wales:
- More than three times the average
- Between two and three times the average
- Above, but less than twice, the average
- Below the average

**Figure 8.1(b)** Domestic burglary in England and Wales. Rates by households at local authority level, 2006–7.

types based on census data, consumption profiles and lifestyle surveys. Households can then be grouped according to the demographic, employment and housing characteristics of the surrounding area. Developed by a private company, ACORN has been bought by many government agencies and local authorities as a planning tool not least because it presents household data in a more

Figure 8.1(c) Robbery in England and Wales. Rates by population at local authority level, 2006–7.
complex way than conventional classifications of class. Richer households are divided into three groups: ‘wealthy achievers’ (e.g. wealthy executives, affluent older people and well-off families), ‘urban prosperous’ (prosperous professionals, young urban professionals and students) and ‘comfortably off’ (e.g. young couples, secure families, older couples living in suburbs). Middling households are described as having ‘moderate means’ (e.g. post-industrial families, skilled manual workers, Asian communities). Poorer households are described as being ‘hard-pressed’ (struggling families, burdened singles, high-rise hardship) (http://www.caci.co.uk/acorn/default.asp).

Recent British Crime Surveys have analysed risk of crime by ACORN areas. The two types of household at most risk of being a victim of crime (vehicle theft, burglary and violence) were those in ‘urban prosperous’ and ‘hard-pressed’ areas. The data also showed there was some correspondence between these figures and levels of concern about crime. Compared with the average in England and Wales, levels of worry about crime and anti-social behaviour were higher in ‘hard-pressed’ and ‘moderate means’ areas and lower in ‘wealthy achiever’ and ‘comfortably off’ areas (Home Office, 2007a: 119–20). ‘Urban prosperous’ groups’ attitudes to crime are more complex. They may be less aware of, or less concerned about, the risks they might face. In the case of students they may have much less choice about where they can afford to live than others within this group. Other researchers who have used a similar approach include Pantazis (2000) in relation to crime and social harm, Chandola (2001) on fear of crime and area differences in health and Howe (2001) on deprivation indices and violence in the community.

**BOX 8.1 Case study: the night-time economy and violent disorder**

In many of Britain’s towns and cities the recent expansion of night-time leisure economies is seen as an important way of sustaining urban prosperity in the face of decades of industrial decline and mass unemployment. Despite the claims of some commentators it is clear that it is the mix of alcohol and profit that is the driving force behind these developments, rather than the broader cultural renaissance imagined by the more utopian planners and entrepreneurs who envisaged a flourishing of European sensibilities in this urban restructuring. Recent research has shown that urban nightlife is increasingly experiencing a form of ‘McDonaldization’ with big brands taking over large parts of the city (Chatterton and Hollands, 2003). While many city centres have achieved a cool status through branded and upgraded nightlife, they are also increasingly becoming more exclusive, segmented and crime-prone. Although many new opportunities have opened up, especially for young women, ethnic cultures, students and gay nightlife, this has often been sanitized and commercially incorporated into the mainstream. For instance, in Manchester’s Gay Village there has been the corporate takeover of gay bars, which has not simply upgraded the premises but has made the bars increasingly look alike. The push for profit has meant that many owners have sought to open up gay venues to more mainstream and straight consumers which has led many to say that this compromises their character (Chatterton and Hollands, 2003: 173–5).
Concerns have been raised about the health- and crime-related consequences of the lifestyles revolving around weekend ‘binge drinking’, drug taking, risky sexual encounters, a diet of high-fat, fast food, and the threat of fights and violent assault. The booming night-time economy of fashionable wine bars, packed ‘vertical’ drinking super-pubs and carnivalesque dance music clubs are also the sites where for many an identity can be found, and friendships maintained. Yet it is important to examine the political and economic forces that create the violent disorder seen in any of Britain’s city centres on most weekend nights. Much recent scholarship has attempted to situate the mass intoxication of the young in the context of post-industrial restructuring, urban regeneration and broader cultural changes. One example is Simon Winlow and Steve Hall’s (2006) Violent Night, which despite the title offers much more than simply a description of the drinking, flirting and fighting that figures prominently in an evening out on the town. Indeed, the real strength of the text is the way it documents young people’s feelings about work, relationships, education, consumption and leisure in considerable detail before analysing victims’ and perpetrators’ accounts of interpersonal violence. It is in this context that the weekly big night out is situated. The ‘orderly disorder’ of the night-time economy combines ‘seductive hedonism’ with unavoidable violence – although for most, it must be emphasized, being on the periphery was ‘far more appealing than being actively involved in violence’ (Winlow and Hall, 2006: 101).
Crime prevention, space and communities

