"Christians, out here?" Encountering Street-Pastors in the Post-Secular Spaces of the UK Night-Time Economy

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The Post-Secular City and the Night-time Economy

The idea of the post-secular city has been used to describe an apparent fusion of religion and secularism in urban public life (Molendijk et al 2010; Beaumont and Baker, 2011a). By studying the emerging interactions between religion and urbanism it is possible to understand how complex political and cultural dynamics are played out in particular spaces of the contemporary city (Beaumont and Baker 2011b). Although some forms of religious action have been criticised for their part in the neo-liberal restructuring of the welfare state (Williams et al 2012), some commentators have argued that faith-based actions have the potential bring about beneficial *rapprochements* between secular and religious actors (Cloke 2011; Cloke and Beaumont, 2012).

Although there is a long history of faith groups intervening in the spaces of the city, these have tended to deal with welfare, poverty and exclusion (Commision on Urban Life, 2006; Cloke*, et al.*, 2005, Conradson, 2008), in predominantly *marginal* spaces of the city such as the street corner, the soup kitchen or the homeless refuge (Conradson, 2003, 2006; Cloke*, et al.*, 2007). Yet, more recently, some faith-based-organisations (FBOs) have sought to engage with social issues that have propelled them into central, public and more visible spaces of the city. With this in mind, this paper considers how Street-Pastors have become a widespread presence within the spaces of the British night-time economy. We pay particular attention to the ways in which *encounters* are significant to the creation of post-secular urban space.

Street-Pastors

Street-Pastors are an interdenominational, Christian initiative that aims to 'provide practical help and advice for those at risk of involvement in antisocial behaviour or crime' (Isaac and Davies, 2009, p.31) and to 'care, listen and dialogue' with people on the streets (Street-Pastors, 2012). More specifically, their work focuses on providing on-street care through activities such as first-aid, ensuring the safety of inebriated people, supporting victims of crime and offering counselling. These are delivered via foot-patrols that are undertaken by uniformed volunteers, at night, on the public streets of city centres.

Faith is integral to the work of Street-Pastors: all volunteers must be practising members of a Christian church and prayer is used extensively to support their work. Thus, street-Pastors are supported by teams of 'prayer pastors' who pray for patrols as they work in the city. Overt proselytizing is, however, prohibited by the Street-Pastors' own regulations and pastors are instructed to speak about their faith only when asked. Nevertheless, Street-Pastors regard their work as an attempt to bring 'the church onto the streets' (Isaac and Davies, 2009, p.210) and to engage widely with the public (see also Cloke 2011). This represents a broader theology of 'mission with partnership' (Stevenson, 2009) that is manifest in a desire to engage with the emergency services, local authorities and those working in the night-time economy.

At street level, Street-Pastors aim to fill the gaps left by these agencies. For example, as the 'police are reluctant to engage with individuals drinking

unless they are a harm to themselves, others or property' (Jayne *et al.,* 2010, p.546), Street-Pastors will engage with intoxiated people to ensure that they get home safely or avoid confrontation with others. In many cities, pastors are guided to those needing this kind of help by closed-circuit television (CCTV) operators, the police or door staff. Pastors may also participate in police briefings, receive training from local authority partners and participate in crime and safety forums.

As these spaces are relatively new territories for FBOs, the work of Street-Pastors provides an opportunity to examine how post-secular places are created in contemporary cities (Beaumont and Baker, 2011a). What is noteworthy about Street-Pastors is the speed and extent at which they have become a presence on British night-time streets. The first patrols were established in London in 2003 and there are now over one hundred and fifty in the UK serving in a range of urban environments from large cities to market towns. While these foundations have undoubtedly been laid through strategic partnership working (for example between The Ascension Trust[1] and the police), what interests us in this paper are the practices that these faith groups have used to establish post-secular spaces in the heart of the night-time economy. Building on the socio-cultural turn in studies of volunteering (Conradson, 2003), we contribute to work that has called for greater attention to be placed on the ways in which religious faith and ethics are performed to create liminal spaces of understanding in urban areas (Cloke et al 2007, Cloke and Beaumont 2012).

