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A Geographic View



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SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND THE CITY: A GEOGRAPHIC VIEW

Inaugural Lecture

Delivered at the College on 27 October 1981

by

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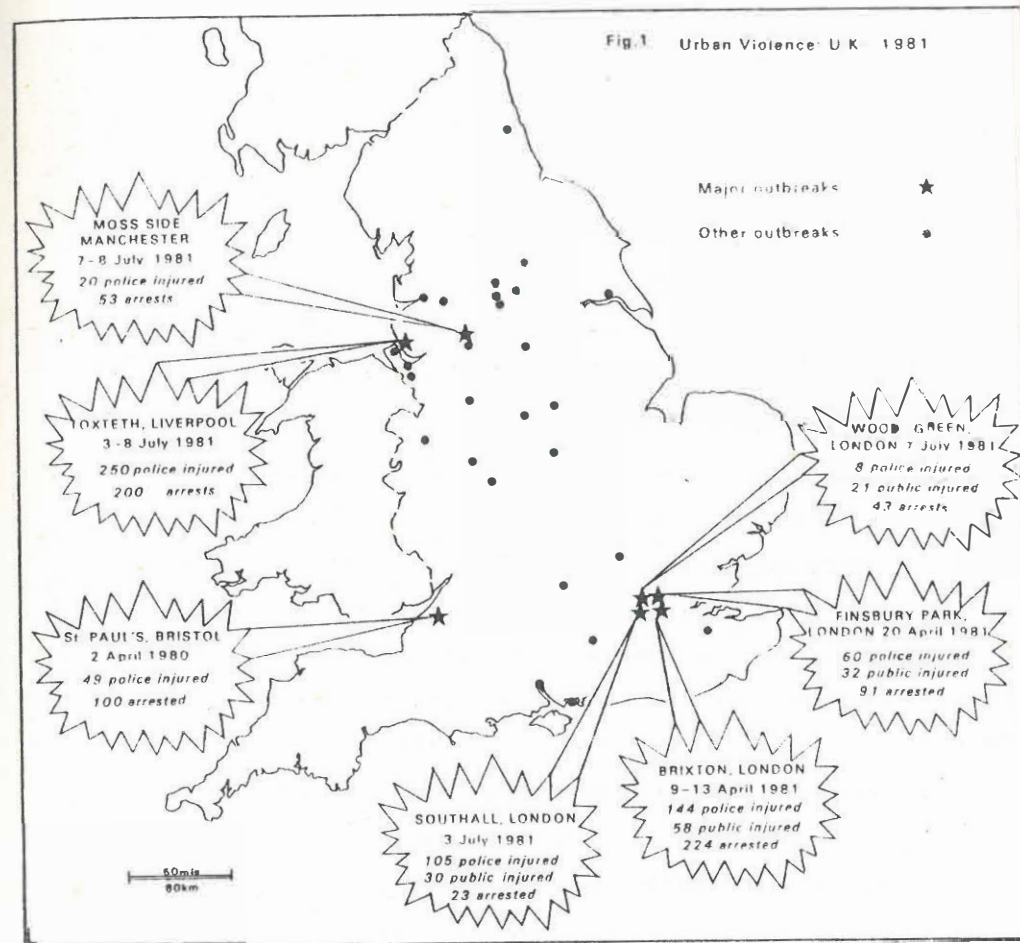
The path towards the point in one's career at which one is invited to deliver an Inaugural lecture is a long and arduous one; the task of preparing the lecture itself has been only slightly less daunting. As a product of the Department of Geography at Swansea, I can reflect over a period which is not far short of its entire history. This Department provided me with my basic training though it did not really shape my future interests. Professor Balchin in his own Inaugural lecture as the first Professor of Geography in 1955 included in his address the slightly 'throw-away' line: "we have only recently come to realise the importance of urban spheres of influence." Yet as the fifth Professor of Geography at Swansea to deliver an Inaugural lecture, it is precisely this 'urban sphere' which has provided me with my dominant research interest. In this lecture, I shall seek to demonstrate something of this interest and in so doing to show how Human Geography in particular has changed over the past two decades.

My interest in social problems and the city is relatively recent and developed from a longer concern with the social geography of the city. It has also been prompted by one at least of the several forces to which geographers have been vulnerable over the past decade, this being the search for relevance or the desire to employ acquired knowledge and methodologies for 'useful' purposes in the real world. That social problems in cities are real enough and demand the attention of both academics and policy-makers does not require proof in the early 1980s. Inhabitants of many of our larger cities have first-hand

experience of both the gradual increase of the hazards of urban life and also of the fact that when pent-up violence or frustration achieves an outlet, they will find themselves in the front-line (Figure 1). My task tonight is not to remind you of the extent and nature of these problems, or indeed to add to the considerable polemic on what should be done, it is rather to demonstrate how a particular academic discipline has developed its methodologies and has formed a contribution to the understanding of social problems in cities. Before proceeding to this 'demonstration', there are two themes which may serve as contexts and which require some discussion. The first of these concerns more recent changes in the nature and content of human geography; the second involves the concept of the social problem per se and acknowledgement of some of the difficulties it contains.

The Changing Nature of Human Geography

Geography as a whole and human geography in particular has experienced great change over the past two decades. In many ways this statement is a truism as change is a proper feature of any academic discipline. For human geography, however, the change has been especially traumatic and exceeds any kind of normal process of evolution; the discipline of the mid 1950s sometimes appears hardly recognizable in its present-day form. Changes of this order have their repercussions and the danger of 'throwing out the baby with the bathwater' has been frequently recognized. On the general nature of this process of change I would make two brief observations. The first is that change has added major

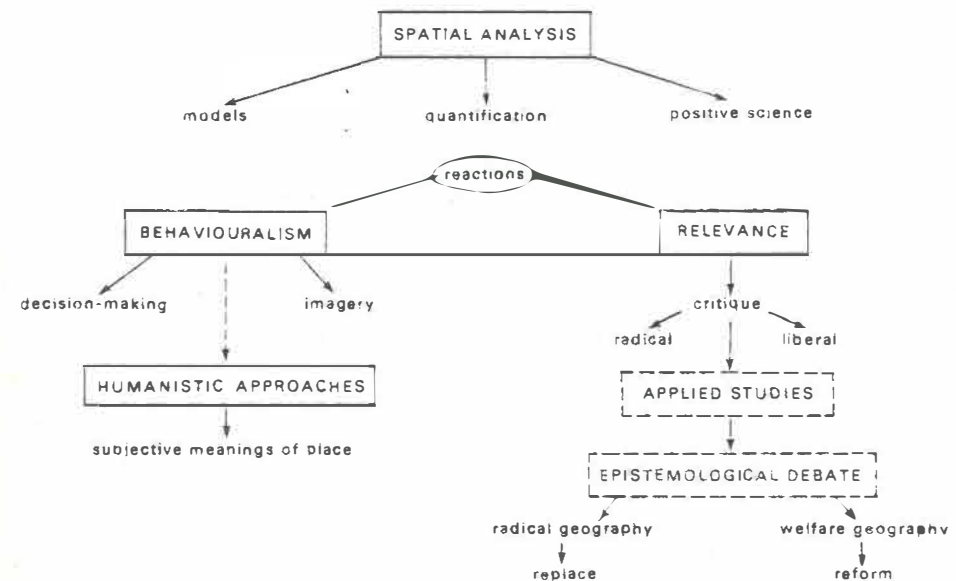


new perspectives to the study of human geography and has re-ordered its sense of priorities and emphases, it has not, however, taken the form of a 'purge' involving the rejection and total removal of more traditional approaches. The second is that in this process of re-ordering priorities, the main thrust, though not the only one, has been one which has moved human geography more firmly into the social sciences and into a closer involvement with their philosophical bases, methodologies and concerns.

