

Chapter One

Defensible Space: An Introduction

in the worst estates...you're confronted by concrete slabs dropped from on high, brutal high-rise towers and dark alleyways that are a gift to criminals and drug dealers. The police often talk about the importance of designing out crime, but these estates actually designed it in. (British ex-Prime Minister, David Cameron, *The Sunday Times*, 2016)¹

Social scientific knowledge linking environment and behavior precipitated the British shift away from public housing and was used to promote several types of privatization. (Cupers 2016: 183)

'Defensible space' is a highly contested concept and approach to designing out crime, frequently applied to public housing estates in the United Kingdom, North America, Europe and beyond. It is both an urban idea and a policy concept, arguably the most influential concept in built environment crime prevention to date. In this book we use 'defensible space' as a vehicle to explore how movement/mobility/mobilisation (and we discuss how these three are related but different later in this chapter) changes ideas/concepts. In exploring the movement/mobility/mobilisation of defensible space from the United States to the United Kingdom and into English housing policy *and* practice² we extend recent work in geography, and indeed urban studies and urban planning more widely, on policy mobilities in a number of critical ways.

The idea of defensible space was introduced to the United Kingdom through a book by North American architect/planner Oscar Newman and a 1974 BBC Horizon television programme on his ideas. Our book traces in detail the

dispersal/embedding of the concept of ‘defensible space’ in England from the 1980s onwards from the point where geographer Alice Coleman reintroduced and popularised it in the English context. For this we revisit Coleman’s critique of modernist council high-rises in England in her 1985 book *Utopia on Trial*, in which she outlines her conceptual (which she hoped to operationalise) account of defensible space. We look in detail at her research and the sometimes quite vicious criticisms of it from other geographers, architects and planners. We use in-depth interviews and oral histories with Coleman herself, and other housing researchers and practitioners from the time, to piece together the story of how this geographer took Prince Charles on a field trip to look at the problem of defensible space on a public housing estate in London, and how she managed to get a one-to-one meeting with Margaret Thatcher, persuading the then Prime Minister to give her £50 million to pilot her ideas for retrofitting council estates with defensible space principles.

We discuss the pilot projects themselves, moving on from Coleman’s conceptual treatise to an operational account of defensible space as demonstrated through her Design Improvement Controlled Experiment (DICE), and how this influenced the wider context of English housing policy and practice at the time. The book explores the multiple ways the concept of defensible space was interpreted and implemented, as it circulated from national to local level and within particular English, especially London, housing estates; illustrating how the transfer mechanisms worked at both a policy and practitioner level. Despite being a concept whose principles continue to underpin design guidance (such as Secured by Design [SBD]), defensible space failed to coalesce into a single formal policy, remaining a cluster of associated disputed elements. How these conceptual elements aided or hindered transfer and take-up of the concept is noted by tracking routes to acceptance, the roles of formal transfer mechanisms, informal information sharing by transfer agents traversing networks, or practitioners’ local contextualisation of generic guidance. Our research demonstrates the ongoing resilience and acceptance of ‘defensible space’ from the 1970s into the 2000s, despite multiple criticisms of architectural/environmental determinism, of being unproven scientifically, and the vague and inchoate nature of the concept. More recently, though, there is evidence that defensible space is beginning to be erased, and expunged, from planning and urban regeneration policy. Nevertheless, we argue for greater trust in practitioner experience and on the basis of its continued usage, that defensible space is positively ambiguous, it has neither been proven nor disproven, and as such is a middle-range theory: ‘between the minor hypotheses of day to day research and unified theory’ (Merton 1967: 39).

Following Flyvbjerg (2001) we show how the simplified dualisms of theory in academia are helpful for polemic thinking and writing but they ‘inhibit understanding by implying a certain neatness that is rarely found in real life’ (p. 49).

Flyvbjerg notes that policy makers get around this messiness by pragmatically asking: ‘will this solution work here?’ Leaping to a solution is different from understanding a theory, and McCann (2008) is disappointed by the ‘paucity of detailed critical geography knowledge of how policy making works’ (p. 4). Our book provides much needed insight into this, and in doing so expels some of the myths that good social science will follow a straightforward route into policy. We develop Jacobs and Lees’ (2013) earlier account of defensible space on the move based on three further insights: a) that policy does not move as an homogeneous, fully formed piece, but as disaggregated elements (of pre-policy, sub-policy epistemes or practices); b) these fragments of knowledge are translated into policy only in context (in situ); c) that the relationship between academic research and practice is not a simple linear progression of policy appropriating and utilising university created research. The interplay between academic knowledge and policy we describe is complex, contingent and often controversial.

Peck and Theodore (2010a) recognise that policy transfer is often disrupted by the messy realities of policy making at the ground level, yet little reference is made in the existing policy mobilities literature to the messy realities of practice. Although recent reviews, like those discussed later in this chapter, provide a very useful overview of (conceptual) evolution in the field of policy transfer/mobilities, ‘they do not provide an overall explanation of policy transfer processes and outcomes’ (Minkman et al. 2018: 224). This book fills that gap by looking at how defensible space was put into practice in England, addressing McGuirk’s (2016: 94) request for research on ‘the “how” questions of practice’. Much of the policy mobilities literature also only follows one or two mechanisms of transfer; in this book we follow a dozen or so mechanisms, showing a far messier and more interconnected reality than the literature suggests. In doing so we elaborate on the challenges of tracing power and the role evidence plays within the policy making process. This has lessons for the utilitarian turn in social research that happened in the 1990s. We argue that to some degree it does not matter if defensible space is a fundamentally poor idea/concept (which we discuss in terms of both its strengths and weaknesses); what is more important is its mis/match with policy contexts or success/failure due to the personalities involved. That defensible space has moved into the mainstream, without definitive proof or consistent government support, is due in no small part to Coleman’s geographical work. Despite the uncertainty surrounding it, defensible space continues to be promoted as a powerful and influential way of salvaging so called ‘sink’ estates, as the former Prime Minister David Cameron, like other Prime Ministers before him, called them. The ideology of contemporary estate demolition in the United Kingdom has drawn heavily on the US Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development’s HOPE VI programme of public housing demolition and renewal which itself draws on defensible space principles to rectify the problems of past failed projects (see Popkin et al. 2004).

In the round, this book makes an important conceptual contribution to policy mobilities thinking, but also to policy and practice, explaining practitioners' handling of complex spatial concepts, through the practical application of an idea that is, as we show, a middle-range theory. We also use a primary transfer agent (a geographer – Alice Coleman) and a concept (defensible space) to reflect on the role and contribution of British geography in English housing/planning policy. Our conceptual framework looks at positionality, context, multiple perspectives, ambiguity and mutability. The irony being that Coleman's positivist, non-negotiable view would totally reject this interpretation as too complex. Although Coleman is the primary transfer agent, we also discuss attendant ones, including one influential individual who acts as a foil to Coleman's views. Nonetheless, Coleman is a useful prompt through which to explore the conflated cluster of sometimes contradictory concepts that are gathered together under the umbrella of defensible space. As an unusual geographer and scholar, known not only for her eclecticism – in Maddrell's (2009) view 'a polymath generalist' – but also for her outspoken views and right wing politics, it is remarkable the extent to which her radical view was applied consistently and rigorously. Like herself, Coleman's take on defensible space was uncompromising, rather than fluid and negotiated. Coleman's values were outliers in the wider discipline of geography at the time (and remain so today), yet they impacted the canon of planning and urban design from another perspective, and continue to do so in recent debates over the demolition and refurbishment of council estates in the United Kingdom.

The Origins of Defensible Space

At its simplest, defensible space can be defined as 'space over which the occupiers of adjacent buildings can exercise effective supervision and control' (Cowan 2005: 102). Given it is about control over space it is an inherently geographical concept. The notion of defensible space demonstrates the interrelationship between the physical design of spaces, social interaction and crime. Yet the concept of defensible space is contradictory, tentative and ill defined. Indeed, the concept has proved ambiguous and malleable enough to support diverse interdisciplinary interpretations; it is a ubiquitous, familiar idea, not only to built environment professionals but also to academic geographers, criminologists, architects, and so on. Defensible space remains a 'common-sense concept' recognised even by the general public in its most basic form.

Architect-planner Oscar Newman (1935–2004) is often said to have coined the term 'defensible space', although it was first used by the sociologist William Yancey. In 1972 Newman published *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention through Urban Design*, based on his research on New York City public housing. He later refined his thesis in his, 1976 *Design Guidelines for Creating Defensible Space*. But

the emergence of the notion of defensible space has a longer history and is far richer and more complex than Newman's method of (re)designing spaces to inhibit criminal activity. Urbanist Jane Jacobs (1961) had famously talked about the importance of 'eyes on the street' sometime before, and we can trace the origins of the concept under different names within Lewis Mumford's (1938) *The Culture of Cities*, or in William Whyte (1956) and Kevin Lynch's (1960) observations. Concepts rarely, if ever, have a singular origin and defensible space is no different. The basis of defensible space emerges from notions of social interaction and encounter in modern city streets. Mumford, who at one level was very confident about the link between civility and the city, was also concerned that the emergence of the 'megalopolis' was leading to 'anonymity' and 'impersonality', which he saw as 'positive encouragement to asocial or anti-social actions' (Mumford 1938: 266; see also Fyfe et al. 2006). The idea of defensible space also builds on the historical work of Louis Wirth and George Simmel and other urban sociologists exploring the influence of the form and character of the modern city (see Lees 2004), or the interconnectedness of common space on the experiences of its inhabitants. Whyte's (1956) study of urban public spaces demonstrated the complex positioning of privately owned public spaces; he studied the behaviour of people within small New York places, and started to catalogue the successful and unsuccessful elements of such spaces. His observations on 'people moving' and 'people watching' in plazas, fed through to Jacobs' (1961) descriptions of 'ballet on the street' and 'eyes on the street'.

