Street Pastors: On security, care and faith in the British night-time economy

Ronald van Steden
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Abstract
This paper presents a study of Street Pastors in Cardiff, the capital city of Wales. Street Pastors are Christian volunteers who look after vulnerable people in the night-time economy. In this manner, they provide securitas through empathy and care. The motives of Street Pastors for engaging with partygoers are multi-layered, but their personal faith appears to be a key explanation. A certain kind of orthodox certitudo – of being safe in, and saved by, a higher power – gives the pastors their strength to go out on the street, face the unknown and feel compassion for their fellow citizens. As such, both ‘securitas’ and ‘certitudo’ highlight positive (that is, constitutive) connotations of safety and security not commonly heard in the criminological literature.

Keywords
Certitudo, Christianity, nightlife, securitas, security governance, volunteers

Introduction
Although the night-time economy contains elements such as cinemas and restaurants that are fairly neutral and unproblematic in themselves, criminologists take most interest in the troublesome nature of going out and having a lot to drink. In particular, the United Kingdom has quite a reputation for its abundant and, at times, aggressive nightlife as its cities and towns, large and small, transform into ‘no-go areas’ (Roberts, 2006) filled every weekend with inebriated (young) people. Adolescents are overtly seduced into hedonistic leisure activities involving heavy consumption of alcohol, which, in turn, causes unruly behaviour and outbreaks of violence. Hobbs et al. (2005) go so far as to speak of ‘violent hypocrisy’: the much lamented crime and disorder problems involved in an average night out are the effect of the very same commercial system that

Corresponding author:
Ronald van Steden, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, De Boelelaan 1105, 1081 HV Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
Email: r.van.steden@vu.nl
encourages people to drink until they drop. Against this background, there is a great deal of academic interest in how criminal and disorderly conduct are controlled by bouncers (Hobbs et al., 2003), prevented by situational measures (Graham and Homel, 2008) or otherwise excluded through the use of banning orders (Millie, 2008). Observers of the night-time economy have thus dedicated much of their work in the field of security governance to professional state and commercial partners.

However, the contributions made by what Loader (2000: 328) calls ‘policing below government’ – citizen-led approaches to public order maintenance – have hitherto been typically overlooked in criminological publications on the management and supervision of Britain’s night-time areas. To fill this gap, I put forward the example of Street Pastors:1 local church members helping anyone in need of assistance during a night out. More precisely, a Street Pastor is

a volunteer who cares for, listens to and helps other people, particularly in the night-time economy environment, in busy areas where people are drinking, partying and moving between clubs and pubs. (Isaac and Davies, 2014: 13)

The Street Pastor initiative currently involves more than 14,000 participants in the UK and abroad, and was pioneered in London in 2003 (Isaac and Davies, 2009, 2014). Located in a Biblical tradition, they respond to public disorder and the feelings of insecurity resulting from a night out by engaging with vulnerable – regularly drunk and intoxicated – people. ‘Being there’, without preaching or prejudice, is their primary goal. My paper addresses the following questions: (1) what do Street Pastors contribute to the regulation of Britain’s night-time economy, and (2) what drives them to take up their voluntary work? The paper draws on ethnographic research into the operations and motivations of the Street Pastor team in Cardiff, the capital city of Wales.

Answering the above research questions serves a dual objective. First, the paper introduces empirical insights into the rich history of voluntary, notably religious, movements in the UK’s regulation of alcohol-related behaviour. Street Pastors belong to a long Victorian tradition of ‘moral entrepreneurship’ (Yeomans, 2014: 10), which prized moderation and temperance as cardinal Christian virtues that could combat drinking problems. Insofar as criminologists have shown any interest in the relationship between Christian faith and the security issues arising from, for example, public drunkenness, they tend to be primarily interested in the negative effects of religious conviction on deviant behaviour (Weenink, 2015), not in the positive impact that faith-based initiatives such as the Street Pastors may have. As Swann et al. (2015) argue, the pastors tend to serve as ‘substitutes for trust’ for partygoers in an anonymous, sometimes even hostile, night-time environment. The volunteer effort of the Street Pastors to ‘make people happy’ (Nikolic-Ristanovic, 2014) – to offer vulnerable revellers shelter and support – diverts criminology’s attention from its narrow focus on punitiveness. Security governance, after all, is not just about ‘fixing what is broken’; it is also about nurturing ‘what is best’ (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000: 7). Until now, criminologists have largely ignored this more optimistic perspective.