Having made these observations and asserted that there has been great change, let me now briefly indicate its main characteristics.

Geography entered the 1950s with three traditional paradigms or broad sets of ideas which members of the discipline shared. Exploration, the earliest such 'core' to the discipline, describes the geographer's role as discoverer and cataloguer of new lands; environmentalism pinpoints the concern with natural environment and its influence upon human activity; regionalism focuses on the mosaic of separate landscapes which forms the earth's surface and the meanings of place. The traditional paradigms were severely disrupted in the 1960s in what Gould (1969) describes as one of the greatest periods of intellectual ferment in the whole history of geography. From this ferment at least one new paradigm emerged which although subsequently subject itself to criticism and modification from within the discipline, has had a lasting effect upon methodology and practice (Figure 2). Spatial analysis is a positivist perspective founded upon greater quantification, model-building and a pre-occupation with the geometry of space. It was a reaction in particular against the exceptionalism and weak

Fig.2 New Paradigms in Human Geography



scientific method of much traditional geography. As already suggested this new paradigm was more successful at displacing the dominance of the older paradigms than it was at proving its own sufficiency as the new geography. There were two kinds of critical reactions. The first was a call for a more relevant discipline; spatial analysis was removing geographical practice further away from the real world and its problems:

"There is a clear disparity between the sophisticated theoretical and methodological framework we are using and our ability to say anything really meaningful about events as they unfold around us" (Harvey, 1973, p.128).

The second was the fear that an increasing dominance of mechanistic skills was distracting geographers from their more humanistic forms of study and analysis:

"The subject was left with too many technicians and a dearth of scholars" (Mercer and Powell, 1972, p.28).

From these two forms of reaction to the positivism of spatial analysis have distilled the relevance perspective, which contains a range of approaches from radical to liberal but with a general preference for a conflict rather than a consensus view of society, and the behavioural perspective, which seeks to re-instate the roles of people as decision-makers rather than the 'pale entrepreneurial figures' they had become under spatial analysis and seeks new ways of understanding the images, values and meanings attached to space and place. Both these reactions to spatial analysis have perhaps above all been instrumental in drawing human geographers into far greater involvement with the

philosophies of the social sciences and into critical scrutiny of the methodological bases from which they work.

Defining Social Problems

Urban geography has in many ways been consistently in the vanguard of this recent period of intense change and methodological ferment. Whatever else the city may be it does represent a concentration of people and resources in space; as a phenomenon, the city has attracted methodological interest, it has been the laboratory in which new techniques and ideas have often been tested. Whether the 'problems' which surface in the city are merely manifestations of some kind of general malaise which is affecting society as a whole or whether they are expressions of some specific urban condition, the fact that they occur in cities means that they occur in an intense and exaggerated form. There are scale effects which give what we describe as urban problems or crises special meaning. A number of points can be made on this theme. Firstly, geographers have for some time been careful to distinguish between what may be termed problems in the city and problems of the city. The former can be regarded as those problems, such as poverty, inequality, and mental illness which are not particularly urban; they affect society as a whole and find expression in urban areas as elsewhere. As problems they are especially associated with cities because of the concentrations of people in space. The latter are those problems which can only really occur in urban settings; they are 'manufactured' or at least brought to problem levels only within the particular combination

of circumstances which cities provide. An easy example is air pollution, it may occur anywhere but is specifically an urban problem because of factors such as the configuration of buildings, and intensity of traffic. Social problems which relate in some way to overcrowding might be similarly described. The geographer's belief that this second kind of problem exists or that city as area generates special effects of its own in part explains the persistence of a research tradition based upon an area or territory such as the city. As Emrys Jones (1975, p.8) has suggested:

"Space is not merely a medium in which society moves and acts, but a variable we can no longer ignore."

The second theme upon which I wished to present some context comments, that of social problems research, is also centrally concerned with questions of definition, with deciding what in fact constitutes a problem and how it should be studied. These are contentious issues and there is a distinction in the research literature between those who treat problems as self-evident facts which require solutions and those who focus upon the ways in which problems are created rather than upon the fact that they exist. For the former the concerns are the quality of available data, the rates of occurrence of a problem, the social characteristics of the 'deviant' group, and the interaction between people and problems. For the latter there are questions on ways in which problems originate in the structure of society. Are they only problems because they are defined as such by those in power whose interests are threatened? Hindess (1975), for example, argues that the real value of official crime statistics lies in their roles as indicators

of the structure of society and its processes rather than as indicators of who the offenders are. I will illustrate some of these definitional issues concerning social problems in two ways, the first pragmatic and the second conceptual, which approximate the dilemmas facing each of the two broad types of research perspective.

Official crime statistics have well-known hazards involved in their use though research which treats problems as facts has little choice but to use them (Figure 3). Official crime statistics under-represent the reality of crime in several ways; only a fraction of all offences and offenders enter official records. Firstly, clear-up or detection rates vary considerably by type of offence but are on average little above 40 per cent. Only a minority of offenders involved in recorded offences are thus known to the police. Secondly, the police exercise a good deal of discretion and by no means all known offences are recorded as such and enter official statistics. Thirdly, there is the so-called 'dark area' of offences which either go unnoticed or, more likely, are noticed but for a variety of reasons are not reported. Estimates vary but there is a general suggestion (Hood and Sparks, 1970) that about 20 per cent. of all crime is actually recorded in official statistics. The pragmatic research issues here, therefore, are: How much of the total crime problem do we know about? Is the sample which is known a representative one or is it biased in one or more ways? White-collar crime, for example, may well be under-represented; it is more difficult to detect a tax-fraud than a mugging.



Pragmatic issues of this kind are not entirely separate from those of a more conceptual nature. Social scientists in general and sociologists in particular, have grappled persistently with the basic issue of defining social problems but come, perhaps inevitably, to the conclusion that as there are contrasted theoretical bases from which to view society, so there are contrasted ways of defining its problems. Writers have sought compromise definitions:

"A social problem may be said to exist when an influential group is aware of a social condition that threatens its values and that may be remedied by collective action" (Sullivan et al., 1980, p.10).

