

Q&A – 30 September – Prof. Tamara Herold

1. Do outdoor spaces hidden or partially hidden by weeds, shrubs, or trees play a role in crime place networks?

Yes. We have seen several examples of spaces in which weeds, shrubs, or trees offer concealment. Such spaces are used to stash illicit items – including drugs and weapons. They are also used to avoid detection or serve as fast escape pathways, should an offender's presence become known.

2. In your copper example, you are formulating a sort of economic theory of crime, namely a set of 'producers' (people who steal copper), a set of 'distributors' (places that take and dispose of the stolen copper), and a set of 'consumers' (people who buy drugs from the funds produced by the above).

This market operates much like other stolen goods markets, including stolen autos, technologies (e.g., cell phones), or other retail goods (e.g., baby formula). To this economic theory of crime, we add the importance of the places used by offenders to move these products and suggest additional place-based intervention points.

3. The copper theft case is fascinating from a network perspective. I don't have a question about that, I just want to note, that this type of crime was effectively reduced in Czechia (70% decrease in a year), when a legislature was changed - Now, everyone has to provide personal ID when giving metals to a recycling place. The key is to find a bottleneck and focus prevention there. The key trick was that the money for copper cannot be paid in cash anymore, but via bank account transfer.

A brilliant example of an intervention point that increases risks for potential offenders!

4. But what happened when the price of copper decreased? If it makes no more economic sense to steal copper, do the arrangements disappear? Or do the same facilities take on another crime production-distribution-consumption product?

Without directly observing the outcome, I can draw parallels to the boom-crash cycles experienced by other markets (including cell phone theft or the theft of specific types of vehicles). The business can continue to operate based on its legitimate purpose, in this case the recycling of metals (not stolen). However, the place owners may seize upon other opportunities to generate additional (sometime illegitimate) income if the price of other metals increase.

5. How applicable is this to public transportation sites?

To the degree that they operate as part of any crime-place network, or facilitate movement between places within the network, this concept would apply. To date, none of my PNI sites have included public transportation sites, beyond bus stops. In one instance, the bus stop served to concentrate a pool of potential victims during drive-by shootings, and so moving this stop (temporarily) while other places in the network were addressed helped to reduce victimization.

- 6. In your copper example, was there any place where it experienced more copper theft relative to other places? If so, what were the environmental settings for that high-copper theft places?**

Places that lacked direct place management or guardianship were particularly vulnerable. For example, vacant homes were often targets. Copper located in public spaces (e.g., streetlights) was also a hot target. Clusters of these unguarded or unmanaged spaces were abundant throughout the Las Vegas valley, making the other locations within the crime place network (comfort spaces and corrupting spots) more productive intervention points. Still, public information campaigns attempted to increase community awareness and guardianship where possible.

- 7. The 'Community Ambassadors' concept, with the revised police role of feeding info to other community agencies, is very important. It could have the potential for a reformulation of policing more generally, for example in relation to manufacturers producing hot products, or in relation to ISPs or networks and cybercrime. But do you police will enjoy that non-traditional role as much - as it is more POP than ILP?**

Like the others, this is such a great question that helps me to think more about application of the strategy to other types of problems. The police role in PNI is a hybrid ILP/POP model. The investigative process follows ILP processes and tenets. The presentation of their investigative intelligence to the larger city/county board allows police to work with other city departments and organizations (including residents) to solve larger issues (following POP). Greater officer buy-in can be achieved if police leadership describes PNI officers as skilled and highly valued investigators who must be among those who are the most tactically sound, as they operate in a jurisdiction's most dangerous locations. Greater community buy-in can be achieved if residents view PNI officers as community ambassadors who bring greater attention and city resources to historically neglected neighborhoods, while relying less on aggressive saturation approaches to suppress violence and other crime. I see these as complementary, rather than conflicting or competing policing models that require a holistic governance strategy to align these functions.