Secondly, and connected to this, the conceptual purpose of fleshing out what Street Pastors do, and what inspires them, is to explore how security can be understood in more positive (that is, constitutive) ways. Criminologists, by their nature, have generally been
preoccupied with ‘fighting’, ‘combating’ and ‘tackling’ crime, their sphere of interest delineated by state and non-state actors engaged in public order provision, loss prevention and risk management. Indeed, it can be argued that criminology, as an academic field, may itself be an effect and a result of widespread fear and of a political appetite for ‘intrusive approaches to security issues’ (Loader and Sparks, 2011: 11). Avoiding risks and diminishing insecurity is a growth industry today, hence the popularity of ‘routine activity theory’ (Cohen and Felson, 1979) and ‘fixing broken windows’ (Kelling and Coles, 1996; Wilson and Kelling, 1982), which, whether or not it was the original intent, have favoured the implementation of ‘zero tolerance’ and ‘law-and-order’ policies in the night-time economy. Adopting this as a principal emphasis paves the way for a one-sided – negative – reading of ‘security’, which is in need of correction (Schuilenburg et al., 2014). It is not the ‘securitization of society’ (Buzan et al., 1998) by heralding a permanent ‘state of exception’ (Neocleous, 2006) that lies at the heart of my study, but, instead, the ‘mundane, routine and quotidian dimensions of security processes’ (Crawford and Hutchinson, 2016a: 1187). Securitas (providing safety and security through care) and certitudo (being safe in, and saved by, a higher power) are key concepts here.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The next section provides a brief overview of security’s treatment in criminological literature. After that, I present a case study of Street Pastors in Cardiff’s night-time economy. In conclusion, I offer reflections on the theoretical implications of the Street Pastor scheme for criminological thinking about security.

Thinking about security

Under the shadow of Hobbes

It would be an exaggeration to say that, on the whole, criminology takes for granted the pervasiveness of risk, crime control and repression in modern societies, and in particular in night-time economies. For example, in their book on ‘positive criminology’ (not to be confused with ‘positivist criminology’) published in 2015, Ronel and Segev argue that ‘the good’ can overcome ‘the bad’ through a peaceful resolution of conflicts, a re-socialization of offenders and a spiritual unification of society. Another salient example is Sampson et al.’s theory of ‘collective efficacy’ (1997) as a means of improving community participation and of informally monitoring disturbing behaviour within a neighbourhood. Nevertheless, criminologists are so immersed in a political and legal discourse about security, with crime and crime control as their focal points, that they often fail to capitalize on wider multidisciplinary scientific knowledge about the volatile meanings of security and security governance (Crawford and Hutchinson, 2016b). Why is this so?

Not unlike political scientists, criminologists habitually link security governance to sovereign state power. The 17th-century philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) was one of the seminal thinkers in this dominant judicial–political view of public order provision. He imagined how the world would look without a ‘common power’, and sketched a gloomy picture of a ‘state of nature’ where people, driven by their desires and ambitions, fight a civil war of ‘all against all’. Such a life, as Hobbes famously wrote, is ‘solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short’ (2008 [1651]: chapter XIII). People are in a constant situation of grave
insecurity, fear and death, which hampers economic flourishing and the creation of a civil society. Hobbes argued that, as rational creatures, humans would decide to collectively sign a hypothetical agreement – a ‘social contract’ – allowing them a happier and safer life under the supervision of a ‘Leviathan’, the metaphor he used for a fairly authoritarian government. Fleeing the horrors of anarchy requires a robust state that will discipline the sentiments and emotions that drive selfish individuals into lethal competition.

With the rise of the institution of the modern state, the protection of public order has become the primary responsibility of police forces, which have always been, but are now more than ever, supported by an array of ‘plural’ and ‘private’ security agencies (Jones and Newburn, 2006). This tight intertwining of security, economic forces and judicial–political power makes security an ‘identity identifier’, because it represents a specific vision of public order that continues to affect cultural and instrumental logics of ‘who we are’ and ‘what “normal” behaviour is’ (Neocleous, 2006). Translated to the night-time economy, nuisance, disorder and crime caused by intoxicated revellers have developed into central features of media coverage, political talks and social unrest that spark the transformation of the UK’s inner cities into ‘sanitized’ spaces accessible to ‘a particular responsible citizen’ to the detriment of ‘flawed consumers … being pushed to the margins’ (Crawford and Flint, 2009: 411). A profusion of disciplinary measures is the direct consequence of this shallow representation of security.

Towards practices of security

In his critique of Thomas Hobbes, Gearty (2013) contends that the philosopher was wrong in equating security solely with national governments, because there are also more ‘human-centric’ and ‘social’ measures people take to protect themselves against harms and dangers. Zedner (2009) further adds that security is not necessarily an ‘end goal’ but rather a ‘pursuit’ and refers to both an ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ state of being. People can feel secure while they are at risk, and the other way around. What exactly security looks and feels like depends on the eye of the beholder. Security, therefore, is a much more ‘polysemic’ (Ranasinghe, 2012) concept than criminologists have commonly assumed. Moreover, in Waldron’s interpretation of Hobbes’ Leviathan, readers should not be blinded by the philosopher’s equation of security with ‘mere survival’, because in his other writings they are told that this concept denotes an important public good that connotes happiness and welfare. As Waldron writes,