The Night-time Economy

The night-time economy has often been associated with alcohol-related crime (Bromley and Nelson, 2002) but recent work has attempted to provide a more naunced account of going-out that highlights the plurality of experiences in the night-time of the city (Hubbard 2005, Jayne*, et al.*, 2008, Jayne*, et al.*, 2010). This contributes to a growing literature that is drawing attention to ways in which urban space and social relations are produced and re-produced through mundane, everyday acts (Edensor, 2010) that lend the city a sense of rhythm that determines how people and places are encountered (Middleton 2010, 2011). Ash Amin (2012, p.62) argues:

> 'mingling in urban public space ... is about people with plural affiliations passing through, carrying multiple cares, sticking to familiar spaces, brushing past each other, bringing a host of pre-formed dispositions into the encounter.'

Similarly, a night-out can be characterised by a rhythmic engagement with the city. In part, this is structured by licencing laws (Hadfield and Measham 2009) and policing (Hobbs et al. 2003, Reynolds 2009, Yarwood 2007, van Liempt

[1] A national umbrella organisation that promotes and regulates the work of Street-Pastors. Local Street-Pastor groups are launched at a church commissioning service that is attended by Street-Pastors, representatives from the Ascension Trust, local churches and representatives from local services, including the police and local council, emphasizing their enrolment into formal city networks.

and van Aalst, forthcoming) but is mostly a product of on-street routines that make up a 'patterned ground' in which movement is steered by 'habit, purposeful intent and the instruction of assembled technologies, rules, signs and symbols' (Amin, 2012, 72). These might include the bus to town to meet friends; moving between venues; dancing; being allowed (or not) into clubs, as well as queuing for taxis, take-ways and cash-points.

Encounters in the night-time economy have often been associated with negative encounters that have been driven by aggression (Thrift 2005) or disrespect for others (Valentine 2008). If the law is broken or if injury occurs, members of the public may enter the rhythms of the police or paramedics working to shift patterns and patrolling particular routes that see them threading through the public spaces of the night-time economy (Yarwood, 2007, Reynolds, 2009). Yet, public urban space can also offer up opportunities for new, unexpected and rewarding encounters too (Jacobs 1961). Recent work stresses that many social encounters also foster kindness, citizenship and the creation of the 'good city' (Amin, 2006; Laurier and Philo, 2006; Jayne, *et al.*, 2010). It is these kinds of encounters that Street-Pastors seek out by walking meaningfully within and across the rhythms of the night-time economy.

De Certeau's (1984, 2000) suggests walking might be viewed as a form of resistance in urban areas. Rather than assuming pedestrians are shaped by urban space, he argues that how and where people walk or perform in cities is a form of resistance against orders imposed by planners, archictects and other urban managers. Although his work has been criticised for its emphasis on the political over the mundane (Middleton 2010), it nevertess draws attention to the way in which walking as a deliberate and routine act can help shape urban space. Following de Certeau, Street-Pastor patrols might be seen as a form of post-secular resistance to the perceived troubles of the night-time economy although, conversely, they also work with those who seek to manage urban space (particularly CCTV operators). Consequently, while Street-Pastors claim they have helped to reduce anti-social behaviour, have the support of the police, and provide a welfare service rather than evangelism (Isaac and Davies, 2009), Johns et al (2009) argue their work represents a form of moralistic policing. For these authors the mere presence of Pastors on the streets draws attention to their religion and, with it, an implied set of values about behaviour in urban space. Either way, Street-Pastors have challenged and, arguably, affected the socio-rhythmic spaces of a night out through the creation of post-secular space in the public places of the night-time economy. This paper goes on to examine how walking and encounters have been fundamental to the performance of faith and the creation of these spaces.

Research Context

This paper is borne out of a national study of Street-Pastors that we undertook in 2010-2011. Our research comprised of a national survey of groups, interviews with key actors and, most significantly for this paper, a

series of mobile participant observations and interviews[2] with Street-Pastor groups in a range of urban localities that included London, other large cities and market towns across the UK. This 'go along' method (Kusenbach, 2003) involved us observing the experiences of Street-Pastors whilst providing the opportunity for informal discussions emerging from events that unfolded during the night patrol. It also facilitated valuable interactions with other key actors, such as door-staff and the police, which enabled us to explore their reactions/reflections on the increasing presence and role of Street-Pastors. Informal follow up interviews also took place during tea breaks and at the end of the night back at the Street-Pastor base which provided a means of discussing more fully the shared events and experiences of the night's activities.

