Criminal dons and extralegal security privatization in downtown Kingston, Jamaica

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In cities across the world, neoliberal retrenchment, shrinking public expenditure and an emphasis on private-public partnerships have resulted in the privatization of many services formerly provided by the state. The privatization of security has been one of the most significant shifts in this regard, with citizens becoming responsibilized for safeguarding their own physical integrity and material belongings. This transfer of state responsibility has had an important effect on the spatial organization of cities, as formerly public spaces become both privatized and militarized. Drawing on research in Kingston, Jamaica, this paper describes how new actors from criminal organizations to security companies move to fill these physical and social spaces. Arguing for an increased focus on spatial retreat from below, it highlights the extent to which an extralegal transformation of urban security and services takes place in marginalized areas, parallel to the better studied privatization of security services in affluent areas.

Keywords: Jamaica, crime, security, urban space, privatization, responsibilization

Introduction

Like many other cities in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Jamaican capital Kingston is plagued by high rates of criminal violence, with the dubious honour of being one of the region's 'murder capitals'. Between 2000–2010, the homicide rate hovered around 60 per 100 000 population,[1] but the highest rates – in excess of 150 per 100 000 population – are to be found in Kingston's inner-city communities (Figueroa *et al.*, 2008: 99). The high levels of urban violence and insecurity have elicited various and increasingly repressive government and popular responses. Notwithstanding several community policing initiatives, which have been largely unsuccessful,[2] Jamaican law enforcement strategies tend to rely on 'tough policing' and the security forces have become increasingly militarized. A high incidence of fatal shootings by police officers has led to accusations of extrajudicial killings from human rights organizations. This use of excessive force by the security forces does, however, receive a broad measure of popular support (Harriott, 2009: 48).

In addition to repressive state responses – and mirroring developments elsewhere in the broader region – many wealthier citizens turn to private security companies and retreat into gated communities and other types of fortified enclaves. Inner-city neighbourhoods also depend on private security arrangements. Residents increasingly turn to 'dons', neighbourhood leaders who are often linked to criminal organizations, for security and dispute resolution. The informal extralegal don-based system of 'self-help' law and order, which generally relies on violent retribution, is relatively popular among marginalized urban residents, who feel the formal justice system is biased and inaccessible and who may also benefit from the broader social provisioning role dons fulfil.

This paper seeks to contribute to debates on how insecurity intersects with neoliberalism in the privatization and militarization of urban space. Specifically, it highlights the extent to which an extralegal transformation of urban security and services takes

place in marginalized areas, parallel to the 'standard' privatization of security services in middle class areas. It describes the physical and social spaces that the state vacates in the neoliberal city and how new actors such as criminal organizations and the security industry fill these spaces. Adding to studies of elite and middle class retreat into fortified urban space, it argues for an increased focus on spatial retreat 'from below'.

In presenting this argument, I draw on 11 months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted over the period 2008–2011, mostly in a West Kingston neighbourhood I will call Brick Town, which until recently was governed by a prominent don. I conducted participant observation and in-depth interviews with Brick Town residents, and held numerous interviews with national and local politicians, bureaucrats, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and several smaller dons. In addition, a survey was carried out among 400 residents of 8 inner-city communities in Kingston.[3]

Neoliberalism, insecurity and the transformation of urban space

In both the global North and South, various forms of neoliberal restructuring have been especially visible in urban space (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Wyly & Hammel, 2005; Crossa, 2009). Often, neoliberal policies have meant the retreat of the state from certain social spheres and city spaces, typically exacerbating the marginalization of lowincome areas. Shrinking public expenditure and an emphasis on private-public partnerships have resulted in the privatization of many services formerly provided by the state, most significantly of security, with citizens becoming responsibilized for safeguarding their own physical integrity and material belongings (Goldstein, 2010). This transfer of state responsibility has had an important effect on the spatial organization of cities across the world as public spaces become both privatized and militarized. Increasingly, cityscapes are characterized by the presence of walls, gates, barbed wire, armed security personnel, guard dogs and security cameras, reflecting what has been described as the 'aesthetics of fear' (Zukin, 1995: 11), or even more starkly, the 'archisemiotics of class war' (Davis, 1992: 231).

