
PRIVATOPIA ON TRIAL? PROPERTY GUARDIANSHIP IN THE SUBURBS

by

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***Abstract:** This paper explores how distinctions between private and public underpin the concept of guardianship that has been applied to the understanding and control of crime in residential areas. Specifically, it focuses on the guardianship of private property in (affluent) residential suburbs. First, the paper discusses the concept of "natural surveillance" and identifies its role in the crime prevention theories of Jane Jacobs and Oscar Newman, particularly highlighting the issue of boundary maintenance between private and public space. Second, it presents evidence on property crime victimisation in relation to dwelling type and area socioeconomic status, drawn from a multivariate model of British Crime Survey data. Third, the paper discusses the ways in which suburbs deliver guardianship "goods" to their residents, including that collectively provided by, for example, "Neighbourhood Watch" Its broad conclusion is that property guardianship in suburbs is likely to be a zero-sum game for residents unless borders can be maintained; in turn, this implies an underlying logic of converting public security goods into exclusive "club goods."*

INTRODUCTION

Distinctions between public and private permeate thinking about crime control no less than in other spheres of political life. Such distinctions have also played a crucial, if often ambiguous and unacknowledged, role within those "criminologies of everyday life" that have shaped contemporary thought and policy about crime prevention (Garland, 1996). Here, I want to explore how distinctions between the private and the public underpin the concepts of guardianship that have been applied to the understanding and control of crime in residential locales.¹ The substantive focus here will be the

guardianship from criminal victimisation of private property in residential suburbs.

There are (at least) three common ways of thinking about the distinction between private and public.² First, there is the idea that it is about the privacy of individuals — the (in)visibility to others of individual thought or action. Second, there is the idea that there is a distinction between matters pertaining to, or the property of, individuals as opposed to those to do with collectivities. These two distinctions underpin common-sense and legal definitions, both of property crime victimisation and guardianship against it. However, a third way of distinguishing between the private and the public, which to some extent incorporates the other two and which will be of particular focus here, is the means of enforcement by which the distinction between private and public is maintained. What are the processes, norms or mechanisms that people use or rely upon to exclude others from their property? These various meanings of the distinction are related in their wider consequences to property guardianship in the suburbs. Specifically, they (1) render private domestic property open to victimisation, and (2) lead to private as opposed to collective responses to such vulnerability, which (3) are obtainable through the operation of exclusionary mechanisms.

The rise of "mass private property" — such as shopping malls, educational campuses, condominiums and privately developed residential estates — has been seen as a principal stimulus for the privatised supply and "commodification" of guardianship and security services, particularly leading to increasing demands on the state for additional security and for the right to exercise private guardianship (Shearing and Stenning, 1983). Yet the guardianship needs of large corporate actors and place entrepreneurs (Logan and Molotch, 1987) are perhaps only one element in the development of markets of private property guardianship (Spitzer, 1987). Additionally, the imperatives of private homeownership — of masses of individual private property owners — also affects demands for security. Yet the specific forms that emergent "markets" for guardianship might take are likely to depend upon the spatial and cultural aggregations of the micro-motives of individual homeowners. Since "suburbs" are residential locales composed primarily of privately owned dwellings, then the way in which the surveillance of their shared space, and the guardianship of their private property, is managed — and by whom — will depend upon the outworking of the distinction between public goods and private interests.

RESIDENTIAL GUARDIANSHIP

Suburban homeowners seek guardianship for their property from a mixed economy of impure public and private goods. Typically, they may spend a certain amount of personal resources (including income and time) on home security, mainly of the target-hardening variety, and they take a variety of simple avoidance and risk-protection measures during their everyday lives to protect themselves and their property. Additionally, homeowners pay to defray their losses from property crime victimisation through private insurance which may **also provide them with a sense of security. These "goods" comprise self-guardianship, i.e., the kinds of protection and surveillance that individuals can secure by private enterprise and contract, that is, private goods.** In contrast, residents also benefit from public guardianship, chiefly, from the property guardianship services supplied publicly by police activity (including detection and patrol). Ideally, **the latter takes the form of a public good.**³ Last, but certainly not least, individuals also opt for the collective guardianship of their residential area. They move into, stay and invest in particular locales or neighbourhoods, thereby deriving their security from the trust they hold in their neighbours' conventions, norms, routines as well as their guardianship practices. Such collective guardianship has public-goods qualities, since it is difficult for residents to be excluded. Nevertheless, as nonresidents do not benefit, it more resembles a "club" good — one that remains public to members of the "club" but where nonmembers' access to the good can be denied, controlled or charged (cf. Sandier, 1992).

Guardianship goods are scarce — they require resources and investment in their production. Moreover, the greater the demand for them, the more "congested" their supply becomes.⁴ Thus, for example, public good guardianship services provided by police patrols are subject to crowding as a result of increased demand (via calls for service), especially if the capacity of the police to respond is resource-limited but nevertheless predicated on giving universal coverage as a public good. Therefore, congestion in supply occurs, reducing the quality of public police guardianship for any individual the more that aggregate demand for the good increases. Thus, suburban demands for greater public guardianship are likely to be increasingly unmet the more that demand increases. The cost of supplying public guardianship rises at the same time as its effectiveness diminishes; and the means of managing the risk of property crime is displaced to private enterprise.

One of the key public policy responses to this problem has been to seek growth in the supply of guardianship goods through innovation. One course has been to look to technological innovation, for example, closed circuit television, alarms, and other domestic hardware; but these innovations also have public costs. The other course has been to exploit the resource of untapped "natural surveillance" of communities that promises to superficially meet the security deficit for a low rate of additional public investment (Hope, 1995).

NATURAL SURVEILLANCE

The term "natural surveillance" seems to have been coined by Oscar Newman, in his book *Defensible Space* (1973), to describe a form of community self-surveillance that entails the day-to-day supervision by residents of their environment, "...employing the full range of encounter mechanisms to indicate their concerned observation of questionable activity and their control of the situation" (Newman, 1973:4). Superficially, the concept draws upon the ideas of Jane Jacobs in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1965), part of which celebrates the self-policing of the successful "street-neighbourhood." Here, surveillance — in the sense of routine supervision of activity in public — arises from the diversity of public street life (the "intricate sidewalk ballet"). This diversity produces a concerned, though not self-conscious, supervision of behaviour in public places, springing out of the everyday, public, routine activities of those who live, work and play there. Yet although many commentators have seen a broad affinity between Jacobs and Newman by virtue of their common interest in natural surveillance,⁵ their respective interpretations of the concept in terms of the public-private distinction are radically opposed.