Most commentators agree that defensible space is not solely about crime, nor is it limited to the design of spaces and fences, the physical location of windows, or the layout of streets and neighbourhoods. Obviously spatial perspectives on the relationship between crime and housing have existed since Booth's nineteenth century maps of poverty and social class in London, Beames' studies of British rookeries or Burgess' pre-First World War concentric zone model of Chicago. These neighbourhood analyses established purely spatial patterns of crime, lacking behavioural differentiation. Basic, area-based approaches evolved into the ecological analysis of the impact of poor housing, poverty and transient populations during the 1950s. These more nuanced methods maintained that a particular behavioural setting had the power to elicit similar responses from diverse occupants; yet remained at an aggregate inter-urban scale of investigation. Crucially, by relating image, meaning and legibility to perceptions of place, Lynch (1960) transformed how designers and social scientists alike perceived urban form. Jones and Evans (2008: 115) point out that 'the anti-modernist stance' of defensible space ideas emerged from Lynch's (1960) notion of legibility, and his criticism of urban spaces where movement and function was not clear. Later, Lynch's (1981) articulation of notions around spatial rights – 'right of presence', 'use and action', 'appropriation' and 'modification' (p. 205) – introduced designers to concepts integral to ownership and control of spaces, fostering freedom to engage with others or being free to retreat from threat.

Jacobs articulated a planning view of defensible space as it is experienced on city streets. In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) her combination of social science and planning theories presented a positive vision of urban living, where active street life and numerous social interactions were identified as indicators of successful, well-designed places. She noted that more crimes occurred in the often-deserted public spaces found in (modernist) public-housing projects, than in traditional, crowded streets. Poyner (1983), amongst others, identified Jacobs' influence on Newman's idea of defensible space; her other critical legacy was a taxonomy of space that shaped social interaction. Jacobs (1961) succinct definition of the three attributes of safe spaces included a plea for clear delineation of public from private space:

First there must be a clear demarcation between what is public space and what is private space. Public and private spaces cannot ooze into each other as they do typically in suburban settings or in projects.

Second, there must be eyes on the street: eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street. The buildings on a street equipped to handle strangers and to ensure the safety of both residents and strangers must be orientated to the street.

And third, the sidewalk must have users on it fairly continuously both to add to the number of effective eyes on the street and to induce people in buildings along the street to watch the sidewalks in sufficient numbers. (Jacobs 1961: 35)

Newman's version of defensible space (outlined in the section 'Oscar Newman's Defensible Space') extended Jacobs' two-part definition of public and private space into four parts: private, semi-private, public and semi-public space.³ Inevitably, defensive architecture for Jacobs, but especially Newman, was connected to post-Watergate and Vietnam progressive US ideals for personal, social and economic liberation; and the city was an emancipatory site for these beliefs. As Newman (1972: 203) said: 'For our low-income population, security in their residential environment – security from the natural elements, from criminals and from authority – is the first essential step to liberation'. At that moment in time, in the early 1970s, there was a concern for the poor, welfarism and community commons; progressive design was linked to social emancipation. One political contraction was the rapid move from emancipatory concern into a strategy of control under the revanchist city and the shifting political climate in US cities like New York (see Smith 1996, on zero tolerance and the revanchist city).

Similarly, in the early 1970s criminological research moved from mapping the location of offenders or offences to proposing models of the local environment as a framework for individual behaviour. Yancey (1971) suggested a hyper-local explanation for residents' actions. His influential paper on the Pruitt-Igoe public-housing project in St Louis, Missouri (which had become infamous internationally for its crime, poverty and racial segregation) critiqued the project's design,

particularly its lack of semi-public space which housing management professionals considered to be unnecessary ‘wasted space’ (Yancey 1971: 11). But far from being wasteful, Yancey argued that lacking this shared space resulted in residents retreating into private internal spaces. Yancey termed these semi-private areas ‘defensible space’ (1971: 17) using the term several years before Newman. He found that residents easily recognised the difference between private apartment space and public shared amenities. Similar to residents socialising on their front steps (or stoops) in the North End of Boston, as described by Jacobs (1961), Yancey (1971) noticed that the semi-public space outside family homes ‘provides the ecological basis around which informal networks of friends and relatives may develop’ (p. 17). These spatial relationships shaped the social networks of residents, with the constrained physical design limiting occupants’ interactions beyond the confines of their individual homes. The design of our surroundings then came to be seen as a fundamental method of demarcating private territory physically or symbolically (Ley 1977; Lynch 1960; Sennett 1986).

More recently, research into the geography of the fear of crime describes a subtle and complex sequence of interactions that link the design of the physical environment to individuals’ perceived potential for crime, and hence to an individual’s sense of wellbeing (Smith 1986a, 1987, 2003). Rudlin (2015), for example, considering the proliferation of gates onto courtyards and walls forming inward-facing gated communities, points out that the creation of defensible urban forms should not only be able to make residents feel safer, but contribute to making the surrounding city safer. He is concerned that gates and barriers result in occupants ‘only mixing with like people, losing their ability to live within a diverse society and increasing their level of fear, thus fuelling a vicious circle in which they feel the need for more protection and control’ (Rudlin 2015: 37–39). Blandy (2007: 47) is especially critical:

gated communities are not an effective response to current issues of crime and disorder in terms of physical security and collective efficacy; nor do they assist in regenerating deprived areas, or tackling problems of disorder on large social rented estates. Indeed, any further growth in the collective fortification of affluent homes and retro-gating of social rented estates is likely to contribute to increased social divisiveness.

So – too few people on the street, not enough movement or activity and public space, were seen as pathological. Modernist planning and social housing projects that lacked activity engendered failed public space, their segregation from active street networks explaining their abnormality – all prompting calls for ‘defensible space’.

Oscar Newman’s Defensible Space

Newman’s own career in housing research, like Yancey, also started in St Louis where he taught architecture and city planning at Washington University from 1965.

He wrote about watching the decline of Pruitt-Igoe, triggering his recognition of Yancey's novel concept and prompting his development of the idea of defensible space (Newman 1995). Newman conceptualised defensible space as a combination of spatial and social mechanisms, with the capacity to create physical zones of territorial influence, to provide natural surveillance opportunities for residents and to positively affect the (often negative) perception of a public housing scheme's distinctiveness and resultant social or economic stigma (see Figure 1.1). Newman refined this definition in his *Design Guidelines for Creating Defensible Space* as:

a residential environment whose physical characteristics—building layout and site plan—function to allow inhabitants themselves to become key agents in ensuring their security. (Newman 1976: 4)

Newman's own research was undertaken in New York City where he studied two housing projects, drawing on New York Housing Authority Police crime statistics, as well as his own data generated through resident interviews and building analysis. One housing project with high-rise blocks, Van Dyke, had a 50% higher crime rate than the other, Brownsville, which consisted of mid-rise walk-ups (see Figure 1.2). Finding higher crime rates in the lifts, stairways and landings of the high-rise apartment buildings, Newman argued that the Van Dyke residents felt no personal responsibility for the communal areas shared by many occupants. Good design and certain physical characteristics, he argued, allowed Brownsville residents to monitor and occupy semi-private spaces, ensuring their security. Although intended as practical, applied research, Newman's assertions about verifiable scientific methods enhanced the reputation of his work (he maintained the study compared identical communities, with constant

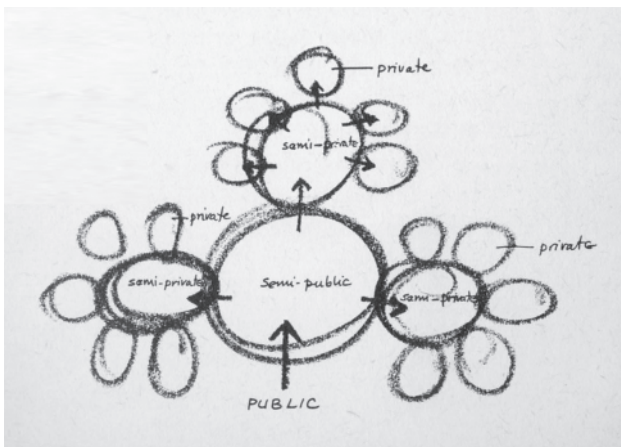


Figure 1.1 Newman's typology of space. (Permission: Kopper Newman)