Much research on the privatization of public space in a context of neoliberal urbanism has focused on the sphere of the affluent classes, for instance, looking at gated communities and their effects on the urban fabric in Latin America, and to a lesser extent the Caribbean (e.g. Coy & Pohler, 2002; Salcedo & Torres, 2004; Mycoo, 2006). In many cases, the upper and middle classes retreat into 'fortified enclaves' (Caldeira, 2000): privatized spaces of residence, work, consumption and leisure. This trend, generally linked to increased insecurity and a concomitant fear of crime, leads to increased urban fragmentation and segregation. Rodgers' (2004) work on 'fortified networks', created when such enclaves are connected by an exclusive transport infra-structure, signals the disembedding of an entire layer of elite space from the urban fabric.

The results of this fortification and disembedding tend to not only further margin-alize the urban poor, who are already relegated to residual and undesirable city spaces, but also reinforce the view that they are the source of crime and violence. The residents of such urban ghettos, *favelas* and *ciudades perdidas* are faced with forced removal or punitive measures if they transgress social boundaries. Paradoxically, the same spaces and populations affected most harshly by state retrenchment are often the target of a punitive rollout neoliberalism (Peck & Tickell, 2002) that penalizes urban marginality (Swanson, 2007; Wacquant, 2008; Goldstein, 2010). Wacquant (2008: 58), for instance, characterizes this process of state retreat from the social and economic sphere and

concurrent expansion of the penal apparatus as the 'logic of punitive containment as political strategy for managing dispossessed and dishonoured populations in the polarizing city'.

It is clear that the urban poor are often victims of the various aspects of neoliberal urbanism, especially shifts in the burden of security. Yet little attention has been paid to the security arrangements emerging in poor urban neighbourhoods. The majority of studies on neoliberal transformations of urban space focus on forms of privatization and militarization that primarily benefit elites, or that tend to be produced or instigated by wealthy private actors and state stakeholders. This paper focuses on the informal types of private security provided by criminal dons in Kingston, taking up Goldstein's (2010: 492) call for 'a critical, comparative ethnography of security [that] can explore the multiple ways in which security is configured and deployed – not only by states and authorized speakers but by communities, groups, and individuals – in their engagements with other local actors and with arms of the state itself'. I do this by exploring Kingston's don-led security provision and the extent to which it affects the city's spatial organization, following a brief historical background on the emergence of these dons.

Kingston, Jamaica: structural adjustment, garrison politics and violence

With a population of around 650 000, the Kingston Metropolitan Area (KMA) is a sprawling agglomeration that accounts for about one fifth of Jamaica's population. Rapid rural–urban migration and a lack of effective urban planning has led to the emergence of numerous informal settlements with poor quality housing and service provision, mostly in southern and western Kingston or 'downtown', while the commercial and residential areas of the wealthier classes are spatially concentrated in the northeast or 'uptown' (Figure 1). The symbolic border between these two halves – 'below Cross Roads' – reflects this polarization in terms of class. The legacy of slavery and colonization is evident in the extent to which this broad sociospatial divide is
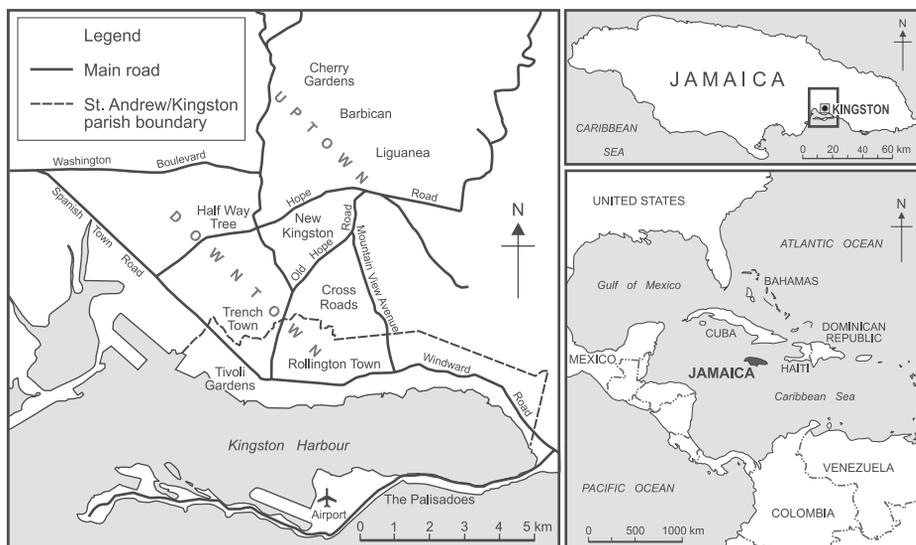

Figure 1. *Map of Kingston Metropolitan Area showing uptown-downtown divide.*
Source: Adapted from a map prepared by Kevon Rhiney, University of West Indies.

inflected by race and/or skin colour. Downtown Kingston remains associated with low income, darker-skinned 'black' Jamaicans, in comparison to uptown Kingston or 'upper St. Andrew', which is seen as the domain of the wealthier classes and lighter-skinned, 'brown' Jamaicans of mixed descent (Howard, 2005; Clarke, 2006).