For Jacobs natural surveillance is collectively produced and publicly inclusive (Berman, 1982): "The first thing to understand is that the public peace — the sidewalk and street peace — of cities is not kept primarily by the police, necessary as the police are. It is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves, and enforced by the people themselves...No number of police can enforce civilisation where the normal, casual enforcement of it has broken down" (Jacobs, 1965:41). Here, a normative urban order emerges spontaneously out of the daily, social life of street neighbourhoods.

The resulting "natural" surveillance is thus a collectively generated public good from which residents cannot be excluded and from

which they cannot opt out except by moving away. In this model, individual residents' public participation in the everyday, shared activities of the street would have both a "horizontal" and a "vertical" effect on the street neighbourhood's collective capacity for social control (Hope, 1995). On the one hand, such participation would provide "eyes on the street" — continuous routine opportunities for the mutual surveillance and guardianship of private property (Jacobs, 1965:chapter 2). This routine participation would not only satisfy the needs of residents for sociability but at the same time would provide an arena in which they could subtly negotiate mutually acceptable degrees of privacy through the medium of routine interaction with their neighbours. On the other hand, the street's latent social network would provide a collective resource — over and above the capacity of individuals — which could be mobilised when needed to invoke the wider resources of the city, including policing, to bring added guardianship and security services that neither individuals nor the street could raise themselves.

In contrast, where this public forum for everyday interaction was lacking, people would need to take part in more organised group activities in order to meet their needs for sociability, mutual support and resource mobilisation. Yet, as Jacobs (1965) presciently points out, this kind of organised activity often only works well "for self-selected upper-middle-class people. it solves easy problems for an easy kind of population" (p.76). For more heterogeneous population, the risks to privacy of organised sociability — especially with "strangers" — outweigh the benefits: "...the more common outcome in cities, where people are faced with the choice of sharing much or nothing, is nothing" (Jacobs, 1965:76). And in such circumstances, of course, the street neighbourhood cannot provide natural surveillance.

The solution to this dilemma offered by Newman (1973) is essentially to bring much more of the public arena of the street neighbourhood under the control and surveillance of individual households.⁶ While Jacobs seeks to protect constituent individual privacy and property rights by enhancing the shared public arena and social institution of the street — essentially to incorporate the private within the public — Newman's approach is to abolish semipublic street space through privatisation, thereby excluding outsiders. This would be achieved either by extending, via architectural design, residents' ability to supervise and control their proximate public space, or by removing residential space altogether from the sphere of common ownership and use. Yet there are obvious practical limits to the complete abolition of shared public (communal) space. At a minimum, a

household's opportunity to enjoy its private space depends upon access that needs to be negotiated around others' private spaces. The crucial issue, then, is where the private-public boundary is drawn in the hierarchy of space that stretches from the individual dwelling to the city itself.

Newman's (1973) approach is to advocate clear, unambiguous boundary demarcations. In one respect, this means clarifying the distinction between private-dwelling space and public space, achieved through the removal of the "confused space" that was neither genuinely private nor purely public (Coleman, 1985). Yet this does not necessarily resolve where the effective boundary between private and public can be drawn. Put differently, to what extent are individuals to derive their security from the privacy of their dwellings or from the public arena of their neighbourhoods? And, in the case of the latter, how is the security of the street neighbourhood itself to be attained?

Jacobs's (1965) preference is to abolish "borders" themselves on the grounds that the more demarcatory they are, the more likely they are to have no purpose other than that of socially sterile border-zones (1965: chapter 14). In contrast, the protection of communities rather lies in their seamless integration into the city as a whole: only continuous networks of street neighbourhoods are able to handle the circulation of strangers, passing them on from one naturally surveyed place to another. Seamlessness also enables neighbourhoods to coalesce into effective political entities if needs be. Thus, city districts can operate as public confederations of street neighbourhoods. This seamlessness points up another fundamental distinction between Jacobs and Newman. Newman (1980) sees neighbourhood disorder arising from the clash of social heterogeneity — and, hence, orderliness deriving from homogeneous "communities of interest." Conversely, Jacobs's (1965) fundamental underpinning of urban order is heterogeneous diversity: the greater a community's diversity of uses and inhabitants, the greater its integration into the wider public economy and civility of cities, and thus the greater the capacity of natural surveillance to preserve order.⁷

The spatial expression of this difference is exemplified in Newman's efforts to demarcate the boundaries of the street neighbourhood itself. His solution lies in collective privatisation of the street neighbourhood in its entirety. Of particular significance is Newman's (1996) interpretation of "The private streets of St. Louis" — city streets not only gated or blocked to through traffic but actually deeded from the city to residents who legally own and maintain them

and who agree to be party to a restricted covenant that limits the nature of the use of their homes and property (Newman, 1980). Newman (1973, 1996) sees both the symbolic and real privatisation of the street neighbourhood as not only limiting access to those who have a legitimate presence (i.e., by virtue of private property rights) but also heightening residents' sense of ownership and collective control over their environments — their sense of territorially. More recently, McKenzie (1994) has dubbed these and similar developments "privatopia" — the growth of self-governing "common-interest developments" that have effectively seceded from the public sphere of city governance, and have thus gained control over the means of membership and exclusion. Thus, while Jacobs's (1965) idea of the organisation of natural surveillance resembles that of a genuine public good, Newman's privatisation of the street neighbourhood more resembles its conversion to a club good.

Yet the question of where boundaries are to be drawn between the private and public spheres is not easily resolved. On the one hand, for example, some have seen the "vernacular" English suburb — especially the development of private, semidetached housing laid down in the interwar period (Coleman, 1985) — as a naturally evolved compromise to the problem of balancing the privacy and guardianship of the dwelling with the need for public access and collective surveillance. For example:

What seems to be almost unique about the UK suburban housing form is that it combines perimeter security at the rear of the house with a communal social control at the front, derived from implied surveillance by surrounding neighbours...The genius of UK suburban housing is that it combines privacy with just enough mutual surveillance by neighbours to provide a significant social control over potential crime (and no doubt many other aspects of neighbourliness) [Poyner and Webb, 1991:120].

