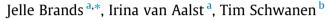Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

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journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/geoforum

Safety, surveillance and policing in the night-time economy: (Re)turning to numbers

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ABSTRACT

Against a background of discourses that link economic vitality of city-centres, consumption and safety to greater need for surveillance and policing, the current study takes particular interest in the city-centre night-time economy (NTE). This is a distinctive space–time where significant increases in surveillance and policing can be witnessed across cities in Europe and beyond. It is not evident, however, if and to what extent such interventions increase subjectively experienced safety and reduce fear of crime among people visiting city-centre bars and clubs on their nights out. Drawing on existing literatures on the NTE in cities, emotional geography, studies of surveillance and policing and the authors' previous research, this study develops a 'thicker' and situational quantitative approach to examining the effects on subjectively experienced safety of different manifestations of surveillance and policing in the NTE context. The visible proximity of police officers and door staff of bars and clubs are shown to have stronger effects on experienced safety than the positioning of CCTV and whether their footage is watched live or not. Nonetheless, the effects of surveillance and policing on experienced safety are rather complex insofar that they are to a considerable extent relational in nature and also ambiguous. For instance, a key difference between police and door staff is that police officers are more often seen as a friend of everybody and their presence as enhancing experienced safety; responses to door staff are more ambiguous and differentiated along lines of ethnicity. It is also demonstrated that surveillance and policing reduce rather than enhance experienced safety for a minority of the study participants.

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Introduction

This paper has both a substantive and a methodological aim. On the substantive level it seeks to integrate three hitherto separate strands of literature on the night-time economy (NTE) in cities, emotional and affective geography, and studies of surveillance and policing through a focus on subjectively experienced safety on nights out in the city centre. This focus reflects the by now common attempts of cities to stimulate the local economy and revitalise their city centres by turning them into sites of pleasure and consumption (Hall and Hubbard, 1996; Hannigan, 2005), inter alia through the creation of a vibrant NTE (Chatterton and Hollands, 2003; Roberts and Eldridge, 2009; Shaw, 2010).

Prevention of fear is key to development strategies configured around pleasure and consumption; it is widely agreed that safe and enjoyable spaces will attract more consumers and spending (Chatterton and Hollands, 2002; Helms, 2008). The desire to

pre-empt fears at night, particularly in areas where nightlife establishments are concentrated, is also more intense than for day-time consumption spaces. On top of more general concerns about safety and fear (Pain, 2009), "perceptions of the 'hours of darkness' as a time of danger, fear and sin seem to be persistent and deeply embedded" (Hobbs et al., 2003 page 44) in Western culture. Nightlife spaces are emotionally charged space–times in which social norms taken for granted during daytime are more easily disregarded and opportunities for transgressive behaviour arise (Latham and McCormack, 2004; Hubbard, 2005; Williams, 2008). Alcohol consumption is widely considered a key driver of the emotional intensities constitutive of nightlife spaces (Bromley and Nelson, 2002; Crawford and Flint, 2009; Jayne et al., 2011).

Local government and the nightlife industry commonly try to enhance experienced safety through increased surveillance and policing of – what are widely regarded as – incivilities and anti-social behaviours (Van Liempt, 2014). The question nonetheless remains whether common strategies and techniques such as increasing on-street policing, CCTV surveillance and the deployment of private security services are in fact effective in enhancing

experienced safety (Norris, 2012; Germain, 2013). This is in part because the everyday, embodied experiences of surveillance and policing have only received limited interest in the surveillance studies literature (Koskela, 2003; Friesen et al., 2009; Monahan, 2011).

However, allied to the wider geographical literature on emotions and affect (Pile, 2010), a diversified literature on experienced safety and fear of crime exists in geography (Pain, 2000; Whitzman, 2007; Johansson et al., 2012). A key idea underlying the current study and derived from that literature is that, for consumers in the NTE, safety only becomes an issue in particular situations. It is then that lack of safety or fear of crime emerges. Thus, fear of crime can be understood as an ecological event, emerging from the continuously changing assemblage of material and immaterial elements and agents in which individuals as embodied and sentient human beings find themselves (Brands et al., 2015). So we take from emotional geography research the idea that fear of crime is embodied and relational (Davidson and Milligan, 2004) and build on recent work about affects as ecological events that emerge with surveillance and policing practices (Adey et al., 2013). From surveillance and policing studies (Koskela, 2003, 2012; Hinkle and Weisburd, 2008; Cook and Whowell, 2011; Norris, 2012) we take the notion that the effects of CCTV and policing practices need not necessarily diminish fear of crime among individuals but can also generate an experienced lack of safety. Thus, by integrating studies of the geographies of emotions and fear of crime with studies of surveillance and policing, we can better understand variability and ambiguity in safety experiences and the conditions under which surveillance and policing practices enhance those in the NTE context.