The paper focuses on the nightly encounters of Street-Pastors and is structured around two principal concerns. First, it examines how Street-Pastors have used rhythmic practices to synchronise their activities with the rhythms of the night-time economy in order to maximise their value to its users. Second, it explores ways in which Street-Pastors have adopted a strategy of *encounters* to engage with urban space and activities. We use a series of boxed vignettes to draw from observations made in nine urban places. They are ordered in such a way as to tell a composite story of a night out with Street-Pastors and, in doing so, capture how patrolling rhythms unfold as the night progresses. By engaging with notions of routine it is not only possible to acknowledge the significance of the overarching structures of Street-Pastor patrols (O'Dell, 2010; Yarwood 2012) but also to capture the dynamic spontaneity of the unfolding action.

Routine practices of being a Street-Pastor

Street-Pastors patrol in the spaces of the night-time economy at weekends. Most patrols start at 10 o'clock and finish in the early hours of the next morning. Few of the Street-Pastors we spoke to were themselves consumers of the night-time economy and so patrolling its spaces were frequently considered a disruption to their usual weekend routines (Ehn and Lofgren, 2010):

> *'I think the most negative time is on a Saturday… from about 4 until about 9 o'clock I am shattered and all I want to do is go to bed and have a bottle of wine and watch rubbish on TV and I don't want to go out and it looks cold and it might rain and all of that. Once I'm there, I'm absolutely fine and I have plenty of energy and I love it!'*

> (Lauren, Street-Pastor, large city)

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[2] Particular analytic attention has been paid to the discursive organisation of the interview accounts (see Edwards, 1997; Potter, 2004) as a means of avoiding essentialising Street-Pastor patrols and treating them as self-evident activities.

In the above interview extract Lauren is responding to a question about whether there are any negative aspects of being a Street Pastor. For Lauren, the less positive features of her Street Pastor experiences are expressed through stating how she is usually "shattered" in the hours leading up to her patrol night, whilst highlighting her concerns about the potential weather conditions. However, she then attends to balancing her experiences of the build up to patrolling as 'negative time' by drawing attention to feelings of energy and enjoyment that emerge once she's there. Such trepidation and excitement was attended to by several Street-Pastors we spoke to as patrol night approaches.

When pastors arrive at their base (usually a church building), these feelings are frequently reflected in the group dynamics of the teams (Box 1). The time before a patrol also provides an opportunity for pastors to prepare both physically and spiritually for their patrols whilst marking a transformation from their ordinary routines to those of a Street-Pastor.

Box 1

On arrival at the Street-Pastor base, a sense of excitement spills from the room. People chatter animatedly whilst pleasantries are exchanged and predictions are made about the sort of 'night out' that is ahead of them. There is a genuine buzz of anticipation that mirrors the preparations of the countless revellers they will encounter (JM observation, large city)

The atmosphere is very relaxed and calm, and could almost be described as one of lethargy. This is in stark contrast to the excitement and buzz before going out with some of the larger Street-Pastor groups. This lethargy is reflected in the content of the prayers made before they embark on their monthly patrol within this London borough as they pray, amongst other things, for the energy to see them through the night. (JM observation, large city)

Five people gather in a city-centre church hall. Four are Street-Pastors, the other a minister who co-ordinates the scheme. Outside, dance music pumps from a nearby club. By contrast, the hall itself is quiet. All are looking forward to the night-out but have been shaken by the illness of a regular and popular pastor who cannot join them. I note that all are middle aged and would not normally be in the city-centre at this time (RY observation, medium-sized city).

Group prayers call for strength, guidance and safety (both for Street-Pastors and also those working in or enjoying the city) and Bible verses are read to emphasise the spiritual dimensions of patrolling. Prior to prayer, pastors will make ready their kit:

> "*We will then, at base, get out the mobile phones and the walkie-talkies and charge them up. That's the first job. We get the patrol bags out, and the patrol bags contain a lot of equipment, a lot of heavy equipment. So we've got water bottles that we carry, about five water*

bottles, about six to eight pairs of flip flops. Six to eight pairs of flip flops. A huge assortment of first aid equipment, including a rescue mask for mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. We carry a torch, batteries, pen, pads, mouth tube, sharps box."

(Simon, Street-Pastor group leader, large city)

Simon describes the routines of preparing for a 'typical' night patrol and in so doing draws attention to the level of preparation involved in terms of the actual quantity of equipment the Street Pastors carry. However, the detail that Simon provides in the interview extract in relation to this equipment also serves to emphasise its significance to their patrolling activities. This array of equipment, as our paper goes on to show, enables Street-Pastors to encounter a diverse constituency of people in a range of situations and spaces.