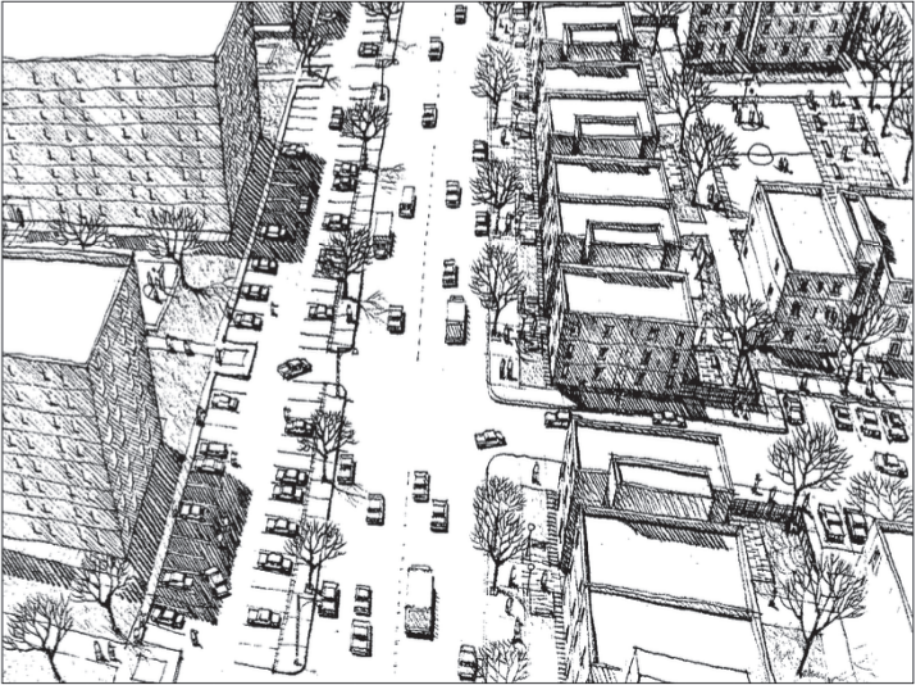


Figure 1.2 Newman's sketch of Van Dyke (L) and Brownsville (R), New York City. (Permission: Kopper Newman)

social characteristics, only the building forms varied). However, these positivist methodological assertions legitimised later scientifically based criticisms of Newman's research.

Newman's concept of defensible space as derived from these studies elaborated on Jacobs' attributes of safe public spaces. Safe spaces required: 'visibility to witnesses, community spirit and being prepared to guard neutral territory, a stream of potential witnesses and demarcation of private territory physically and symbolically' (Mawby 1977: 171). The 'dimensions' that underpinned Newman's defensible space concept were:

- the capacity of the physical environment to create physical zones of territorial influence,
- the capacity of physical design to provide surveillance opportunities for residents and their agents,
- the capacity of physical design to influence the perception of a project's uniqueness, isolation and stigma, and
- the influence of geographical juxtaposition with 'safe zones' on the security of adjacent areas (Newman 1972: 50).

Territoriality can be interpreted very broadly from the concept of place attachment or social commitment to location, to animal-like defending of ‘turf’, through to symbolic or physical acts. Similarly, territoriality can be applied at a range of scales, relating to specific sites or wider neighbourhoods. The positive and negative attributes of territoriality have been explored across the social science disciplines; a contradictory interpretation of territoriality arises from interconnected mechanisms that establish control over space. This control can be communicated in a multitude of ways: physical (a person’s presence reducing and inhibiting criminal activity or a physical barrier such as fences or walls); symbolic (plants and/or other symbolising ownership of the space); visual (graffiti tags); or physiological (encouraging a sense of safety through well-lit, well-looked-after places). Control mechanisms applied to the same space that communicates possession can result in alternative readings from a range of users. To Newman, territoriality consisted of several interconnected effects: it was a process of establishing a sense of ownership for legitimate users of the space, which in turn provided a clear definition of areas controlled and influenced by inhabitants, and was encouraged through familiarity with neighbours or passers-by.

Territoriality is often characterised as ‘the absence of anonymity’ for legitimate inhabitants. Ley (1974a), for example, emphasised opportunities for casual contact, leading to joint ownership of space and to the exclusion of non-inhabitants. For Newman, territoriality was directed at strangers by controlling their access and movement through a housing estate or a neighbourhood. Yet, territoriality might influence factors that jeopardise as well as improve security. The number or frequency of passers-by has contradictory interpretations, providing a spectrum of explanations; many strangers might provide greater anonymity for criminals, but the same number of familiar passers-by might act as potential witnesses or provide positive opportunities for social interaction.

Surveillance is especially emphasised in the concept of defensible space, which favours the use of natural or informal surveillance (windows overlooking public spaces, or active street frontages) over mechanical (CCTV) or formal forms of supervision (security guards). Natural surveillance can increase a sense of security, which will encourage the greater use of a space and positively reinforce ownership. However, even the apparently simple tactic of natural surveillance can have contradictory consequences on design decisions – ground floor windows, which may improve visibility over adjacent spaces, might also advertise opportunities for burglary.

Image is the least well-defined, but in some ways the most tangible of Newman’s dimensions; he includes the use of distinctive built forms, materials, finishes or aesthetics, which are identified as having associations with a particular social class or lifestyle. Image and its resultant associations suffuse housing design from the urban scale to the detail, from the size and scale of the blocks themselves to the selection of particularly institutional or utilitarian materials. Image is, of course, affected by the physical condition of the buildings and spaces; by signs of

decay, neglect or poor maintenance. The dominance of materials in the reading of spaces is widespread: cracked fluorescent lights cruelly exposing the flaws in cold damp concrete ceilings, speak of tight budgets, lack of care and neglected maintenance; the aesthetic of 'cheap'n'drab' has become synonymous with public housing stigmatised by its very appearance and design. Such images became encapsulated in the broken-windows theory discussed later.

Milieu is the positive influence of activities perceived as safe (such as police stations or well-used streets) adjacent to areas suffering from crime. Greater levels of activity contribute to a positive milieu through a potentially benevolent increase in passers-by. It encompasses the effects of neighbourhood context and reputation, and identifies urban design decisions for the location of amenities as an explanation for spatial concentrations of crime or the presence of unpopular areas. Certain activities or amenities (shops, clubs, bars or even neglected recreational areas) act as attractors for crime. Newman (1972: 108–109) explained that 'certain sections and arteries of a city have come to be recognized as being safe – by the nature of the activities located there; by the quality of formal patrolling; by the number of users and extent of their felt responsibility; and by the responsibility assumed by employees of bordering institutions and establishments'. Here, Newman (1980) touched on the Chicago School ideas of Burgess, Shaw and McKay of crime hot spots through mapping high- and low-risk neighbourhoods. He ascribed a simplistic juxtaposition of high crime and low crime areas and proposed pepper-potting potentially difficult residents within quiet well-behaved neighbourhoods to reduce crime levels. To test his hypothesis, Newman analysed and redesigned Five Oaks in Dayton, Ohio, into mini-neighbourhoods by removing through traffic, changing the character of streets to enable children's play, increase neighbours' interactions and recognition of cars, and altering the layout so potential criminals had to enter and exit one way. Newman countered complaints that these changes had displaced crime by arguing that positive milieu, that is the residents of Five Oaks taking control of their streets, extended out into the bordering communities as well. Nevertheless, milieu is an ambiguous mechanism relating to spatial layout and land-use patterns that provides a context for routine⁴ activities (Reynald and Elffers 2009). Habraken's (1998) tripartite ordering of the physical, territorial and cultural readings of spaces into a 'common fabric' reminds us of the interrelated nature of these characteristics. It is the interaction of image, milieu and natural surveillance, which strengthens or weakens territoriality or pride in a place.

Before turning to criticisms of Newman's defensible space theory, the racialised contexts of Newman's writings should be noted. Notoriously Pruitt-Igoue, Newman's trigger for developing his theory of defensible space, was a dumping ground for over 10,000 low-income African Americans. It is important to situate defensible space in relation to the way that discourses of crime in the United States were (and continue to be) profoundly racialised. Racial inequalities had prompted race riots from the late 1960s in cities like New York, Los Angeles,

Newark and Detroit, leading to federal concerns about crimes against property and the pathological construction of black (male) (inner-city) bodies as criminal and dangerous (see Smith 1996). The photographs in the federal reports commissioned at the time, according to Knoblauch⁵ ‘put a face to the so-called pathology of the “personality factory” of black families in the “slums”, and ‘displaced concern with structural economic issues onto residents themselves’. Newman saw this de facto segregation as negative, and in the face of waning political support in federal programmes to address such issues he saw defensible space as a physical solution, but he also stridently criticised welfare dependence. As Kinder (2016: ch. 3) points out:

Newman’s focus on physical design and social exclusions was problematic. His work undertheorized criminality and inequality. He explicitly discouraged city planners and policy makers from using social, economic, and welfare planning to revitalize cities, create jobs, or redistribute income.

The idea that Pruitt-Igoe’s design, and not structural inequality and racism, was to blame took hold, and Newman’s ideas about territoriality and defensible space became mainstream in assumptions about public housing redesign in the United States. Indeed, they heavily influenced The US Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) HOPE VI program of demolition and renewal of public-housing projects across the United States (see Vale 2013).

Criticisms and Endorsements from Different Disciplines

Newman’s concept of ‘defensible space’ was mobilised from the United States to the United Kingdom (see Chapter 2) at the same time as vociferous cross-disciplinary critique of it emerged. Critics implied that Newman had manipulatively selected which housing projects to examine (Bottoms 1974; Hillier 1973; Mawby 1977; Merry 1981); for while he mentioned several positive and negative examples of neighbourhoods and projects, he only talked about a single pair of housing projects (Van Dyke and Brownsville) in any detail. Critics argued he failed to demonstrate the comparability of these two projects to other examples; of course, finding truly ‘paired’ public housing projects to compare may be impossible but the differences that Newman ignored were ones that influenced his arguments greatly. For example, Brownsville was completed over a decade earlier than Van Dyke, so it was perhaps further advanced along a cycle of popularity or decay (Bottoms 1974). Others pointed to Newman’s shallow ethnographic summary of resident interviews as methodologically weak (e.g. Ley 1974a). In addition, when characterising the projects as having similar resident populations in terms of income, race and family size, Newman ignored the less favourable reputation of one project that may have discouraged better-off residents; as such he was

accused of omitting potentially conflicting or explanatory data on education or social class (Hillier 1973; Mawby 1977).

