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PLACE-BASED COLLABORATION: A REVIEW AND FORMULATION OF A RESEARCH AGENDA

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Place-based Collaboration: A Review and Formulation of a Research Agenda

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Abstract: Place-based collaborations are widely used to improve safety and local economic conditions, but the evidence base regarding their effectiveness remains conceptually fragmented. We use an institutional framework based on three design dimensions – who controls resources, the degree of formalization, and the mode of coordination – to classify major place-based collaboration models into four categories: (1) integrated collaborations; (2) police-centered interventions; (3) school-based programs; and (4) community-based initiatives. Synthesizing international evidence on these categories, we find that more formalized and resource-coordinated models, particularly integrated and police-centered interventions, show more consistent crime-reducing effects. However, this pattern partly reflects differences in the ability to evaluate, as less formal, community-based initiatives are harder to assess using standard causal methods. We argue that outcomes depend on both institutional design and the type of collective action problem addressed, and outline a research agenda emphasizing institutional analysis, a greater focus on economic outcome measures, and design-aware evaluation strategies. The review offers an organizing framework and consolidated evidence to guide policymakers and practitioners on what works, under what conditions, and why.

Keywords: place-based collaboration; interventions; regulations; institutional design; crime

JEL codes: R58, K42, H41, R23.

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1. Introduction

Vulnerable neighborhoods perceived as being “left behind” have attracted renewed attention in both policy and research. Such areas are often characterized by concentrated poverty and crime. These conditions are deeply problematic because socioeconomic living conditions and perceived safety influence both individual life opportunities (Sen, 2001) and local economic development (Hipp et al., 2019). In this context, place-based policies, broadly defined by the OECD (2025) as “intentionally spatially-targeted policies that provide support to a place to improve long-term economic development and well-being outcomes,” are gaining increasing prominence.

While there is no universal solution to improve conditions in vulnerable areas, a recurring component in many examples of successful place-based policies is that of collaboration, e.g., between public, private, and/or civil society actors, which points to the relevance of the hitherto scarcely used term *place-based collaborations*.¹ We define place-collaborations as *coordinated efforts by multiple actors to improve conditions within a defined area* (cf. The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, 2021).

From an institutional perspective, a place-based collaboration can be understood as a particular configuration of rules, roles, and resource flows that structures how public, private, and civil-society actors co-produce safety and local development. Rather than a single “program model,” it is a polycentric arrangement in which locally embedded partnerships operate within existing legal, fiscal, and administrative frameworks (Ostrom, 2010; Aligica & Tarko, 2012). Outside markets, coordination lacks clear efficiency signals such as prices, making goal alignment, responsibility, and accountability central challenges (Hayek, 1945; Smith, 1776). Place-based collaborations are therefore often motivated, implicitly or explicitly, by the idea of complementarity in the sense that pooling resources across public, private, and civic actors can generate outcomes that no actor could achieve alone. At the same time, such arrangements face inherent trade-offs, as broader participation can enhance legitimacy and capacity while also complicating decision-making and diluting accountability.

As we shall see, place-based collaborations constitute a diverse ecology of organizational forms and approaches. Prominent examples include Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), where property and/or store owners collectively finance local public goods through a levy, focused deterrence programs targeting gang violence, school-based interventions such as KiVa, and resident-driven neighborhood watch initiatives. Evidence on place-based collaborations is fragmented across several literatures (e.g., economics, urban planning, and criminology), where studies are generally organized around sectors or intervention types rather than the underlying problems they seek to address, spanning qualitative case studies and process evaluations as well as robust pre-post-treatment-control evaluations. Consequently, the field lacks a shared

¹ In Sweden, the concept has gained renewed attention following a recent government inquiry proposing legislation that would allow property owners to be required to pay a mandatory fee to support collaborative programs aimed at increasing local safety (SOU 2025:5). This legislation went into effect in August 2026.

conceptual framework capable of systematically integrating different forms of place-based collaboration. Notably, no study to our knowledge has tried to apply a systematic institutional perspective to understand the workings of place-based collaborations, why they are conceived, what institutional forms they may take, and how their institutional features relate to their effectiveness. The purpose of this article is to apply such a perspective.

We start from the premise that place-based collaborations are designed to solve different types of *collective action problems*, such as coordination failures, enforcement deficits, norm formation, or collective engagement, and that these problem structures shape institutional design. Building on foundational work in institutional economics, we conceptualize collaborations as governance arrangements and focus on three core design dimensions that emerge as responses to these problems: *the control of resources* (Ostrom, 1990; Williamson, 1985), *the degree of formalization* (North, 1990; Greif, 2006), and the *mode of coordination among actors* (Ostrom, 1990). The dimensions capture who has the capacity to act, how predictable and enforceable rules are, and how actors interact in practice.

Empirically, the analysis proceeds by identifying a set of established place-based collaboration models and classifying them into a typology based on their institutional features. The typology is then used to discuss their theoretical foundations and program logic and review the available evidence on their effects in three areas: crime and safety, local business activity, and place attractiveness. We thus go beyond a sole focus on crime by noting that from a place-based perspective, crime, economic activity, and place attractiveness are closely interlinked. Crime imposes direct and indirect costs on firms and residents, discouraging investment and reducing local demand (e.g., Rosenthal & Ross, 2010; Wilcox et al., 2018), while economic conditions shape both opportunities and incentives for crime (Becker, 1968; Cohen & Felson, 1979). The interactions imply that place-based interventions may affect not only crime but also broader economic and spatial outcomes, motivating a focus on multiple outcome domains.

The result is an overview of what is currently known – and unknown – about place-based collaborations, variations in their institutional features and their effects:

1. **Integrated place-based collaborations.** *Collective action problem:* Coordination failures across multiple actors addressing complex, place-based problems. *Institutional features:* High formalization, structured governance, and coordinated or pooled resources combined with systematic knowledge use. *Outcomes:* Relatively consistent reductions in crime and safety improvements, with some evidence of positive economic and place-based effects.
2. **Police-centered interventions.** *Collective action problem:* Enforcement deficits and lack of credible deterrence in high-crime areas. *Institutional features:* Centralized authority, high formalization, and tightly coordinated deployment of enforcement resources. *Outcomes:* Clear and often substantial reductions in targeted crime types, particularly in the short run.
3. **School-based programs.** *Collective action problem:* Norm formation and early prevention among youth. *Institutional features:* School-anchored coordination with high legitimacy and continuity but limited cross-sector resource pooling and broader

governance reach. *Outcomes*: Robust effects on attitudes and social behaviors, with indirect and longer-term impacts on crime and economic outcomes.