The literal and symbolic "semidetached" nature of such housing seemed to provide a workable balance, first, between the mass provision of housing and the aspirations of the middle classes,⁸ and second, between privacy and public accessibility in the guardianship of residential space. Yet, in an urban scenario predicated upon inter-cine conflict, the tension between public and private solutions to suburban order is only resolved through a radically privatising interest. As Davis (1990:248) notes about suburbs-in-extremis: "On the bad edge of post-modernity...contemporary residential security in Los

Angeles — whether in the fortified mansion or the average suburban bunker — depends upon the voracious consumption of private security services."

What is of interest, then, is the underlying logic of guardianship that operates in the suburbs. From the point of view of prevention, two basic issues remain unresolved: first, where the effective boundaries of guardianship might be drawn — whether around the dwelling or the neighbourhood, or whether, indeed, boundary maintenance itself is necessary at all; and, second, how such boundaries are to be maintained — whether through private (exclusionary) action or public inclusiveness.

HOUSEHOLD CRIME RISK IN THE SUBURBS

What are the contours of insecurity in the suburbs? Table 1 shows the risk for households of becoming a victim of property crime by type of dwelling, estimated from the 1992 British Crime Survey (BCS). The first column shows risks (relative to those of a detached house whose odds are set at unity) weighted only to represent the population. In this estimation, both detached and semidetached dwellings have significantly lower risks than other dwelling types, whose risks do not differ significantly from each other.⁹ However, the second column shows the odds re-estimated from a multivariate, logistic regression model that takes into account various characteristics both of the households and of the areas in which they are located. In this context, detached houses and, to a lesser extent, semidetached houses appear to have higher risks than other dwelling types, particularly flats (apartments). The broad reason for this change in the risk-ranking of dwelling types is, of course, the effect of other individual and area-level variables, either amplifying or suppressing risks that might be associated with the dwelling alone. The full model is presented in the Appendix to this paper in Table A.I.¹⁰

In this model of property crime risk, as with others estimated recently from BCS data, there is a counter-balancing of the risk factors associated with affluence between the individual household and the neighbourhood (Trickett et al., 1995; Ellingworth et al., 1997; Osborn and Tseloni, 1998). Households whose residents are employed in non-manual occupations and have high car ownership also have higher risks of household property crime. A higher risk of victimisation is also associated with the degree of "detachedness" of the dwelling from others adjacent. Thus, our model shows households

Table 1: Likelihood of Property Crime Victimization by Dwelling

	Unadjusted odds (weighted)	Adjusted odds (multivariate logit regression)
Detached house	1.000	1.000
Semidetached house	1.254	0.845 (.054)
End-terraced (row) house	1.726	0.986 (.901)
Mid-terraced house	1.505	0.763 (.005)
Flats (apartments)	1.569	0.664 (.000)

Source: 1992 British Crime Survey

living in semidetached dwellings to be significantly less at risk than those in fully detached ones; mid-terraced (row) houses less at risk than end-terraced, and households in apartments in multi-occupied buildings less at risk than those in single family buildings. So, in broad terms, "suburban" types of housing and households have higher property crime risks.¹¹

The detachedness of dwellings reflects a constellation of values (Hope, 1984). In Britain at least, it represents the cultural value of privacy, expressed as distance and concealment from neighbouring property. In terms of dwelling design, this value is coupled with the amenity of external access to parts of the property and the aesthetic and recreational (i.e., gardening, car parking) facilities of accessible private grounds. In densely populated countries like Britain, land values are high so that the production price of detachedness is also high. Coupled with its use-values of privacy and amenity, dwelling detachedness is highly valued in the housing market and is thus, generally, correlated with the degree of affluence of its occupants, and with the value of domestic private property contained within the dwelling.

There is also a fair degree of research evidence pointing to the greater risk of property crime associated with dwelling detachedness (Hope, 1984). For example, Winchester and Jackson's (1982) study of a relatively affluent area of southern England found marked differences in the annual risk of burglary faced by different types of housing design, with detached houses being five times more vulnerable than other house types. This is a finding supported by Maguire's (1982) study of a similar area. Winchester and Jackson went on to develop and apply an Environmental Risk Index to victimised and

non-victimised dwellings, the components of which express various aspects of detachedness in terms of housing plot and environmental setting. This proved to be a powerful discriminator between burgled and non-burgled dwellings, a finding replicated by Litton (cited in Litton, 1997). Moreover, interviews with English burglars have corroborated the view that attributes of dwelling detachedness are attractive as targets primarily through the degree of concealment and access afforded, and the implied value of the property contained within (Maguire, 1982; Bennett and Wright, 1984). In sum, then, dwelling detachedness — the physical expression of individual privacy and affluence — also, ironically, provides the opportunity for burglary.