We should be open to the possibility that the notion of security also needs to be understood as something we provide together. In one sense this is obvious: we rely on a collective mechanism for much of our actual protection. … In a richer sense, however, we also act together to secure the way of life and the patterns of interaction in which our security partly consists. … Security is something we provide for each other by enjoying together the social order of activities and interaction that defines our way of life and by acting in solidarity with one another to ensure that the benefit or this system is available to all. (2006: 500)

It is hard to dismiss the valuable points made by critical security commentators and ‘anti-security’ advocates (Neocleous and Rigakos, 2011) that many inhabitants of our world do not benefit from the protection and freedom they deserve. However, most of
their investigations lack convincing ‘theoretical innovation’ in relation to contemporary obsessions with harsh policing, crime prevention and punitiveness ‘that seek to identify alternative visions of security’ (Nunes, 2012: 346). Equally, academics have persuasively critiqued a ‘punitive turn’ in criminology (Hallsworth, 2000), and have highlighted ‘the diversity, contradictions, reversions and tensions in current crime control policy’ (Matthews, 2005: 195). This has not altered enduring theoretical debates about security as merely a judicial–political form of power. Scholars warn loudly and clearly against ‘too much security’ (Zedner, 2003) while failing to offer any inspirational lines of flight for criminology.

It seems, in sum, that a lack of empirical enquiry into precisely what security is and what it entails has led the field of criminology somewhat astray. Shearing and Johnston therefore insist that in-depth research is needed to unmask the ‘a priori assumptions’ (2010: 496) scholars make about the content of security governance. The question now arises of how to move security theory forward with an appreciation for the initiatives people undertake ‘to create the good in their lives’ (Robbins, 2013: 457). In other words, how can security be understood in richer and more positive ways than just ‘fighting crime’ and ‘preventing disorder’? A promising route to follow here is Valverde’s assertion that we should not consider security as a ‘thing’ or a fixed ‘condition’, but instead ‘focus on practices of governance that in fact appeal to “security” … and tell us what security means’ (2010: 5) to people. She presents three interrelated dimensions – scope (time, space and jurisdiction), techniques (methods and equipment employed in governance processes) and logics (rationales) – to interpret the dynamics of such practices.

The next section follows this approach in describing what Street Pastors do (practices) in Cardiff’s night-time economy and why they do it (logics). With this framework in mind, my second aim is to reinterpret security through the lens of securitas and certitudo, two Latin terms found in a German two-volume theological dissertation published in the early 1990s (Schrimm-Heins, 1991, 1992; see also Gregersen, 2004). Both concepts serve to illuminate the practices of the Street Pastors (their contribution to the regulation of Cardiff’s night-time economy) and their logic (what drives them to take up voluntary work), while acknowledging the terms of reference of conventional criminological thinking on safety and security. The connotation of security when described as securitas involves the provision of charity, care and a ‘sense of shelter’, whereas certitudo underlines an existential dimension of security as ‘the certainty of faith’.

**A case study in Cardiff**

**Methodology, data collection and analysis**

The Cardiff Street Pastor scheme signifies a ‘critical’ case study (Flyvbjerg, 2006) likely to contribute to a countervailing – more positively inspired – understanding of security and security governance in any reflection on conventional criminological notions of control, punishment and exclusion. The choice of Cardiff as the location for the case study was partly pragmatic and thanks to personal contacts at Cardiff University. But the city also has a reputation for raucous binge drinking and carnivalesque hen and stag parties
This ethnographic research was undertaken during July and August 2014. During the fieldwork, I interviewed 29 respondents. The first set of respondents comprised the Street Pastor scheme’s director and coordinator and 20 randomly selected members of the Street Pastor team (25 percent of the total population of Street Pastors in Cardiff). The youngest pastor I met was in her early twenties; the oldest was well over 70. Most of them had salaried occupations as varied as cleaner, fighter jet engineer, physiotherapist, television broadcaster and traffic warden. A small number of respondents were retired or performed only voluntary work. In general, the Street Pastors seemed to be busy people, involved in all kinds of voluntary activities for churches, food banks, soup kitchens, toddler groups, homeless shelters, and so on. Most respondents were surprisingly candid about their volunteering and faith; a few were more distant and reserved. My conversations with the pastors were about the relationship between their work on the streets and the logic behind it.

Subsequently, I interviewed three senior police officers, including Cardiff’s former and current chief superintendents, a senior partnership analyst with the local authorities, a senior nurse and two professors affiliated to the National Health Service (NHS). These respondents gave their professional verdicts on the Street Pastors’ contribution to security governance in Cardiff’s night-time economy. Virtually all interviews with the Street Pastors and with the other respondents were transcribed; one person did not agree to our conversation being tape-recorded. For ethical reasons, I have anonymized my interviews.

Finally, on two Friday and three Saturday nights, I went out with the Street Pastors. My participatory observations covered approximately 24 hours, learning from what the pastors do on their ‘tour of duty’. The information I collected about what was happening on the streets consisted of hand-written field notes, which I expanded into typed narratives. Owing to time constraints, I was able to see what occurred on only a limited number of nights out. To address this limitation, the Street Pastor coordinator provided me with weekly reports – rather like diaries – covering September 2013 to August 2014. The completed reports, 114 in all, contained comprehensive descriptions of the pastors’ proceedings on Friday and Saturday nights.