4. **Community-based initiatives.** *Collective action problem*: Weak collective engagement and low levels of informal social control. *Institutional features*: Low formalization, decentralized coordination, and reliance on voluntary participation and local trust. *Outcomes*: More heterogeneous and harder-to-measure effects, with potential improvements in cohesion and perceived safety but less consistent crime impacts.

The results indicate that variation in outcomes reflects both differences in institutional design and the types of collective action problems being addressed. Models oriented toward enforcement and coordination, typically characterized by higher degrees of formalization and resource alignment (e.g., BIDs), tend to show more consistent crime-reducing effects, whereas interventions focused on norm formation or collective engagement watches (e.g., KiVa) display more heterogeneous outcomes and appear harder to evaluate using standard causal methods.

We contribute to the literature by providing an organizing framework that links institutional design to variation in outcomes across place-based collaborations. By shifting the focus from program labels to underlying governance structures, we reconcile fragmented strands of research and offer a unified, institutional perspective. Conceptually, we show how different collective action problems give rise to distinct institutional configurations, which in turn shape effectiveness and evaluability. Empirically, we synthesize evidence across crime, economic activity, and place attractiveness, highlighting both consistent patterns and important gaps. Taken together, the paper moves the place-based collaboration literature from descriptive classification toward an explanatory framework for understanding what works, under what conditions, and why.

2. Place-Based Collaboration – an institutional framework

2.1. An integrated approach to crime and economic outcomes

Place-based collaborations are often evaluated primarily in terms of crime reduction and safety. However, from a local development perspective, crime, safety and economic conditions are deeply intertwined. A growing empirical literature shows that crime influences business activity, consumer behavior, property values, and neighborhood trajectories (e.g., Cook & MacDonald, 2011; Hipp et al., 2019; Fe & Sanfelice, 2022), while local economic conditions simultaneously shape opportunities for offending, informal guardianship, and institutional capacity (e.g., Brinkman & Mok-Lamme, 2019; Branic & Hipp, 2018; Khanna et al., 2021). Thus, interventions aimed at improving local safety may also affect broader economic and spatial outcomes, and vice versa. Understanding place-based collaboration therefore requires a framework capable of linking social, economic, and spatial dynamics.

One influential perspective describing these relationships is Becker's (1968) economic model of crime, which conceptualizes offending as shaped by expected benefits, risks, and opportunity

costs. Contemporary empirical research continues to support the importance of these mechanisms, particularly through studies linking employment shocks, income changes, and local economic decline to crime patterns (e.g., Edmark, 2005; Chalfin & McCrary, 2017). From this perspective, local economic conditions matter because they alter the incentives surrounding criminal behavior. Business activity, commercial density, and concentrations of potential targets may increase the expected benefits of crime, while employment opportunities, income levels, and future economic prospects increase the opportunity costs of offending.

Routine activity theory complements this incentive-based perspective by emphasizing how crime is embedded in everyday spatial and social routines (Cohen & Felson, 1979). Recent place-based research highlights how pedestrian flows, commercial activity, and patterns of land use shape both crime opportunities and informal guardianship (Weisburd, 2015; Hipp et al., 2021). Commercial environments may simultaneously increase criminal opportunities *and* strengthen informal guardianship through increased visibility and more “eyes on the street” (Jacobs, 1961). This helps explain why many place-based collaborations focus on environmental design, place management, lighting, maintenance, and the coordination of actors operating in shared urban spaces.

Finally, social disorganization theory (Shaw & McKay, 1942) highlights the importance of neighborhood stability, institutional capacity, and informal social control in shaping long-run local development trajectories. More recent research on collective efficacy, neighborhood change, and spatial dynamics suggests that crime and local economic conditions may evolve through reciprocal feedback processes over time (Sampson, 2012; Hipp, 2010; Boggess & Hipp, 2016). Areas characterized by weak social cohesion, institutional fragmentation, and disinvestment may experience self-reinforcing cycles of crime and decline, while coordinated local institutions and stable economic conditions may instead contribute to virtuous cycles of safety, investment, and place attractiveness.

Taken together, the perspectives suggest that place-based collaborations may influence not only crime outcomes, but also broader economic and spatial development processes, and that these relationships are likely to be reciprocal and dynamically interconnected.

2.2. Institutional theory: Collective action problems in place-based collaboration

From an institutional perspective, place-based collaboration can be understood as a form of polycentric governance, where multiple, partly autonomous actors operate within a shared rule system and exercise discretion over specific territories (Ostrom, 2010; Aligica & Tarko, 2012). Wagner (2016) describes governance as an “entangled” process in which public, private, and civic actors continuously shape one another’s constraints and opportunities. Seen thus, place-based collaboration is not a discrete intervention but an emergent configuration within an interdependent web. This highlights the importance of institutional design: rules governing participation, financing, decision-making authority, and accountability influence both the effectiveness of place-based collaborations and the ways they vary locally.

Ostrom's work on institutional diversity and polycentric governance highlight that differences in rules-in-use help explain variation in outcomes and legitimacy (Ostrom, 2010; Ostrom et al., 1994), i.e., who participates, how decisions are made, and how costs and responsibilities are allocated. From this perspective, place-based collaboration appear as an institutional arrangement whose governance structure may shape local crime prevention capacity, economic development, and perceptions of place attractiveness (Aligica & Tarko, 2012). Crucially, they are designed to address localized collective action problems. These problems arise when multiple actors share an interest in improving neighborhood conditions, such as reducing crime or enhancing attractiveness, but face coordination challenges due to dispersed resources, diverging incentives, and the absence of clear price signals (Olson, 1965; Ostrom, 1990; Hayek, 1945).

The nature of the coordination problem varies across contexts. Some interventions primarily address enforcement problems, where rapid, coordinated action is required to deter crime. Others involve complex coordination among interdependent actors, e.g., to align investments, services, and planning decisions in a specific area. Still others focus on norm formation and behavioral change, where sustained shifts in attitudes and informal social control are central.

The differences matter because they shape the types of institutional arrangements that are feasible and effective in different local contexts. In particular, the choice of governance structure (i.e., how resources are controlled, how rules are formalized, and how actors coordinate) can be understood as responses to specific types of collective action problems.

Building on this perspective, we conceptualize place-based collaborations as governance arrangements through which multiple actors coordinate resources and actions to address localized collective action problems. While existing literatures often focus on specific program types, we argue that a more general understanding can be achieved by analyzing the institutional design of the arrangements. Drawing on institutional economics and organizational theory, we thus conceptualize place-based collaborations along three core dimensions: i) who controls resources, ii) the degree of formalization, and iii) the mode of coordination. Together, the dimensions capture key aspects of how collective action is structured – namely, who has the capacity to act, how predictable and enforceable the rules are, and how actors interact in practice.