Kingston's deeply embedded socioeconomic inequalities have been exacerbated by neoliberal policies over the decades since the first structural adjustment programs were implemented in 1977, with continual and massive cuts to public spending on services and infrastructure in health, education and housing (LeFranc, 1994; Mullings, 2009). Informal sector employment increased as formal, specifically public sector employment contracted sharply, while the labour force participation rate, in particular of women, also dropped (Gordon *et al.*, 1997).

The consequences of these neoliberal reforms are seen in specific socioeconomic and spatial distributions. Gopaul (1996) argues that while structural adjustment had positive economic effects on the tourism and manufacturing sectors in other parts of the island, the negative social effects were concentrated in the metropolitan area. In addition to higher levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality, and the deterioration of urban infrastructure, social services and social facilities, she describes the outcomes of increased urban population pressure, urban decay, increased squatting and slum housing, and a collapsed public transport system. Structural adjustment produced distinct winners and losers, a glaring contrast between dilapidated downtown ghettos and spacious elite suburbs. Within Kingston, despite the emergence of 'uptown ghettos', the spatial polarization between the uptown rich and the downtown poor has been perceived to be on the increase (Gordon *et al.*, 1997: 216).

The public-private partnerships associated with neoliberal policies have effectively created uneven distributions of state investment and accountability across urban and national landscapes. This is the case, for instance, with the Kingston Restoration Company (KRC) and the Urban Development Corporation (UDC), influential quasi-private/quasi-state agencies that operate largely without being accountable to citizens. Dodman (2008: 40) points to the role of the UDC in 'creating deregulated spaces within the territory of the city and the nation-state . . . implementing . . . restructuring strategies [that] alter the relationship between the state and its citizens'.

Mullings (2009) also analyzes the spatial implications of structural adjustment, tracing the connections between 'the processes of neoliberalization taking place in the Jamaican economy, the spatial transformations in social reproduction and the rising levels of social disorder since the 1980s'. She argues that the crisis in social reproduction produced by the neoliberal retreat of the state in the 1980s and 1990s was alleviated by two spatial practices. The first is the transnationalization of the household, with the remittances sent home by (female) Jamaican migrant workers paying for education, health, housing and food. The second is 'gang welfare', in which investment in the basic elements of social reproduction is narrowed down to the scale of the don-led community. Disorder and violence are amongst the 'social repercussions of the increasing number of children being left behind without adequate supervision and care, and the replacement of state welfare with gang-based ones' (Mullings, 2009: 185).

While researchers such as Mullings (2009) have associated the steady increase in violent crime in Jamaica with structural adjustment and increasing inequality, it is more often explained through reference to the particular features of its political system. Downtown Kingston is divided by violence-inflected party-political fissures, often referred to as 'political tribalism'. The two major parties – the People's National Party (PNP) and the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) – had, and to some extent still have,

relationships with a number of their constituencies known as 'garrison politics', a form of political clientelism in which politicians use state resources to secure votes, and supply loyal communities with material benefits such as housing or employment. Both the PNP and the JLP created party-loyal garrisons by concentrating supporters in new housing developments and by surreptitiously distributing weapons and money to the respective dons, who use violence to produce favourable electoral outcomes in their inner-city strongholds (see further, Figueroa & Sives, 2002; Harriott, 2008; Sives, 2010). In the 1970s and 1980s, the enmity between PNP and JLP gangs in Kingston's garrison communities frequently erupted in violence, especially during elections, resulting in hundreds of deaths. The combination of political tribalism and garrison politics have been, as Figueroa *et al.* (2008: 119) note, 'the incubator for the promotion of and legitimization of criminal perpetrators of violence as well as those who have become embroiled in inter and intra-community violence and its seemingly endless cycle of reprisal and counter-reprisal'.

In the 1980s, the financial independence of the dons increased as they found new sources of income in the international narcotics trade, and partisan political violence morphed into criminal violence (Sives, 2010). While this has entailed a shift in the relationship between politicians and dons, the association endures (see *Jamaica Gleaner*, 2001; Sives, 2002). Horst (2008: 60) suggests that 'the move away from political violence to "freelance violence" of Jamaica today is part and parcel of [the] privatised, casual ethos [that] many argue characterizes neoliberalism'.