In collecting and analysing my data, I deployed an insider approach that takes people’s own perceptions as a starting point for description, measurement and interpretation. First, I gathered information on the pastors’ activities, scope and techniques and placed them under the banner of ‘practices’. Secondly, I investigated the various rationales that lay behind their taking up voluntary work in Cardiff’s nightlife and labelled those findings ‘logics’ (see Valverde, 2010). Thirdly, I interpreted the pastors’ practices and logics in their own terms. Because the Street Pastors give meaning to their work by equating safety and security with the provision of care, and do so through a sense of religious calling, I framed their practices and logics in theological language.

This language uses securitas (providing safety and security through care) and certitudo (being safe in, and saved by, a higher power) as twin concepts that eloquently capture how the pastors, all Christians, act and think on issues of security and security governance. Both Latin concepts originate from the oeuvre of Martin Luther.
(1483–1546), a former Augustinian monk and leading Reformer (see Schrimm-Heins, 1991, 1992). As the Danish theologian Gregersen clarifies,

first there is the safety human beings want to achieve on their own by a controlled calculation of one’s good merits before God (in Latin usually designated as *securitas*). However, Luther also reflected upon another sort of safety, often described as certitude (in Latin, *certitudo*). This religious certainty of being embraced by God is only possible when humans give up their earthly safeties and flee to the mercy of God as revealed in the gospel word of the Bible. (2004: 28)

Those elucidations of *securitas* and *certitudo* are novel in the criminological literature with its mostly uni-dimensional concentration on safety and security as the absence of crime and disorder. Both concepts thus serve as devices to encourage discussion of different and more positive interpretations of security and security governance – and what they might entail – than are common in academic publications.

**The local Street Pastor scheme**

The original push to set up a Street Pastor scheme in Cardiff dates back to 2008. At present, the team comprises around 80 volunteers. The pastors are drawn from a very broad Christian spectrum, yet are guided by shared principles and values of love, care and faith. In Cardiff, pastors generally come from Baptist and Evangelical groups or belong to ‘free’ (independent) churches. According to formal principles and policy guidelines, Street Pastors do not preach or proselytize – that is, they don’t spread the Gospel by proactively handing out Bibles and communicating Christian messages. Furthermore, Street Pastors are not immediately recognizable as Christians by symbols such the cross or the dove. Teams wear blue caps, polo shirts and jackets bearing the words ‘Street Pastor’ in white.

The pastors’ main objective is to approach the social problems surrounding the nighttime economy in constructive and effective ways. Following Isaac and Davies,

*Street* has become a prefix that conveys the absence of structure [and] has been adopted for its currency, for its rawness, edginess and ability to update or remarket. A Street Pastor believes that the streets of our towns and cities are places of opportunity to help and care for people. (2009: 19–20; italics in original)

The Cardiff Street Pastors operate under the umbrella of the Ascension Trust, a national church-led governing body for several community initiatives, and are run by Ignite, a local Christian youth ministry. The ministry’s general director and part-time coordinator are the sole paid members of the Street Pastor scheme. Their basic tasks are administration, raising funds, recruiting new members, facilitating the obligatory 12-day training and education programmes, networking and taking care of the pastors’ individual needs. They also regularly go on patrol with the Street Pastor teams.

Street Pastors are committed volunteers. They are ready not only to do dirty work (picking partygoers literally out of the gutter and cleaning the vomit off them) but also to invest £300 in their own uniform clothing and training. In Cardiff, the pastors operate from a so-called ‘night-base’, a church building that borders on the inner city’s most crowded nightlife area. Street Pastoring starts at 10.00 pm on a Friday or Saturday night.
Before the pastors head off, a number of police officers will normally arrive for an informal meeting lasting five or six minutes. The Senior Street Pastor in charge of the teams gives a short reading from the Scriptures and offers a brief prayer for a fruitful and safe night out. The police brief the Street Pastors on what is happening locally – for example, if there are specific events, such as a football match, and what the atmosphere feels like in the city. After this meeting, everybody signs an attendance sheet, the senior Street Pastors check their radios and two or three mixed teams, male and female, leave the base to merge themselves ‘in the rhythm of the night’ [and] ‘to contrive opportunities to engage with those on the street’ (Middleton and Yarwood, 2015: 509). The nightly shifts end at around 4.00 am on a Saturday or Sunday morning.

Drawing on Valverde’s (2010) analytical framework of security governance, my aspiration in the succeeding sections is to uncover what Street Pastors do (their ‘practices’) in Cardiff’s night-time economy, which ‘techniques’ they use within time, space and judicial dimensions (‘scope’), and why they carry out their voluntary work (their ‘logics’ or ‘rationales’). In so doing, there is an assumption that Street Pastors share a degree of consensus about the logics behind their actions. A second assumption is that a sequence of observable actions carried out by the pastors and their ability to express themselves about those actions will reveal the justification for what they do. Street Pastors are able to ‘turn inwards’ and talk about their ‘everyday life attitudes and behaviour’ (Adler et al., 1987: 219) in a reflective way.