2.3. Who controls resources?

In institutional theory, control over resources is central to understanding governance structures and transaction costs (Williamson, 1985) as well as the feasibility of self-governance in collective settings (Ostrom, 1990). The allocation and control of resources shape both incentives and the capacity for collective action.

In place-based collaborations, resource control varies from centralized (e.g., police-led interventions funded and directed by the state), to shared or pooled arrangements (e.g., BIDs where private actors collectively finance local public goods), to highly decentralized and

voluntary contributions (e.g., community-based initiatives such as neighborhood watch). The differences influence both the scale of interventions and the extent to which free-rider problems can be mitigated. Notably, where resources are pooled and tied to formal decision-making structures, actors may have stronger incentives to engage in sustained collaboration. By contrast, decentralized and voluntary arrangements may face greater challenges in mobilizing and maintaining collective effort.

2.4. Degree of formalization?

The degree of formalization refers to the extent to which rules, roles, and responsibilities of an arrangement are codified and enforceable. Formal institutions structure expectations and reduce uncertainty, thereby facilitating coordination and accountability (North, 1990; Greif, 2006). In the context of place-based collaborations, formalization ranges from legally mandated arrangements with clearly defined governance structures (e.g., statutory BIDs or police programs) to loosely organized initiatives based on informal agreements and social norms.

Greater formalization typically enables clearer allocation of responsibilities, monitoring, and enforcement, which may contribute to more predictable outcomes. However, formalization also entails rigidity and administrative costs and may not be well suited to contexts where flexibility and local adaptation are critical. Less formal arrangements may instead rely on trust, shared norms, and voluntary participation. They can be effective under certain conditions but are harder to sustain and evaluate systematically.

2.5. Mode of coordination

The mode of coordination captures how actors interact within the collaboration, i.e., whether through hierarchical authority, network-based negotiation, or norm-driven processes. Organizational theory distinguishes between these coordination mechanisms as fundamentally different ways of structuring collective action (Ostrom, 2010). These modes of coordination differ in their ability to address various types of collective action problems. Hierarchies are well suited for enforcement and rapid response, networks for complex coordination across actors, and norms for shaping behavior and sustaining long-term social change.

Hierarchical coordination, typical of police-centered interventions, relies on top-down authority and clear lines of command. Network-based coordination, often found in integrated collaborations such as BIDs or multi-agency partnerships, involves negotiation and joint decision-making among interdependent actors. Norm-based coordination, characteristic of community-based and school-based programs, depends on shared values, peer influence, and informal social control.

2.6. Linking institutional design to outcomes

Taken together, the three dimensions provide a framework for understanding variation in both the implementation and outcomes of place-based collaborations. Rather than treating different

programs as isolated interventions, the framework highlights how institutional design shapes both the type of collective action problem addressed and which mechanisms generate effects.

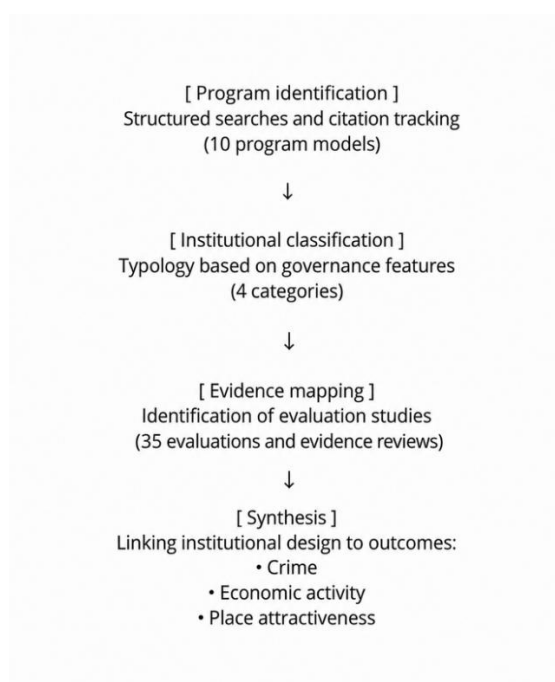
In particular, more formalized arrangements with clearer resource control and structured coordination may be better equipped to produce measurable short-term effects, especially in reducing crime. At the same time, less formal and more decentralized initiatives may operate through slower, norm-based mechanisms that are less visible in standard evaluations.

The perspective suggests that differences in reported effectiveness may at least partly reflect differences in how interventions are organized and how easy they are to evaluate. To understand “what works,” researchers therefore need to use analytical methods that fit the institutional design and characteristics of the interventions being studied.

3. Literature Review and Program Classification

Our empirical strategy proceeds in four steps, summarized in Figure 1. This approach does not constitute a formal systematic review in the PRISMA sense, but rather a structured and theory-informed mapping of evidence aligned with the institutional typology. First, through structured searches of the academic and grey literature, supplemented by backward and forward citation tracking, we identified ten established program models that organize collaboration among multiple actors to address localized collective action problems. Second, we classified the program models according to their institutional features, resulting in a typology of four broad categories. Third, we reviewed the available evaluation literature associated with each model. Finally, we synthesized the evidence by relating institutional features to observed outcomes in crime and safety, local economic activity, and place attractiveness.

Figure 1. Framework for the structured literature review



The three institutional dimensions outlined in section 2, i.e., resource control, degree of formalization, and mode of coordination, can be used to systematically classify place-based collaborations into a small number of analytically distinct program types. Rather than treating individual programs as unique cases, the approach highlights underlying similarities in how collective action is organized. Viewing place-based collaboration as an institutional form aligns our review with a broader tradition of theory-driven evaluation: programs are not black boxes, but bundles of institutional rules and mechanisms that can be specified, compared, and tested (Rossi et al., 2004; Ostrom, 2010).

Applying the framework to the ten program models identified through the structured search process, we group them into four broad categories: integrated collaborations, police-centered interventions, school-based programs, and community-based initiatives. The categories differ in how resources are mobilized, how formalized their governance structures are, and how coordination among actors is achieved. Table 1 summarizes the typology.

Table 1. Typology of programs

Program type	Resources	Formalization	Coordination logic
Integrated	Shared / pooled	High	Hybrid (rules + coordination)
Police-centered	Centralized (state)	High	Hierarchical
School-based	Institutional (school system)	Medium-high	Norm-based within formal structure
Community-based	Distributed / voluntary	Low	Informal / norm-driven

The typology reflects distinct configurations of institutional design. Integrated collaborations combine pooled resources with formalized governance and coordinated decision-making across actors, enabling them to address complex coordination problems. Police-centered interventions rely on centralized authority and hierarchical coordination, making them particularly suited to enforcement-oriented problems. School-based programs operate within existing institutional structures, combining moderate formalization with norm-based coordination to influence behavior over time. Community-based initiatives, by contrast, rely on voluntary participation and informal norms, with limited formalization and decentralized resource control.