Researchers also identified statistical flaws in Newman's data analysis, questioning both the selective use and underplaying of statistics (Bottoms 1974; Ley 1974a; Mawby 1977). Newman failed to separate out strength of correlation or causation for his proposed linkages between crime levels and built form. Newman (see also Coleman in Chapter 2) concentrated on measuring easily quantifiable effects (Moran and Dolphin 1986), relying on statistical analysis of numerical data (Coleman 1985a; Newman 1972). Subsequent defensible space research applied more rigorous and in-depth methods, for example, Merry's (1981) detailed ethnographical victimisation studies that significantly improved on Newman's anecdotal stories, or Cozens et al.'s (2001a) exploration of participants' perceptions. Newman's dimensions of defensible space relied on concepts drawn from across spatial and social fields. His book stated that his ambition was to draw together and incorporate material into an interdisciplinary perspective:

We have chosen to direct this work at a rather wide readership. It was initially intended primarily for housing developers, architects, city planners and police. But as the scope of the work grew and the significance of our findings became more apparent, it was felt that the manuscript should be reworked so as to make it more universally available. (Newman 1972: xiii)

His references were grouped into sections by discipline: environmental form, social policy, human territoriality, urban crime, housing and the sociology of the family. Reviews of *Defensible Space* showed that his concept provoked a strong response from an array of professions. Although each discipline/sector commended the overall idea, they tended to criticise it, perhaps not surprisingly, by emphasising the importance of, and seeking to protect/project, their own disciplines. The urban sociologist Mark Baldassare (1975) criticised Newman's research as 'the kind of sociologizing that is being done by other disciplines' (p. 435). Baldassare (1975) considered *Defensible Space* a methodologically sound study, however, he found Newman's interpretation of his findings 'sociologically naïve, or at least unproven' (Baldassare 1975: 435); particularly Newman's assertions that a collective identity would emerge to take responsibility for residential spaces. Finding Newman's architectural evaluation shallow, the urbanist Rayner Banham (1973) favoured the criminological over the urban design analysis: 'the non-architectural part is probably the more fruitful and meaningful of the two' (Banham 1973: 155). Planner John Friedmann (1973) emphasised the spatial limitations of Newman's analysis, arguing the publication was more about people's behaviour than spatial design. Friedmann's review unjustifiably asserted society's inherent impulses to crime and violence, and taking an unenthusiastic attitude to evidence gathering, asked: 'Why do we need costly scientific studies

to prove to us what should be self-evident?' (Friedmann 1973: 49). Geographers and other planners said that defensible space was more likely to displace crime rather than eliminate it, questioning whether it could provide sustained and long-lasting improvements (Ley 1974a; Schneider and Kitchen 2002). Responding to this, the main governmental proponents of defensible space in the United States, HUD, argued that shifting crime away from areas of particular vulnerability made policing an easier task and that waves of defensible space strategies should be applied across a city, neighbourhood by neighbourhood (Cisneros 1996).

From the beginning, defensible space as a concept was disparaged for its negative framing of architectural form by the design professions, its views of human interaction by sociologists, its insensitivity to neighbourhood level social forces by urban geographers, and for its crude reading of crime by criminologists, such as concentrating on the analysis of offence rates independently of offender rates (Bottoms 1974). Nonetheless even Newman's most vocal critics agreed he was addressing 'a serious social problem' (Ley 1974a: 157), but that his crude interpretation ran 'a serious risk of debasing the importance of that theme' (Bottoms 1974: 206). Despite Ley's concerns that the significance of the idea was undermined by the poor quality of Newman's research, his review of Newman's book in the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* recommended the exploration of defensible space as 'an intriguing and socially responsible task for the geographer' (Ley 1974a: 158)!

The term defensible space is now commonly used by a variety of disciplines. It has been subject to much cross-disciplinary scrutiny, not only from criminologists (Cozens et al. 2005; Reynolds and Elffers 2009; Taylor 1973), but also urban sociologists (Halpern 1995; Sampson et al. 1997; Wilson 1978a, 1978b, 1980, 1981a, 1981b), geographers of crime/criminal cartographers (Davidson 1981; Herbert 1982); social geographers exploring the geography of crime (Smith 1986a, 1986b); and urban designers/architects (Hillier 1973, 1986a, 1986b; Poyner 1983). Yet even within the broad topic of design and crime, Ekblom (2011) is careful to separate defensible space as a subset of crime prevention, spawning its own sub-fields such as environmental criminology. He defines defence of a space, building, object or person as both a 'preparatory' and an 'operational' task, with the role of defence and defender as further subsets. For a space to be defensible, it requires suitable physical properties, but defence equally has social dimensions, depending on the motivations, behaviour and capacity of the defender and offender. As this careful taxonomy suggests, criminologists' dissection of the mechanisms of defending spaces is extensive and thorough. Cozens et al. (2001a, 2001b) identified a hierarchy of four sequential levels: defensible space, undefended space, offensible space and indefensible space. A defensible space encourages a strong ownership response, yet undefended space (Merry 1981) may have similar characteristics (well surveyed, overlooked and inhabited) but for some reason is not actively defended. Offensible space (Atlas 1991) is still defended, but by 'others' in an anti-social way to facilitate criminal gang

activity or drug dealing. Finally, indefensible space (Cozens et al. 2001a, 2001b) is where all social control mechanisms have broken down to such an extent that any design features are ineffective.

An alternative, and well-established, extension of the concept was into Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).⁶ Ekblom (2011) traces the genealogy of the CPTED schools (e.g. Jacobs 1961; Jeffrey 1971; Newman 1972; Wilson and Kelling 1982) seeing its evolution as an accretion of ideas rather than progress towards a synthesised whole.

CPTED has seven components: territoriality, surveillance, image and management/maintenance, defensible space (as a distinct component from the former three), as well as target hardening, access control and activity support. These core concepts overlap, for example, territory is defended by controlling access to it, or surveillance influences opportunities for defence. These and other properties of the space (e.g. legibility, enclosure, porosity of boundaries) interconnect with design features to produce good or bad outcomes. So an assemblage of an isolated alley in combination with an overlooking window and a well-placed streetlight can mitigate criminal behaviour. Despite lacking clear evidence of causality, CPTED is attractively self-evident, with several decades of research finding design factors do work – just that these are *less* effective than other factors – recognising there may be other benefits from design interventions.

The concept of defensible space became quickly embedded in geography, for example, geographer David Herbert's (1982: 46) tripartite definition of defensible space, which summarised the range of its effects:

as a model for residential environments which inhibit crime by creating the physical expression of a social fabric that defends itself; as a surrogate term for the range of mechanisms – real and symbolic barriers, strongly defined areas of influence and improved opportunities for surveillance – that combine to bring an environment under the control of its residents; and as a living environment which can be employed by its inhabitants for the enhancement of their own lives, while providing security for their neighbours, families and friends.

In fact, Herbert's definition neatly summarizes the dichotomy of disciplinary positions on defensible space: that of criminology (with its prime objective of inhibiting crime), and of planning/urban design (which aligns itself with the final, more positive, quality-of-life enhancing aims).

Geographers' interpretations of defensible space combined cartographical criminology (the spatial distribution of crime) with concepts from social psychology, particularly fear of crime. In *The Geography of Crime*, Herbert (1982) combined these by attempting to classify vulnerable urban environments and whether their occupants could identify their weaknesses. He found that particular design features of a dwelling did increase the likelihood of burglary,

yet neighbourhood crime data revealed stronger patterns of social forces or inequality. Herbert's careful critique of defensible space concluded that the uncertainty around how it worked mattered little: 'if applications of defensible space ideas and associated social policies can improve the quality of life in city neighbourhoods and increase feelings of wellbeing, then these are in themselves ample justifications for such policies' (Herbert 1982: 110).

Various definitions of defensible space evolved from different disciplines – already within a critical context where various elements of defensible space were accepted/rejected depending on who the reader was. Yet despite the uptake of defensible space by different disciplines, the validity of defensible space as a concept was repeatedly questioned (Cozens et al. 2005; Ekblom 2011; Hillier 1973; Hillier and Sahbaz 2007). And, rather than completely discrediting it, this continuous critical inquiry has resulted in elaborations of an initially simple concept, in an attempt to explain better the perceptible effects. It is possible to trace back through this divergent history to a handful of foundational ideas (ownership, surveillance, interaction, territoriality). A striking aspect of this situation has been the malleability of the concept of defensible space; it has been promoted as a universal 'snake oil', before being attacked, refuted and disproved (interview with David Riley,⁷ 2011). Yet, it remains a 'common-sense' concept, continuing to be used by architects and housing managers, and investigated by researchers with just enough agreement on what it constitutes for the idea to be applied in a workable way. The term 'defensible space' appears in newspapers, it is popularised as a positive recognisable housing attribute (*The Economist* 2006; Jenkins 2010). As with the professions, a basic version of defensible space is also recognised by the general public. It is this slippery ambiguity of defensible space that is intriguing, as is the way its mutability has helped this concept adapt as it has moved across disciplines, networks and policy domains. This is not to conclude, that defensible space is inherently unstable or endlessly flexible, more, as Larner and Le Heron (2002) describe, that concepts interacting in the world 'stabilise (become rationalities, meta-discourses, logics) as they are communicated and are instituted as the basis of action' (p. 720). Defensible space is a telling example of a concept that is unstable but highly durable and resilient as the basis of certain practical actions, yet less successful in retaining its logic when removed from this 'real world' by being transferred into formal policy.