As part of the preparations, volunteers are organised into mixed gender teams of four to five people. The number of teams deployed reflects the number of trained pastors available and the size of the city. Each group has a leader who is equipped with the radio and/or mobile-phone to communicate with the pastors' base and, when available, the police, CCTV and door staff. Another person carries a form to record the night's encounters and actions. This includes space to log significant social encounters, tally the number of objects (such as glass bottles and lost property) that are picked up, and list items which are given out, such as water-bottles and flip flops. Teams patrol together but may break off in pairs, often walking on either sides of the pavement. Pastors are instructed to always stay within eye contact of the rest of the group for safety and insurance purposes.

The patrols themselves occupy a distinct set of time-space routines based around two-hour shifts punctuated by breaks back at a central base established in a church or community centre. The base itself is an important fixed space in the mobility of the patrol, providing a start and end point and providing a place for refuge and prayer. Each team follows a set route that has often been planned with the police to ensure the safety and efficiency of the work of Street-Pastors. Sometimes only streets covered by closed circuit television are patrolled. This is partly for reasons of safety but also because CCTV operators will direct Street-Pastors to incidents that are suited to their skills. Once on the streets, however, police and pastors maintain their own patrol patterns and activities. Although they occasionally meet to exchange pleasantries and information, both are maintain some distance as a means of demonstrating their organisational independence. Overall, the geographies of these patrols reflect that Street-Pastors have been enrolled into wider, secular networks of city management.

Routes are planned to allow Pastors to patrol at a slow walking space, giving them time to both meet and engage with people. However, as can be seen in the next example, the repetition of Street-Pastor routes and activities also aligns with the rhythmicity of urban outreach work detailed by Hall (2010):

> *"the routes .. were chosen for us but we developed them. The routes mean that roughly every 20 minutes we'll be round again .. I learnt that if you do consistent routes, people get to know that you'll be round again …. And that's what we operate. We can be found, that's why CCTV can call me in December last year and say WPC [Woman Police Constable] needs your help, because they could see me, they knew where to find my teams. And we were available instantly. So it's proven to be a reliable and conclusive method of patrolling. So we're not just willy-nilly where shall we go tonight? It's all set"*

> (Simon, Street-Pastor group leader, large city)

Simon positions his account of patrolling routes in relation to the professional nature in which they develop. For example, he emphasises the training in which he learnt about the importance of the consistency of routes and how they are 'a reliable and conclusive method of patrolling' as opposed to being 'just willy-nilly'. He also stresses the professional conduct of the teams patrolling these routes in relation to the other agencies they interact with, such as CCTV operators and the police, and how they are led by team leaders and can be 'available instantly'. Simon's account articulates how patrols aim to follow a routine that maximises the chances of encountering people on the streets and is informed by training and other, professional agencies

However, the extract also highlights how these patrols show an awareness of the rhythms of the night-time economy and how pastors, through regular patrols, develop a good knowledge of the social geographies of their towns and cities. Thus, early in the evening they might take the opportunity to talk to the staff of take-away outlets or door staff while they were not busy (see for example Box 2). Later, Street-Pastors position themselves at places that are busy, such as pubs at closing time or taxi-ranks, so that they can diffuse any tension or help people in need. For as one Street-Pastor explained: "*the rationale for that is that that's where there are lots of concentrations of drinkers and partygoers and revellers.*"

Box 2

As we set off on the first patrol of the night, the pace at which we walk is very steady and measured. It feels strange to walk so leisurely at night through the city, even more so as the temperature drops. There is a deliberate feel to the patrolling pace and rhythm that is difficult to explain. One Street-Pastor points out how they avoid 'making beelines for people' and walk slowly as a means of avoiding appearing confrontational and authoritative. I am struck by the significance of these observations in relation to how the Street-Pastor interact with other people in these city centre spaces. (JM observation, large city)

Mid-way through one patrol, the pastors stop on a busy part of the night-club strip where they simply stand and watch what is going on. I'm informed that this allows the pastors to 'tune into' the night and get a sense of the night's atmosphere. In this static position, we become aware of the movement and

flow of the city as groups of revellers pass by on their way from club to club in flurries of noise, laughter, shouting and colour. (RY observation, large city)

Street-Pastors are also aware of events that influenced or disrupted these patterns. In one market town, for example, Pastors knew that the number of people on a night out varied according to the day that people were paid. At the start of the month, close to pay-day, people would spend money travelling to a nearby city to go out. Towards the end of the month, with less disposable income, people elected to stay in their home town or not go out at all. Thus, the night-time economy followed a monthly rhythm that was well known and anticipated by Pastors.