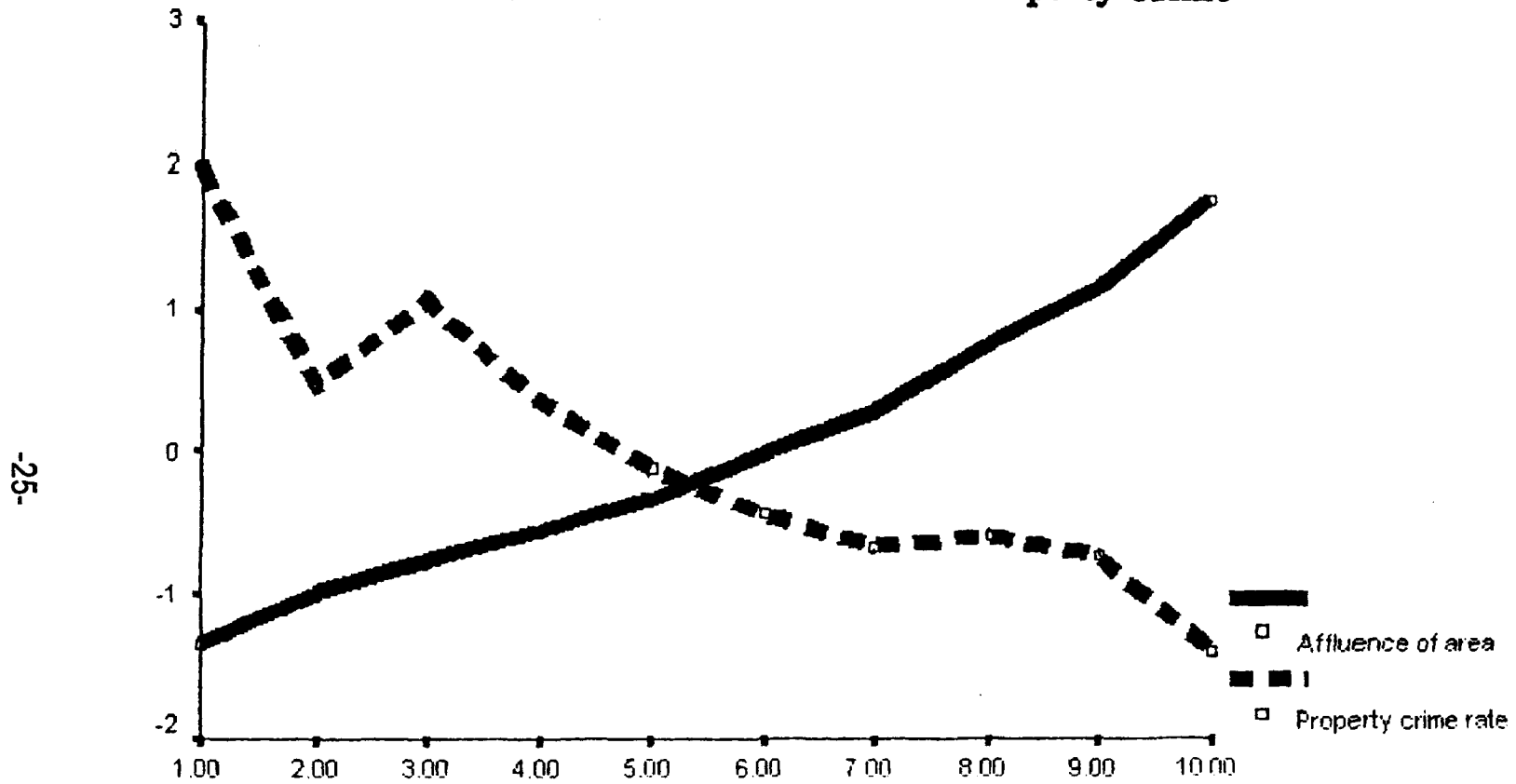
Yet suburbs themselves suppress the individual risk of property crime. Figure 1 suggests that area affluence — measured here by the proportion of households living in detached dwellings combined with the average number of cars per household — represents a powerful suppressant of household crime risk. This effect is also substantiated in multivariate models of risk (Table A.I; Trickett et al., 1995).¹² Additional area characteristics that seem to reduce property crime risk in our model are also "suburban" — in particular, low child densities, low rates of "disrupted" families, and high rates of home ownership. Despite their individual vulnerability, the typical spatial distribution of dwelling types serves to moderate significantly their risk.¹³

Thus, when the values of privacy, amenity and affluence are attached to the dwelling alone they heighten the risk of property crime. But when such values become the property of neighbourhoods, they reduce risk substantially. Arguably, the "genius" of the English suburb lies in the ability to deliver privacy and amenity in housing to its residents while protecting them from the crime risks that these values might otherwise incur were their owners not fortunate enough to be able to buy into the protection that a better-off suburb seems able to provide.

DEFENDING SUBURBAN BOUNDARIES

Since the real and symbolic boundaries of the dwelling seem to offer insufficient protection, how do the boundaries of the suburbs work to maintain the good of security for their residents? The bulk of

Figure 1: Area Affluence and Property Crime



Affluence of area (deciles)

Standardized means per decile

Source: 1992 British Crime Survey (weighted data)

research into offenders' "journeys to crime" suggests that volume property offending is spatially structured by two broad processes: (1) a fairly sharp "distance decay" from offenders' homes; and (2) a fairly strong degree of routine familiarity that burglars have with the environments in which they offend (Bottoms and Wiles, 1997; Rengert and Wasilcek, 1985; Brantingham and Brantingham, 1984). Additionally, we might make the reasonable supposition that there are two broad classes of offences: those committed amongst familiars; and those amongst strangers. Combining these propositions, the successful low-crime suburb would be one that:

- (1) reduced rates of offending amongst proximates and familiars, and created more opportunities for supervising nonresidents (ordering);
- (2) maximised its physical and cultural distance from potentially-offending strangers, making it difficult for outsiders to become familiar with the environment of the neighborhood (distancing); and
- (3) created buffers between itself and less advantaged outsiders (buffering).

The next three sections will examine each of these elements in detail.

Suburban Ordering

The internal order of residential communities, not least more affluent suburbs, has received less research attention than it deserves (Hope, 1995). We might suppose, however, that there are both compositional and contextual sources of low crime rates in suburbia. On the one hand, suburbs that can attract affluent residents are also attracting people who, for a variety of reasons, have low motivation, or high perception of risk, of committing public criminal acts, particularly of property appropriation. On the other hand, the mores of conduct amongst families, friends and neighbours may resemble what Baumgartner (1988) calls "moral minimalism" — a social order built upon the values of privacy and nonintervention in the lives of others. With greater privacy, mobility and cosmopolitan commitments in work and leisure, strong ties between proximates fail to develop. At the same time, there is an absence of accompanying animosity or grievances that might lead to conflict, including that which could be expressed through property appropriation and destruction.

Yet if moral minimalism and relative affluence reduce opportunities and motivations for property appropriation and destruction amongst proximates in the suburbs, they also have particular conse-

quences for suburban communities' capacities to generate surveillance. If the problem of property guardianship in the suburbs is to prevent offending by outsiders, the more that people value privacy and private lifestyles, the more they become dependent upon specialised institutions — such as police — to maintain the security of the environments in which they wish to pursue their privacy. That is, the more they need agents to provide their public-goods infrastructure of security, including the policing of boundaries, that individual, private action cannot provide. Yet the more overtly supervisory of public space the police become, the more they may intrude on residents' privacy, and the more they become a reminder of the absence of security in the environment (Ericson and Haggerty, 1997).