While the influence of dons varies considerably across inner-city neighbourhoods, in many downtown areas they are important local leaders and critical mediators in state–citizen relations. In return for providing political parties and state institutions with access to electoral blocs and suppressing urban unrest, their illegal activities enjoy protection from judicial scrutiny. Dons act as brokers between the urban poor and politicians, connecting residents to political and economic resources that many inner-city Jamaicans perceive to be accessible only to privileged segments of the population. The more successful dons can provide financial support, employment and security services, sometimes by linking to formal state actors and sometimes by replacing them. Having their own financial means and access to the means of violence allows them to provide services directly or leverage their influence and standing to pressure the local member of parliament (MP) or councillor (the local government political representative) to deliver these. These clientelist relations developed in the context of Kingston's pre-existing sociospatial divisions. This has meant that, for the urban poor, access to urban space is increasingly precarious and fragmented: it is organized not only along socioeconomic and ethnoracial lines, but also according to party-political affiliation and the shifting borders of criminal turf.

Informal privatization of security

Jamaica's dons are both the source of much violence and the only form of protection many of the urban poor have against this same violence. The prevalence of criminal violence and insecurity has given rise to a proliferation of private security firms such as King Alarm, Guardsman, Marksman and Hawkeye whose presence is highly visible on billboards and the uniformed armed response units racing through the city on motorcycles (Figure 2). The gated luxury condominiums and exclusive commercial plazas developed by private investors in uptown Kingston over the last few decades rely heavily on over 15 000 private security guards from these firms (*Jamaica Gleaner*, 2010a)

Figure 2. *Private security advertising, near Cross Roads (author's photograph, January 2008).*

– in comparison, the Jamaica Constabulary Force has 8364 members (JCF, 2010). Where wealthier Kingstonians have the option to live and work in fortified enclaves patrolled by private security firms, the options of the urban poor are much more limited. They cannot afford the services of private security firms, nor do they expect much from the police, who are perceived to be unreliable, uncaring and corrupt. Many inner-city residents have little choice but to turn to the forms of security offered by dons as the police are perceived to be unreliable, uncaring and corrupt. There are obvious differences between the formal and informal privatization of security – from the agency of those receiving security services to the concrete ways in which these services are rendered. While significant research has been done regionally on formal private security, much less is known about the dynamics of informal security provisioning such as the don-backed system in Kingston.

While media stereotyping often depict dons as ruthless autocrats, many dons can rely on a significant level of support amongst inner-city residents, related in part to their provisioning role in social security and employment. For example, at regular 'treats' held around holidays or the start of the school year, many dons distribute food, school supplies and other gifts. In addition, they may pressure either the MP or locally operating businesses to give residents a job. However, what consistently emerged during my research as the dons' most important function, was their role in providing physical security and protection, and an alternative form of dispensing justice.

Unsurprisingly dons depict themselves as benevolent providers and protectors. As 'Toppa',[4] a smaller don based in a housing scheme in a garrison zone of St. Andrew West Central, explained:

> We have to hold all kind of treats and fundraisers . . . the people for the people, always . . . It always goes back to: as much as you put in is as much as you're always gonna get back when it's your time. . . . Yeah, we have a responsibility to the people in the community, most definitely, which is security and [financial] support, man, most definitely (pers. comm., June 2008).

This combination of security and financial support was also emphasized by 'Second', a don who had moved from a West Kingston garrison to lead a more peaceful life in the neighbouring dormitory town of Portmore. In explaining what it takes to be a leader,

Second stressed that defending the community and 'splitting justice' (punishing local violators) take precedence over providing financial support:

> It starts off you have to defend your area [against violators from neighbouring communities]. And you have to split justice. You have to deal with justice because everybody comes to you for justice. Because in the area you have people who will dis[respect] other people. But you can't take sides, even if it's your friend. Where the right is you have to lay it out. It's a serious position. If people find that you are not giving justice, [if] you're taking it up for your friend, it will be unbalanced (pers. comm., April 2010).

Second described the processes of helping residents with financial needs but returned to the topic of security, emphasizing that business people also rely on the dons' role in deterring and punishing crime:

> Typically garrison people . . . sometimes they can come to you with their needs and you can help them buy some khaki [school uniforms], send their pickney [children] to school. When you're a leader, you know, the business people look up to you, any problem they have they come to you. You have to go find [the thieves] and warn them, or make them bring back the people's things that they steal.