This definition seeks to accommodate a functionalist perspective which first defines the qualities of an existing order and designates as problems those events or individuals which pose a threat to its continuity; a conflict perspective which argues that as key resources are in short supply so people will struggle to attain them; problems arise when groups feel they are not receiving their fair shares; and an interactionist perspective which argues that problems exist when they are perceived as such by a large group of people, it is the awareness which must be a key feature. This conceptual debate, often conducted at high levels of abstraction, is important but it does hold the dangers of fragmenting reality rather than treating it as a whole:

"All we are doing is putting our knowledge in convenient pigeon holes. Whatever philosophical stand one may take..... this need not blind us to the unity of the whole nor impede our efforts

at analysing and describing both the world in which we live and the way in which we live in the world" (Jones, 1964, p.18)

and, as important, the danger of forgetting that social problems actually exist and need attention. A recent review of a textbook on social problems expressed this concern rather well:

"The information is well-selected and is information about the real world of social problems people are dying and suffering on these pages, not getting their concepts straightened out" (Cohen, 1981, p.15).

A Framework for Research in Human Geography

My comments so far have related, in somewhat separate compartments, to the main components of change in the practice of human geography on the one hand and to some of the conceptual and practical issues in the study of social problems on the other. My next task is to look for the links between these two compartments and to demonstrate ways in which geographers have and perhaps should study social problems in cities. The first and main objective is to identify some form of integrating framework within which the presently various strands of modern geographical methodology can be accommodated. There is a danger of eclecticism which must be both recognized and averted; an integrating framework should not merely serve as a convenient organizational structure, it should also provide channels or 'openings' among often divergent perspectives. As presented here this framework relates to social problems but it has more general applications.

An integrated framework for the geographer concerned with

social problems must, I believe, identify the various levels of analysis at which research should be conducted. These levels of analysis have some broad coincidence with the older geographical concept of scale but they are more fundamentally concerned with recognition of socio-spatial processes which lead both to the creation and emergence of social problems. The three levels, summarised in Figure 4, are labelled as production, distribution and consumption. My use of these terms will be briefly defined and more fully exemplified.

production: this is the broadest level of analysis, the truly macro-scale. In its most general terms this level is concerned with the type of society with which we are involved, its values and policies which permeate the system as a whole, in more technical terms the social formation and 'modes of production'. For geographers the key questions concern the relationship between the core of the system and what emerges in space - are there basic features which eventually find spatial expression as social problems?

distribution: this is the intermediary level between society and its spatial expressions. The key area of interest is the allocative system, the ways in which power and resources are distributed downwards through the system, the roles of the 'middlemen', the urban managers or gatekeepers who make local allocative decisions, the ways in which these decisions are linked to outcomes in geographical space.

consumption: this level summarises the spatial outcomes, the patterns and processes in local space which have formed the

dominant agenda for geographical research. The local environment is the 'arena' within which distributions in space can be measured and classified, spatial behaviour and processes can be analysed and the values and meanings attached to place and space can be investigated.

Fig 4. Framework for a Geography of Social Problems



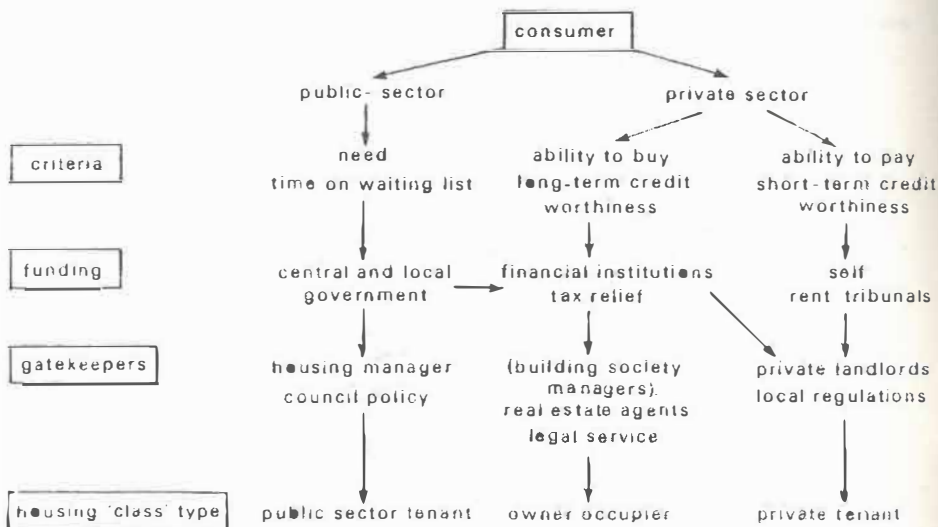
From these brief definitions of the levels of analysis, it is perhaps already clear that the framework is intended for the immediate present and the future rather than the past. Up until the middle 1970s, so much geographical research belonged squarely in the 'consumption' level of analysis, that it would hardly be worth acknowledging the need for the others. As I seek to exemplify what research at these different levels means, this imbalance will remain very evident but there is good evidence to suggest that it will be progressively corrected in the future.

The thrust of research at my first level of analysis, that of production, is to demonstrate that social problems arise as the natural by-product of an existing order or set of values. In this respect the writings of geographers have their special emphases but differ little in kind to those of other social scientists. Most Western societies are, so it is argued, organized on some variant of the capitalist mode of production. This is a 'system' which rewards its members differentially; this inevitably creates inequality and it should therefore come as no surprise that the 'have-nots' or the 'have less' exist, may feel deprived, may take action and so become a social problem. Research at this level has tended to be theoretical rather than empirical; parallel with the radical critique of the social sciences there is an active school of radical geographers who are highly critical of the existing order and advocate revolutionary change, most commonly in line with Marxist principles. By no means all research by geographers at this level, however, is radical in a political sense, there is a strong reformist, 'liberal' strand which advocates evolutionary, ameliorative change. There are several very positive contributions emerging from research at this level. Firstly, it has drawn geographical research into close scrutiny of its philosophical bases and methodologies; the 'structural' perspective in its various forms is now firmly placed in the front of the stage. Secondly, it is now beginning to provide good comparative analyses aimed, for example, at understanding the ways in which contrasted types of society 'produce' contrasted urban housing environments. Thirdly, it has brought clear

recognition of the fact that local social problems may not have local solutions. The Community Development Projects (C.D.P.s), for example, consistently refused to prescribe local reforms for the problem areas they were formed to examine but argued that society and government needed to re-order their priorities and put their house in order.

At the distribution level of analysis, the research focus is upon ways in which decisions about resource allocations are made. Although this level of analysis is not well theorised its empirical implications are already evident; the research task is to understand the activities of the urban managers or gatekeepers who have some level of discretion in terms of 'who gets what,

Fig.5. Gatekeepers in the Housing Market



where and how'. The roles of the gatekeepers in the housing market have received the most attention to date and it is clear that there are key areas of allocation which affect the wider social geography of the city and the incidence of social problems (Figure 5). Research into the activities of building society managers, for example, shows how although their lending practices are comprehensible in terms of the rules by which they operate, they have discriminatory effects. Applicants with low income levels or job instability have lower success rates, some inner city districts are actually 'red-lined', in the sense that properties within them will not normally be funded. To some extent, therefore, the existence of a problem housing area of low owner-occupance, little improvement, high vacancies can be explained by decisions made at the distribution level. Similarly, there is research which shows how local authority housing managers have tended to direct problem families to the same districts and unsurprisingly produce 'problem estates'. Estate agents occasionally have similar roles. The 'gentrification' process in parts of London by which older subdivided low-income housing of 'potential' is transformed into modernised, high-cost single-family homes, is thought to be substantially aided by the managerial roles of estate agents. A lesson of this kind of research in housing is that the 'local pathology' approach may be wholly inadequate, problems are in large part created elsewhere in the system.