The differences suggest that place-based collaborations are not functionally equivalent interventions, but rather institutional responses to different types of collective action problems. For example, enforcement problems may be more effectively addressed through hierarchical coordination, while norm formation and long-term behavioral change may depend more on decentralized, norm-based processes.

At the same time, the typology has implications for how outcomes are observed and evaluated. Programs characterized by high formalization and centralized or pooled resources tend to produce more visible and measurable short-term effects, particularly in terms of crime reduction. In contrast, less formalized and more decentralized initiatives may generate more gradual and diffuse effects, which are harder to capture using standard evaluation methods. This

highlights the importance of interpreting differences in empirical evidence with caution: observed variation in effectiveness may reflect not only substantive differences in impact but also differences in institutional design and evaluability. Table 2 summarizes the evidence on each program type, while the following sections describe them in detail.

Table 2. Detailed summary of place-based collaborations covered

Program	Institutional features	Effects on crime/safety, business activity, and place attractiveness
1. Integrated programs		
Focused deterrence/GVI. Violence-prevention program coordinating police, social services, and civil society to reach criminal groups and offer support while communicating clear consequences.	Represents a highly formalized and authority-centered collaborative arrangement, where multiple agencies coordinate under shared rules to produce coherent signals of deterrence and support.	International meta-analyses show reductions in firearm violence of approximately 25–30% over three years and reductions of about 33% in drug-related crime under high implementation fidelity; no evidence of displacement (Braga et al., 2018; Braga & Kennedy, 2021; Rostami et al., 2023). Risk of negative effects under overly punitive implementation (Griffiths & Christian, 2015).
BIDs (Business Improvement Districts). A collaboration model where property owners and businesses jointly finance and implement safety and development measures in a specific geographical area.	Semi-autonomous, business-led governance units with dedicated financing and formal decision rules, creating a stable local node within a broader polycentric system.	Most quantitative studies find reduced crime (Moir et al., 2024), e.g., 12% fewer robberies and 8% fewer violent crimes in Los Angeles BIDs (MacDonald et al., 2010). However, Clutter et al. (2019) show that some BIDs can increase the risk of robbery. Positive effects on turnover and productivity (Daunfeldt et al., 2023), especially in larger BIDs, though competition effects in smaller BIDs may negatively affect firms (Sutton, 2014). Positive effects on commercial property prices (Brooks & Strange, 2011; Jansen, 2017). Mixed results for residential property: both positive and negative effects documented (Ellen et al., 2007; Hirao et al., 2020).
CTC (Communities That Care). A long-term framework in which local actors map risk and protective factors for children and young people and select evidence-based interventions accordingly.	A long-term, community-centered governance framework that structures collaboration through standardized assessments, shared planning, and evidence-based rule systems.	A cluster RCT shows reductions in youth firearm carrying of 27% short-term and 24% long-term (Rowhani-Rahbar et al., 2023). Long-term follow-up of the Seattle Social Development Project shows about 40–42% lower risk of serious offending in adulthood (Hawkins et al., 2005, 2008).
CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design). A model for designing and modifying the physical environment to reduce crime and increase perceived safety.	Embeds collaboration into the planning system by formalizing expectations about how actors manage and maintain public space, linking environmental design to collective guardianship.	International meta-analyses show that environmental changes such as improved lighting reduce crime by about 21% (Farrington & Welsh, 2002). CCTV and integrated place design also show documented effects (Welsh & Farrington, 2009; Cozens & Love, 2015).

2. School-based and norm-shaping prevention

MVP (Mentors in Violence Prevention). School program training students to act as positive bystanders and counter harmful norms.	Leverages the school as a central coordination hub, aligning educators, students, and external partners within a shared normative framework for early prevention.	Studies show improvements of about 10–15 percentage points on attitude measures related to bystander behaviour (Ward, 2002; Cissner, 2009). Other studies confirm improved attitudes with small-to-medium effect sizes (Katz et al., 2011; Butler et al., 2024).
KiVa. Finnish anti-bullying program combining instruction, adult support, and structured responses to incidents.	A highly standardized, school-anchored governance model in which the responsibility for norm shaping and conflict resolution is embedded in clear procedural rules.	An RCT with 78 schools shows about a 30% reduction in bullying and 17% reduction in victimization after nine months (Kärnä et al., 2011). Positive results replicated in Italy and the Netherlands (Nocentini & Menesini, 2016; Huitsing et al. 2020, 2022). A national Finnish review shows best results under high implementation fidelity (FINEEC, 2020).

3. Police-centered interventions

Hot Spots Policing. Police strategy concentrating resources in small geographic locations with high crime levels.	Reflects a centralized authority model that can become collaborative only when embedded in broader local partnerships and shared problem-solving structures.	International meta-analyses show approximately 20% crime reductions in high-crime areas, especially violent crime (Braga et al., 2014, 2019; Turchan & Braga, 2024). No evidence of displacement.
PoP (Problem-Oriented Policing). A method where police and local actors identify and analyze recurring problems to develop long-term solutions.	A structured problem-solving framework that integrates police authority with multi-actor analysis and adaptive rule-making to address recurring local problems.	International meta-analyses show 20–30% crime reductions when the SARA (<i>Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment</i>) model is fully implemented (Braga et al., 2019; Hinkle et al., 2020; Keenan, 2025).

4. Community- and neighborhood-based interventions

Neighborhood Watch. Residents cooperate with police and municipalities to reduce crime through increased vigilance and information-sharing.	A low-formality, citizen-led governance structure that relies on voluntary engagement, shared norms, and informal accountability mechanisms.	Meta-analysis of 43 studies shows 16–26% crime reductions, strongest for burglary (Holloway et al., 2008). Later reviews confirm robust effects in well-organized programs (Ekici et al., 2022).
Safety Walks. Method where residents, municipalities, and police jointly identify unsafe locations and propose improvements.	Participatory governance practices that generate shared situational awareness and local legitimacy, though with limited organizational durability.	No robust quantitative evidence of crime reduction. Used primarily as a process and knowledge tool; can improve collaboration, resident participation, and prioritization of environmental measures.

3.1. Integrated place-based programs

Integrated place-based collaboration programs are characterized by a high degree of formal cooperation between the public sector, civil society, and/or private businesses. The evidence base surrounding the programs is also relatively strong compared with other forms of collaboration.