Although we have emphasised the rhythmic nature of patrolling and the night-time economy, these routes, places and events are not set in stone and patrols can deviate for three reasons.

First, as Street-Pastors are practising Christians many believe that they can be called to a place by the Holy Spirit. All Street-Pastors we interviewed re-countered experiences through expressions of faith such as when they felt God had intervened in their work. This is exemplified in an extract from an interview with a senior pastor who recounts arriving at a park bench the moment a blanket blew away from a sleeping homeless man:

> "*And as I open the gate to go in, make sure he's okay, the space blanket lifts off with the wind and falls on the floor. I went over to him and the best way of describing him is he had a drunken snore. He was laid out on the bench. And my water bottle is at his head. And I picked up the space blanket and I folded it round him and I tucked it in, all the way along, and I had to walk away.. If I hadn't turned up at that second, see I do believe in God-incidences, not coincidences, we turned up at the very second the space blanket blew away.*" (Simon)

For this Pastor, his actions were not only guided by his training and equipment but also positioned through articulations of faith and his belief in "God-incidences. It illustrates the importance placed by Pastors on understanding urban-nightscapes as spiritual and, at the same time, worldly places. Encounters are understood in the same way and are often imbued and understood with divine significance. As Dewsbury and Cloke (2009) note, this reflects a 'spiritual landscapes' in which experiences are understood in relation to 'bodily existence, felt practice and faith in things that are immanent' (696).

Second, patrols can be called, in more earthly terms, by the police, CCTV operators or other actors to deal with an incidences that they require assistance with. Street-Pastors have become valued by these agencies for their ability to deal with people who are vulnerable and to provide practical help, emotional support or counselling. Examples might include walking with a lone woman who has lost her friends, administering minor first aid or assisting a person incapacitated by drink to a taxi. It is not in the remit of the

emergency services to deal with these people as they have not committed a crime (in the case of the police) or are not seriously injured thus meriting the attention of the paramedics (Jayne et al, 2010).

Finally, Street-Pastors will intervene if they feel their help is needed or if people ask for it. The foundations for the way in which people are treated are laid in the formal training undertaken by Street-Pastors. Once selected for training, all volunteers must complete a twelve week course that covers a range of skills (including first aid, use of radios, drug and alcohol awareness, how to diffuse aggression and so on) that is delivered by a range of secular and religious agencies. Pastors have been criticised for intervening only when asked, thereby neglecting those in most need of help but unable or unwilling to ask for help (Johns et al 2009). Our observations did not support this idea but, rather, revealed the unfolding of a particular ethos of care that sought to identify and help those who are deemed to be most vulnerable at night, usually young women. For example, on one occasion the group found a large man physically slumped and conscious in a doorway. He was very drunk and had difficulty reaching a taxi. At the same time, a lone woman was seen walking down the street who was visibly upset and drunk. The decision was taken to support the latter instead of the former as it was felt the woman was much more vulnerable. After spending much time with her, the team returned to the spot where the man had been and, upon finding it vacated, prayed for his safety at the end of the evening. This spiritual support is a key feature of their practices as Street-Pastors.

Box 3

On this inaugural patrol, the Street-Pastors were sent off to opposing corners of the square with instructions that each person/group has to speak to at least three individuals. In other words, each person has to have three 'significant' encounters. They are instructed not to evangelise but to give 'good information' and not initiate conversations about God or religion 'that's unless they (the person encountered) wants to carry on the conversation"…. As we walk around observing the different groups on this first patrol, an observer from the Ascension Trust raises some key issues which he feels need working on in future patrols. He points out how they were walking too quickly and the people they do approach are 'easy targets'. Both of these issues mean they were 'missing people, potentially more vulnerable people' and missing opportunities for 'successful interactions'. He also explains how they are sticking together as a group too much and not breaking off into pairs in order to cover more ground. (JM observation, large city)

The importance of these kinds of encounters to Street-Pastors operation is such that each 'significant' social interaction (see Box 3) occurring on a patrol is logged using record cards noting the nature of the exchange and is usually

supported by supplication from prayer pastors. As the observations in Box 3 illustrate, 'significant' or 'successful' interactions are those that involve a conversation rather than just a greeting. The following discussion explores these encounters in more detail and attempts to position them in relation to the mixing strategies adopted by Street-Pastors.