Evidence for the relevance of a managerial or distribution level can also be identified in the field of crime studies. The

'managers' in this context could be regarded as the judiciary and the police, both of whom exercise a good deal of discretion. In the sphere of the judiciary, this discretion is revealed by variations in sentencing practice - if an offence has to be committed then some areas are 'better' than others in terms of the sanction which is likely to follow. There is clear American evidence that identical offences are differently treated by different state legislatures and courts; in the United Kingdom there is generally greater uniformity in court practice but still some bases for variation which reveal the different attitudes of magistrates, for example, in various parts of the country. The police act as 'managers' in the sense that they make decisions on where and in what ways they distribute their resources and officers - a heavily policed area is likely to 'raise' the detection rate and hence the crime rate - and also in the sense that they decide which cases to prosecute and what procedures to adopt. It is argued of the police that the amount of discretion exercised increases down the hierarchy. The officer on the beat has the 'on-the-spot' decision of whether to enter a formal report or whether to give an informal word of caution; as the complaint enters the system with its sets of rules, the available flexibility decreases. Whether a crime rate or a crime pattern emerges is in part therefore a function of decisions made by the police rather than the activities of potential offenders.

What I have sought to demonstrate in outlining these first two levels of analysis is that the depiction of patterns forms

an adequate starting point only in a limited and rather superficial way. The patterns and the apparent social problems themselves may be only surface manifestations of some deeper disorder; to understand the social processes which create problems and in a wider sense create the nature of urban space, consideration of these two levels of analysis is essential. Having stated the case for the production and distribution levels, I now need to say some words in defence of the consumption level within which the majority of empirical research in geography continues to take place. Radical geographers have in recent years called for an abandonment of concern with what they term the 'fetishism of space', the unwillingness to step away from the study of spatial patterns and processes. Their call for a 'unified social science', free from its 'adjectival' divisions has some relevance at what I have termed the first level of analysis with terms of reference as broad as society itself. In these contexts, derivative theories are as relevant as the indigenous, non-spatial factors override spatial and inter-disciplinary or even non-disciplinary approaches may be the most appropriate. The success of geographers at this level rests upon their generalist rather than upon their particularist contributions to the theories and practices of the social sciences. At the other levels of analysis, however, and especially at the third level it is the particularist role which is central and it is to this that I shall now turn.

Although, as I have stated, this third level of analysis is the most traditional, this should not be taken to mean that it

has not experienced change. Some of the most interesting new kinds of research are in fact being developed at this level and incorporate a direct concern with local environment, and with the concept of place. The depiction of patterns or spatial distributions can be used to demonstrate the existence of a problem and the extent to which it is concentrated in particular parts of the city; from this basis new questions concerning social processes and responses may emerge. Pattern in this sense remains, as does the map, a basic and essential technique in a geographical study. As an example of a pattern, we can take a map constructed not by a geographer but by the Washington police department which shows the incidences of offences of violence over a single-week period in the early 1970s (Figure 6). As a pattern it raises several key questions. Why is there such an uneven distribution? Why are the strong concentrations of offences in a small number of city districts? What environmental qualities of those districts might help us to explain why they are so vulnerable? This kind of example could be replicated many times and has a long record in geographical research which has evolved from descriptions of patterns, to classifications of types of areas, to use of pattern as a clue to process, and to the kind of territorial social indicator research typical of the 1970s.

The Study of Urban Crime

The examples of research at this level of analysis which are now used are drawn from the study of urban crime. Inevitably

to its later 'humanistic' qualities.

Oscar Newman (1972) provided one variant of this theme with his book *Defensible Space* which attracted a great deal of contemporary attention, mainly because it was policy-oriented and offered a means of reducing the level of crime. Newman studied housing projects in New York and showed how in two developments of a very similar social and demographic composition on adjacent sites, there were very sharp differences in crime rate from one to the other. Initially Newman argued that the differences corresponded with the contrasted design features of buildings and their success in creating a well-defined territory which could be defended, which possessed a means of control over local space by visibility and surveillance, and which had no prior stigmatization as being unsafe or undesirable.

This over-emphasis upon design rendered Newman's thesis vulnerable to criticisms of architectural determinism and his later statements laid greater stress on the interplay between social and physical factors and the ways in which people perceived and used space. As with many new theses, Newman's was too simply stated and lacked the kind of methodological rigour with which research should be characterised. There are however useful ideas in Newman's thesis, as the large number of replicative studies continue to show. Whereas there is no conclusive evidence to show that use of defensible space design principles actually reduce the amount of crime in an area, it can be more forcibly argued that they increase the quality of life. Even in so-called crime areas, the likelihood of victimization is actually quite small, fear of crime is a greater problem than the reality of being a victim; if design effects can reduce the

fear and apprehension, they would be very worthwhile. Some strands from the defensible space idea can be demonstrated with reference to residential burglary patterns in Swansea using a data set for 1975 which shows how interesting variations can occur in a single type of offence over relatively small areas. Taking West Swansea as the relevant area, it is clear that the main concentration of offences occurs in a broad zone just outside the city centre with quite high rates both in older terraced-row areas and in some local authority estates. From this data set at least it is clear that burglary rates are lower than one might expect in the more affluent suburbs; opportunity alone appears as insufficient explanation as the most rewarding 'targets' are not those most heavily affected. Even within the apparent zone-at-risk however, there are variations with relatively high incidence rates in two sub-areas whereas the third is virtually incident-free (Figure 8). Using some of the defensible space ideas but introducing stronger social criteria, it is possible to understand some of these variations both at an area scale and at more detailed levels. The offence-free area has, for example, the most stable and uniform population, with low rates of mobility and, also, the strongest sense of local community. The other areas by comparison are more transient, more mixed and have higher proportions of rented and subdivided property. In seeking to explain the existence of vulnerable areas of this kind, there is a well established 'border-zone' hypothesis which suggests that locations which are interstitial or peripheral to well-defined neighbourhoods may be especially at risk. A simpler version of