Practices

Street Pastors, in general, envisage their primary role as ‘keeping people safe’ by looking after vulnerable, often drunk, partygoers. They depict this mission as offering people ‘care’ (interview #11, Street Pastor) and ‘parenthood’ (interview #17, Street Pastor). The basic activity of the Street Pastors is to walk around Cardiff’s city centre presenting a visible, uniformed presence patrolling the streets. Nights can be quiet and dull, but the pastors are mostly kept busy with numerous calls and requests for help. Their practices and techniques can be described as follows.

Street Pastors exercise informal social control and respond to (potential) crime and disorder problems. If they think that something is happening that does not feel right, the pastors take a step back, wait for a bit, observe a little and, if necessary, interact with the people concerned. Indeed, as Sheard (2011) indicates, the experience of ‘clubbing’, often described in positive terms of flirting, dancing and pleasure, can be disturbing, fearful, even traumatic, especially for women. For example, some women panic about ‘spiked’ drinks (drinks mixed with rape drugs), about being left alone and about being assaulted. These fears are not exclusive to women. Men can also become vulnerable if they are drunk and disoriented: their money could be stolen; they are at risk of losing their phones; they might leave their bus ticket, ID card or passport lying around. In response, Street Pastors stay close to people and recover lost possessions. The pastors will also pick up abandoned bottles and glasses, and bin them to avoid them being used as weapons. If the atmosphere among partygoers becomes heated, Street Pastors try to interrupt and diffuse escalation before a flashpoint is reached. Most of the pastors do not come across as physically strong, but they apply social skills to the situation, engaging people in
conversation, making troublemakers smile, or doing something unexpected that knocks people off balance and defuses the situation.

Street Pastors share information with others. They have regular contact with a wide variety of people in Cardiff’s inner city: police, bouncers, paramedics, ‘Charlie Romeo’ (the CCTV control room), taxi marshals, partygoers and tourists. The pastors also incorporate the intelligence they gather into their weekly reports for police use. Take this notification, for example:

Some time ago, I reported that there was a guy who was always parked on the junction of Wharton Street and St Mary’s Street. He used to be in a BMW, and I can’t find my report to confirm it was the same car, but it was definitely the same guy, bald and Afro/Caribbean in appearance. Haven’t seen him for a long time but he was back tonight. He was sat in a black BMW, registration number [anonymized], and was parked up with his engine running on both occasions we walked past, and he must have been there at least two hours. He was just sat there with his window down waiting. Don’t know what he was doing but it appeared suspicious. (Street Pastor report, 11 January 2014)

Other rich data collected by the Street Pastors flow to the NHS and the City Council. In particular, information about pubs and clubs where youngsters had their last drink too many can be used as a ‘wake-up call’ for the owners of those premises serving youngsters too much alcohol. Street Pastors also keep track of things such as public urination or waste piling up, in an effort to help the local authorities prevent more serious disorder by deploying portable lavatories and extra street sweepers.

Street Pastors perform many duties that involve ‘emotional labour’ (Hochschild, 1979): they sit down with drunken revellers to offer them solace and concrete help. On these occasions, the pastors might have shorter or lengthier conversations with partygoers, share a joke, listen while people pour their hearts out or put their arm around a distraught person:

Young people come for a hug. Certainly in Wales most of us think: ‘you can’t touch, you can’t’. Do you know what? People need a hug sometimes, that’s all they desire. I’ve got these great strapping lads, six footers, and they want to be hugged in the middle of the street. (Interview #9, Street Pastors)

When things really get out of hand, the Street Pastors provide first aid or call 999 for back-up from police and ambulance services. In general, however, they prefer to pick up a wheelchair from their night-base or from one of the nearby hotels to bring a drunk to the Alcohol Treatment Centre – in effect a field hospital for the night-time economy. In addition to that, Street Pastors distribute candy bars to the homeless, plastic water bottles to sober up partygoers, and pink flip-flops to girls who are unable to walk in their high heels. These flip-flops, especially, have made the Street Pastors famous. Partygoers take them home as fashionable ‘trophies of the night’ and courteously nickname the pastors ‘flip-flop angels’.

And finally, Street Pastors pray outside on the streets if the situation calls for it (see also Collins-Mayo, 2013). The pastors never take the initiative themselves, but rather wait for people to prompt the action. This is what happened on one night out:
We met two homeless sitting in a doorway. One of them, a guy with a sympathetic but marked face, asked the female Street Pastor to pray for them. The other instantly told her to ‘back off’. His mate begged him to behave properly, because ‘Street Pastors are Christians; they are good people’. When we walked off, the female Street Pastor prayed to herself that Jesus’ mercy may find a way to this poor man’s heart, bless him. (Observation #4, 15 August 2014)

Not every Street Pastor prays that easily because they were reticent, not seeking to foist their faith on people. One respondent said: ‘if I pray I use my own little time and space rather than standing over others’ (interview #23, Street Pastor). Street Pastors, in the end, are not Street Preachers.