Rhythmic Encounters

When shadowing patrols, we noted four main ways in which encounters were initiated by Street-Pastors.

i) Patrolling

First, and most significantly, Street-Pastors aim to mix with people out on the streets. They employ a range of strategies to do so but by far the most common approach was simply to say 'hello' to people as patrols walked through the city. Indeed, one Pastor said that she did not like the term patrol and, instead, preferred to think of it simply as 'mixing'. Positive responses to these 'hospitable gestures' (Laurier and Philo 2006, Bell 2007) are perhaps aided by the carnvalesque atmosphere of a city at night. By immersing themselves in the rhythm of the night, pastors are able to contrive opportunities to engage with those in the street. This is one typical example of a conversation that occurred between a Street-Pastor and a man heading from one pub to another:

Man on a night out: '*What are you guys doing*?'
Street-Pastor: '*We're from the Churches … and are helping people to stay safe*'.
Man: '*Someone told me you were Christians*'.
Street-Pastor '*We are*'
Man: '*What, Christians, out here? You're out here*?!'

Amin (2012, 72) considers that 'in this mingling, strangers are less mindful or each other or of the swirls of the crowd' so that '…the possibility of newness always hovers in public spaces .. always demanding those who pass through an ability to respond to the unexpected.' Here the man was startled to find Christians in the midst of the night-time economy rather than, say, church. So, while the presence of Street-Pastors could be a surprise, this surprise also provided the opportunity for dialogue. As we note later, this opens up opportunities for Street-Pastors to discuss their faith.

The surprise expressed by the man indicates that this encounter was significant as it was out-of-the-ordinary to him. It provided a pause within the wider rhythm of the night-time city that juxtaposed with the expected patterns of encounters (Amin, 2005). These pauses are meaningful to Street-Pastors, as Box 4 illustrates.

Box 4

The patrol walked to a busy street corner in the middle of a night-club strip and outside two popular bars. They then simply stood at the side of the pavement and watched what was going on. In this static position, we become aware of the movement and flow of the city as groups of revellers pass by on their way from club to club in flurries of noise, laughter, shouting and colour. Various parties of loud, exuberant revellers spilled past, shouting and laughing and en route to clubs and bars. It was in stark contrast to the stillness and quietness the pastors. The patrol leader said that standing in a place allowed them to 'tune into the night' and be available to anyone who needed them. They were the only people standing still and this seemed at odds with the flow of people along the street. This difference, and perhaps its value to Street-Pastors, was highlighted when one young pastor was spotted by his mates on a night out. They greeted each enthusiastically and the latter encouraged the pastor to join them. After some banter, he returned to his team. By pausing amongst the throng, he had become visible to his friends and prompted another encounter (RY observation, large city)

ii) Working with other agencies

Second, pastors went over to talk to people working in the night-time economy. These included shop keepers or those serving in take-away outlets, many of whom had displayed information about Street-Pastors in their premises. The aim of these encounters was to provide re-assurance to people working at night but also to gain information about the night and how it was proceeding:

> *I can go up to a burger bar person, I can shake their hand, say good evening, "how are you doing? Is everything okay? Are you all quiet?" And they'll chat with me for a bit and then I'll say I'll be round again soon, and they'll know.* (Simon, Street-Pastor group leader, large city)

Most workers we observed responded in a friendly manner although some Street-Pastors reported that door-staff and bouncers had initially been cynical about their efforts. Others highlighted that door-staff had offered to help Pastors out if they ran into any aggressive or violent situations[3].

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[3] There have only been a handful of physical assaults on Street Pastors in the UK which perhaps serves to illustrate how successful their mixing strategies have been.

Figure 1: Street-Pastors in uniform interacting with consumers and providers of the night-time economy (source: authors)

iii)   Kit and Tokens

Thirdly, interactions are enabled and aided by the 'kit' carried by Street-Pastors. A blue, corporate uniform (Figure 1) is the most obvious example of this. The warm, waterproof, practical clothing contrasts noticeable with the ways clubbers are dressed, allowing pastors to be identified from them and, in turn, allowing interaction. During one patrol we observed, one Street-Pastor was very concerned that they had misplaced their Street-Pastor baseball cap. As well as being a significant part of their uniform received upon the successful completion of training, they also make pastors easily identifiable to CCTV operators and police. Upon being probed further, the Street-Pastor also explained that revellers frequently 'stole' the hat to try it on. Without it, the potential resource for interaction was lost.