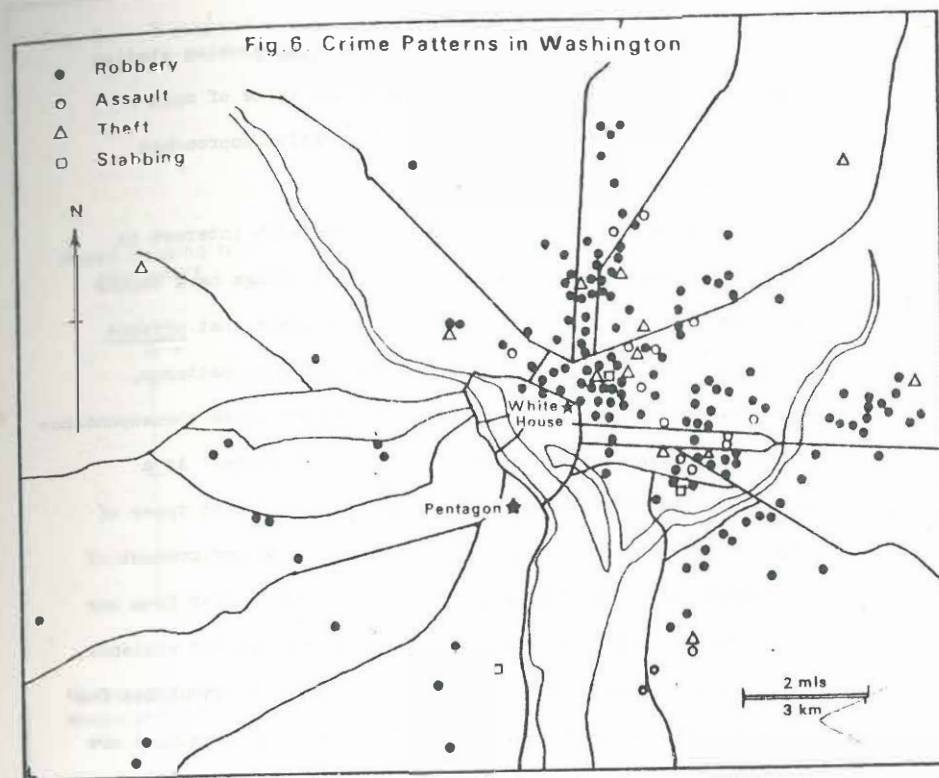
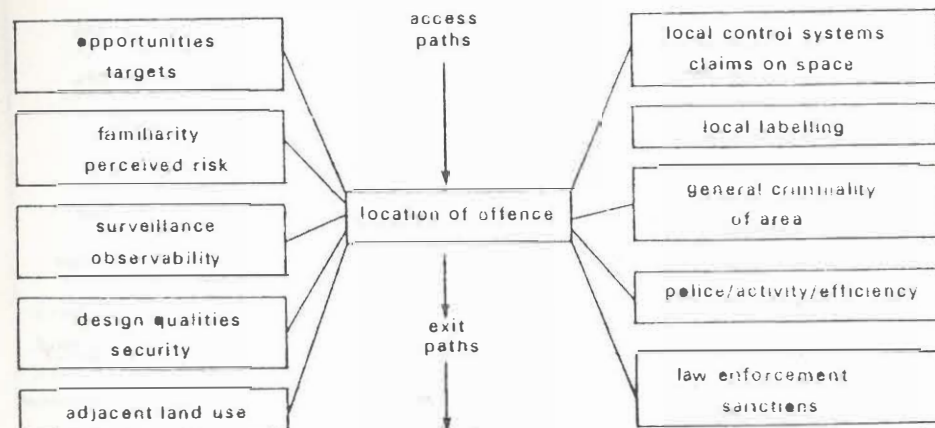


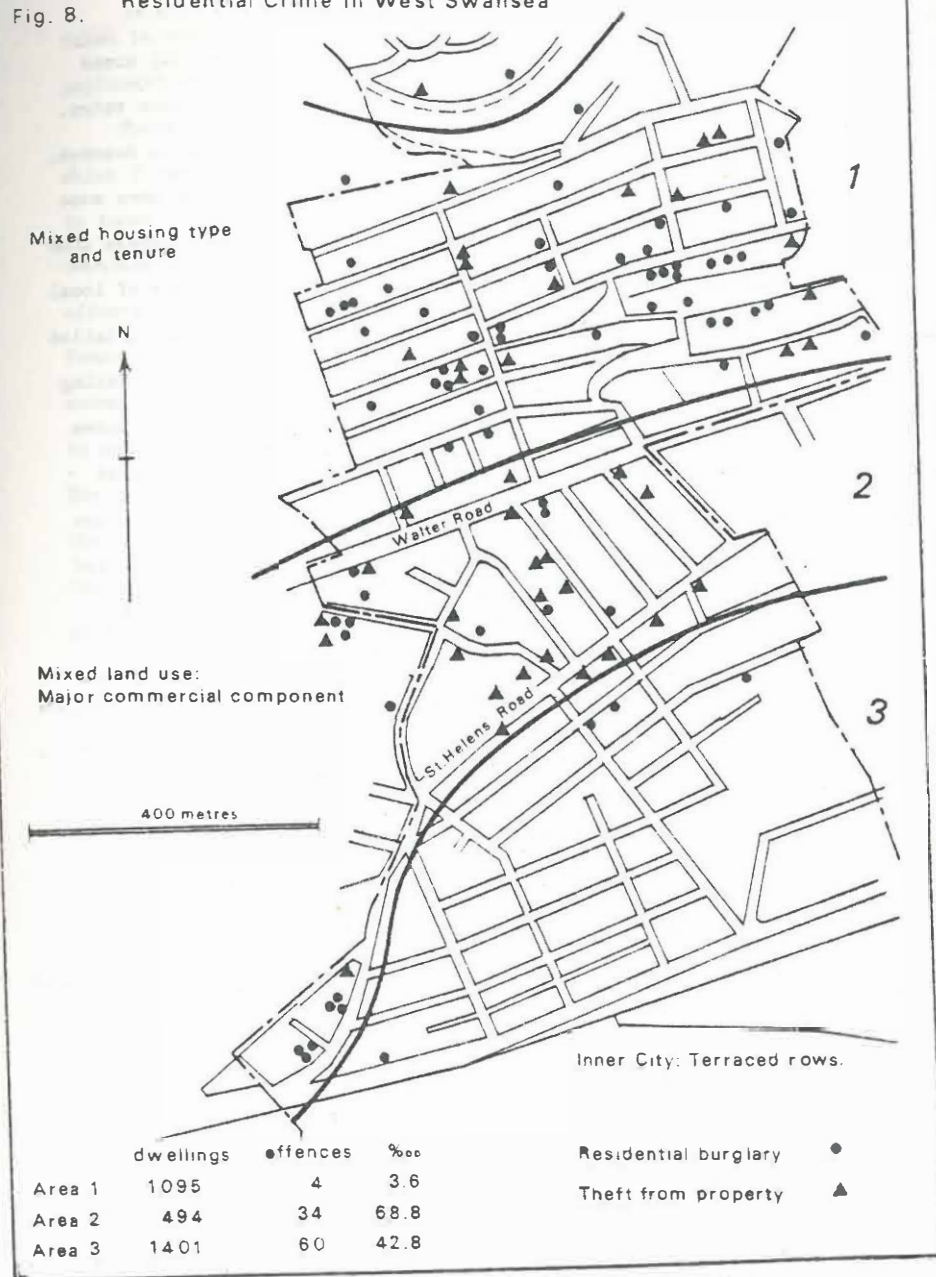
Fig. 7. Features of the Vulnerable Environment



the choice has to be limited but it is a social problem studied by geographers in which evidence of both the value of more established modes of study and of the innovative approaches can be demonstrated (Herbert, 1982).