Defensible space can be viewed either from Schön's (1983) theoretical high ground or from within his less rigorous 'messy swamps'; this is less a question of varied disciplinary perspectives than an indication of its mobile, mutable, uncertain nature. Cross-disciplinary interest in the topic has contributed to its definitional looseness but a greater definitional expansion can be traced from its use in differing regimes of practice. Practice is often seen as the messy, woolly obverse of academic theory. The simplified dualisms of theory in academia are helpful for polemic thinking and writing but they 'inhibit understanding by implying a certain neatness that is rarely found in lived life' (Flyvbjerg 2001: 49). In this

book we reflect on the strengths, weaknesses and often hidden assumptions, inherent in the more familiar scrutinies of defensible space by disciplines such as criminology, planning or architectural design, reflecting on how theory and research shape policy and practice and vice versa.

Policy Mobilities

Unlike most of the policy mobilities literature (e.g. McCann 2011a, 2011b; Peck 2002; McCann 2013) that investigates pre-formed policies, we investigate the movement/mobility/mobilisation of a contested idea/concept. Indeed, ‘defensible space’ is a geographical concept – defensible *space*, not a policy per se. We look at how certain ideas about defensible space and associated strategies and views won through in the face of sometimes quite vicious criticism from academic peers. Critically we explore the daily mundaneness of policy formation, so often dominated by the use and misuse of evidence to justify decisions; this is unusual but necessary, as policy making is often embedded in the ‘banal practices of bureaucrats’ (McCann 2011a). Extending the policy mobilities work of McCann and Temenos (2015) on the practices and politics of public health we place equal importance on the mobility geographies of defensible space in English housing policy *and* practice.

We look at defensible space principles *practised* on housing estates in England, including a detailed case study of the Mozart Estate in Westminster, London (see Figures M.1–M.6). Here we draw on experiential knowledge as pragmatic rather than theoretical or scientific, orientated to here-and-now action. We also examine how defensible space consolidated political institutional settlement (Peck 2012) with respect to Thatcherism, Right to Buy etc., and update this to contemporary policies and practices, finishing the book with a discussion of the current English government’s estate renewal programme (what Lees 2014, following Hyra 2008, has called the ‘new’ urban renewal) where defensible space still features. We explore the interaction of policy, the English housing sector and the state, in relation to the concept of defensible space.

Baker and Walker (2019) provide an excellent history of the multidisciplinary roots of thinking on policy movement, starting from what was known as ‘policy diffusion studies’ in the 1960s in the United States, which looked at intra-national policy adoption (see Simmons et al. 2006; Simmons and Elkins 2004). Diffusion modellers were soon criticised for their focus on diffusion as resulting from processes of technocratic modernisation and competition, with policies carried along by rational, optimising agents or policy makers ‘scanning the “market” for potential policy products’ (Peck 2011a: 776). A less-blinkered interest in ‘policy learning’ then emerged in the 1990s from political scientists concerned that ‘we know almost nothing about the process by which such policy transfer occurs’ (Wolman 1992: 29). R. Rose (1991, 1993), for example, emphasised

what he called ‘lesson-drawing’: the process by which policy makers learn from different sources. He was interested in the agents and actions associated with policy circulation. Rose (1991: 9) saw policy making as a process whereby policy makers set out to solve problems by seeking knowledge, and abstracting useful information from it; yet critically that they failed to achieve truly rational decision-making due to operating within institutional and political constraints. As Baker and Walker (2019: 5) state: ‘with the turn to process-tracing, they [policy makers] began to open up analyses of policy circulation to issues of political contestation and strategic selectivity in policy making’. Subsequently, and also from within political science, ‘policy transfer’ emerged as a field of studies led by Dolowitz and Marsh (1996) who saw it as ‘the process by which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political system (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political system’ (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000: 5). They were especially critical of the improbability of purely voluntary and direct policy transfers, arguing that the reality was much more messy. Although Stone (1999) had long argued that ‘the process of modification in transfer requires closer attention’ (p. 57), it took a while for this call to be heeded. But there was a gradual move away from policy transfer, towards work focused on how the ‘form and effects’ of certain policies are ‘transformed by their journeys’ (Peck 2011a: 793). From this emerged the notion of ‘policy mobility’, now known as ‘policy mobilities’ (however these terms are not fully interchangeable, see Soaita (2018) whose review shows that ‘policy transfer’ still dominates ‘policy mobilities’ terminologically in housing). This literature developed outside political science as a discipline, indeed was quite critical of it, taking a social constructivist approach, as we have in this book.

Soaita et al. (2021: 8) argue that policy mobilities scholars are ‘more likely to look for thick-descriptions rather than explanations, aiming to unravel how policy is continually “assembled, disassembled and reassembled according to the elements (both discursive and material) that it encounters” (Lancione et al. 2017: 7)’. Policy mobilities thinking has been led by geographers, but also taken up by urban studies scholars, anthropologists and sociologists. Geographers are becoming increasingly aware of the social construction of policies, where and how they have been conceived, whether and how they have been mobilised and the political consequences of this (McCann 2013). As Baker and Walker (2019) point out, the organising metaphors of diffusion, lesson-drawing and transfer were replaced in policy mobilities by those of assemblage, mutation and mobilities (see McCann 2011a, 2011b; Peck 2011a; Peck and Theodore 2010a, 2010b). Those following a policy mobilities approach see policy as situated at any moment in time and as constantly contested. McFarlane (2011) talks about learning as ‘situated seeing’, where an individual’s policy consciousness emerges via engagements with particular materials, people and environments. Geographers in particular have been interested

in the spaces and spatialities in which policy makers do their learning (e.g. McCann 2011a, 2011b). By focusing on process policy mobilities scholars are exploring spatial multiplicity and dynamism, tracking how policy making processes ‘have promiscuously spilled over jurisdictional boundaries, both “horizontally” (between national and local political entities) and “vertically” (between hierarchically scaled institutions and domains)’ (Peck 2011a: 773). In the conclusion to their review of ideas on policy movement Baker and Walker (2019) argue for an interconnected trans-disciplinary future for what they call ‘policy circulation studies’: ‘an agnostic, umbrella term’ they use ‘to denote research that examines the movement of policy knowledge and practices’. ‘Policy circulation’, for them, represents the state of play at the moment where a ‘fragmenting pluralism’ falls short of proper dialogic interaction across different research traditions and disciplines (Dolowitz and Marsh 2012; McCann 2011a, 2011b) and has become an obstacle to advancing knowledge on the what, how and why of policy circulation (Cook 2015; Dussauge-Laguna 2012). Jacobs and Lees (2013) have likewise been critical of the distinctions between policy transfer and policy mobilities: ‘in making strident claims for the novelty of contemporary “mobilities” as opposed to past “transfers” assumptions are often made about how and why those earlier transfers happened and the effects they had’ (p. 1561). The way forward, Baker and Walker (2019) argue, is through a commitment to an ‘engaged pluralism’, a commitment to intellectual openness, the creation of venues for dialogue and the (de/re)construction of coordinating concepts in policy circulation. In this book we have tried to do just that.

Like Baker and Walker (2019) we are also exploring disciplinary location in this book, but less in terms of how policy circulation has been seen by different disciplines such as political science, geography, anthropology or other fields. Rather our focus is on the policy or in our case the concept of defensible space itself, and how it was ‘disciplined’ in different disciplines (especially those with a tendency to intervention), such as criminology, geography and architecture. We are interested in how defensible space has been implanted, inserted, perhaps like a cuckoo in a nest; how defensible space has insinuated itself, like a Trojan horse, across different disciplinary frameworks.

We see the debates over defensible space from different disciplines as part of the process through which defensible space was mobilised. As such in engaging in the practice of engaged pluralism, we put on the table the multiple perspectives and critiques of defensible space as seen through the eyes of different disciplines. Later chapters describe how defensible space was mobilised differently in geography, criminology and architecture/planning. We answer Cook’s (2015) call to listen to non-geography literatures (he mentions criminology and planning) on policy transfer and mobilities, but we go much further than that by looking at how a policy idea/concept was *mobilised* differently in different disciplines. Newburn et al. (2018) think through the value of notions of mobilities and assemblages in

criminological debates; we do likewise providing a deeper and more extended historical narrative.

Baker and Walker (2019) argue that ‘policy circulation’ has three coordinating concepts: the arenas of policy circulation, the agents (these are necessarily diverse and include those who champion ideas, experts, global or more benevolent organisations, governments and civil servants, commercial bodies/economic actors etc.) and actions (including decision-making). In this book we focus on all three of these in some detail. But we also set out to think through three inter-related ideas: movement/mobility/mobilisation. Movement is the act or process of moving that can include change and development; mobility is the ability or not to move, the quality or state of being mobile; and mobilisation is the action of making something movable, mobile or capable of movement. The latter is about marshalling, organising, making ready for use or action. All of these three explain certain aspects of the story of defensible space. So far we have described the constituent pieces of the concept. As later chapters will show, it is the potential for alteration of these pieces during movement, the mobile state facilitating readjustment, that organises and finally assembles the various interconnected aspects of defensible space for suitable use in a specific context. In fact, mutability appears to be an essential defining characteristic of the concept. Yet this inherent instability or flexibility is not automatically negative. It is this adaptability and looseness of interpretation that has ensured its resilience in practice.