From an institutional perspective, integrated place-based collaborations represent the most formalized and rule-bound version of local collective action. They typically rely on stable organizational structures, explicit decision rules, clear responsibilities, and routinised information flows. The arrangements resemble a “polycentric node” with relatively strong internal coherence: actors agree on joint priorities, coordinate through shared governance mechanisms, and often have access to dedicated resources. In terms of institutional design, this implies a combination of high formalization, pooled or coordinated resources, and structured coordination mechanisms across actors – i.e., the public sector, civil society, and/or private businesses. At the same time, the formalization can limit inclusiveness and adaptability, particularly when commercial or public-sector priorities dominate.

Due to these features, integrated programs can minimize coordination failures and produce comparatively robust effects on crime and safety. The evidence base surrounding them is also relatively strong compared with other forms of collaboration.

3.1.1. Focused deterrence programs

Focused deterrence programs are targeted interventions aimed at reducing serious crime among chronic offenders, particularly gangs and criminal networks (Braga & Kennedy, 2021). These programs identify individuals and groups considered at highest risk of involvement in violence and communicate a coordinated message combining deterrence and support. Law enforcement agencies, social services, probation authorities, schools, and community representatives jointly signal that further violence will trigger rapid and concentrated sanctions, while simultaneously offering pathways out of crime through employment support, counseling, housing assistance, addiction treatment, and educational opportunities. A central component is the so-called “call-in”, informing offenders that violence will no longer be tolerated and that authorities are coordinating their actions across agencies (Kennedy, 2006). Operationally, the model seeks both to increase the perceived certainty of sanctions and to reduce barriers to behavioral change.

Institutionally, focused deterrence programs represent highly formalized and centrally coordinated arrangements, where multiple agencies align actions and communication to produce credible signals. The most prominent example is Group Violence Intervention (GVI). Applications typically fall into two main strands: interventions targeting serious violence (e.g., gang-related homicides) and interventions targeting open-air drug markets, which differ in both target populations and enforcement strategies (Kennedy, 2008; Kennedy & Wong, 2009; Rostami et al., 2023).

Evidence about the effects of focused deterrence is relatively strong. Meta-analyses suggest reductions in firearm violence of around 25 percent and in drug-related crime of roughly one-third, with limited displacement effects (Rostami et al., 2023; Braga et al., 2018; Makarios & Pratt, 2012). However, effectiveness depends critically on implementation fidelity and perceived legitimacy, as overly punitive approaches may backfire (Griffiths & Christian, 2015).

3.1.2. Business Improvement Districts

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are geographically defined collaborations in which local businesses and/or property owners collectively finance and govern improvements within a commercial area through a mandatory or voluntary levy (Peel & Lloyd, 2005). In practice, BID organizations coordinate services and investments that supplement ordinary municipal provision, including enhanced street cleaning, private security, lighting, graffiti removal, place marketing, event organization, environmental maintenance, and improvements to public spaces. Many BIDs also function as coordinating platforms between businesses, municipalities, police, transport authorities, and civil society actors. Operationally, BIDs seek both to reduce disorder and improve local economic attractiveness by strengthening informal guardianship and increasing pedestrian activity, consistent with Jacobs' (1961) "eyes on the street" logic and broken windows perspectives (MacDonald et al., 2010; Han et al., 2017).

Institutionally, BIDs combine decentralized control with stable, earmarked resources and formal governance structures, creating semi-autonomous local nodes within a polycentric system. Although not primarily designed as crime-prevention programs, BIDs often implement measures that improve safety, including environmental maintenance, lighting, and place management.

Empirical evidence is generally positive. Studies find reductions in robbery and violent crime (e.g., -12% and -8% in Los Angeles; MacDonald et al., 2010), with most quantitative evaluations reporting crime decreases (Moir et al., 2024). However, some studies find increased crime risks within BID areas, likely reflecting higher activity and target density (Clutter et al., 2019). Such findings highlight a key trade-off: the same mechanisms that increase economic activity may also increase crime opportunities if not matched by sufficient guardianship.

3.1.3. Communities That Care (CTC)

Communities That Care (CTC) is a long-term prevention framework designed to coordinate local actors around evidence-based interventions targeting youth risk behaviors (Hawkins & Catalano, 1992). Rather than constituting a single intervention, CTC functions as a structured planning and governance model through which municipalities, schools, police, social services, healthcare providers, parents, and community organizations jointly identify local risk and protective factors and select appropriate preventive measures. The model relies heavily on systematic data collection, particularly recurring student surveys measuring factors such as violence exposure, school attachment, substance use, peer relations, and family conditions. Based on these assessments, local coalitions implement combinations of evidence-based interventions tailored to local needs (Hawkins et al., 2018). Operationally, CTC seeks to institutionalize preventive collaboration by embedding long-term, data-driven coordination into local governance structures, with the broader aim of reducing youth violence, substance abuse, school failure, and later criminal involvement.

Institutionally, CTC programs are characterized by relatively high formalization combined with decentralized, multi-actor coordination, where systematic data collection, particularly student surveys, guides joint decision-making across schools, social services, police, and community actors. The programs target youth risk behaviors such as violence, substance use, and school failure by identifying local risk and protective factors and aligning interventions accordingly. The model builds on the social development framework and emphasizes sustained coordination across institutions and over time.

Empirical evidence about the effects of CTC is strong. Longitudinal and experimental studies show substantial reductions in youth crime and related outcomes, including a roughly 40 percent lower risk of serious offending in adulthood (Hawkins et al., 2005, 2008) and a reduction in adolescent firearm carrying of about one-quarter in randomized evaluations (Rowhani-Rahbar et al., 2023; Hawkins et al., 2018). While direct evidence on economic outcomes is lacking, the model's effects on safety, stability, and youth development suggest potential indirect benefits for local economic conditions and place attractiveness.

3.1.4. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) refers to interventions that seek to reduce crime opportunities by modifying the built environment and the management of public space (Cozens & Love, 2015). In practice, CPTED measures often include improved street lighting, increased visibility, removal of visual barriers, maintenance of public environments, access control, surveillance systems, pedestrian-oriented street design, and redesign of physical layouts to reduce concealed or poorly monitored spaces. The approach is commonly integrated into urban planning, housing management, commercial development, and broader place-management initiatives involving municipalities, police, planners, property owners, and businesses (Boverket, 2024; Brå, 2025). The operational logic is that environmental design shapes offender decision-making and informal guardianship by influencing visibility, territoriality, movement patterns, and the perceived risk of detection (Clarke, 2005). CPTED is therefore often less a standalone intervention than a framework embedded within broader place-based collaborations such as BIDs or municipal safety strategies.