As geographers have developed their research interest in crime at the local environmental level, some things have become clear reasonably quickly. Firstly, it is evident that offence patterns, showing where crimes occur, and offender patterns, showing where offenders live, have no necessary close correspondence even though in some circumstances there are overlaps. As a subset of this observation, it is clear that different types of offence have different distributions; there is an environment of opportunity to which offenders respond which may differ from one type of crime to another (Figure 7). Opportunities for violence, for example, do not occur in the same places as opportunities for burglary; offence patterns will reflect this. Opportunities are in fact important elements in anticipating where offences are likely to occur but research shows they are not the only ones. There are vulnerable environments within any city, rendered such by a combination of factors, both physical, in the sense of the characteristics of buildings, lines of access, and open spaces, and social in the sense of controls over territory, usage of space and attitudes towards places. Seeking to understand why some local environments possess this vulnerability to crime has provided one research avenue for geographers concerned with crime as a social problem. As it develops, this research is likely to relate most strongly to the behavioural perspective and especially

Fig. 8. Residential Crime in West Swansea



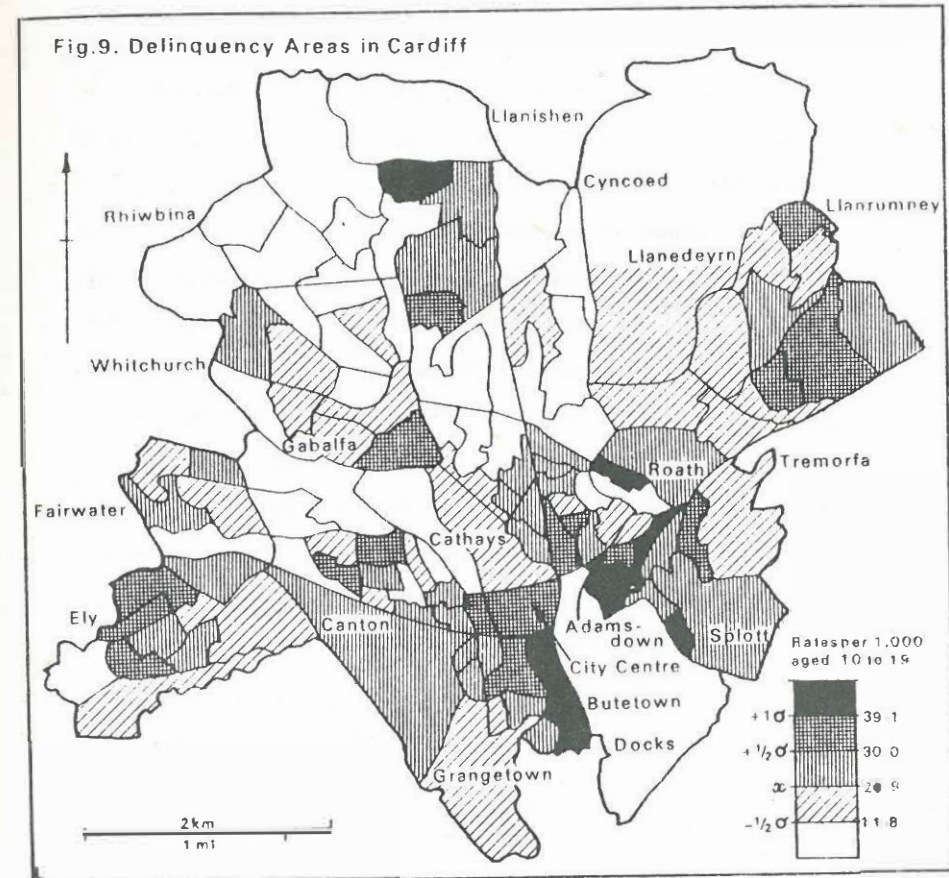
this hypothesis suggests that parts of other residential areas adjacent to a known problem area will suffer high offence rates. Although this hypothesis has not been properly tested in Swansea, it can be conjectured that the high offence rate areas have some qualifications as 'border-zone' locations; they also possess some qualities of anonymity, low observability and an absence of local social control which the hypothesis involves. At a more detailed scale, distinctions can be made within vulnerable areas. Taking the transect area, for example, one-third of all known offences occurred in properties which were either on 'corners' or else were adjacent to some kind of open space or vacant lot. In one segment of the area, this 'corner plot' characteristic typified nearly 70 per cent. of all recorded offences. Results from these investigations in part of Swansea, although still at a preliminary stage, offer some interesting clues on the ways in which a geographer might proceed from a simple pattern to examine the 'social dynamics' of space. The built environment with its design features and land-use arrangements offers useful indicators but these are of little value in themselves unless they are contexted in terms of the social values and meanings which people attach to places and also in terms of an understanding of the ways in which people use the spaces they occupy in normal patterns of behaviour. This research in Swansea will proceed to investigate these aspects using, among other things, questionnaire surveys of areas known to suffer high offence rates. How do the potential victims react to this 'vulnerability'? Are they aware of it and does it affect their daily lives? Can measures be

taken to reduce an area's vulnerability and what are the policy implications?

There are some research guidelines on these questions to which I can briefly refer. David Ley examined crime and delinquency in inner Philadelphia (1974); he was concerned with where offences occurred and with juvenile gangs in particular but also with the effects which crime had on people who lived in the district. He found that there were well-defined areas of 'stress' which affected normal day-to-day behaviour in marked ways; people made long detours to avoid these areas in their trips to school, work, and local store. The gang territories were well marked out and graffiti served as the markers of where one gang's turf ended and another's began. One approach is to investigate directly the attitudes and behaviour of the 'population-at-risk', another is to examine the offenders themselves and their images of space. Oklahoma City offers some indirect evidence by demonstrating the differing offence-behaviour of the main ethnic groups. The blacks offend in the black areas and the whites in the white areas; the only real exceptions to the rule occurring in the 'border-blocks' close enough to the 'haven' of home neighbourhood. Carter (1974) took the more direct approach of interviewing eighty-three convicted burglars in Oklahoma City, thirty-eight of whom were black, along with appropriate control groups of non-offenders. Offenders were asked how they went about committing burglaries in terms of movements and modus operandi and to nominate the areas and locations which they judged to form the most attractive targets. The direct evidence which Carter obtained confirmed that most offenders preferred not to

move far from their home areas; the 'easy marks' were those with which they had greatest familiarity, all offenders regarded middle to high-income areas as 'hard marks' with too much security and police protection. These are early results in a growing research field, they do however indicate some ways in which the local environment in which social problems occur can be investigated.

My final example which is designed to emphasise this point is again drawn from the geography of crime but begins with patterns of offenders rather than of offences. The idea that there are 'crime areas' from which many offenders are drawn has been canvassed for a considerable length of time. The tradition runs from the 'rookeries' of the nineteenth-century European cities 'where children were born and bred to the business of crime', through the 1920s studies of Chicago in the heyday of its gangland criminality to modern times. The nature and in a sense the reality of crime areas varies over both time and space; descriptions such as that of a district in Merthyr during the early nineteenth century as one 'in which thieves, prostitutes, vagrants, and the dissolute lived in conditions of squalor' (Strange, 1980) do not find close parallels in modern Western cities; but again, in modern times, the crime areas of Belfast or Detroit are scarcely comparable with those of Cardiff or Swansea. Mack (1964) has argued that crime areas have become a thing of the past as criminals became more mobile but that 'delinquency areas', involving juvenile offenders remain a feature of our larger cities.