On the consequences for those caught stealing, Second said that thieves would get a beating, or a warning if they were first-time offenders. He also outlined the role of leaders in dealing with cases of domestic violence in the community. If a male resident was being unduly aggressive towards his female partner, the don would intervene:

> Once they go to the man and the man says 'I want it to be finished', it has to be finished. Or else they come beat you if you are the aggressor. They warn him – 'don't put your hands back on her' – based on how both of them explain themselves. Their rules are stricter than the police: the man is the man, his words stand out. You might not like it, but the system is – whether you like or don't like – what he says is how it goes.

To a perhaps surprising extent, inner-city respondents confirmed and supported the role of dons as described by Toppa and Second. In Brick Town and other inner-city neighbourhoods, residents confirmed that dons maintained a level of security and order that was difficult or impossible for the police to achieve. The dons who enjoy the highest level of legitimacy amongst inner-city residents are those whose neighbourhoods have low levels of violence. Any successful don must rely on the credible threat of severe punishment, exemplified by the personalist, violently punitive style described by Second. For the system to work, every don must 'sort out' those who 'dis the order', whether they are residents or outsiders.

Until recently, Brick Town, where I did most of my research, was ruled by a prominent don whom I will call 'General'. Residents complained about the poor level of security since General's imprisonment a few years ago. Andy, a young man who had grown up in Brick Town, described to me what the neighbourhood was like when General was still in charge, speaking highly of his generosity and his role as a moral leader:

> Normally thieves could not come and break into a store or anything when General was here . . . You could lock your door and throw all your money in your house, open your door and nobody could go in there. Every community should have a don. And when you are a don, it's certain things that you do [that] let you become a don. You have to love – the love that you have for all the community people and children – and you can't just decide 'I'm going to murder this person' and expect that people will support everything you do. . . . General would tell the people that everybody in the community, anything they want they should come to him.

> They should not steal or anything, don't do anything wrong or. . . . I feel like he would always
> do the right thing, because if you go into that house there and you rape the woman there,
> that's wrong. I feel like you should go to prison or somebody needs to take care of that business.
> You can't see a man just put his wallet over there and pick it up and say that it's yours: that's
> not right (pers. comm., April 2010).

I asked Andy what a resident would do if, say, their daughter had been raped. 'You go
to him', he answered. When I asked him to explain, he did so in terms similar to Second:

> In a situation like that he would talk to [the perpetrator] to ask how you had reached into the
> people's house. Talk to them at the same time, so he would listen to this one first and then
> listen to that one. So he would tell who was wrong from who was right. And if you had got a
> first chance already, like if the first time you had got away, then you can get in trouble,
> probably you would get a few slap ups and one of your legs might get broken, make you spend
> a week . . .

Andy left the last sentence unfinished but was apparently referring to a makeshift prison
that General was alleged to have maintained in the neighbourhood (see Johnson &
Soeters, 2008: 177). Other residents also affirmed the decreased level of safety in the
neighbourhood without General. 'Mikey', a businessman in his early thirties, told of
how outsiders pretending to be from Brick Town could now demand extortion money
from market vendors in the community and how thieves operated with impunity,
because even if they were caught: 'Them can say: nobody cannot do nothing cos the
man who is supposed to deal with it like that is not there'. Before General went to
prison, Mikey said: 'If the leader say "no stealing", it's no stealing, you understand'
(pers. comm., April 2010).

While Brick Town had been ruled for an extended period by a powerful don, a
number of the other neighbourhoods surveyed had smaller or no dons in charge. Here,
the support for dons was less outspoken, but many respondents confirmed the impact
a don could have on the level of security. Still 36 per cent of those surveyed agreed that
'If this community had a strong don, crime would be less', while 41 per cent disagreed
(the rest were unsure). Of those who agreed, several referred to 'Dudus', the island's
most prominent don, who presided over the West Kingston neighbourhood of Tivoli
Gardens until he was extradited to the US in 2010 following a bloody military incursion
into his stronghold. Even a respondent who disagreed added: 'I don't like dons. So far
the only sensible don is Dudus'.

The level of distrust in the formal system of law was evident in the divided response
to the statement 'Crime will only get less when people talk to the police': 34 per cent
agreed, while 58 per cent disagreed. Many who disagreed explained that the police
could not be trusted as they would leak the name of 'informers' to the accused and so
put lives at risk. One respondent clarified his answer:

> Crime will only be reduced when the people work with the dons and the dons work with the
> government. It should be an organized structure. The police sometimes don't care. There
> should be a system where things are reported to a particular leader in the community and that
> leader takes the information to the police. That way there is no fear in going to the police.