Still, weak, overlapping ties amongst members of a social group also have strengths for social organisation, providing an extensive network of associations amongst residents through which communication can flow and reciprocities develop. The social strength of these ties is that they provide linkages between sources of power and influence within a community that cannot be achieved by isolated friendship groups, no matter how intrinsically solidaristic these cliques might be (Granovetter, 1973). Extensive networks of social ties provide opportunities for network "closure," creating a reciprocity of social obligation from which "social capital" can be generated (Coleman, 1990). Social capital can also be seen as a collective good that helps in the creation of voluntary community organisations such as residents' associations. These "representative" groups are then able to draw upon the symbolic capital that the neighbourhood holds with extra-communal sources of power, such as public police and local government, to generate resources to preserve neighbourhood amenities and use values, including security (Skogan, 1988).

Those who comprise the social resources that underpin the production of order in suburbs are "socially selected" through the operation of the private free market, primarily in housing. In this respect, the internal production of suburban order, and the process of boundary definition, are apparently seamless — much in the way that Jacobs (1965) envisaged them to be. Yet although weak social ties have strengths for forming associations, they are also weak in sustaining them. As Michael Walzer (1990:15) remarks: "liberalism is distinguished less by the freedom to form groups....than [by] the freedom to leave the groups...behind. Association is always at risk in a liberal society. The boundaries of the group are not policed...that is why liberalism is plagued by free-rider problems." While privacy and affluence may ensure a tranquil internal order in the suburbs — and

attract extra-communal resources — they cannot inhibit "exit" from community participation in the form of "free-riding" and outward mobility.¹⁴ Moreover, the availability of incentives to exit continually undermines the production of collective guardianship goods, such as natural surveillance and boundary maintenance.

These effects can be illustrated with reference to resident participation in Neighbourhood Watch (NW), a method favoured in Britain for encouraging growth in the collective guardianship good of natural surveillance. By and large, British NW schemes are initiated and serviced by public police but rely upon individual, voluntary effort to sustain them and to produce and distribute preventive benefits (see Laycock and Tilley, 1995). Importantly, schemes provide club goods for residents — including guardianship through neighbourly natural surveillance, greater security consciousness, property marking, free security advice, and so on — from which households in the area covered by the scheme cannot be excluded. Table 2 is derived from separate multivariate models of the probabilities of a BCS respondent saying that: (a) a NW scheme has been set up in their area; (b) their household actually belongs to such a scheme; and (c) they believe there are reciprocal social relations amongst residents¹⁵ — which we are seeing here as a proxy for social capital (see Appendix for details).

Table 2 shows that although households living in detached houses are more likely to say that a NW scheme exists in their area, they are no more likely than households living in other dwelling types (other than flats) to agree that they actually belonged to a scheme. While respondents' greater access to schemes may indicate that the police have recognised their security needs (see above), their relatively lower likelihood of participating suggests a tendency to free-ride on the collective goods available. Table 2 also suggests that residents of affluent areas are more likely than others to think that reciprocity exists amongst their neighbours (and hence that there is a greater potential for social capital). However, they seem much less likely to have NW schemes set up in their neighbourhoods, and no more likely to belong even when schemes are available. In sum, although the ethos of privacy and weak ties in the suburbs may help sustain "internal" order and create the potential for generating social capital, it also inhibits the transformation of such capital into sustainable social organisation that would provide collective guardianship goods of surveillance and boundary maintenance.

Table 2: Neighbourhood Watch and Community Reciprocity by Dwelling Type and Affluence of Area

	NW scheme set up in area		Household belongs to a NW scheme		Community reciprocity	
	odds	sig	odds	sig	odds	sig
Detached house	1.00		1.000		1.00	
Semidetached house	0.78	.001	1.02	.918	1.03	.640
End-terraced (row) house	0.63	.000	1.01	.953	1.07	.436
Mid-terraced house	0.57	.000	0.80	.194	1.17	.038
Flats/maisonettes	0.45	.000	0.54	.003	1.02	.845
AFFLUENT AREA	0.91	.005	0.95	.509	1.14	.000

Suburb Distancing

Suburbanisation has always meant a search for low housing densities — and their accompanying values of amenity and privacy — at a distance from noxious, high density areas. The theories of the Chicago School provide a framework for predicting the criminogenic outcomes of this dynamic in terms of relatively unregulated competition for urban space between industrial/commercial and residential uses, and between social groups differentiated by income and ethnic and cultural identity (Bursik, 1988). The land and property pricing of the city reflects the outcome of unfettered competition for access to urban resources: inner zones would have high crime rates by virtue of their position in the ecological structure of competition for urban space, a situation that results in a moral vacuum and social disorganisation (Kornhauser 1978; Shaw and McKay 1969). Outer zones would be stable, organised communities reflecting socially homogeneous gradations of income and status. In this context, simple physical distance from areas of offender residence and low spatial mobility would ensure the safety of the suburbs.

Yet such a pattern is ceasing to pertain both in its planned and unplanned forms (Felson, 1994). For example, on the one hand — and perhaps more common in a British context — strict planning controls have limited the capacity for city growth and expansion, in order to hem in suburban sprawl. Additionally, state intervention in housing development, and postwar slum clearance and urban regeneration, has led to mass social housing developments on the periphery of cities in greater proximity to more affluent suburbs. At the

same time, relatively unfettered suburban development and extensive road building, perhaps more common in the American context, have led to a mixing of classes in the suburbs (Logan and Molotch, 1987) and a greater accessibility to a wide-ranging and diverse urban area by a greater range of people (Felson, 1994). In both circumstances, however, the safety of the suburbs can no longer be guaranteed simply by physical distance from areas of offender residence. For would-be ex-urbanites, it takes more resources to achieve distance and maximise amenity, with the costs of counter-urban flight escalating beyond many incomes and occupational needs. Fewer and more affluent people will in future be able to attain the security that distance alone may once have provided.

If sheer distance cannot do the job, other processes may go some of the way towards maintaining suburban boundaries. There are two well-substantiated sets of findings from environmental criminology. Firstly, higher rates of offences are to be found in interstitial or border areas between places that differ in socioeconomic status, with lower rates of offences — especially in better-off neighbourhoods — to be found more towards the social core of these areas. Second, crime rates are higher close to, or in areas with many, through routes and arteries (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1984). Together, it might be inferred that the more a suburb is permeable from the outside, the greater its crime rate (Taylor and Gottfredson, 1986). In this respect, the more that suburban design can be made impermeable to outsiders the greater its internal security: *pace* Jacobs (1965), border zones may well take the blight of diversity but nevertheless benefit the community within; *pace* Newman (1980) the more that borders discourage diverse intrusions, the more safe the community of interest inside.