Indeed, a strategy of giving objects away proved a remarkably successful way of enabling encounters. Water is given to dehydrated drinkers, space blankets to the cold and flip-flops to women who find it difficult to walk in high heels as an evening progresses. For some, receiving something from a Street-Pastor is a trophy of a 'good night' out and we witnessed countless requests of "*have you got any flip-flops*?" from both women and men. It was later revealed that the volume of men asking for flip-flops (usually as a joke) had become so great that some Street-Pastor groups had started handing out lollypops in

response to these requests. The rationale was that although some people did not actually need alternative footwear, it was important that they were given something as to turn people away empty-handed might be perceived as rejection.

Although these gifts are of immense practical value, they also provide a reason for people to talk to pastors for as Laurier et al. (2006) highlight; 'under most circumstances city dwellers do not initiate conversations with people with whom they are unacquainted unless by way of some legitimate mechanism that provides basis for a conversation (14). Objects such as flip-flops provide is a legitimate resource for conversation, or what Sacks (1992) refers to as a 'ticket'.

'Tickets' such as flip-flops provide a mechanism for a conversation and, in doing so, also open up the possibility of conversations about faith. It is important to note that pastors are explicitly forbidden by their teams to preach or attempt to convert the public to their faith; a regulation that is strictly enforced by team leaders. Pastors are, though, encouraged to articulate that they are a Christian organisation. So, when people inevitably asked Pastors what they were doing, who they were and why they were giving goods away, the standard response was that 'they were from local churches and helping to keep people safe'. As Box 5 illustrates, the transformative potential of social interactions beyond the initial encounter are a key motivation for some Street-Pastors to be on the street.

The religious framing of these relationships in the street, especially the streets of the night-time economy, is positioned as an emergent feature of these encounters. The leaflets that Street-Pastors distribute (detailed in Box 5) are an example of a resource, or 'ticket', to initiate social encounters. In this instance it was hoped that it would have a transformative potential beyond that of that social interaction. In other words, it was hoped the leaflet would have some impact on the young woman and her faith.

While Street-Pastors agree not to evangelise overtly, many acknowledge that these conversations allow them an opportunity to talk about their faith. The following is an example of how faith can act as an emergent resource in their night-time encounters:

> *'In some ways it's almost like when you've got young kids asking you about sex, you only tell them the smallest amount that you can get away it and then if they want to know more, they'll ask more ... people might say 'so you're Christians,' so you go, 'yeah we are'. They might say, 'well what do you believe then?' I mean if people ask me outright I would tell them what I believe, but I'm not telling them what to believe and I'll always make that clear. I mean sometimes people come up to us and say, 'will you pray for us,' and if they do that, then yes we will.'* (Lauren)

In the above example the conversation about faith is positioned as recipient led. Hypothetical examples of what "might" be said are reported. The conversation trajectory is generated on the basis of the other party's curiosity. Questions provide the platform for further articulation of the Street-Pastor's faith. The point being that such deviations of faith are claimed as standing in contrast to any persuasive evangelical discourse. Indeed, in this particular example an outright question concerning the religious footing of their patrolling is a general strategy articulated of never telling people what to believe, only what the pastor believes. The sensitive topic of religion is equated in this pastor's discourse to that of imparting the facts of life to children. Religion, just as sex, is only made manifest on the basis of people declaring an interest and then only in terms of the existing beliefs of the pastor. It is not positioned as an evangelical opportunity for converting

someone else. Religion is clearly at the core of the Street-Pastor's practice but is not immediately apparent.