**Logics**

Street Pastors offer a variety of accounts of their voluntary work in Cardiff’s night-time economy. For a start, being involved in the banter of the night can be genuine fun – the crowds, the neon lights, the buzz: ‘What I particularly like about this job? The unknown. You never know where you’re going to and who you are going to help’ (observation #2, 19 July 2014; informal chat with a Street Pastor). Also, partygoers can be entertaining when they dress up as clowns, try to see how many of them can get into a phone box or propose marriage to the Street Pastors:

Girl, tipsy: ‘Do you have shoes for me? I can’t walk on my high heels anymore’ – Street Pastor kneels down and puts a pair of pink flip-flops on her feet.
Girl: ‘You’re the nicest man I’ve ever met. Are you married? You are? Can I share you with your wife, then? Perhaps Mondays to Wednesdays?’ – Street Pastor laughs.
After the girl took a ‘selfie’ with the Street Pastor team, she wanders off. (Observation #1, 12 July 2014)

A second, frequent, theme is that working in a team gives Street Pastors new or renewed direction in life. Some of them have made friends because of their voluntary work. One pastor felt that he more or less owed his paid job to things he has learned from being a Street Pastor (interview #17, Street Pastor), while another said she had come on board after winding down her professional career (interview #2, Night-Base Team). These motives are personally oriented, but the altruistic motive of meeting the dire needs of vulnerable people is also a driver. Pastors see it as their moral obligation to serve partygoers in a night-time economy that thrives on massive commercial interests.

For this reason, Street Pastors expressed a general apprehension about how Cardiff’s pub and club industry has developed over the past few decades. According to them, partygoers are increasingly seduced into buying beer, wine and strong ‘alcopops’ in a setting where ‘enjoying life to the max’ has become the norm. Youngsters have easy access to alcohol in bars and supermarkets, celebrate a ‘me culture’ and drink their sorrows away, a proportion of them continuing to drink until they pass out. This critical view of Cardiff’s night-time economy is occasionally reinforced by individual experiences. Street Pastors
also recall their own life histories as they ‘have been there and done that’ themselves. Someone said in interview:

Being an active alcoholic, I was fortunate I didn’t drink through the day, but the moment I finished work I was on it like a lunatic, just to get peace and serenity. … My husband banned me from going out, because I would black out and end up God knows where … I then stopped drinking …. What motivates me to be a Street Pastor? I am recognizing something. … I have so much compassion for people who have wet themselves, lying in their own vomit … because that was me. (Interview #19, Street Pastor)

That said, alongside the many reasons that prompt Street Pastors to take up this voluntary work, their Christian faith is a root motivation for what they do. The pastors locate themselves within a solid religious tradition, which presents a sense of unwavering truth ‘more so than would be gained from other social identities’ (Ysseldyk et al., 2010: 61). As several of them elucidated:

My motivation is to share the love of God in me, [because] I know I am loved and accepted by Him. (Interview #8, Street Pastor)

We feel God’s love inside of us. That is what makes us Christians. … We are not doing it with our own strength. We are doing it with God’s strength. God helps us. (Interview #13, Night-Base Team)

God has redeemed us, and it is because of that we want to help. (Interview #14, Street Pastor)

In effect, Street Pastors do their volunteering explicitly as Christians for whom the city of Cardiff offers an alluring transcendency that lends ordinary things ‘something of its own radiance’: people, events and happenings ‘gain a special quality in the eye of the religious beholder’ (Van Harskamp, 2008: 13). So, for instance, the pastors pray about becoming volunteers, see themselves as instruments of a divine revelation and speak unblushingly about ‘miracles’ or ‘God instances’ taking place in the night-time economy. Street Pastoring, in other words, is more than just being kind and looking after intoxicated youngsters: it is a calling.

**Theoretical reflections**

**Securitas**

By returning to my proposition of ‘security practices’ to delineate the Street Pastors’ voluntary work, questions arise about the ‘scope’ (time, space and jurisdiction) and ‘techniques’ (methods, equipment) embedded in their actions (Valverde, 2010). Clearly, the pastors’ actions have a built-in temporality as they customarily go out on Friday and Saturday nights. This is in harmony with the routines of the police, taxi marshals, bouncers and NHS staff with whom they cooperate in the night-time economy.

There is also a limited spatial locus to the pastors’ actions: they confine themselves to Cardiff’s city centre, more specifically to those parts of the city with clubs and pubs. This
is where they see that the need for safety and security is greatest. In terms of jurisdiction, the Street Pastors’ powers are no different from those of any other citizen. They do not arrest intoxicated partygoers or use any force against them. This peaceful approach is strongly reflected in the methods Street Pastors deploy and the equipment they carry. The pastors’ techniques of security governance centre on talking to people, listening to them and, if necessary, helping them get home safely. They have no other materials at their disposal than confectionery, bottles of water, flip-flops and wheelchairs.