CPTED operates through distributed governance across planners, property owners, and local managers, with relatively high formalization through planning norms and standards but less centralized coordination than other models. Interventions typically include improved lighting, visibility, maintenance, and surveillance, often integrated into broader place-based initiatives such as BIDs (Boverket, 2025; Brå, 2023).

Empirical evidence suggests that CPTED-type interventions can reduce certain forms of crime, particularly property offenses. Meta-analyses show that improved street lighting reduces crime by roughly one-fifth (Farrington & Welsh, 2002), and CCTV has also been found to have crime-reducing effects (Welsh & Farrington, 2009). However, causal identification is often difficult, as such measures are typically implemented alongside other interventions (Cozens & Love, 2015). Moreover, while a plausible argument can be made linking this kind of intervention to

improved local economic conditions, there presently does not exist any studies considering such outcomes.

3.2. Police-centered interventions

Police-centered interventions focus on concentrated enforcement in high-crime areas, typically grounded in situational crime prevention. Institutionally, they are characterized by centralized authority, vertically controlled resources, and strong enforcement capacity. While they may involve other actors, coordination is often limited or ad hoc, and governance remains anchored in the police organization.

The features enable rapid response and relatively robust short-term crime reduction. However, their institutional scope is narrower than more integrated models, and their effectiveness depends heavily on procedural legitimacy and implementation quality. Thus, the programs are well suited to addressing acute crime problems but may be less effective in reshaping broader neighborhood dynamics.

3.2.1. Hot Spots Policing

Hot spots policing concentrates police presence and enforcement efforts in small geographic areas with disproportionately high levels of crime (Weisburd, 2015). These interventions typically involve intensified patrols, increased officer visibility, stop-and-search activities, targeted enforcement operations, or temporary saturation policing in micro-locations such as street corners, nightlife districts, transit hubs, or commercial corridors. Increasingly, hot spots strategies are guided by crime mapping, predictive analytics, and real-time crime data identifying where offenses cluster spatially (Braga et al., 2019). Some implementations also incorporate collaboration with local businesses, municipalities, or property owners, although operational authority generally remains centralized within the police organization. The central operational idea is that concentrated police activity in crime-intensive locations can disrupt offending patterns, increase perceived detection risk, and stabilize local disorder without requiring large-scale interventions across entire cities.

Institutionally, hot spots policing represents a centralized and relatively low-complexity intervention, which may become more collaborative when embedded in broader place-based initiatives involving local actors. Evidence for beneficial effects is strong. Meta-analyses show that it reduces crime by roughly one-fifth on average, with particularly strong effects for violent offenses (Braga et al., 2014, 2019; Turchan & Braga, 2024). These effects do not appear to displace crime; rather, they often diffuse into surrounding areas (Higginson et al., 2014; Bowers et al., 2011).

While primarily focused on crime reduction, there is no direct evidence assessing hot spots policing's economic effects. However, localized crime concentrations are associated with negative effects on property values, suggesting potential indirect economic benefits of targeted interventions (Ceccato & Wilhelmsson, 2020).

3.2.2. Problem-Oriented Policing (POP)

Problem-Oriented Policing (POP) is an analytical and problem-solving policing strategy focused on identifying and addressing the underlying causes of recurring crime and disorder problems (Goldstein, 1990). Rather than responding reactively to isolated incidents, POP interventions begin with systematic analysis of local crime patterns, offender behavior, environmental conditions, and victimization risks. The approach is commonly operationalized through the SARA model – Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment – emphasizing iterative problem identification and evaluation (Hinkle et al., 2020). Responses may include environmental redesign, intensified guardianship, regulatory changes, collaboration with businesses or schools, or targeted enforcement depending on the specific local problem identified. In practice, POP often requires coordination between police and external actors such as municipalities, transit authorities, schools, property owners, and businesses, making it more analytically and organizationally flexible than traditional reactive policing.

Institutionally, POP combines centralized police authority with elements of decentralized coordination, as it often involves collaboration with local actors within an analytical and iterative framework. Empirical evidence indicates that POP can reduce crime by between one-fifth and one-third on average, particularly when the full SARA process is implemented (Braga et al., 2019; Hinkle et al., 2020; Braga et al., 2024; Keenan, 2025). Effectiveness depends on the quality of analysis, the appropriateness of interventions, and the degree of coordination with relevant stakeholders. However, there is presently no direct evidence on the program's economic effects.

3.3. School-based and norm-shaping interventions

School-based programs operate within existing institutional structures, using schools as stable platforms for influencing behavior, social norms, and peer relations over time. Institutionally, they combine moderate formalization and access to embedded organizational resources with norm-based coordination among students, staff, and, in some cases, external actors. This provides continuity and legitimacy but may also limit their reach beyond the school setting and produce effects that emerge gradually rather than as immediate changes in neighborhood conditions.

3.3.1. Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP)

Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) is a school-based violence prevention program centered on bystander intervention and peer influence (Katz, 2018). In practice, older students are trained as mentors and role models who lead structured discussions and exercises with younger students concerning violence, bullying, harassment, gender norms, and abusive behavior. The program emphasizes practical scenarios in which students learn how to recognize problematic situations, challenge harmful norms, and safely intervene as active bystanders (Katz et al., 2011). MVP is typically integrated into school routines and often implemented in collaboration with schools, social services, police, and civil society organizations. Operationally, the program seeks to

reshape social norms and strengthen informal peer-based guardianship by increasing students' willingness and confidence to intervene in situations involving violence or abuse.

Institutionally, these MVP programs rely on decentralized coordination within the school setting, combining pedagogical routines with contributions from external actors such as police, social services, civil society, and parents. Thus, compared with other models, school-based and norm-shaping interventions rely less on formalized inter-organizational governance and resource pooling, and more on pedagogical routines and norm-based coordination. This may enable sustained preventive work and early intervention, particularly through approaches that strengthen empathy, self-efficacy, and willingness to intervene in situations such as bullying or violence (Katz, 2018; Storer et al., 2015). However, the program's institutional reach beyond the school context is likely more limited, which constrains their ability to directly influence broader neighborhood dynamics or economic outcomes.

MVP has shown some evidence of improving attitudes toward violence, gender norms, and bystander willingness to intervene, particularly in school settings (Katz et al., 2011; Eriksson et al., 2018). Studies report improvements of roughly 10–15 percent in attitudes related to violence and gender norms, as well as increased confidence in intervening as a bystander (Ward, 2002; Cissner, 2009; Katz et al., 2011).

However, effects on actual behavior and spillovers to younger students appear more limited, with some evaluations finding no statistically significant impacts among mentees (Butler et al., 2024). However, the evidence regarding long-term behavioral effects on serious violence or crime remains limited, partly because many evaluations rely on self-reported attitudes and relatively short follow-up periods rather than observed criminal outcomes. Moreover, there is currently no evidence regarding the effects of MVP on economic outcomes such as business activity, employment, property values, or broader place attractiveness.