In order for policies to successfully circulate they must *be made* mobile (Peck 2011a); in contrast with the orthodox literature on policy transfer, ‘the governing metaphors in critical policy studies are not those of transit and transaction, but of mobility and mutation’ (Peck and Theodore 2010a: 170). Following Temenos and Baker (2015) call for more attention to embodiment, or ‘a peopling of the geographies of policy mobilities’, the book traces the movement/mobility/mobilisation of defensible space through certain people, namely a primary transfer agent: the geographer Alice Coleman; and, an attendant transfer agent: the Home Office (HO) researcher Sheena Wilson. As Peck and Theodore (2010a, 2010b) argue, policy transformations are clearly not realised declaratively or through administrative or authoritative decree or sanction – they are also embodied practices. But these actors are of course also embedded in specific contexts and in networks of association that channel learning potential (Peck 2011a, 2011b). Like Coleman, Wilson also met with Oscar Newman and given she worked in the HO this paved the way for his ideas to permeate there. Despite never meeting in person, Wilson’s influence on Coleman is visible in the way she is quoted by name in *Utopia on Trial*. Wilson was a psychologist who had studied criminology and through her we see the transdisciplinary importance of defensible space, it is not just about architects’ or geographers’ takes on space and housing. Both of these transfer agents are coincidentally women. But considering Sheena Wilson, who worked in the HO and then the Department of the Environment (DoE), and her work with Michael Burbidge (senior principal research officer for the

DoE from 1975 until the late 1990s, when he supervised many influential cross departmental housing and crime studies), brings us to another female protagonist – Anne Power – whose early work stemmed from similar concerns about unpopular ‘difficult to let’ housing estates. But Anne Power, though acknowledging the role of design in successful housing, is a less direct transfer agent for defensible space; her influence on its dissemination is tangential in that more often she appears as a foil, especially to Alice Coleman.

Alice Coleman, Sheena Wilson and Anne Power all have practical influence and a desire to influence policy and guidance, but defensible space did not just transfer via powerful agents – it was also an obvious (common sense) idea that architects and planners picked up without knowing about its origins. In focusing on the key people involved in the mobilisation of defensible space into English housing policy and practice, we do not rely on Peck and Theodore’s (2010a, 2010b) familiar idea of persuasive gurus (although this fits Oscar Newman well), indeed in Alice Coleman’s case she could be considered as an ‘anti-guru’ (whilst acknowledged as a knowledgeable proponent, Coleman’s forthright views often undermined colleagues acceptance of her in this position/role). Instead, in contrast to Peck and Theodore (2010a, 2010b) we look at the promotion and mobilisation of defensible space through individuals with particular interests in mind and succeeding despite resistance or opposition. Although not primary transfer agents, Sheena Wilson and Anne Power are not simply ‘peripheral actors’ (see Rusu and Löblová 2019); rather they are essential conduits providing the means for successful movement/mobility/mobilisation. We see through all three (Coleman, Wilson and Power) how knowledge and expertise shapes careers and how individuals use their careers (both strategically and accidentally) to connect with new ideas, sites and contacts (cr. Craggs and Neate 2017).

Given that our primary transfer agent Alice Coleman is established as a counterfactual to contemporary positions and thought (an anti-guru), a well-connected ‘outsider’ working within the establishment, a degree of consideration of personality is necessary, particularly as one of our critiques of policy transfer thinking to date is the overlooked force of personality, even if the roles of charismatic individuals as transfer agents are acknowledged in the literature (McCann 2011a, 2011b). A brief comparison of Newman and Coleman focuses on their ability to influence and the tools they used to persuade, as much as their personalities themselves. Newman as salesman, applying architects’ wiles, chatting with residents on film or using the advertising artifice of line-drawn images. Coleman’s belief that the facts speak for themselves cultivated and reinforced by her dismissive brusqueness and reliance on indisputable interpretation of graphs, data and mapping. Like McFarlane (2011) we look at the socio-material assemblages that facilitated and inhibited the mobilisation of defensible space in policy and practice, from diagrams to graphs to letters to field trips to policy briefings, and so on.

The unusual fact that the primary and attendant transfer agents were all female urges us to employ a critical feminist perspective. Here we follow on from Gillian Rose's (1993) work on the nature of geographical thought and power-knowledge relationships. But this goes beyond simply revalorising the female protagonists, more fundamentally defensible space as a concept effected highly gendered responses to crime and fear of crime. Human geographers exploring the geography of crime have compared David Herbert's (1982) spatial mechanism led view of crime to Susan Smith's (1986b) feminist perspective that extended the social/spatial view of crime. More recent thinking on the geography of the fear of crime describes a subtle and complex sequence of interactions that link the design of the physical environment to perceived levels of violence, to fear of crime, and hence to an individuals' sense of general wellbeing. The subtlety of this interaction is open to individuals' interpretation not limited to design determinism (Smith 1986b, 2003). Nor does the book follow the typical feminist perspective exploring erasure due to difference. This perspective is a valid one, as *Defensible Space and DICE* is the story of many unnamed female housing estate residents whose lives were affected by the practical application of defensible space theories. Nonetheless some women's actions – such as Muriel Agnew of the Mozart Estate tenants' association – are recognised as championing sensitive approaches to regeneration (see the case study following Chapter 4). Here class and to a lesser extent racial/ethnic politics are important. Rather we explore a more subtle form of exclusion focusing on the delegitimization of ideas related to power relationships. Coleman's extreme and occasionally suspect ideas were not countered through persuasive logic or consistent analysis but via exclusion, derision and ostracism, which were in-and-of themselves attempts at erasure.

Unlike much of the policy mobilities research that has tended to focus on fast policies this book focuses on the slower and longer infiltration of a concept into policy and practice. Speed of mobilisation is important. Indeed, the notion of 'policy mobility' as different to its supposed predecessor 'policy transfer' implies speed, neoliberal speed at that (Peck and Theodore 2010b; see also Clarke 2012). The fact that much of the policy mobilities literature has looked at the rolling out of more recent neoliberal policies, such as workfare initiatives (Dolowitz 1998; Peck and Theodore 2010a), business improvement districts (Ward 2006; 2007; see also Cook 2008; Hoyt 2006; Tait and Jensen 2007), the creative city (González, 2011; Kong et al. 2006; Lees et al. 2016; Luckman et al. 2009; Peck 2005; Wang 2004) and healthcare programmes (McCann 2008; Ward 2006, 2007) is perhaps not surprising. But here we begin our analysis in a period when the neoliberal, privatisation agenda was just emerging (cr. Clarke 2012; Larner and Laurie 2010). Ours is a 'distended case' (Peck and Theodore 2012: 25) that follows defensible space across time and space and through localised instances. This stretching is sensitive both to relational and territorial geographies, geographies of flow and fixity and place specificities (Ward 2010).

In this chapter we have begun by tracing defensible space, if briefly, before it arrived in the United Kingdom. Much more work could be done on its origins (see particularly Knoblauch 2014, on the background economy of fear that influenced its success in the United States), but that is not the remit of this book. Rather, following Robinson (2015), our study is more interested in how it ‘arrived at’ various locations (policies, practices, even housing estates) via different people in England. We look at the multiple circulating stories about defensible space and the techniques used to create it from the notion arriving in the United Kingdom via Oscar Newman. But methodologically, like Gulson et al. (2017), we note the limitations of ‘following the policy’, because ‘defensible space’ was/is not a singular, cohesive concept, indeed it was/is not a policy. We trace how the concept was operationalised differently by a diverse set of agents (cr. Baker and Walker 2019), different academics, policy makers, practitioners and even industry.

Importantly, this is not a ‘presentist’ case study (many policy mobility studies are of contemporary policies), rather it is a historical narrative of an older concept and how it has been mobilised and moved over time. Here we echo Madrell’s call for ‘historical work that is inclusive, contextual and theoretically and analytically sensitive to difference’ (2009: 338). We focus in particular on the recent past – the late 1970s and the 1980s – which marked ‘a key moment in the unfolding of the global privatization agenda’ (Larner and Laurie 2010: 218); in so doing our study contributes to understanding the diverse geographies and histories of the privatisation of space through the global movement of theories, policies and techniques (Larner and Laurie 2010: 218; see also McCann 2008; Ward 2006). As such, it plays a modest role in extending our understanding of what Brenner and Theodore (2002: 349) refer to as the relationship between city building and ‘actually existing neoliberalism’. Although the bulk of the book focuses empirically on the late 1970s and the 1980s, it also considers subsequent decades, taking the story of defensible space in English housing policy and practice right up to the current day, showing that defensible space continues to be mobile, mobilised and emergent.

Here we do not necessarily see the mobility of defensible space into English housing policy and practice as completely positive, indeed the use of this non-proven concept to argue for the demolition of ‘sink estates’ today is deeply problematic. Yet we do not see the mainstreaming of defensible space as entirely negative either. Its acceptance as a common-sense concept is powerful and inclusive. The problem is not only its uncritical use to justify estate renewal, but the unthinking application of urban design principles that can either lead to isolated exclusion or a more accessible, equitable and well-maintained public realm.⁸

Finally, we investigate what Allen and Imrie (2010) have called ‘the knowledge business’ in urban and housing research, in that we investigate the varied trans-disciplinary nature of evidence use with respect to the concept of defensible space by policy makers and housing professionals. Similarly, by following Jacobs and Manzi (2013) and tracing the persistence of evidence-based policy’s ubiquitous

presence across administrations, particularly within English housing policy, we reconnect the often pragmatic practicalities of policy implementation with the highly politicised and uncompromising theorisation of what is perceived as good data and solid evidence.