Similarly, a young woman who felt strongly that people should talk to the police
qualified her position: 'It is good for people to talk to the police but the police are so
corrupt they sometimes leak information to the accused'.

While only 36 per cent of the inner-city residents surveyed agreed with the state-
ment 'It's okay to use violence against someone caught stealing in my community', 53

per cent agreed that 'Community justice is more effective than the formal system', against 34 per cent who disagreed. Respondents who felt that 'community justice' – the informal don-led system of retributive justice – was more effective rationalized this position by stating, for example: 'It is Moses' law, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Plus it is quicker'. Another survey respondent pointed out that 'Sometimes when you call the police they don't come, but sometimes the area dons get the problem solved'. One major difference between community justice and the formal justice system is, of course, that one man determines what is fair and just, rather than an institution. There are indications, however, that the informal system is undergoing codification and institutionalization, with standardized punishments for certain crimes, and a system of local courts in which groups of elders preside along with the don (Duncan-Waite & Woolcock, 2008: 27–29).

Both qualitative and quantitative data, then, point to the established nature of informal, private systems of security and dispute resolution. Inner-city residents who enthusiastically or reluctantly embrace these systems, and even those who reject them, point to the failings of the police force and the formal justice system in preventing and prosecuting crimes.

Disembedding from below?

Donmanship displays a number of important differences with formal private security. First, because inner-city residents have a restricted choice of security options, acquiescing to the don's security arrangements is often unavoidable. Second, while the legitimacy enjoyed by some of the most successful dons is linked directly to the level of extra-state security they are seen to provide, their system provides a range of governance services (from welfare to conflict resolution) that go far beyond the scope of services offered by private security companies. In addition, the methods the dons use in enforcing security and order tend to be violent and, on the whole, illegal. Finally, the system's historical roots in garrison politics and its current status as a form of governance mean that donmanship is both entangled and competes with the formal political system in ways that private security companies rarely are. Beyond these differences, to what extent does the don-based informal system of fortification resemble that in urban elite enclaves? The spatial implications of uptown or formal sector privatization of security have been analyzed in some detail, with authors such as Caldeira (2000) and Rodgers (2004) pointing to the fragmentation of urban space into inward-looking private elite enclaves and abandoned residual public spaces. How can we think of the system of donmanship spatially, and what effect does this informal privatization of security and dispute resolution have on the fabric of the city?

Taking into account the varying types of dons and the measure of power they may wield in a community, I propose thinking through the spatiality associated with their coercive force in three different ways. The first way in which donmanship is spatialized overlaps very much with the uptown-downtown divide: it reflects a socioeconomic division in which urban elites employ one type of security and the urban poor have little choice but to resort to another, much more restrictive, type of private 'protection'.

However, neither downtown nor uptown can be conceptualized as homogeneous blocs – in both zones, security measures splinter the urban fabric into enclaves. Elite gated communities are bordered by walls and gates, while many inner-city garrisons maintain physical barriers such as roadblocks constructed from car wrecks and other debris to prevent easy entrance or exit. In Brick Town, the drain covers on many of the

access roads have been removed so that cars must slow to a crawl to drive in. Such border markings, along with political and gang graffiti, indicate how the built environment of downtown Kingston is marked with its own version of the aesthetics of fear. In addition to physical barriers, any outsider entering such a neighbourhood will be subject to suspicious, if not hostile, gazes. Psychological borders – developed over decades of political and gang warfare, and reinforced in media depictions – are as effective deterrents as any physical gate. This constellation of informal borders contributes to a splintering or atomization of urban space in a similar way to the more formal fortified enclaves of the elites, as officially public spaces become *de facto* inaccessible to the broader public.

In addition to this second way of conceptualizing the spatiality of donmanship, there have been indications of a network of don-led garrisons which bears some resemblance to the fortified networks of fragmented privatized urban spaces in Nicaragua described by Rodgers (2004). Before Dudus was extradited to the US, he reputedly had the power to make things happen, or to appoint people in areas far beyond the stretch of his own neighbourhood of Tivoli Gardens. His leadership, while based in this West Kingston neighbourhood, was seen as connecting lesser dons in other (JLP-affiliated) Kingston communities, or reaching to the 'ghettoized' areas of smaller towns. This networked hierarchy of garrison spaces, which hopped over PNP areas and elite suburbs, was sometimes referred to as 'one order'[5] (*Jamaica Observer*, 2010c) and sometimes as 'one don', for instance, in dancehall songs or graffiti spray-painted on walls. Unlike the fortified networks Rodgers identifies in Nicaragua, the connections between these mainly JLP-affiliated garrisons were more virtual than physical; they were not linked into a network through any exclusive infrastructure in terms of roads.[6] However, the unification of these spaces under a single order of quasi-governance, segregated from their broader cityscape, posed a comparable threat to the urban fabric.