3.3.2. KiVa

KiVa is a highly structured anti-bullying program developed in Finland that combines universal preventive measures with targeted interventions in specific bullying cases (Kärnä et al., 2011). In practice, the program includes classroom lessons, group discussions, digital learning materials, teacher training, and clearly defined intervention protocols used when bullying incidents occur. A central feature is its focus on the broader peer group rather than solely on bullies and victims; the program seeks to alter group dynamics by reducing passive acceptance of bullying and strengthening peer support for victims (Huitsing et al., 2020). Schools implementing KiVa typically establish designated response teams responsible for investigating incidents, monitoring outcomes, and maintaining implementation fidelity. Operationally, KiVa combines norm-based prevention with formalized organizational routines intended to systematically reshape social interactions and social norms within the school environment.

Institutionally, KiVa represents a more formalized variant of norm-based prevention, with standardized procedures, defined roles, and strong emphasis on implementation fidelity within

the school organization. Evidence for beneficial effects is strong. A large randomized controlled trial found a reduction in bullying of around 30 percent (Kärnä et al., 2011), and subsequent evaluations confirm positive effects across different countries and contexts (Nocentini & Menesini, 2016; Huitsing et al., 2020). Effectiveness appears to depend on sustained implementation and adherence to program design (Finnish Education Evaluation Centre, 2020).

However, while bullying victimization is associated with later violent and antisocial behavior, no studies have directly examined whether KiVa reduces serious violence or criminal offending specifically. Likewise, there are currently no studies examining the program's effects on economic outcomes such as business activity, property values, or broader place attractiveness.

3.4. Community-based interventions

Community-based interventions aim to strengthen local social control, trust, and informal guardianship through broad, low-formality mobilization of residents. They represent the least formalized form of place-based collaboration, relying on voluntary participation, shared norms, and informal accountability, often in cooperation with actors such as the police or property owners. These arrangements offer advantages in terms of legitimacy, local knowledge, and adaptability, but are also vulnerable to collective-action problems, including declining participation, diffuse accountability, and limited capacity for sustained coordination. As a result, they tend to be effective in strengthening informal social control but have more limited impact on structural or long-term neighborhood dynamics.

3.4.1. Neighborhood Watch

Neighborhood watch programs mobilize residents to increase informal surveillance and strengthen cooperation with police and other local actors in order to prevent crime (Holloway et al., 2008). In practice, participants are encouraged to observe suspicious activities, report crimes or disorder, improve home security, share information with neighbors, and increase collective vigilance within a defined residential area. Programs often involve neighborhood meetings, signage, communication networks, digital alert systems, and varying forms of cooperation with local police. Some initiatives also include environmental improvements or community activities intended to strengthen social cohesion and local trust. Operationally, neighborhood watch seeks to increase capable guardianship and informal social control by encouraging residents to take collective responsibility for the safety of their local environment, consistent with theories of collective efficacy and routine activities.

Institutionally, it is a low-formality, citizen-led arrangement grounded in voluntary participation and norm-based coordination. Empirical evidence of the effects of neighborhood watch is relatively strong. Meta-analyses show crime reductions of around 16–26 percent, particularly for property crimes such as burglary (Holloway et al., 2008; Ekici et al., 2022). Effects appear strongest in well-organized programs with clear participation structures. To our knowledge, there are presently no studies examining these programs' economic effects.

3.4.2. Safety walks

Safety walks are participatory assessments in which residents, municipal officials, police, property owners, and businesses jointly inspect public spaces perceived as unsafe (Cozens et al., 2022). In practice, participants walk through a neighborhood or commercial area and identify environmental conditions associated with insecurity or disorder, such as poor lighting, obstructed visibility, vandalism, isolated pathways, traffic risks, or neglected public spaces. The observations are documented and subsequently used to guide planning, maintenance, or safety interventions. Operationally, safety walks function less as standalone crime-prevention programs than as low-cost coordination and information-sharing mechanisms that generate shared situational awareness, strengthen dialogue between stakeholders, and produce locally embedded knowledge about how public environments are experienced by residents and users.

Safety walks function as low-formality, collaborative tools that generate shared situational awareness and local legitimacy, but with limited organizational permanence. Evidence on direct crime-reduction effects of safety walks is limited. Existing studies primarily highlight process-related benefits, including improved collaboration, resident engagement, and systematic collection of place-based knowledge (Cozens et al., 2022; Sahlin Lilja, 2024). As such, safety walks are best understood as components within broader place-based strategies rather than as standalone interventions.

3.5. *Summary of evidence*

Taken together, the four categories illustrate how variation in institutional design shapes both the types of collective action problems addressed and the mechanisms through which outcomes are generated. More formalized and resource-intensive models tend to produce stronger and more immediate crime-reduction effects, whereas less formalized and norm-based approaches operate through slower, more diffuse mechanisms that are harder to evaluate but potentially important for long-term social change.

Table 3 summarizes the main programs reviewed, with an emphasis on their institutional features and the outcomes that have been empirically studied. The overview highlights that while the evidence base is relatively strong for certain interventions, such as focused deterrence, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), and hot spots policing, other approaches, particularly those involving community engagement or school-based norm change, have been evaluated primarily in terms of intermediate outcomes like attitudes, collaboration, or perceived safety. Moreover, evidence concerning economic effects and place attractiveness remains scarce across all categories, representing a key gap in current research.

Table 3. Institutional design and evidence across place-based interventions

Program type	Institutional features	General evidence
Integrated programs (Focused deterrence (GVI), BIDs, CTC, CPTED)	• Shared/pooled resources across actors • High degree of formalization through structured rules • Hybrid coordination combining rule-based governance and multi-actor collaboration	→ Strong and consistent crime reduction (~20-30%) → Some evidence of positive economic effects (primarily BIDs)
Police-centered programs (Hot spots policing, Problem-oriented policing (POP))	• Centralized (state-controlled) resources • High degree of formalization • Hierarchical coordination, often complemented by problem-oriented collaboration	→ Strong and consistent crime reduction, particularly in high-crime areas (~20%) → No clear evidence on economic outcomes
School-based programs (MVP, KiVa)	• Institutionally embedded resources (e.g., school system) • Medium-high degree of formalization • Norm-based coordination within a structured organizational setting	→ Consistent improvements in attitudes and behaviors → Evidence of indirect crime effects → No clear evidence on economic outcomes
Community-based programs (Neighborhood watch, Safety walks)	• Distributed and voluntary resources • Low degree of formalization • Informal, norm-driven coordination based on local engagement	→ Mixed or limited evidence on crime reduction → Positive process effects (e.g., trust, engagement) → Weak causal evidence overall

