

ABSTRACT

The study of crime and place has long emphasised the relationship between the physical environment and crime. Accordingly, environmental and place-based approaches have become an increasingly common component of crime prevention. One setting of particular interest is the residential area, where people live, interact, and shape their everyday lives. The perceived and actual safety of residential environments may influence quality of life, trust, and community stability. Creating safe residential environments is therefore an important objective. It is within this context that the present research is situated.

The aim of this dissertation is to contribute to the empirical understanding of environmental and place-based crime prevention in residential settings. To achieve this, the dissertation comprises four complementary studies. Study I presents a systematic review and meta-analysis of environmental interventions in residential areas, synthesising existing evidence on their effectiveness. The results demonstrate heterogeneous intervention effects in residential areas. More specifically, the synthesised results indicated statistically significant reductions in property-related crime, whereas effects on violence-related crime were not statistically significant on average. Studies II and III apply staggered difference-in-differences designs to address-level panel data to evaluate indoor (basements and attics) and outdoor environmental interventions in a multifamily housing context. While Study II focuses on basement and attic theft, Study III evaluates the potential impact on outdoor crime. Both studies found declining crime trends over time but could not attribute the decline to the interventions. Study IV combines multilevel modelling and a synthetic control method to assess the broader impact on crime of a municipal public housing-led crime prevention strategy in designated residential areas. Similar to Studies II and III, the results showed an overall decline in crime outcomes but could not conclude that the decline was linked to the strategy.

Overall, the findings highlight the complexity of environmental and place-based crime prevention, particularly when evaluating interventions implemented as part of a broader residential development strategy. The results support two possible interpretations: either the interventions did not produce measurable effects on recorded crime, or any effects remained difficult to detect within the available data and evaluation designs. Together, the studies suggest that evaluating environmental and place-based crime prevention should consider both intervention outcomes, implementation contexts, and the conditions under which preventive measures are expected to operate.