Finally, studies of the routine activities of property offenders suggest that knowledge and familiarity with a neighbourhood is an important factor in their search behaviour (see Bottoms and Wiles, 1997). Thus, property offenders are likely to commit crimes close to places where they go routinely. To the extent that offenders have similar characteristics — for example, are mostly young men — the less likely are they to go to places where there is little that caters to their lifestyles. Familiarity also cuts the other way: the more socially (or racially) homogeneous the area, the more likely those with non-majority characteristics will stand out. Similarly, the more that strangers differ in obvious and visible ways from residents, the more they will be, and feel, exposed in the public places of the community. Paradoxically, *pace* Jacobs (1965), the fewer people there are in pub-

lie, the more that those who seem out of place — by virtue of their looks, pedestrianism, car, and so on — will be exposed, provided there is anyone to see and intervene with them. This itself becomes problematic if the routine activities of residents render them less and less likely to spend time in the public places of their community (Felson, 1994). Unless this surveillance deficit can be taken up by other means, for example, public police patrols, even the public-exposure effect of moral minimalism will not suffice.

Suburb Buffering

None of this would matter, however, if suburbs were in a steady state of relations with other parts of their urban areas. Yet even the growth dynamic envisaged by the Chicago School — that is, the process of invasion and succession — implied that there would be periods in which the goods and values of the "outer" suburbs would be threatened, albeit temporarily, by outward growth from the inner core. More contemporary evidence and theory, however, suggests that although the unidirectional, "organic" pattern of growth no longer pertains — nor does its correspondingly stable pattern of relative crime rates (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993) — urban arrangements, nevertheless, are still predicated upon the dynamics and imperatives of growth in capital and rents, and these dynamics affect how places are defined and the meanings they have, especially concerning their boundaries.¹⁶

Suburban goods, including security, are threatened by crowding. As Hirsch (1977) points out, the amenity (i.e., use) values of suburbs are diminished the more they are overtaken by other suburbs further out from the urban core. The unrestricted dynamic of suburban growth induces congestion in the positional good that once placed the now-engulfed suburb at the edge of the urban area, particularly if it removes residents from proximity to amenity and privacy, for example, when a new road or housing development is built close-by.

Recent ecological analysis of recorded crime rates in Merseyside tends to confirm crowding effects upon the residential security of the more affluent (Hirschfield et al., 1997). In the first place, the highest recorded crime rates in the urban region were found in areas typified by census-based geodemographic methods as "cosmopolitan, multi-racial areas of high population turnover, with a mix of single young professionals, students and young families and over-representations of sub-divided shared dwellings and private renting" (Hirschfield et al., 1997:7). Such "gentrifying" areas are subject to rapid social change and transience, which may itself promote high crime rates

(Bursik and Grasmick, 1993; Taylor and Covington, 1988). These areas are also those that place the poor and the younger segments of the better-off in closest proximity. This proximity may intensify the rate of victimisation, since these areas also had high rates of repeated burglary victimisation; the shortest distance between victims' homes and offence location for assaults and robberies; and high "self-containment" rates for offences (i.e., the extent to which the victim's home and the location of the offence were in the same neighbourhood type).

This study also suggests that as the spatial "width" of relative disadvantage in the areas surrounding an affluent core area increases, the levels of assault and burglary of residents in the affluent core also increases. In addition, the lower the levels of these crimes, the greater the width of relative affluence in the surroundings (Hirschfield et al., 1997). It would seem that social buffering may reduce the crowding of a suburb's security: the more an affluent suburb surrounds itself with other affluent suburbs, and thereby insulates itself from less advantaged neighbours, the more it can resist the crowding of its security.

In sum, then, it would seem that the guardianship goods provided by residence in an affluent suburb, especially those that help control the incursions of nonresidents, are unlikely to be produced through residents' collective actions. Even if public agencies provide affluent suburbs with more free opportunities to organise themselves — as with NW — the values of privacy, mobility, and individualism produce more countervailing incentives for exit than for either political voice within the neighbourhood, or loyalty to its institutions (Walzer, 1990). The property guardianship of the suburbs would seem to reside primarily in border maintenance. As long as suburbanites can distance themselves from offenders — preferably by placing other buffer communities between them so that their positional advantage is not crowded out — the fragility of their internal collective defences, and the vulnerability of their property, need not be tested.

CONCLUSION

Property guardianship in the suburbs is likely to be a zero-sum game unless borders can be maintained. As regards private self-guardianship, the only study of its kind found negligible crime displacement and benefit-diffusion effects between immediate neighbours (Miethe, 1991). It would seem that households cannot usually free-ride on their neighbours' guardianship, nor successfully displace

risk to others by taking pre-emptive action. So, when feeling threatened externally, residents may more likely enter into individual zero-sum accumulation of private-security goods, which may indeed become voracious (Davis, 1990). Perhaps only when a certain saturation is reached are collective guardianship goods likely to be generated. Miethe (1991), for instance, also found that there was a clear trend for residents of high-protection areas to benefit from the crime control efforts of their neighbours (supporting free-riding), whereas displacement effects were observed in areas with lower levels of safety precautions. Of course, as the public-goods argument implies, it is difficult to free-ride on others' crime prevention activity if everyone else is free-riding too. Arguably, only when a sufficient aggregation of private self-guardianship is reached does its benefit spill over to the collective advantage of a community as a whole.¹⁷

An alternative course of private action is move somewhere else, to buy into the total security package offered by another, more secure neighbourhood. But the scarcity of suburbs means that the security of all but the most distant or buffered suburb also becomes devalued (crowded) the more that people seek that option (Hirsch, 1977). Although rising house prices may serve to restrict residential membership of the suburb, they cannot necessarily protect its boundaries other than through market-structured, blighted border zones. The security value of the suburb itself can diminish the more its boundaries are crowded, or its buffers eroded, by encroachment from less advantaged neighbours. Thus, boundary maintenance becomes an **important weapon in the preservation of both neighbourhood values and amenities**, including security.¹⁸

Much community action in suburbs is preservationist (Savage et al, 1992), not least with regard to anticrime efforts (Skogan, 1988). Yet suburban communities cannot readily generate organisational resources to take preservative action because private-minded rational action tends towards free-riding and non-contribution. One solution to these public-goods problems is to privatise the street neighbourhood as an exclusive club — "an institutional solution to the collective action problem that internalises an externality through tolls" (Sandier, 1992:64). In this case, if the size and membership of the suburb can be controlled, then crowding effects within the suburb can be prevented and free-riders have an incentive to contribute lest they lose the benefits of club membership. An exclusive club can also police its boundaries by imposing restrictions on who enters the neighbourhood club, whether on a temporary or permanent basis. Thus, taken to its logical conclusion, the public-goods problem of

suburban property guardianship lies in the privatopian solutions of Newman (1980). These include the creation of residential club-neighbourhoods that can: deliver boundary-maintenance goods (including additional private guardianship) to residents; generate internal organisational strength and reduce free-riding by virtue of their powers of exclusion; share amongst members the collective benefits of individual security activities; and reduce the costs that their otherwise voracious private consumption of security would incur.