Importantly, these differences reflect a fundamental trade-off in place-based interventions between organizational capacity and local embeddedness. Highly formalized arrangements are better equipped to coordinate resources, sustain long-term efforts, and directly affect crime, but may face challenges related to legitimacy or local responsiveness. In contrast, less formalized, community-based approaches benefit from local knowledge and trust but often lack the capacity to maintain participation and deliver sustained or large-scale effects.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Discussion

The purpose of this study has been to improve our understanding of place-based collaboration by identifying common forms of collaboration and synthesizing the available evidence on their effects on crime, business activity, and place attractiveness. By extending the analytical focus beyond crime and safety, we highlight how economic dynamics interact with social and institutional processes to shape long-term development in disadvantaged areas. The resulting

synthesis provides a structured overview of what we currently know, and, importantly, what we don't know, about the broader impacts of place-based collaboration.

A central contribution is to show that variation across interventions is not only a matter of program logic, but of institutional design. Comparing the four categories through this lens reveals systematic differences in rule configurations, authority structures, and capacities for sustained collective action. Integrated collaborations combine formal governance, stable financing, and structured decision-making, giving them strong institutional coherence and relatively predictable effects. School-based models achieve legitimacy and continuity through professionalized public institutions but remain functionally bounded to the school as an organizational setting. Police-centered interventions concentrate authority and operational capacity but rely on more limited forms of shared governance, constraining their ability to influence broader social and economic dynamics. Community-based initiatives, finally, rest on informal norms and voluntary engagement, providing local legitimacy but limited organizational durability.

Thus, differences in outcomes across intervention types can be understood as reflecting a fundamental trade-off between organizational capacity and local embeddedness. More formalized, resource-intensive arrangements are better equipped to coordinate actors, sustain long-term efforts, and directly influence crime opportunities, but may face challenges related to legitimacy and responsiveness. Less formalized approaches, by contrast, benefit from local knowledge and trust, but often lack the institutional capacity required to maintain participation and produce durable or large-scale effects. The trade-off helps explain why interventions differ not only in their effectiveness, but also in the types of outcomes they are able to generate.

The findings resonate with broader perspectives on polycentric governance, where coordination emerges through overlapping networks of public, private, and civic actors rather than through hierarchical control alone. From this perspective, place-based collaborations can be understood as institutional configurations embedded within wider governance systems. Integrated models represent dense and highly structured configurations; school- and police-based models occupy more bounded but still interconnected positions; and community-based initiatives reflect thinner, more voluntary forms of coordination. This variation in institutional density and structure is central to understanding differences in legitimacy, coordination capacity, and long-term problem-solving.

Our review also highlights important gaps in the evidence base. While there is relatively strong and consistent evidence of crime-reduction effects for several interventions, particularly focused deterrence, BIDs, and police-centered approaches, evidence on economic outcomes remains limited across all categories. This is notable given that many theoretical frameworks emphasize the role of business activity, employment, and place attractiveness in shaping long-run development trajectories. Expanding the empirical focus to include such outcomes should therefore be a priority for future research.

From a research perspective, our study highlights the need to move beyond treating place-based interventions as a homogeneous category. Instead, future studies should more explicitly account for institutional design when evaluating effects, including how governance structures shape implementation fidelity, mechanisms of change, and the durability of outcomes. Methodologically, this calls for more rigorous and context-sensitive evaluation strategies. Where feasible, randomized or quasi-experimental designs should be used to identify causal effects. At the same time, future studies should more explicitly incorporate institutional variables, such as governance structures, financing mechanisms, and degrees of formalization, into their empirical designs. Doing so would make it possible to better understand not only whether interventions work, but why their effects vary across contexts.

An important implication of this study is that place-based collaboration should be analyzed not only as a set of programs, but as an institutional form. This includes examining how different legal and fiscal frameworks shape who can initiate and sustain collaboration, how resources are mobilized and governed, and how to manage issues of legitimacy, representation, and accountability. Such an approach is essential for understanding why similar collaborative models produce different outcomes across cities and countries, and how they influence not only crime and safety, but also long-term economic and social dynamics.

A limitation of the study is its primary focus on impact evaluations, which means that the extensive process-oriented literature on collaboration has not been systematically reviewed. However, existing research suggests that strengthened cooperation and coordination are often important outcomes in their own right. Collaboration should therefore be understood not only as an input, but as a dynamic process that evolves over time and may generate benefits beyond immediately observable effects. Finally, we do not examine in depth how place-based collaboration affects broader social dimensions such as legitimacy and trust. These factors are likely to be important for long-term effectiveness, but their relationship to different institutional arrangements remains insufficiently understood. Addressing these questions represents an important avenue for future research.

4.2. Research agenda

Building on the findings of this review, several priorities for future research emerge.

First, future studies should more explicitly incorporate institutional design into empirical analyses. While existing evaluations typically focus on program effects, they rarely account for how variations in governance structures, financing mechanisms, and rule systems shape implementation and outcomes. Comparative designs that systematically vary these institutional features – across interventions, cities, or countries – would provide a more fine-grained understanding of why similar programs produce different results in different contexts.

Second, there is a clear need to expand the range of outcomes studied. The current evidence base is heavily skewed toward crime and safety, whereas economic outcomes, such as business activity, employment, and property values, remain underexplored. Given the central role of

economic dynamics in many theoretical frameworks of place development, future research should integrate these dimensions more systematically and examine how safety improvements translate into longer-term economic change.

Third, future work should pay greater attention to mechanisms and temporal dynamics. Many interventions are evaluated in terms of average treatment effects, but less is known about how effects unfold over time, how they interact with local conditions, and whether they generate cumulative or self-reinforcing processes. This includes distinguishing between short-term deterrence effects and longer-term changes in social control, norms, and local economic structures.

Fourth, there is a need for more context-sensitive and methodologically diverse evaluation strategies. While randomized and quasi-experimental designs remain essential for identifying causal effects, they should be complemented by approaches that can capture institutional complexity, such as comparative case studies, mixed-method designs, and analyses of implementation processes. This is particularly important for interventions where outcomes are diffuse or indirect, such as community-based or norm-shaping programs.

Finally, future research should more systematically examine broader social outcomes, including legitimacy, trust, and participation. These dimensions are likely to be central to the long-term effectiveness of place-based collaboration, yet remain insufficiently integrated into existing evaluation frameworks. Understanding how different institutional arrangements shape these outcomes is essential for assessing not only whether interventions work, but whether they are sustainable and socially embedded.

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