Similar to the effects of uptown privatized security, these three spatial effects of informal don-based security – the reinforcing of Kingston's dual divide, the atomization of urban space and the networking of fortified fragments – render the urban ideal of open, public space ever more elusive. Both forms restrict access and belonging to urban space, eroding the ideal of city life as characterized by 'openness to unassimilated otherness' (Young, 1990: 227). Within the garrisons' boundaries, as within elite enclaves, new publics emerge that are far removed from the democratic ideal of urban public life. Like formal privatization, the dons' protection has specific consequences on the functioning of rule of law. While formal private security does not curtail the democratic rights of those it protects (only those it protects against), for inner-city residents the system of donmanship entails a direct trade-off between security and political freedom. Their urban mobilities are restricted not only by class, skin colour and political affiliation, but also regulated by a system of urban order that leaves little room for accountability or dissent.

State complicity

In uptown conversations and mainstream media representations, the level of authority and legitimacy dons enjoy in Jamaica's inner-city areas is often attributed to the deviant morals of the urban poor. Less attention is paid to the measure of state complicity in facilitating dons' localized monopoly of the means of coercion, going beyond the system's roots in garrison politics. There are a number of contexts in which the links between dons and state institutions take the form of illicit public-private partnerships,

emerging through conscious strategies of the actors involved or as less intentional side-effects of neoliberal shifts in governance. This *de facto* outsourcing may take place as a direct consequence of state retrenchment, with an emphasis on cost efficiency. As Harriott (2008: 9) notes, 'The collusion between the political parties and organized crime is not just the outcome of materially self-interested motivations; it is an adaptation to state incapacity that permits co-rulership of the communities of the urban poor'. In addition, the neoliberal emphasis on participatory development, decentralization and public-private partnerships – promoted in Jamaica through World Bank loans, bilateral donors and NGOs – can be understood as framing this redistribution of power.

The most evident cases of outsourcing occur in the realm of policing. It can be argued that the provision of law and order in Jamaica's inner-city communities are no longer primarily a state responsibility. With rates of theft, rape, murder and other forms of violent crime high in downtown Kingston, the most established dons are lauded by residents for their role in maintaining order and for delivering justice more speedily and effectively than the state. Have state actors effectively withdrawn from these areas and ceded their policing to dons? This certainly appeared to be the case in Tivoli Gardens, where Dudus' zero-tolerance order was said to have brought local murders down to almost none. In addition, as the Jamaican security forces 'recaptured' Tivoli in May 2010, they found what appeared to be a room where informal court sessions were held and punishment administered (*Jamaica Gleaner*, 2010b). There are strong indications that the police encouraged this informal provision of security and justice, for instance by referring both victims and perpetrators to this system (see also Duncan-Waite & Woolcock, 2008: 28–29). A senior officer in the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF), with extensive experience in West Kingston, spoke of his work in the area:

> From time to time you have to work with these leaders. Not that you're compromising or anything but they have access to the communities . . . What we try to do in instances is to actually use them, we task them so they actually end up doing some of our work. For example, if you go into a community and you realize that you're having certain type of crimes, you might have people being shot . . . you just say it to someone that 'listen, you are in charge of this community, so the next time we hear that someone get shot, we coming for you'. So rather than we policing to protect, they're actually policing themselves, because they know that if you're in charge you can prevent things from happening. If somebody is raped and we say 'listen, the next time it happens we'll see you'. . . . So we task them to reduce certain acts that you cannot on your own reduce, because you'd have to have eyes and ears in every corner, so you actually task them (pers. comm., March 2011).

Such cooperation reflects the incapacity of the JCF to effectively police the inner city and acknowledges that dons are 'in charge'. It further indicates a conscious move towards the privatization of security in these areas in which residents are tasked with policing themselves. The role of the state in reconfiguring security, then, arguably goes beyond rollback retrenchment to more active, if often reluctant, forms of responsibilizing private actors.

Conclusion

Kingston's high rates of violent crime have historical roots in the partisan political violence associated with the garrison politics of the 1960s and 1970s. This form of politics engendered a system in which much of downtown Kingston is governed by dons, who simultaneously cause and combat crime and insecurity. Repressive state policing has had limited success in assuaging Kingstonians' fear of crime. Many of the

city's more affluent residents rely on private security companies and fortified residential enclaves, while many of the urban poor rely on the informal security provided by dons. The majority of inner-city residents view this retributive 'community justice' system as more effective than the formal system. The level of this support suggests that the dons employ a type of punitive populism akin to that wielded by tough-talking politicians who promise zero-tolerance policing or a reintroduction of the death penalty.