Crime and place, as the discussion so far has shown, are now very firmly discussed in relation to community and area dynamics. This raises the further question – is it possible to change these dynamics and the places in which they are played out in order to reduce crime? Put another way, can crime be cut by reshaping a space or altering community relations in a space or both? Criminological work on this first focused on changing spaces but has since moved on to focus on changing community relations.

Changing spaces: urban design and crime

US architect Oscar Newman (1972) used the concept of ‘defensible space’ in the 1970s to argue that it was possible to modify the built environment to reduce the opportunity for crime and to promote community responsibility. Newman’s ideas – which centred on public housing design – helped to shape new approaches within what was then still referred to as environmental criminology. ‘Situational crime prevention’ (SCP) and ‘crime prevention through environmental design’ (CPED) advocated changes in physical environments and physical objects within them. These strategies have gradually become part of everyday life in public, residential, commercial and financial urban sectors. Street fixtures – such as benches, bus shelters, playgrounds and lighting – were all increasingly designed to screen out undesirable activity. So-called ‘tramp-free benches’, for example, are designed to allow people to sit only for short periods and to discourage any longer-term use or ‘loitering’. Surveillance equipment and CCTV is used to monitor but also to deter wrong-doing.

In addition, new rules governing behaviour in many kinds of spaces have been introduced. Most UK football grounds banned standing on the terraces in the wake of the 1989 Hillsborough disaster and introduced all-seater stadia as part of a generally successful effort to combat
hooliganism. In 2005, one of the UK’s largest shopping malls, Bluewater in Kent, banned customers wearing hoodies and baseball caps as part of a general clampdown on intimidating behaviour, swearing and shoplifting (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/kent/4561399.stm). In 2008, there was controversy surrounding the use of ‘mosquitos’ — devices that emit a high-frequency buzzing sound which cannot be heard by people over the age of 25 or so — to disperse groups of young people gathering in public spaces (http://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk).

Urban design and surveillance were taken up by academics and planners at a time when the old focus on the causes of crime was beginning to give way to a new focus on the need to manage crime. SCP and CPED, for example, are clearly linked to Felson’s ‘routine activity theory’. All argue that crime is an inevitable phenomenon that can best be managed by reducing the opportunity to commit an offence rather than by seeking to reduce individuals’ desire to commit a crime in the first place.

Criminology remains divided on the implications of this shift. Some argue that it addresses the needs of, and empowers, those communities — often among the most deprived — that live with the realities of high crime rates. Community safety is identified as an important element in any kind of neighbourhood regeneration. Others argue that it fails to address the root causes of the poverty, deprivation and spatial exclusion which, in their view, lies behind so much recorded crime (McLaughlin and Muncie, 1999). Mike Davis (1999) offers an extreme but very interesting view here (see Box 8.2). His account of Los Angeles as an ‘ecology of fear’ reworks...
**BOX 8.2** **Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster**

Mike Davis charts the remodelling of Los Angeles’ central downtown area in the years following the 1965 Watts Riots. Davis argues that, fearing a ‘black inundation’ of the old business district, leading landowners and financiers worked with the city police department, the LAPD, to design a new riot-proof financial area, Bunker Hill. The new area was put to the test in 1992 in further riots sparked by the televised beating of Rodney King, a black man, by white police officers. As Davis puts it, while other parts of the city were attacked and looted, ‘Bunker Hill became a Fortress . . . Bullet-proof steel doors rolled down over street-level entrances, escalators froze and electric locks sealed off pedestrian passage ways’. The ‘riot-tested success’ of these defences ‘stimulated demand for new and higher levels of physical security’ causing a further ‘erosion of the boundary between architecture and law enforcement’ (Davis, 1999: 364–6).