Mapping police data for Cardiff allows such delinquency areas in which relatively high numbers of known offenders live, to be identified (Figure 9). Several points may be made about these areas and their distribution. Firstly, they are no longer confined to the inner city as was the case in Britain up to the early part of this century and continues to be typical of American cities. As public sector housing policy has redistributed population from the inner city, it has also redistributed some behavioural characteristics as well; the 'problem estate' has become a feature of British cities. Secondly, the nature of the distribution offers some further confirmation for research at this third level which focuses upon local environmental effects. If officially defined crime could be adequately 'explained' in terms of macro-structures, then much more of the inner-city and its replacement estates which share the general impact of inequality and disadvantage should be typified by high offender rates. In fact there is considerable variability within these areas which is only partly explained by other kinds of heterogeneity; there are more local or 'neighbourhood' effects to be considered.

Successive stages of this Cardiff study were designed to identify the nature of these local effects. Using several sources of offender data and also previously researched classifications of residential areas, six small areas were selected for more detailed investigation in what was effectively a controlled area-sampling procedure. Of these six areas, three were classified as delinquency areas; the six areas contained two subsets. One subset consisted of two inner-city terraced row

areas with the same general characteristics but markedly different delinquency rates; a second consisted of three local authority estates, two of which had high delinquency rates. In moving to the detailed social survey, the general hypothesis was that as objective environments - types of housing and kinds of people - had been controlled, the means of understanding different rates of delinquency might be found in the subjective environments of attitudes, values and meanings. The research findings provided support for this hypothesis and can be exemplified with reference to three of the topics which were studied. The first of these topics concerned parental attitudes towards education and actual achievement levels of their children in educational terms. There is a well-developed research literature on this theme which would suggest that lower aspirations and attainment levels are in large part reflective of less parental interest and have relevance to other forms of social behaviour including delinquency.

Table 1: Education attainment

<u>Qualifications</u>	<u>Canton</u>	<u>Adamsdown</u>
none	45.0	72.9
C.S.E.	3.3	4.2
Trade	11.7	9.3
G.C.E./O.N.D.	23.3	10.1
A level/H.N.D.	10.0	0.8
College	6.7	2.4

(all figures are percentages)

As Table 1 shows, there were in fact significantly lower educational attainment levels in the delinquency area. A second topic concerned parental attitudes towards punishment, again a well-researched topic in the literature with the general finding that some forms of punishment or sanction, are more indicative of 'good' child-parent relationships than are others. This is a more difficult hypothesis to test and all questions were couched in terms of a 14 year-old boy in order to give uniformity and also to raise the reference out of the errant child category.

Table 2: Sanctions used by parents

<u>Sanction</u>	<u>Canton</u>	<u>Adamsdown</u>
Physical punishment	17	38
Verbal	64	48
Deprive of privileges	48	12
Refer to authority	0	2

(all figures are percentages)

As Table 2 shows, there was again a significant difference between the two areas with physical punishment proving more common in the delinquency area and other forms of sanction - especially withdrawal of privileges and use of verbal sanctions - in the other. As a third topic, questions were devised to test one of the most relevant theories in criminology, that of a sub-cultural effect. Translated into the present research

framework, this would suggest that delinquency is more prevalent in some local areas because it is, in some forms, regarded as normal or as an acceptable form of behaviour. Clearly, this is a complex theory which is not normally measured in territorial or area terms, but Table 3 gives some indication of the kind of observable effect.

Table 3: Definitions of delinquency

<u>Delinquent act</u>	<u>Parents classifying as a serious matter (%)</u>	
	<u>Canton</u>	<u>Adamsdown</u>
Drinking under age	54	31
Taking money from child	56	21
Taking from school	51	26
Travelling without ticket	38	23
Damaging public property	74	67
Breaking open meters	89	92
Breaking into a shop	92	91
Attacking strangers	97	93

In the delinquency area, there is a lower level of concern with misdemeanours and this is particularly evident in the blurred area of right and wrong. In considering the findings of this piece of research it is important to remember that the surveys were of parents in the areas and not of known offenders. For the most part the hypothesis is supported and this support is in terms of differing parental attitudes towards their children.

Some useful confirmation has recently been published by Wilson who concludes:

"that parental supervision is the most important single factor in determining juvenile delinquency" (Wilson, 1980, p.230).

The thrust of this particular piece of research has been to suggest that even after all the structural and institutional factors have been taken into account, there remains some residual explanation for the incidence of delinquents in the local environments in which they reside. It is on the basis of evidence of this kind that social geographers should continue to argue the relevance of place as one of the key filters through which values are received, in which access to society's 'goods' and 'bads' are obtained, and which serves as an 'anchoring point' to which the individual may relate. The example I have used from Cardiff raises other interesting questions. How do such problem areas emerge? Why do they persist? These are questions to which answers are emerging but they cannot be included in the compass of this present discussion (see Herbert, 1982).

Geography and Urban Policy

The argument that the local environment remains relevant to the task of understanding social problems leads logically to the proposition that it is also a context in which policy-oriented research can be conducted and possible solutions prescribed. In this latter type of role, geographers have an established applied tradition which has taken them beyond the restricted roles of observers of or commentators upon societal problems. The land-use

surveys methods, for example, which were devised by geographers in the 1930s were ideally suited to the perceived tasks of planning. Land-use mapping, evaluation of land and resource capability and the application of zoning were all aimed at the creation of a better environment. The Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 formalised this principle and both geographical methods and geographers became strongly represented in the new planning profession. As the nature of geographical research changed in subsequent years, so the form of applied geography also changed. Geographers in the 1950s and 1960s, freshly armed with their new tools of quantitative analysis, turned to the task of devising models of the urban system. These were a response in particular to the traffic problems of cities and sought to link movement with land-use and to the impact of the latter upon the former. There were also environmental concerns of a more traditional kind which were given new dimensions by research into environmental hazards, such as floods and air pollution, and related issues of resource management.

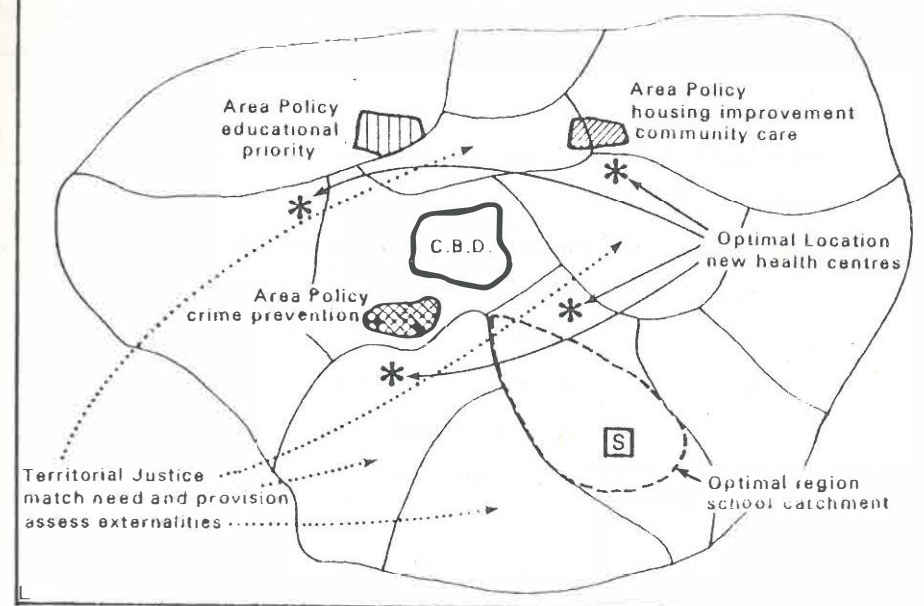
Brian Berry in his Presidential Address to the Association of American Geographers chose to place considerable emphasis upon the continuance and strengthening of the applied research tradition in Geography with its accompanying policy implications:

"Applied geography is not something to be contrasted with, and set beneath an academic geography that is somehow 'pure' we must expand our commitment to the world of practice for this world must be to the explorers of future geography what field observation was to geographical exploration in the past" (Berry, 1980, p.453).