Jacobs's (1965) theory of natural surveillance presupposes an inclusive network of street neighbourhoods. However, this could only come about if every neighbourhood, and each household within it, was seamlessly connected to others within a common, public good that was simultaneously spatial, political and practical. Yet the values of privacy and individualism that suffuse the physical form, cultural life and social position of suburbs within cities militate against this happening. The alternatives for suburbanites to guard their property may be much as Davis (1990) describes them: "fortify your bunker;" support a homeowner politics that preserves the boundaries of the neighbourhood (so that they remain distanced and buffered from the less advantaged); or opt into a privatopian club-neighbourhood where boundary maintenance is part of the service charge.

In Britain and many other countries, these options probably will not need to be put to a serious test for some time; the socio-spatial processes of distancing and buffering still seem likely to provide the main means of suburban protection, unequal and unjust though that may be.¹⁹ To the extent that preservationist homeowner politics are successful, they will continue to distort the distribution of security goods and contribute, indirectly, to the further inequality of the poor. Yet privatopian guardianship may itself be a fugitive Utopia unless followed to the logical conclusion of "clubbing" public goods in their entirety. As Jordan points out: "comfortable households in the suburbs ultimately contribute more, through local and national taxes, for their exclusive privileges, because they are required to pay for prisons, reformatories, special schools, psychiatric clinics..[etc.]..many of whose inmates and users could more efficiently be included as members of a heterogeneous and pluralistic community" (1996:181).

Thus, the broader political issue of which the homeowner politics of suburban property guardianship is just a part, is how to control the "secession of the successful,"²⁰ — how to control opting out and the creation of club-goods, at least so that they do not contribute to

distributive injustices in both social harms and the public goods that might be available to remedy them.



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APPENDIX

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The statistical models in this paper were estimated from data drawn from the 1992 British Crime Survey (England and Wales) combined at the individual-level with data drawn from the 1991 Census. Further details on the data can be found in Ellingworth et al. (1997). Separate logistic regression models were estimated for: (1) property crime victimisation; (2) NW present in the area; (3) membership in a NW scheme; and (4) neighbourhood reciprocity. The full results from these analyses are to be published in forthcoming papers.

Variables Used in the Analysis

Age

AGEHH Age head of household

Occupation (base: manual occupation)

JOBNONM Non-manual

JOBOTH Other

Children in household (base: other)

CHILI 215 Children 12-15 yrs

CHILD511 Children 5-11 yrs

CHILDLT5 Children less than 5yrs

Tenure (base: owner occupied)

RENTC Rent from local council (public housing)

RENTO private rental (including Housing associations)

TIED Rental tied to job

Dwelling type (base: detached)

SEMI Semidetached

MIDTERR Mid-terrace

ENDTERR End-terrace

FLATM Flat or maisonette

UCACCOM Unclassified accommodation

Ethnic identity (base: white)

BLACK Afro-Caribbean

INDIANSC Indian Sub-Continental

OTHERETH Other ethnicity

ETHREF Refused

Mobility (base: other)

MOVED Household moved in past year

Satisfaction with area (base: not satisfied)

FAIRSATA Fairly satisfied

VERYSATA Very satisfied

Neighbourhood reciprocity (base: people go own way)

MIXSOCO Mixed

GOODSOCO People help each other

Area-level variables

ZPAGE515 Population aged 5-15 yrs (%)

ZPINDIAN	Population Indian-Sub-Continental identities (%)
ZPOLD1HH	One-pensioner households (%)
ZSPARHH	Single-parent households (%)
ZRENTED	Privately rented households (%)
AFFLUENT	[Average number of cars per household + proportion of dwelling units in detached houses]
INCITY	Location in an inner-city area

Standard Regions (base: South East [excluding Greater London])

NORTH	North
YORKS	Yorkshire and Humberside
NWEST	North West
WALES	Wales
WMIDS	West Midlands
EMIDS	East Midlands
EANGLIA	East Anglia
SWEST	South West
GLC	Greater London

**TABLE A1: Property Crime Victimization Logit
Regression: Victim in Past 12 Months vs.
Not Victimized**

Variable	Sig	Exp(B)
AGEHH	.0000	9868
BASE: Manual		
JOBNONM	.0139	1.1480
JOBOTH	.0167	1.3090
CHIL1215	.3211	1.0821
CHILD511	.0460	1.1458
CHILDLT5	.5200	1.0478
BASE: Owns		
RENTC	.0015	1.2525
RENTO	.7542	1.0303
TIED	.0451	1.5786
BASE: Detached		
SEMI	.0535	.8449
MIDTERR	.0051	.7627
ENDTERR	.9014	.9859
FLATM	.0003	.6637
UCACCOM	.1986	.8205
BASE: White		
BLACK	.0837	.8459
INDIANSC	.2092	.8726
OTHERETH	.0296	.5853
ETHREF	.4575	1.2405
MOVED	.0021	1.2966
BASE: Not Satis		
FAIRSATA	.0000	.4511
VERYSATA	.0000	.3341
BASE: No SoCo		
MIXSOCO	.1768	.9101
GOODSOCO	.0000	.7638
ZPAGE515	.0357	1.0935
ZPINDIAN	.0000	.8418
ZPOLD1HH	.5085	.9770
ZSPARHH	.0280	1.0630
ZRENTED	.0003	1.1369
AFFLUENT	.0000	.8456
INCITY	.6047	1.0381
BASE: Seast		

Variable	Sig	Exp(B)
NORTH	.2596	1.1592
YORKS	.0300	1.2718
NWEST	.2662	1.1251
WALES	.1919	.8138
WMIDS	.4133	1.1041
EMIDS	.0010	1.4084
EANGLIA	.1026	.7274
SWEST	.7210	.9585
GLC	.5674	1.0634
Constant	.6368	-.0775

NOTES

1. Cohen and Felson (1979) specifically introduced the term *guardianship* as one of the key components of the routine activity theory of crime occurrence — a term that subsumed not only the notion of natural surveillance but other forms of supervision as well. Clarke et al (1992) had earlier sought, and continues to seek, to distinguish types of surveillance according to the surveying agency, e.g., citizens (natural), employees, or formal agents such as the police.