**Plate 8.3** Zonal Map from the book Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster by Mike Davis. Reprinted by permission of Henry Holt and Company, LLC.
According to Davis’s zonal map, more affluent residential areas of LA and its surrounding urban areas developed ‘social control districts’ as a means of keeping out crime. Certain zones were designated drug-free, gun-free, graffiti-free and even child-molestation-free. This new ‘disciplinary order’ was created through the merging of criminal and civil codes with landuse planning into a ‘new militarized landscape’. CCTV surveillance played a key role here – establishing what Davis calls ‘virtual scanscapes’, areas of ‘protective invisibility that increasingly define where white collar workers and middle class tourists feel safe’ (Davis, 1999: 366, 383). Outside these protected areas, life looked very different. Areas like MacArthur Park became ‘free fire zones’ where ‘crack dealers and street gangs settle their scores with shotguns and uzis’ and slum landlords conduct ‘their own private reign of terror against dealers, petty criminals and deadbeat tenants’ and schools became ‘more like prisons’ (Davis, 1999: 378). At the outer edge of Davis’s zonal map – something which he says has ‘no equivalent’ in Burgess – lies the ‘gulag rim’ made up of the many kinds of prisons and correction units within the vast Californian penal system (Davis, 1999: 416).

Issues to consider:

- Davis’s account is compelling but is it generalizable beyond Los Angeles?
- What are the social costs and benefits of neighbourhood regeneration?

original Chicago School zonal theory and argues that the linking of urban design and policing has led to a destructive militarization of urban landscapes which protects privilege and punishes poverty.

Newman’s own reworking of defensible space theory (1996) stresses the need to move beyond urban design to address community relations. People should feel that they ‘own’ public space and share a responsibility for it – not simply that they are being monitored. This kind of thinking is evident in the more communitarian approaches to governance that emerged in the 1990s and which are also very much linked to post-welfarism. New Labour’s 1998 Crime and Disorder Act has had a major impact on British approaches to crime and community. Crime was to be tackled not just by the police and the courts but by new Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) which were set up in over 300 local authorities. The partnerships require a multi-agency approach, typically involving the police, local councils, health authorities and voluntary agencies. The emphasis is on identifying both local crime problems and ‘what works’ to reduce these. There are two key strategies here. First, the community is ‘responsibilised’ as part of a wider dispersal of power (Hughes, 2002; Crawford, 2002) and, second, these new styles of local policing encourage a new kind of attention to local trouble spots.

Increasing interest in the localized nature of crime has led to highly localized policing strategies and even localized criminal justice legislation. Dispersal orders, ASBOs, curfews and other measures are all ‘tailored’ to particular environments – they aim to stop certain people behaving in certain ways in certain spaces at certain times. Civil rights campaigners such as Liberty...
have warned that these spatial techniques represent a dangerous trend because, among other things, they sanction a move away from the principle of a common, universal criminal justice system operating equally across a state. They have launched a number of legal challenges to the government on these issues (http://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk).

Some criminologists believe that this kind of work is valuable because it can show more precisely where crime problems are and where police should target their resources. Echoing the earlier discussion of the night-time economy, Bromley and Nelson’s study of alcohol consumption and crime in a British city concludes that ‘a detailed knowledge of the variety of spaces and times of alcohol-related crime and disorder is key to the development of appropriate urban design, planning and licensing policies and can be used to inform a more closely targeted policing strategy’ (2002: abstract). Others are less sure. White and Sutton (1995) stress the limits of ‘quick fixes’ for crime, arguing against ‘episodic initiatives’ and technological strategies in favour of strategies ‘which see crime and public safety as stemming first and foremost in the community’. Herbert and Brown (2006) argue, similarly, that the relationships between identities, values and spatial environments are complex and should not be oversimplified. Finally, this kind of analysis may work for public order offences but does not help the police to tackle other kinds of crime which take place in private as opposed to public space – white-collar crime, domestic violence, fraud and state crime, for example (for a wider discussion on policing and geography, see Evans et al., 1992 and Fyfe, 1998, 2004).