As we can see from the above, in addition to protecting people against each other, as the police usually do, the Street Pastors’ voluntary efforts can be interpreted as people being protected by each other. Security, in this sense, can be equated with Geborgenheit – a German word for security that ‘evokes an immediately positive sense of sheltered-ness, nested-ness, and well-being’ (Hutta, 2009: 252). The image of a mother and father who unconditionally protect their child is apposite. Indeed, the pastors themselves frequently talked about ‘parenthood’ in describing their work. Although the night-time economy is undeniably the domain of a heavy police presence, robust bouncers and sophisticated security cameras, the Cardiff Street Pastors create an additional sphere where ‘security’ is more about ‘giving love’ than about ‘fighting crime’. Interestingly, in so doing, the pastors remind us that the concepts of safety and security (securitas) do not inevitably take us back to the violent state at the core of the Hobbesian view, but have much broader etymological assertions (see Schrimm-Heins, 1991, 1992). What does this empirical observation add to theoretical debates about security in the field of criminology?

In contrast to influential criminological scholarship that is oriented towards resolving the problem of (in)security by controlling, punishing and excluding miscellaneous violators of a neoliberal judicial order (for example, Wacquant, 2009), Street Pastors look after revellers who are drunk and confused. Their case challenges the assumption that providing security necessarily implies suppressing crime and disorder by banning the ‘flawed’ partygoer from the nightlife district. A Street Pastor clarifies:

Newspaper articles [show] terrible representations of humanity. But there are no names, there are no ages, there are no histories. It is all very depersonalized and very clean, so you can box people off, put them on a shelf … and leave them there. (Interview #14)

In contrast, the pastors adopt a ‘convivial’ style of reasoning ‘that is serious about the heterogeneous company and messy business of living together’ (Hinchliffe and Whatmore, 2006: 134) and rescues security from a discourse that is overarching infused with negativity. To recall the antique roots of securitas, being secure denotes a mental state ‘wherein concerns and worries have been put off to the side’ (Hamilton, 2013: 5). ‘In other words,’ as Robinson (2011: 7) writes, ‘a feeling of security is most often the product of feeling attached and included – a feeling that others are “here” with you to provide support.’ It is therefore important to consider ‘care’ and ‘care work’ as essential features of security governance. As the Street Pastor manager underlines:

The caring aspect is the great thing about being called ‘Street Pastors’. ... And what is a Street Pastor when you look at the derivation of it? It’s a shepherd, and we’re there to care for the sheep. Who are the sheep? Everybody. (Interview #12)
Vulnerable and lost partygoers, for their part, may experience comfort, assurance and peace – a positive psychological condition of ‘being carefree’ (Brands and Schwanen, 2014) – thanks to the Street Pastors’ activity. Seen in this way, positive readings of security as care reflect the theoretical appeal of communitarian philosophy, which holds the promise of a ‘moral voice’ – a mentality and motivation – of virtue, empathy and affection, even for those who do not immediately belong to a core group of friends, families and close acquaintances (Sevenhuijsen, 1998). Along similar lines, criminologists may choose to transfer their focus from suppressing fears and threats to the stimulation of ‘sustainable’ security practices that can ‘turn vicious into virtuous circles’ (Crawford, 2014: 52). The provision of care in that way offers a promising channel that enables people to open up to each other, balances the harsh outcomes of contemporary security policies and creates spaces of trust and solidarity in society.

Certitudo

It is important to stress that securitas – understood as providing safety and security through care – has had an ambivalent reputation in Christianity since the time of Saint Augustine of Hippo (354–430), an ancient theologian. The psychological outcome of ‘being without care’ – unconcerned, untroubled, tranquil – is perceived as a condition that may degenerate into indifference, neglect, ignorance and the elimination of care (Hamilton, 2013). Therefore, the ‘logics’ or ‘rationales’ (Valverde, 2010) behind the work Street Pastors do should be understood in terms of certitudo, not securitas. In turn, this relates security to notions of spiritual ‘certainty’ and ‘certitude’: the hope of salvation – of being safe in, and saved by, a higher power. Martin Luther is famous for his plea not to trust in earthly securitas but to opt for certitudo as a divine gift embraced by grace (Schrimm-Heins, 1991, 1992). People are justified by faith alone – a Protestant doctrine that ties in with the existential human need to be seen, known and nurtured and that facilitates the incentive to make contact with others.