The various bodies of knowledge we engage with (geographical, housing, architecture, design, planning etc.) all have shortcomings on how the mobility of policies might differ from the movement of concepts into research or into practice. We are interested in how ideas around defensible space developed through *doing* research, *making* policy and *practising* defensible space design on housing estates. In tracing the movement of defensible space from theory/concept to evidence-based practice, we ask a critical question: what does this mobility of defensible space tell us about how different communities of practice use evidence? As a result, we open up new avenues of inquiry for future policy mobilities work, taking ‘a mobilities perspective [that] can extrapolate the specific ways in which everyday acts and technical practices are political actions that are ongoing and incremental’ (McCann 2013: 593).

Researching and Writing about Defensible Space

few [*in policy mobilities scholarship*] are explicit about their methodological practice. (Baker and McGuirk 2017: 425)

It remains unusual in geography, even in the twenty-first century for two women to come together to write a book, especially in urban geography, which remains a male-dominated space. In fact, female voices permeate this book, not only our own but those of Alice Coleman, Sheena Wilson, Anne Power and many others. As such we see this book as contributing to the ongoing project of de-gendering geography (cr. G. Rose 1993), particularly urban geography, plus urban studies more widely. The more we researched the key transfer agents in this book the more we reflected on our own positions as women in the academy and in practice. We are both women with children (all daughters) and our writing by necessity had to fit around our family responsibilities and commitments (social reproduction), plus in Elanor’s case a non-academic full-time job. Our researching and writing have been a pleasurable experience, collaborative, fun, critical and memorable. Although very interested in geographical and other theory we do not believe in theory for theory’s sake, nor theory as a measure of intellect; rather we believe in grounded, empirical research and this takes a big commitment of time and energy.

As stated this is a deliberately trans-disciplinary book, as defensible space, although inherently geographical, also entered the disciplines of criminology, architecture and urban planning. Following the suggestion of Baker and Walker (2019) ours is a collegiate project of ‘engaged pluralism’, as we both come from

different disciplinary backgrounds: Loretta is an urban geographer with over 25 years of research expertise in urban regeneration and architecture, Elanor is an architect who was Head of Research at the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and who has also worked for housing associations including the Peabody Trust (where we first met). Loretta has been researching the regeneration of council estates for the past decade, working with residents to ensure socially sustainable regeneration; and Elanor has been working to quantify the long-term impact of regeneration projects on residents (including tools to evidence social value impacts), endeavouring to ensure that residents' wellbeing remains at the core of organisational financial decision-making. The book is a culmination of many years of research by both of us, indeed it draws on research undertaken in a number of different research grants over the years,⁹ it also draws on Loretta's work in three public inquiries into the demolition of high-rise council estates in London, and Elanor's day-to-day research activities for the Greater London Authority (GLA), Clarion Housing Group and the wider G15 group of housing associations. This is an important and somewhat idiosyncratic historical story that has not been told in full before, there have been only fragments of the story in different places, here we bring those fragments together, plus much more, and hopefully the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

In this book, for the first time, we collate the disparate evidence on the mobilisation of defensible space in the English context. Our sources have been voluminous and in the end stages of writing this book we were given, very generously by the criminologist Simon Harding, yet more, new, material – a large body of research and material from the 1980s and 1990s on high-rise housing in the United Kingdom. Now this book is complete we are working on archiving this research and material and deciding what to do with it. Given the historical nature of this project we inevitably consulted a wide range of documentary materials, for as policy theorist Richard Freeman (2012) says, accessing policy mobilities requires a focus on constitutive practices of communicative interaction, both oral (in meetings) and textual (in documents), which he places as central to policy *making*, its production and reproduction. Our textual documents included:

- Media articles, both from the architectural and mainstream press, including the press cuttings of Coleman's publishers dating from the 1980s to the present.
- Policy documents dating from the 1970s that set the context for DICE, as well as more recent policy documents, to be able to trace the emergence of Coleman's ideas in subsequent planning, housing design and management guidance.
- The DoE's internal DICE reports.
- Market researchers MORI's numerical survey data for the DICE estates and their preliminary reports to Price Waterhouse for the DICE project.

- AEDAS Architects' project documents for the regeneration of the Mozart Estate.
- A member of the King's College London (KCL) DICE Unit's private archive of papers and reports.
- Alice Coleman's personal archive of all her research.

The first two categories on this list – publicly available media articles and policy documents were easier to locate along a critical spectrum as they tended to accentuate the particular attitudes of the publishers, or the audience they were addressing. Private papers, such as those of the KCL DICE researcher, suffered from a common drawback of informal archives in that they were highly selective and non-systematic, yet provided a candid interpretation of the situation. Although the central transfer agent – Alice Coleman's – work was quantitative, as was her DICE project and the large-scale quantitative and statistical evaluation that followed, and promoted as a highly scientific experimental process, our investigation has taken a qualitative approach. We undertook critical discourse analysis of the policy documents and attendant in-depth interviews with key academics and practitioners across the fields of architecture, criminology and planning, examining the varied viewpoints of these communities. Indeed, despite our argument being that defensible space is a concept lacking sufficient internal validity to be truly considered a theory, theory building for us was a critical frame for consideration. In the chapters in this book we trace how alternative physical and social ways of constructing defensible space and a kernel of shared principles have been reflected in research (both in Alice Coleman's DICE and Bill Hillier's *Space Syntax*), in housing policy (in the form of funding documents for the Estates Action Programme [EAP]) and finally codified into design guidance (the DICE Design Guides, DoE documentation and the early versions of SBD).

Although much of the research underpinning this book is historical – that is, recent history – many of the key protagonists in the story are still alive, for example, Alice Coleman (b.1923) is in her late 90s. As such there were, and remain, ethical considerations. Throughout Coleman's career she often forthrightly defended her opinions, which politically at least have long been counter to those in her home discipline of geography; hers has been seen as a maverick viewpoint. Coleman and her work were seen as politically embarrassing to the Department of Geography at KCL where she worked, and to human geography more widely. As such we need/ed to take care of Coleman, given her age and potential vulnerability to personal criticism, we need/ed to take extra care to treat her and her work sensitively and with as open a mind as possible. As Jacobs and Lees (2013) point out, Coleman was engaged with what many consider to be the wrong brand of 'public geography' (Burawoy 2004, 2005): someone operating in the 'extra-academic realm' conducting scholarship that was concrete, pragmatic and serving wider neoliberal policy

agendas and clients (see also Castree 2006; Fuller 2008). That scholarship appeared increasingly out of step with the trends then restructuring ([critical] geographic) academic thought.

Maddrell's (2009) useful discussion of Coleman's geographical work finishes in 1970 when ours starts, and her impact on English housing policy has not been discussed in any detail in histories of geography or housing, remaining an interesting omission. Coleman was an unusual geographer – she trained initially as a physical geographer, became a human geographer¹⁰ (we look at the skill sets she brought between the two) and was a Tory at a time in the 1980s when many (but not all) geographers were quite the opposite. We look at her networks in the discipline and how these made her the woman she was/is. She was also a woman and eventually a professor at a time when geography was still very male dominated and the cultural turn was only beginning. She was the first female professor of geography at KCL, but we hear from a different, non-feminist, right-wing voice on these issues, something that the discipline has not done to date. Soaita et al. (2021: 11) argue that 'policy moves "successfully" across places and actors of similar ideological sensitivities', but as our research shows – yes and no.

For the first time, our book critiques some of the vociferous critiques of Coleman herself; it highlights the fact that a female professor of geography won a research grant of £50 million (a substantial grant now and unprecedented 40 years ago), and that her ideas have had arguably the biggest lasting impact on housing policy and practice of any recent geographer. A review of Danny Dorling's book *All that is Solid: How the Great Housing Disaster Defines Our Times and What We Can Do About It* (2014), chides Dorling for overlooking Coleman's work (amongst other female urbanists), particularly Coleman's critique of pre-1970s council housing (see Domosh 1991, on such absences). The review says 'for Dorling to have ignored these feisty predecessors makes his work questionable' (Bar-Hillel 2014: 46). We do that work in this book. Coleman, ironically, was once awarded *The Veuve Clicquot Award* for being 'A woman in a man's world' yet she had little regard for feminist agendas: 'I was a geographer rather than just a female', she insists (interview with Alice Coleman, 2008). But including women in geographical knowledge and history (G. Rose 1993; Maddrell 2009) is of course an ongoing project! Here, our focus on Coleman does HERstory (see Barnes and Sheppard, 2019).

Coleman, however, is only one of many feisty and successful women in this story; Sheena Wilson is discussed as another key transfer agent, and Anne Power as Coleman's nemesis. Jacobs and Lees (2013) only discuss one transfer agent, Coleman; here we extend their study underlining the multiplicity and messiness of transfer. In 'exploring' Coleman in relation to other (female) actors in the story we also necessarily avoid concentrating any critique on her personally.