**Living in spaces: everyday negotiations of disorder**

Community safety has become part of the UK criminal justice policy framework. But, outside the policy framework, how do communities themselves negotiate crime, risk and fear in their own neighbourhoods? Many UK households may not be aware of the policies of their particular CDRP, for example, but have nevertheless developed their own ways of dealing with crime as it affects, or seems to affect, their everyday lives.

Feminist geographers and criminologists have investigated the many ways in which women routinely adapt their use of urban space in order to guard against possible physical or sexually motivated attack – taking certain routes, avoiding certain places at night, telling others where they are going, and so on (Pain, 1991). This kind of work has since been extended to encompass other groups – such as children, teenagers and elderly people (Pain and Smith, 2008). One of the key points about such studies is that they highlight the importance of beliefs and emotions in establishing shared meanings around particular places or routes between places. A given place may have been designed as ‘safe’ but different groups of people may continue to experience it as risky or dangerous and act accordingly. Cultural geographers such as David Sibley (1995) have explored myth making, meaning and social exclusion in relation to ‘marginal’ spaces in ways which are very useful to criminology. Drawing on this, Millington’s work on local reactions to asylum seekers in the south-east of England bears this out (2005). Hostile locals in Southend tended to attribute much local crime to newcomers living in ‘Little Bosnia’ – an area of the town which quickly acquired strong negative associations.

Modifying movements around space is one way in which people try to minimize their exposure to crime; securing their home, workplace or neighbourhood is another. A further option
is to relocate altogether. Beliefs about crime and safety play a significant part in determining whether a neighbourhood gains a reputation as ‘rough’ or ‘desirable’ and therefore in shaping the workings of housing markets.

The concept of urban flight or ‘white flight’ is relevant here. Derived from the Chicago School work on patterns of ethnic segregation, it has been used in the UK to explain the movement out of the inner city by both the middle and the working classes – a movement partly driven by beliefs about crime. In the ‘home counties’ of south-east England urban flight is shaped by particular perceptions of ethnicity. The inner city is constructed as an epicentre of crime and disorder associated with a large black presence and the suburb as a haven of Anglo-Saxon family values and public safety (Clapson, 1998, 2003; Watt, 1998). Watt argues, for example, that white East End Londoners have moved into neighbouring Essex because of their perception that ‘their’ neighbourhoods have been ‘taken over’ – a narrative with clear racist overtones. Others suggest that this effect is particularly strong among the older generation and may be less pronounced among younger people who have grown up with multiculturalism (Back, 1996).

Mapping and the uses of geo-data

As this discussion has shown, mapping (or cartography) is a vital research tool in studies of crime and place. From Quételet and Mayhew in the nineteenth century to the first environmental criminological studies in the mid-twentieth century, maps provided visual representations of crime and a means of explaining its spatial relationships.

Satellite and Internet technology have transformed cartography, however. Geographical information systems (GIS) combine spatial analysis software, database technology and high-resolution satellite photography to create new interactive spatial visualizations of social science data. These developments are having a major impact on criminal justice practices. One site, Chicago Crime Map, offers a whole new macro- and micro-view of contemporary urban crime. It maps crime using the Chicago police department’s publicly available crime reports, Google Earth software and Google Maps website. The crimes are browsable by location, time and type of crime. Chicago Crime Map is an example of a ‘mashup’ – a new term for a new kind of map that combines ‘two or more separate data streams to create original content’ (Goodman and Moed, 2007). Mashups are rapidly expanding in the commercial sector and are likely to have many civic or criminal justice applications.

Sites like this raise issues about the status of what has been termed ‘personal geo-data’. Sharing such data ‘outside the context of its creation’ has implications for privacy, transparency and ownership (Goodman and Moed, 2007). The site vastly expands the traditional relationship between the police and the public. The police, a public body, have always produced information about private citizens in the public interest. In the past, this data has been circulated by the media and other channels but in a very selective way. The combination of Internet, browser and GIS technologies have allowed the Chicago data to be delivered in completely new ways – in a comprehensive, spatial and visual format, which can be used by individuals much more on their own terms. It remains to be seen what impact access to such information will have on ‘democratizing’ public experiences and perceptions of crime as well as on authorities’ abilities and desire to present crime figures in particular ways. These democratizing tendencies will have
to be balanced alongside serious questions of civil liberties. Does the resident whose home is identified as having been the site of crime have a right to privacy? Do his or her neighbours (or local estate agents, schools or doctors’ surgeries) have a right to know what kind of crime has been reported?