I have argued that this extralegal form of security provision can be understood within the context of neoliberal urbanism. Despite distinct differences from the formal private security of fortified uptown enclaves, it has similar effects in terms of the privatization and militarization of urban space. Both forms of private security entail a physical reorganization of the urban landscape: its division, fragmentation and sometimes networked disembedding, and its marking with the aesthetics of fear. Beyond these spatial effects, however, the informal privatization of security has a more marked impact on state sovereignty. More forcefully than the formal security industry, the dons' protection services undermine the territorial integrity of the nation-state. Their relative success in 'securing parts of the city' disproves the formal state's legitimate monopoly on the means of coercion, and so delegitimizes the state and generates additional insecurity as a range of irregular armed actors compete with each other (see Davis, 2010).

The question remains of how far donmanship represents a disembedding *from below*. Specifically, to what extent are the urban poor, with far less room to manoeuvre than the wealthy, capable of exercising agency and contributing to a changing spatial organization of the city? Residents of neighbourhoods like Brick Town narrate their relationship with the don as one characterized by fairness, care and even love. While their security choices are necessarily restricted by the parameters set by dons and (colluding) state actors, the strategizing of marginalized citizens – the legitimacy they accord to criminals – in negotiating the insecure neoliberal cityscape does represent a measure of agency. Nonetheless, the fortification of downtown Kingston neighbourhoods is achieved largely through the efforts of a small number of criminal leaders and less through the voluntary actions of these residents. The effects of informal security privatization on everyday lives in inner-city neighbourhoods, and thus on the possibility of realizing a public, democratic urban landscape, are cause for deep concern.

Certainly donmanship poses serious challenges to the sovereignty of the Jamaican state more generally, and the implicatedness of state actors in reproducing this status-quo is especially worrying. The neoliberal policies that have reshaped cities across the world take effect not only through state retrenchment and abandonment of physical and social spaces. They are also materialized through the discourses and practices of state actors (as well as citizens) that legitimize the role of private actors who emerge, or are actively encouraged, to fill these vacated spaces. While a strong state presence is maintained in certain domains, ongoing processes of retrenchment and responsibilization have opened up new spaces of governance and service provision. This has led to criminal or gang-based organizations moving in as providers or brokers of essential services – paradoxically, with security as a top priority. It is their contribution to the erosion of the formal rule of law and their undermining of state monopoly of the means of coercion that even in the short term generates the same insecurity that allows them to thrive.

Endnotes

1   The comparative average homicide rates per 100 000 are 17.4 for Africa, 15.5 for the Americas, 3.5 for Europe and Oceania and 3.1 for Asia (UNODC, 2011: 21).

2   A prominent initiative in this regard was the large-scale USAID pilot programme in the inner-city neighbourhood of Grants Pen. Explanations given for the lack of success include continued police brutality and corruption, the transfer of trusted police officers to other areas, and the lack of harmonization between community policing and the broader activities and strategies of the rest of the Jamaica Constabulary Force (*Jamaica Gleaner*, 2008; JCF/USAID, 2008; Leslie, 2010: 66–67).

3   Surveys were conducted by local research assistants, who were trained as survey interviewers and had SPSS data entry experience. The survey used purposive sampling to ensure a gender and age balance in each neighbourhood. Of the 400 survey respondents, 51 per cent were male and 49 per cent female. The age distribution was as follows: 27 per cent were aged 15–25 years; 25 per cent were 25–35 years, 21 per cent were 35–45 years, 16 per cent were 45–55 years, and 11 per cent were 55 and older. The survey neighbourhoods were distributed across the city, in the constituencies of Kingston West, Kingston Central, St. Andrew West, St. Andrew South, St. Andrew Southeast and St. Andrew East Central. Questionnaires consisted of 27 statements on multiple topics including security, politics and justice, to which responses were sought on a 5-point scale (strongly agree/mildly agree/unsure/mildly disagree/strongly disagree). Research assistants also registered any additional qualitative explanations given.

4   All names of dons and residents quoted here are aliases.

5   This term should not be confused with the One Order gang – also linked to the JLP – in the nearby city of Spanish Town.

6   Dudus' imprisonment and the continued military presence in Tivoli Gardens make the continued existence of this particular spatially noncontiguous network uncertain.

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