In the book we draw on a series of in-depth interviews with Coleman: in 2008 Loretta Lees and 'the other' Jane Jacobs, a geographer, recorded a half-day interview with Coleman in Loretta's then office at KCL, they also video

recorded a half-day ‘walk along interview’ in which Alice was interviewed revisiting some of the public-housing estates in East London where she put into action her version of Newman’s idea of defensible space. In 2010 they also undertook a video and tape-recorded day-long interview of Coleman discussing her work in and through her own personal archives in her home in Dulwich, South London (see Figure 1.3). Coleman had an extensive personal archive of the research undertaken during her career, housed in a separate house, adjacent to her home. Then in 2013 Elanor Warwick undertook follow-up interviews with Coleman, firstly after her 90th birthday celebration at KCL, where she reflected on themes such as her drive and focus for research, her desire to be a teacher and her struggles to access crime data and persuade funders and officials, including Michael Heseltine, of the value of her work. These were indications of her single mindedness and persistence but lead to what she considered her proudest achievement – ‘bringing the crime rate down with Thatcher’. These themes were explored in later interviews again in her home. Nicholas Boys Smith of Create Streets¹¹ in 2014, who like us, found:

At 91 Coleman remains a formidable force. The fruits of a keenly inquiring mind and productive professional life are evident all around the room, ranging from a unique keyboard developed to write a phonic version of the alphabet that Coleman has developed herself, to stacks of large glossy colour plates of her exhaustive land utilisation survey. Only 15 percent was ever printed. The rest is in her dining room or (carefully stored under blue tarpaulin) outside on the terrace. It is rather alarming to think that the only copy of one of the most accurate surveys of the UK ever conducted is stored at partial risk to the elements in suburban London. Her memory is strikingly sharp and fast – and wide ranging.¹²



Figure 1.3 Loretta Lees' and Jane Jacobs' interview with Alice Coleman in her archives. (Photograph: Loretta Lees)

He finishes: ‘Alice Coleman watches the world cheerfully and with remarkable precision from her Dulwich home but she wonders why this generation is repeating the mistakes of her own’ (it is worth watching Alice in this interview <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/DesignedForLiving> to get a sense of our protagonist and her views).

Of course, all interviews have inherent bias, and reflections on past events involve seamless post-facto rationalisations in which ambivalence, multiple motivations, dilemmas and failures are concealed (cr. Chamberlain and Leydesdorff 2004). Coleman was somewhat guarded with respect to the scepticism of peers and the DoE whom she sees as having hindered her vision for design intervention in council housing. As such we had to triangulate Coleman’s account by looking beyond her recollections and archive to other sources, including interviews with national and local government figures involved with Coleman or dealing with the implementation of programmes of action based on her findings. We have also looked at media and scholarly reviews of her work, produced either as stand-alone reviews or as part of historical housing and public policy review accounts; articles in architectural or planning magazines, as well as mainstream press. This diversity of sources and literatures, spanning academic journals to red-top newspapers and TV programmes, threw up the challenge of reconciling contradictory presentations but flagged up the reach of the idea and the breadth of applied domains and practical vocations it touched. It was this multiplicity of contexts that made discourse analysis a suitable technique for exploring the disparity of viewpoints between academics, practitioners and politicians. In fact, Jacobs and Manzi (1996) suggest that the process of policy making itself can be understood as a form of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis then, was used both as a technique for paying close attention to the evolution and translation of concepts, and also as a conceptual bridge between practice and the mechanisms of transfer.

A key consideration when writing any book is who is it for? Earlier we quoted Oscar Newman who wrote his defensible space book for ‘a diverse audience’. Of course, our core audience are geographers – those interested in urban geography, housing, urban regeneration, architectural geographies, the geography of crime, the history of geography, and so forth. But the book has not just been written for geographers, it is an inherently trans-disciplinary book, written for others in urban planning, architecture, criminology, sociology, environmental psychology, and so on. Its target audience is also built-environment professionals and housing practitioners, policy makers, those involved in environmental design and ‘secure by design’ consultancies, and urbanists more generally. Looking in some detail at ‘defensible space’ in practice, and evaluations of it, offers some useful insights for practitioners on its value or not. Finally, the research and findings in this book have real potential in terms of informing government funded programmes of work on the demolition and/or remodelling of urban/high-rise estates in the

United Kingdom, especially in reference to defensible space and thus helping those fighting this ‘new’ urban renewal.

The book tracks defensible space from being a somewhat simplistic, almost naive concept, as it goes through a gradual process of elaboration into the current, multifaceted, multi-layered version. Cross-disciplinary interest in the topic adds to this definitional expansion and suggests that reinterpretations will continue. The book begins properly, in this chapter, with Newman’s definition of defensible space in New York City in the 1970s (recognising that its origins are much earlier) as it is about to enter English housing policy and practice. We then turn to its mobilisation in Chapter 2 through Newman himself, but also through two key agents – Sheena Wilson and Alice Coleman – who also meet with Newman, if separately. The book investigates the period from 1970 to 1990 when defensible space was examined by academics and designers and was at its peak of influencing policy and design guidance, despite being contested. Chapter 3 looks in detail at the push back against Coleman’s reinterpretation of Newman’s defensible space in the UK context, including Coleman’s personal reflections on this negative response, but we also look at how her interpretation attracted those in power. In Chapter 4, we explore Coleman’s DICE (the Design Improvement Control Experiment) project, the remodelling process dubbed ‘Colemanisation’ by the *Municipal Journal* (1990). In Chapter 5 we consider the evaluations of defensible space in the Priority Estates Project (PEP) and the EAP, the Price Waterhouse evaluation of Coleman’s DICE and Coleman’s own evaluation. The final chapters bring the investigation up to date, Chapter 6 looks at the uptake and resilience of defensible space ideas since DICE, from SBD to estate renewal from the late 1990s onwards. The latest, from a designing out crime standpoint, is Armitage and Ekblom’s (2019) reformulation of CPTED, which has defensible space as a foundational element. This attempts to reinvigorate the somewhat ‘one-size-fits’ CPTED principles, by integrating situational crime-prevention, offender-related approaches with design, propelling ‘CPTED towards a properly evidence-based, theory informed, conceptually sound and practically feasible field of intervention’ (Armitage and Ekblom 2019: 3). We extend this ambition in Chapter 7, reflecting on the relationship between research, policy and practice, through a discussion of defensible space as a mid-range theory. We ask if the way in which defensible space was mobilised affected its impact and how it was, and is still, used to construct places to live. This reveals pertinent lessons on mobile concepts for academia and policy, highlighting the value of policy mobilities research. We conclude with examples of contemporary homes and their surrounding estates that demonstrate the negative outcomes of applying exaggerated dimensions of defensible space at increasingly high densities. By speculating where present practice may lead, we show this is not the end of the story of defensible space, which, irrepressibly, will no doubt continue to evolve.

Notes

- 1 *Estate regeneration: article by David Cameron.* <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/estate-regeneration-article-by-david-cameron>.
- 2 Our focus is on English housing policy and practice because there is no such thing as ‘UK Housing Policy’. Answering Pinch (1998) we offer a more ‘spatially aware’ analysis that avoids conflating the English experience with that of the United Kingdom as a whole. Housing policy has of course been a devolved matter since 1999 and prior to the establishment of the devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, separate laws and regulatory frameworks existed across the United Kingdom.
- 3 Newman’s classifications were: interior spaces within flats are private and streets public. Lobbies, stairs or shared internal spaces are semi-private spaces and external gardens accessed by a number of residents, semi-public. However, depending on the design and layout, internal circulation areas could be classified as public. Coleman’s later categories included ‘confused’ space, corresponding to the planning term SLOPE – space left over from planning.
- 4 Note this is not the normal reading of ‘routine’, to criminologists ‘routine activity theory explains that a crime event occurs when a motivated offender and a suitable target converge in time and space in the absence of a capable guardian’ (Cohen and Felson 1979).
- 5 *Defensible space and the open society.* <http://www.we-aggregate.org/piece/defensible-space-and-the-open-society>.
- 6 Jeffrey (1999) who originally devised the term ‘crime prevention through environmental design’ in 1971 stated that its principles were largely based on Newman’s work.
- 7 David Riley was the civil servant managing the DICE research project at the DoE.
- 8 See The Urban Idiot (2015) *Urban idiocy: Brilliant ideas that ruined our cities.* Part two: Secured by Design, *Here and Now: Academy of Urbanism Journal*, 5 (Spring), p. 54.
- 9 Research from the following projects underpin this book: PI: Lees, L., CoIs: Hubbard, P. and Tate, N. ESRC 2017–2020. *Gentrification, Displacement, and the Impacts of Council Estate Renewal in C21st London [ES/N015053\1]*; PI: Lees, L. CoIs: London Tenants Federation, Just Space and Southwark Notes Archive Group, Antipode Activist Scholar Award 2012. ‘Challenging “the New Urban Renewal”: Fathering the Tools Necessary to Halt the Social Cleansing of Council Estates and Developing Community-led Alternatives for Sustaining Existing Communities’; Lees, L. (PI) 2003–2006 ‘High-rise Living in London: Towards an Urban Renaissance’ from ESRC under the ODPM studentship programme; Lees, L. (PI) 2001–2004 ‘Young People, Place and Urban Regeneration: the Case of the King’s Cross Ten Estates, London’ from ESRC under CASE studentship programme, collaborating partner – the Peabody Trust; PI Warwick, E. KCL PhD ‘Defensible Space as a Mobile Concept: the Role of Transfer Mechanisms and Evidence in Housing Research, Policy and Practice’, funded by CABE; and finally, unfunded research undertaken with Professor Jane Jacobs (then at the University of Edinburgh) on Alice Coleman.
- 10 The Royal Geographical Society presented Coleman with the Gill Memorial Award (1963) and Busk Award (1987).
- 11 See Create Streets <http://dev.createstreets.com>.
- 12 Boys Smith and Wildblood (2014).