**Critical cartography**

Maps always need to be interpreted. They are never neutral despite the fact that we often treat them as if they are. Many geographers are very critical of mapping. Even the most technologically sophisticated maps offer a representation of a given area rather than a value-free ‘real’ view of it (Pinder, 2003). These critics argue that whenever we look at a map we see it from the point of view or perspective of the person or object with the power to ‘gaze’ out over the whole territory from a position of authority. Mapping has always been a powerful tactic of governance and surveillance. Colonizers, urban reformers and police authorities have always drawn maps of ‘unruly’ or ‘ungoverned’ areas in ways which justify their efforts to ‘restore’ order to those areas. To give one example, Blomley and Sommers (1999) chart the efforts of a group of marginal Vancouver residents to contest the way in which their existing neighbourhood was literally erased from maps drawn up by local planners seeking to ‘regenerate’ it. In another example, Kurgan and Cadora’s mapping of ‘million dollar blocks’ (see Box 8.3) uses cartography to demonstrate the extremely high cost of incarcerating large numbers of residents from ‘crime-prone’ zones in US cities. Here, maps are used to raise questions about crime and power not simply presented as a tool in a crime-prevention kit.

**Plate 8.4** Satellite photograph from chicagocrime.org – showing detailed location of a recent crime.
Summary

1. Social life is lived out in social space. A spatially aware criminology considers the relationship between crime, control and place. Various terms are currently in play to describe this kind of work: socio-spatial criminology, geocriminology, crime and community are all used.

2. Early work (from the 1920s) on place and crime focused on offenders. Later work (from the 1970s onwards) focused on offences, victims and urban design. Current work could be said to fall into two groups: (i) community dynamics in a given place and (ii) high-tech monitoring of space and crime mapping.

3. Recently, criminologists have tended to focus on analysing formal policies aiming to change places and improve community dynamics. They have mixed views on the success of such policies. Cultural geographers interested in questions of crime and disorder continue to look at ordinary people’s everyday understandings and negotiations of space and perceived risk.

4. Mapping is a vital if contested part of many investigations of crime and place. The transformation of the gathering, display, distribution and use of personal geo-data (which combines mapping, Internet and survey technologies) is likely to have profound implications for criminology.

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**BOX 8.3 Mapping million dollar blocks**

Radical mapping projects in the United States have highlighted that a disproportionate number of US prisoners come from a small number of neighbourhoods in big cities. Architect Laura Kurgan, a professor who runs Columbia University’s Spatial Information Design Lab, and Eric Cadora, co-founder of the Justice Mapping Center, mapped the home addresses of inmates. They showed that while crime itself is dispersed across cities criminals living in certain areas of cities – especially those with high poverty rates and high proportions of black residents – are many more times likely to be imprisoned than those living outside these.

The high cost of imprisoning so many people from one neighbourhood or even one block led Kurgan and Cadora to coin the term ‘million dollar blocks’. For example, ‘the district of Brownsville’s District 16 accounts for 3.5 percent of Brooklyn’s population but 8.5 percent of its prison population’. Kurgan calculates that ‘it cost $11 million to incarcerate people from these 11 blocks in 2003’. Her Columbia lab works with local community groups to break crime patterns through architecture and public projects and to demand a shift in state spending away from incarceration into helping people out of poverty. In Kurgan’s view, ‘Too much has been spent on prisons in the last 40 years and not enough on affordable housing’.

For more on this see:
- [http://www.justicemapping.org/aboutus/](http://www.justicemapping.org/aboutus/)
Critical thinking questions

1. What do criminologists gain from looking at crime in terms of where it occurs?
2. Is space still neglected in much criminology?
3. Is it possible to prevent crime just by changing spaces?
4. How are communities and spaces connected?
5. What do ‘mashups’ offer as new forms of criminological data?

Further study


More information

http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs07/hosb1107.pdf

Chicago Crime Map
http://www.chicagocrime.org/

ACORN
http://www.caci.co.uk/acorn/default.asp