In a similar way, Street Pastors feel actively encouraged to engage with vulnerable partygoers in the night-time economy. On one level, the logic of their certitudo-driven project is that a caring approach towards drunken people adds a friendly addition, or even an alternative, to the strong arm of the law. Street Pastors abide by the central Christian message of God as love (agape) that demands responsive and responsible commitment to the other. For example, during interview several of them alluded to the Biblical story of the Good Samaritan:

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. … But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. (Luke 10: 30–34; King James translation)

It is the belief of the Street Pastors that God recognizes and endorses each person individually, and therefore people must love each other as equals. This is exactly the notion
explicated in their charitable delivery of security through care. Two pastors said that, ideally, their presence would even positively enhance the moral consciousness and attitude of partygoers:

Partygoers may be aware of somebody who is quite stressed and try to find a Street Pastor to go and help that person. … I think there is almost a psychological change in people witnessing us. (Interview #1, Night-Base Team)

Partygoers might think ‘if we’re putting these volunteers through all this trouble, we won’t get so drunk next time’. Maybe they are thoughtful about that. (Interview #25, Street Pastor)

The Street Pastors’ voluntary work brings together spirituality, ethics and care, offering partygoers not just safety and security ‘but the associated ethos and values – in much the same way that the Olympics offers not simply the opportunities of sport, but also the ethos of Olympism, embodying values such as fair play and peacebuilding’ (Robinson, 2008: 130). Put differently, by meeting role models who are giving without asking, (adolescent) people perhaps shift their view of the world as an essentially self-centred Hobbesian battlefield and change their behaviour accordingly. This is the assertion of several Street Pastors who believe that their presence might inspire revellers to behave themselves, to desist from starting a fight or from creating insecure situations in other ways.

On a second and deeper level, because of their faith, the Street Pastors are able and willing to put themselves at risk and bring the church to Cardiff’s nightlife areas. The logic of certitudo, it seems, positions them psychologically to be self-confident, stay firm and carry out this voluntary work to help others. As Gregersen stresses,

The teaching of Jesus suggests a dauntingly positive view of human risk taking. In the parable of the talents (Matthew 25: 14–30; Luke 19: 11–27), a master hands over to his servants a certain amount of money. Some go out to trade with it and come back with even more money. One, however, is so terrified of his master that he immediately digs a hole in the ground and hides the talent entrusted to him. As the story goes, this strategy of safety is punished by the master, who takes the fearful servant’s one talent and hands it over to the servant who risked the most. … The point is clear: the strategy of safety fails certainly, whereas risk taking may pay off, and if it succeeds it will do so abundantly. (2003: 367–8)

Seemingly irrational aspects of Christianity thus may have compelling mental benefits for the Street Pastors. They experience ‘God as a secure base’ (Beck, 2006: 126), a spiritual sensation that gives them the strength to immerse themselves in a not always very pleasant, alcohol-drowned night-time environment. Street Pastors, in effect, reap the courage and ‘motivation for caring about others in spite of our inclination to do the contrary’ (Grant, 1996: 18). This makes certitudo a vehicle for an ‘unashamedly positive attitude to security’ (Waever, 2008: 101). It opens up a mechanism for coping with anxiety that stimulates Street Pastors to create networks of community, solidarity and care in a night-time environment shaped by neoliberal – commercial – politics.
Conclusion and discussion

This paper has examined the work of Street Pastors in Cardiff’s night-time economy and their motivation. It has also reflected on theoretical meanings of safety and security that flow from my empirical observations. These observations indicate that Street Pastors are engaged in practices that advance informal guardianship, that stimulate information-sharing with the police, the NHS and the City Council, that offer emotional support to disoriented partygoers, and that allow for prayer during their shifts. The motivations underlying their volunteering are multidimensional, but Christian faith is the fundamental driver for the pastors’ presence on the streets.

My empirical findings from Cardiff cannot be generalized to the UK at large. Although Street Pastors schemes are operational around the country, their local practices may diverge. And yet, along the lines of ‘theoretical generalisation’ (Yin, 2003), the Street Pastors’ actions make it clear that security is more than a static judicial–political term pervaded by negative connotations of control, repression and exclusion. By affording individual care to intoxicated partygoers, the pastors relieve people of concern and anxiety – the logic of securitas – and provide them with security (or Geborgenheit). The pastors themselves, however, understand the basis of their faith in terms of certitudo, not securitas. Their internal disposition is optimistic and confident – a ‘certainty of mind’ that descends from Heaven, from a personally felt relationship with God. As such, Street Pastors embody a risk-taking logic in their social environment. They are not afraid to mingle with intoxicated, and occasionally aggressive, partygoers.

From a critical perspective, it must be maintained that there is as yet no evidence base ‘for the efficacy of Street Pastor schemes’ (Johns et al., 2009: 52). Do the pastors, as some claim, really influence the moral compass of intoxicated partygoers in such a way as to change their drinking habits? Do they really prevent crime and disorder? Do they really have a calming impact on the nightlife atmosphere, or are there just too few pastors around to achieve such an ambitious goal? Further research is needed to estimate the effect of this voluntary work on, for example, crime rates in the UK’s drinking areas.

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Notes

1. www.streetpastors.org.
2. www.ascensiontrust.org.uk.
3. www.igniteme.org.

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