In methodological terms, our research seeks to show that, in specific circumstances and if carefully designed and interpreted, advanced quantitative methods can usefully extend research on experienced safety. Advanced quantitative methods should by no means be privileged over the qualitative approaches that dominate the emotional geography literature (Pain, 2000; Little et al., 2005). Nonetheless, (predominantly) quantitative methods have specific strengths, especially if mixed with qualitative ones. First, they permit large(r) samples of study participants to be considered and therefore lend themselves more easily to the scaling up of results obtained using qualitative methods. This offers important insights in how common or prevalent a certain interaction among elements/events is (e.g., whether more CCTV surveillance increases experienced safety). Secondly, quantitative methods enable researchers to better understand the strength of interactions between elements/events, which facilitates comparisons – e.g. in the relative intensities of effects on experienced safety between live watching of CCTV footage and surveillance by security personnel at a club's entrance.

Thirdly, from a radically constructivist perspective (Law, 2004, 2009; Brown, 2012) quantitative methods enact experienced safety and its relations with surveillance and policing, socio-demographic indicators, etcetera in specific ways. Quantitative methods inevitably entail abstractions – simplifications and selections – that differentiate them from lived experience. If the abstractions at the stage of data collection are such that the questions to study participants in surveys are 'functionally equivalent' (Brown, 2012) – i.e. they reasonably resemble but are not identical – to real-life situations, they produce new insights exactly because they disrupt rather than mimic lived reality. Finally, whilst qualitative research can inform public policy in numerous ways (Pain, 2006b), findings expressed in numbers may travel farther beyond academia and affect policy in a different and complementary manner (Plummer and Sheppard, 2001; Wyly, 2009). In our experience, numbers rather than 'anecdotal' results (no matter how rigorous from an academic point of view those qualitative methods have been applied!) are more likely to mitigate concerns among policymakers.

The current paper seeks to realise the stated substantive and methodological aims through an empirical study among students in the Dutch cities of Rotterdam and Utrecht. More specifically, we report the results of a stated preference experiment during which participants were asked to immerse themselves in a particular nightlife situation, and report on experienced safety by performing rating tasks. The methodological approach is explained in Section 'Methodological approach'. The following section discusses the most important theoretical approaches to experienced (lack of) safety and fear of crime and links these to preliminary research in the NTEs of Utrecht and Rotterdam.

Lack of safety and fear in nightlife areas

Fear of crime and safety

A sizeable literature offers important insights into the nature and extent of fear of crime (Ferraro and LaGrange, 1987; Hale, 1996; Pain, 2000, 2009; Koskela and Pain, 2000; Whitzman, 2007; Johansson et al., 2012). Situational Crime Prevention scholarship understands fear of crime as an individually held experience that can be influenced by "reducing the propensity of the physical environment to support criminal behaviour" (Carmona et al., 2010, page 151). It assumes that alterations to the physical environment will bring about social change and thereby reduce fear of crime (Clarke, 1995; Welsh and Farrington, 2009). Hence, the physical design and layout of nightlife areas is seen as critically important in shaping individuals' fear (Fisher and Nasar, 1992; Carmona et al., 2010). Specific to the urban night is the implementation of street lighting, which is widely considered to enhance safety experiences (Pain et al., 2006; Welsh and Farrington, 2009; Brands et al., 2015). Another body of work in feminist geography and emotional geography holds that fear of crime is socially constituted but individually experienced (Pain, 2000; Sandberg and Tollefsen, 2010). Here fear of crime is both relational and embodied, the "connective tissue that links experiential geographies of the human psyche and physique with(in) broader social geographies of place" (Davidson and Milligan, 2004, page 524).

Safety has received less attention from researchers than fear of crime, although the former is a useful concept in the context of city-centre revitalisation and the NTE because it emphasises positive intensities and is linked to a sense of well-being (Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007; Pain and Smith, 2010; Brands and Schwanen, 2014). Brands and Schwanen (2014) have conceptualised experienced (lack of) safety in nightlife areas as an ecological event that emerges from interactions between the perceiving subject and the continuously changing assemblages of material and discursive elements in which s/he is embedded (see also Anderson, 2009). They summarised the multiplicity of experiences triggered by such interactions in terms of three meta-stable states of experience. In the first and basic state of *absorptive coping* individuals interact with their surroundings as if on auto-pilot. They are not consciously concerned about their safety. Although visitors to nightlife areas tend to be in this state for most of their nights out, a transition in experience whereby nightlife consumers become *alerted* and/or experience *actual dange*r is always possible. Being on the alert means that individuals sense a potential threat – there is the possibility that trouble or harm will occur from the assemblage in which they were enmeshed. With actual danger they experience an actual threat characterised by three aspects: physical proximity of one or more persons who may cause harm or trouble; an intention among the other(s) to inflict harm or cause trouble, and individuals feeling unable to escape the threat.