Conclusions

This paper has explored the geographies of Street-Pastors in relation to their growing presence in spaces of the night-time. As such, specific attention has been drawn to the role of Street-Pastors within the urban night-time economy and in so doing has contributed to more nuanced accounts of 'drinking spaces' (Jayne et al., 2010). More specifically, discussion has highlighted how the relative success and acceptance of Street-Pastors in UK city centres is strongly related to how they have used rhythmic practices to synchronise their patrolling activities with the rhythms of the night-time economy. The significance of these rhythmic practices emerges from focusing on both the routines that inform and unfold from the patrolling 'routes' and the everyday routines of the Street-Pastors themselves. Furthermore, the paper has drawn attention to the importance of rhythm for understanding the strategy of encounters that Street-Pastors have adopted which in turn makes visible the micro-geographies of how urban encounters unfold. The encountering strategies employed by Street-Pastors revolve around the distribution of goods, such as flip-flops or bottles of water, that, initially at least, serve as a 'token' to start conversations and contact with the public. This strategy has become so successful that Street-Pastors are known largely by the public for being the distributors of goods or, more simply, as 'the flip-flop' people. As a result, Street-Pastors are themselves subjects of encounters as people seek them out for these goods.

At one level the encounters discussed in this paper can be positioned as examples of pockets of urban sociability that counter more negative accounts of urban social encounters (Thrift 2005). Indeed, the performances of Street-Pastors may reflect the optimism of the 'post-secular' city, whereby faith and non-faith groups can work together to produce spaces of ethical citizenship and care (Cloke, *et al.*, 2010). As such, the empirical data emerging from our research provides an alternative scenario for how night-time spaces are understood. In other words, spaces associated with night-life consumption are not somewhere usually associated with the presence of Christians or religious groups. It is therefore important that these spaces are also acknowledged and engaged with in the context of growing concerns with the 'post-secular city' (Beaumont and Baker, 2011) whereby the continuing significance of religion to urban life is acknowledged and engaged with both theoretically and empirically.

Indeed, Street-Pastors embody the post-secular ethic: they are trained by both secular and religious groups; view the city as a spiritual landscape yet are attuned to its worldly rhythms and needs; and work with a wide range of secular partners in the contexts of their own (varied) Christian faith. For some, the work of Street-Pastors illustrates the kind of secular/faith rapprochement that is valued by some commentators for providing spaces of hope and care in the city (Cloke and Beaumont 2012). Street-Pastors aim to provide care to

people that would otherwise fall through the safety net of the emergency services yet it is important not to romanticise the social interactions that unfold through their activities. Others view the introduction of religion to the streets with alarm. Johns et al (2008) call for a wider debate about the place of religion on the street and question the motives and effectiveness of Street-pastoring. Unlike some of the organisations cited by Cloke and Beaumont (2012), pastors do not draw from the ranks of non-believers. Those with no faith are unable to join, limiting opportunities to fuse fully the ideas and practices of the secular and sacred.

Street-Pastors, like any voluntary group, have a spatiality that brings them into contact with some groups and not others. As Street-Pastors work in the public spaces of the night-time economy they are more likely to come into contact with particular groups of people at particular times and places. Although we have emphasised encounter, not everyone will encounter or chose to engage with a Street-Pastor. For example, the private space of pubs and clubs are unseen to their gaze. Thus, their primary target for engagement are 'revellers' rather than the homeless (who may be cared for by other voluntary groups) and, despite working in a non-judgemental way, are more likely to offer care to groups they perceive as vulnerable, particularly young women. Their work not only reflects an ethics of care, ground rules for engagement and formal training but also personal views of who is or is not in need of help. Greater attention is needed on these micro-geographies of engagement, as Valentine (2008) points out, and to appreciate how Street-Pastors fit into a broader net of social care and service provision outlined at the start of this paper.

Finally, greater attention is also needed on the spiritual practices of Street-Pastors and how their work embodies and performs Christian ethics and belief. Although Street-Pastors subscribe to non-judgemental, non-evangelical practices, there is a requirement to be a practising Christian to serve as a Street-Pastor (defined as regular church attendance for a year). Thus people of other faith and no faiths are currently excluded. At present, Street-Pastors fill a gap in service provision but, with the advent of the 'Big Society'[4] and cuts in public spending, there is a potential for Pastors to fill a greater role or to be relied on more heavily by statutory providers. Potential scenarios include an increased involvement in the surveillance networks of police, CCTV operators, or private security such as door staff. Therefore, despite Street-Pastors good intentions, it is important for researchers to examine the consequences of such a move and the implications of religious as well as secular practices in the management of the night-time economy.

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[4] Many policy initiatives emerging from the current UK coalition government relate to notions of a 'Big Society' whereby the emphasis is on a rolling back of the State and public spending cuts whilst encouraging social enterprise and active citizenship.

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