2. The first two are taken from Weintraub (1995), who suggests that the various meanings of the distinction are "used to distinguish different *kinds* of human action — and beyond that, the different realms of social life, or the different physical and social spaces, in which they occur" (Weintraub, 1995:287).

3. A public good is usually defined as having two characteristics: non-rivalries; and non-excludability (Barry and Hardin, 1982). A good can be thought of as *nonrival* if "one person's enjoying more of the good does not reduce the ability of others to enjoy it" (Hargeaves Heap et al., 1992:345). A good is *nonexcludable* in its provision if access to the good cannot be denied to individuals, even if they have not contributed in some way to its provision. Rarely are goods purely public — air comes close — but, as will be described, these characteristics nevertheless comprise useful criteria for analyzing the nature of particular goods (or bads) and, importantly, how their benefits (or negatives) are produced and distributed.

4. The security that is sought from property guardianship is like a *positional good* (Hirsch, 1977), something that is scarce and diminishes

with extensive demand upon it, and where increased growth in its supply (i.e., through social innovation or cultural change) is slow. Where the supply of positional goods fails to keep pace with demand for them, considerable pressure is placed by consumers upon the *distributional mechanisms* of the positional economy (Hirsch, 1977). Congestion in supply particularly undermines the provision of public goods.

5. Interestingly, Jacobs herself never uses the term as such.

6. As Newman (1973:51) asserts, "...by its very nature, the single-family house is its own statement of territorial claim. It has defined ownership by the very act of its positioning on an integral piece of land buffered from neighbours and (the) public street by intervening grounds."

7. Though as Berman (1953) also notes, the vision was not quite so openly inclusive as it might have seemed — there were "no blacks on her block" (p. 153). Indeed, the kind of city from which Jacobs drew her inspiration seems to be one devoid of mass public housing, migration and poverty concentration.

8. "...private ownership, self-determination and social mobility as the keys to personal development" (Savage et al., 1992:94).

9. The one-way analysis of variance test reveals these differences to be highly significant ($F=18.01$, $p.<.00001$), while differences between groups are significant according to the least significant difference (multiple range) test at $p.<.05$.

10. As noted in the Appendix, it should be remembered that the variables used here to estimate the risk of victimisation are only those that also proved significant in the estimation of NW awareness, availability and membership; there are also other risk factors associated with victimisation (see, for example, Ellingworth et al., 1997).

11. In other models of property crime risk estimated from the BCS and census data, we have also found higher household car ownership to be positively correlated with higher risk of *household* property crime, notwithstanding risks of car crime, again suggesting the higher risk of affluent suburban households.

12. This is a highly significant effect ($p.<.00001$). The model suggests that for a standard unit increase in the probability of a household being located in an "affluent area," the probability of property crime victimisa-

tion is reduced by 15%. Nevertheless, probably as a consequence of collinearities, other models of the 1992 BCS have found that the effect of "area affluence" is derived only from that part of the variable measuring the average number of cars per household (Ellingworth et al., 1997).

13. The BCS data suggest that the relative distributions of household dwelling types — with different risks associated with each — are polarized along the area-affluence variable. Thus, 74% of detached dwellings (at higher individual risk) are located in the top third of these affluent areas (at lowest area risk), while 59% of flats, and 48% of terraced houses (at lower individual risk) are located in the bottom third of the affluence continuum (at higher area risk). The distribution of semi-detached houses is more even, though the largest proportion (44%) can be found in the middle third of areas classified on this variable. On the whole, 96% of detached, and 78% of semidetached dwellings can be found in the top two-thirds of this area-affluence continuum.

14. Free-riders are those who can enjoy the benefits of membership without contributing to the costs of their production, and who cannot be excluded from doing so. It can be shown formally — in a game-theoretic context, with standard rationality assumptions about individual action — that the conditions of nonexcludability and voluntarism attaching to public goods leads to the strategy to free-ride for any participating individual. Even though greater collective benefit would be obtained if everyone contributed to the production of the public good, the individual incentive to free-ride that bears on every participant equally results in the underprovision of public goods that do not carry additional penalties or incentives to participate. That is the public-goods dilemma.

15. Specifically, this was assessed by means of a standard BCS question:

Q. "In some neighbourhoods people do things together and try to help each other, while in other areas people mostly go their own way. In general, what kind of neighbourhood would you say you live in?"

A. Help each other, go own way, mixture.

In the logistic regression context, the response variable was coded positive for those agreeing that people mostly helped each other.

16. As Logan and Molotch (1987:43, emphasis in original) note: "places are not simply *affected* by the institutional maneuvers surrounding

them. Places *are* those machinations. A place is defined as much by its position in a particular organizational web — political, economic, and cultural — as by its physical makeup and topographical configuration...the very boundaries of place, as well as the meaning of those boundaries, are a result of intersecting searches for use and exchange values."

17. That is, where significant *externality* benefits are generated for neighbours and the wider community (Field and Hope, 1990). Ekblom's (1997) evaluation of the British Safer Cities Programme, for instance, found greater preventive benefits accruing to areas the greater the amount of expenditure on crime prevention effort.

18. Thus Davis (1990:170, 244) notes: "Homeowner politics have focused on defense of th[el suburban dream against unwanted development...,as well as against unwanted persons...the security-driven logic of urban enclavization finds its most popular expression in the frenetic efforts of Los Angeles's affluent neighbourhoods to insulate home values and lifestyles."

19. As I have pointed out elsewhere, half the communities of England and Wales suffer only 15% of the national amount of property crime; and repeat victimisation is virtually nonexistent in the lowest crime areas (Hope, 1997).

20. Robert Reich quoted in McKenzie (1994).