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## Exploring the spatial-temporal relationships between a community greening program and neighborhood rates of crime

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2007).

Simultaneously, although greening is well-connected to criminology and criminal justice practice, the use of geographical tools such as space-time analysis to examine greening and crime has not been explored in-depth within applied geography literature. Furthermore, the temporal effects of greening on crime are not well known, and methodological limitations in past studies have affected the utility and generalizability of findings. Yet the range of tools available within geographic information systems (GIS) continually offers new opportunities to better understand how greening and crime reduction are associated.

The purpose of this study is therefore to showcase the utility of the emerging hot spot analysis (EHSA) tool as we ask: What are the spatial-temporal associations between rates of greening and crime in Flint, Michigan? To address this question, we analyze incident level data for all crimes committed in the city of Flint, as well as every parcel maintained through the Genesee County Land Bank's Clean & Green (C&G) greening program, from 2005 to 2014.

### 1.1. Urban greening

As noted, greening is operationalized here as the maintenance of blighted properties to add value to communities dealing with an abundance of available land (Nilsson et al., 2007; Schilling & Logan, 2008). Greening blighted properties not only improves the appearance and environmental sustainability (Bowler, McKay, & Shaw, 2015) of urban environments, it also addresses social and economic challenges in legacy cities (Schilling & Logan, 2008), or post-industrial cities experiencing continued job and population loss (Mallach & Brachman, 2013). Greening can also address infrastructure costs, ease population pressures (Reeve, Desha, Hargreaves, & Hargreaves, 2015), and mitigate the impacts of climate change (Bowler, Buyung-Ali, Knight, & Pullin, 2010; Reeve et al., 2015) by reducing the costs of maintenance due to storm water run offs and mitigating the urban heat island effect. Bowler et al. (2015) emphasize the need to view greening in more

### 1. Introduction

Advances in built-environment focused community development strategies afford new multidisciplinary opportunities to address crime with criminologists, criminal justice practitioners, and community partners. Practices such as the development and maintenance of blighted urban land through lawn maintenance and removal of waste (hereafter referred to as 'greening') are routinely linked to diminishing crime and improved quality of life (Branas et al., 2011; Garvin, Branas, Keddem, Sellman, & Cammusco, 2013a; Johansen, Neal, & Gasteyer, 2016; South, Kondo, Cheney, & Branas, 2015; Westphal, 2003). Because greening reduces visible disorder, residents within participating communities may experience increased collective efficacy and feel empowered to combat crime (Johansen et al., 2014). Indeed, participation in greening activities and associated neighborhood meetings has been shown to contribute to social capital (Alaimo, Reichel, & Allen, 2010). Thus we might expect associations between greening and reductions in crime both directly, due to the reduction of disorder, and indirectly, with greening serving as a manifestation of and/or catalyst for collective social action (Nettel, 2016; Wakefield, Elliott, & Cole,

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