There are many forms of applied geography, I shall comment briefly upon three types which have relevance to the kind of social problems which we have discussed. These are area policies, optimizing procedures and the concept of territorial justice (Figure 10).

Many research strands in geography, at the third level of analysis, lead to an area policy approach to the amelioration of urban problems. Problem areas which can be identified by territorial social indicators can become priority areas in terms of the allocation of resources; a policy of positive discrimination can be adopted towards them. Area policies have been widely used in the housing field with the adoption of General Improvement Areas and Housing Action Areas, and also in the field of education with the use of Educational Priority Areas. There are many other kinds of area policy and though none is specifically designed to meet the kind of delinquency or crime problems which have been discussed, the possibilities are clear. If the task is to control crime, for example, then extra police resources should be diverted to areas where specific crime rates are high; policing practice or policy can be advised. If the objective is to improve living conditions in a 'delinquency area' typified by a surfeit of adverse values and parental supervision, then other kinds of social work or counselling resources might be needed. If the objective is to reduce an area's vulnerability to a crime such as burglary then projects concerned with crime prevention and effective security may be warranted. This latter kind of area policy, 'target-hardening',

Fig.10. Geographical Research and Social Problems.
examples of policy implications



can have the effect of displacement, i.e. the offenders merely seek new targets elsewhere, but the bulk of evidence points to a clear reduction effect, many offences are committed almost casually and those involved are easily deterred. Rates of car-theft, for example, fell dramatically when steering locks were introduced. These are suggestions of ways in which area policies can be applied in relation to urban crime problems; it must be stressed that there are many other factors involved in the formation of effective policies, geographers can contribute to the debate, it is unlikely they will have all the answers.

There are problems with area policies of both a practical and a conceptual kind. Practically a major problem is the fact that once a boundary is drawn and an area is defined, it may omit many who are disadvantaged or 'at risk' and include many who are not. Barnes and Lucas (1974) produced the best-known critique in relation to Inner London educational policy. It is a critique, however, which is often not well-founded and seems to miss the point that area policies are intended to be complementary to individual policies not to replace them.

"The district as a means of identifying problems and allocating resources is held by us to be no more than a convenient framework within which closer and more detailed work has to be done with schools, school classes, individuals and families in order to realize a fully effective policy of positive discrimination" (Halsey, 1972, p.181).

Conceptually, the criticism of area policies is typified by the reports of the Community Development Projects which

suggested that 'tinkering' with the local environment misses the fact that social problems have their roots in the political economy and may in fact divert attention from the points upon which it ought to be focused; spatial reformism, it is argued, becomes a substitute for more radical change. The value of this critique has already been acknowledged and there are signs that research which may have an impact at this macro-scale will emerge. Area policies, however, and indeed all other 'reforms' are a response to the fact that whilst the debate over the need for structural change goes on, people continue to suffer deprivation and the impact of crime in localized areas of cities. For them, ameliorative reform, increased safety, a better quality of life are the immediate priorities; as is evident in Britain's inner cities now. There is admittedly a thin line between action which serves the needs of deprived people and those activities which bolster up a system in need of more radical change. Clifford Shaw devoted much of his life to the Chicago Area Projects of the 1930s, community care schemes designed to help young offenders and others who lived in crime areas. In the end however his feelings were more of frustration than they were of satisfaction:

"In an ironic way, the projects protected the property and equipment of the very concerns which were the root causes of disorganization and delinquency" (see Snodgrass, 1976, p.17).

In many ways a sad epitaph but principles of welfare and social justice have achieved much general progress since the 1930s and 'community-care' at a local scale remains a policy option worth pursuing.

Another local environmental set of 'solutions' to urban problems of a different kind emerged more directly from the spatial analysis perspective and the technical procedures which it developed. These may be summarised under the two main headings of optimal location and optimal regionalization. The former type of procedure is designed to find the best or optimal locations for facilities such as schools, hospitals or community centres, the latter to define the catchment or service area for facilities such as schools or shopping centres. There is a good record of the successful applications of these techniques, often as specified parts of policy-research. In Oklahoma City, for example, optimal location procedures were used to identify sites for new police stations; they have been widely used to locate new health facilities. Optimizing procedures, however, involve some kind of value judgement. Who defines what is best? Which criteria are the most relevant? Most models rest heavily upon efficiency and may neglect equity, though they are capable of being re-designed to redress this kind of imbalance.

A growing concern with equity and the general theme of social justice has been another influential point of reference for geographers concerned with policies to meet urban problems. The concept of spatial or territorial justice, developed from the studies of social needs and resources associated with Bleddyn Davies (1968), has provided one organizing principle for this research. The initial task is to identify the local levels of need, the subsequent is to measure the effectiveness of provision;

to the extent that a mismatch occurs, territorial injustice can be said to exist. A related perspective is David Smith's (1977) attempt to reduce human geography to the study of 'who gets what, where and how' - the geography of welfare.

Some Conclusions

I have spent some time in identifying some of the ways in which geographical research maintains and develops its applied tradition and forms its contribution towards the understanding and solution of social problems in cities. My additional concern however has been with the need to put the academic foundations of the discipline in order. The integrating framework around which I have based much of the discussion is intended as one contribution towards this end. It serves as a statement on the essential unity of human geographical study which both asserts the continuing validity of its particularist roles and also identifies ways in which more generalist perspectives could develop. Geographers have for some time been aware of flaws in two of their more traditional premises. The first of these necessitates that we acknowledge that natural environment is an imperfect source of explanation for human behaviour, the second that space has limited independent meaning. The most general research thrust of the past decade has been one which seeks to modify these premises and to relate them more rigorously to the social, economic and political contexts in which they belong. My much admired former teacher, John Oliver, in his Inaugural lecture as a Professor of Geography in 1967, concluded



with the phrase 'nor is Geography other than an environmental science'. In some ways I would not dissent from his view but for some purposes it may be too narrow a perspective to achieve proper understanding of the concepts and problems we seek to study. We need to consider what we mean by environment and also to accept that what we see in environment often has its origins elsewhere. In acknowledging the need for breadth as well as depth, for synthesis as well as specialism, human geography in the 1980s will continue to be an attractive, practical and soundly based field of study, in truth, a 'many splendoured thing'.

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