

# "Police as the New Don"? An Assessment of Post-Dudus Policing Strategies in Jamaica

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## Abstract

*Since the 2010 'Tivoli Incursion', the policing strategies that the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) uses in inner-city communities have been under scrutiny. We suggest that recent strategies employed by the police represent a form of intra-urban policy mobilities, involving the appropriation and adaption of strategies utilised by criminal 'dons'. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Kingston between 2008 and 2014, we discuss recent JCF activities in security and dispute resolution, social provisioning, and symbolic assertions of authority. These activities, we argue, reflect the JCF's recognition of the efficacy of security and legitimisation strategies popularised by dons.*

**Keywords:** *policing, crime control, policy mobilities, dons, Jamaica*

## Introduction

Following Jamaica's 'Tivoli Incursion' in 2010, aimed at the extradition of Tivoli Gardens 'don' Christopher 'Dudus' Coke, there has been much debate on the efficacy of previous policing strategies in combatting the country's high rate of violent crime. Specifically, the government and security forces have been weighing the pros and cons of 'hard' and 'soft' policing styles in diminishing the influence of organised crime in inner-city neighbourhoods. Assisted (and sometimes hindered) by foreign diplomats and development agencies, they have been exploring numerous possibilities for innovation ranging from new legislative tools and technologies to police reform. While some previous policing and security policies have been continued, existing strategies have been intensified or reconfigured in the 'post-Dudus' period, starting during the 2010 State of Emergency and continuing into the present.

These new strategies have included increasingly punitive and militarised tactics. Amongst such ‘tough on crime’ tactics we would include harsh anti-gang legislation, military curfews involving the ‘processing’ of large groups of inner-city men, and the targetting of ‘persons of interest’ for detention and, allegedly, intimidation or extra-judicial killing. Recent allegations of the existence of ‘death squads’ within the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) also point to the excesses associated with such ‘hard’ policing (see, for example, Robinson 2014; Barrett 2015). However, recent crime-reduction strategies have also included ‘softer’ tactics aimed at ‘regularising’ inner-city communities by combatting social exclusion and facilitating access to state services. Such strategies can be understood as a renewed version of a longer tradition of attempts at community policing.

In this article we assess post-Dudus policing strategies. Rather than seeking to evaluate these strategies in terms of their success or failure, we are interested in exploring the origin of these policies and techniques. Building on research on ‘policy mobilities’, we focus on the circulation and adaptation of policies from one location to another. While much of the existing research on security policy mobilities has concentrated on the transnational movement of policies, we seek to understand how policing strategies circulate within Jamaica and, more closely, within the urban area of Kingston. In so doing, we focus on the mobility of policing strategies not only across geographical locations but also between different actors and institutions. Specifically, we explore the similarities between current strategies employed by the Jamaican government and security forces, and those utilised by dons to maintain an alternative version of ‘law and order’ within inner-city neighbourhoods. Much of the dons’ popularity has been related to their local provision of public goods and social services, including security and conflict resolution mechanisms, as well as to more symbolic strategies of legitimisation. We suggest that the JCF’s current policies can be interpreted as drawing on similar strategies of producing legitimacy, and that one of the effects of this approach is that inner-city residents may understand the police to be ‘the new don’.

This article presents the results of an ongoing ethnographic research project and draws on research material collected during fieldwork

conducted in Kingston by both authors. The first author conducted six weeks of fieldwork in the summer of 2014, focussing specifically on the role of aesthetic practices in the legitimation of donmanship. This fieldwork included interviews with police personnel who work in the Western and Central Kingston divisions, and interviews with street artists who work in those same divisions and in communities in the wider metropolitan region. In addition, tours of these communities were conducted during which residents were interviewed informally regarding their perspectives on local street art, including murals of dons. The second author conducted 14 months of fieldwork during the period 2008–14, in the context of broader research projects on donmanship and on public–private security assemblages. This research involved long-term participant observation in an inner-city neighbourhood in West Kingston, as well as interviews with dons, politicians, officers within the JCF and the Jamaica Defence Force (JDF), owners of private security companies, and local and international development agency staff.

The article starts with a brief overview of research on policy mobilities and our proposed intervention in this literature, followed by a background section on donmanship and police and inner-city relations. Next, we present our data, discussing which strategies dons employ and how we see these emerging, in a reworked form, in the recent activities of the police and other government agencies. We focus, first, on the reliance of both dons and police on violent retributive forms of law and order, as well as more preventive policing and restorative justice models. Second, we discuss the broader social provisioning role dons take on in inner-city neighbourhoods and, third, the symbolic strategies they develop. These provisioning and symbolic activities, we argue, are also appropriated by the police. We end with some concluding remarks on the implications of these intra-urban policy mobilities.

### **Policing and Intra-Urban Policy Mobilities**

In this article, we examine how specific policing strategies and policy models are circulated and appropriated between different actors and institutions. In so doing, we seek to build on and extend recent work in geography on policy mobilities. This work studies how specific policies move from one geographical location to the next, focussing in particular

on the transnational movement of policy models. Many of these studies have concentrated on the movement of urban policies between different cities. In contrast to earlier work on policy transfer, research on policy mobilities stresses that policy norms, practices and models do not move in a straightforward, linear fashion. As policies are adopted in new locations they are not so much emulated and replicated; rather, they mutate, as exogenous elements become embedded in local institutional contexts (Peck and Theodore 2010; McCann and Ward 2012).

Some of this work on policy mobilities has researched the movement of policing and security policy models. For instance, researchers have studied the international popularity of zero-tolerance policing and its connection to former New York City mayor, Rudy Giuliani, and his 'top cop', William Bratton, who both capitalised on the city's success in decreasing crime rates during their tenure in the 1990s and early 2000s. The security and policing consultancy firms they established – the Giuliani Partnership Group and Bratton Group LLC – have been associated with the proliferation of punitive *mano dura* policing strategies in multiple locations throughout Latin America (Swanson 2013; Mountz and Curran 2009). Other authors have studied the circulation of security policies between cities in Southern Africa, including community policing, and the role of South Africa as a regional 'sending country' in terms of security models (Bénil-Gbaffou et al. 2012).

Rather than focussing on the transnational mobility of policing models, we explore the circulation of policing strategies and techniques at the local, intra-urban level. Specifically, we are interested in understanding how these law and order strategies move between different institutional contexts and between public and private, or formal and informal, policing actors. We argue that, in developing and implementing new security policies, government agencies do not look only to the public sector policy models introduced and championed by their international governmental counterparts. The role of non-state actors is especially salient in the field of security and policing services where the agents and agencies that deliver these services have been rapidly diversified in recent years. This diversification is often described as the shift from police to policing: the police are not the only actors performing the activity of policing but compete and collaborate with non-state security providers such as commercial security companies, and neighbourhood watch and vigilante groups.

Given that the provision of security and policing services is by no means the sole domain of public sector actors, it is unsurprising that government agencies will also take into account the viability of strategies developed by private security providers. This could involve a consideration of the activities of commercial private actors, such as the use of closed-circuit television cameras in commercial plazas, or the architectural interventions aimed at crime deterrence promoted by insurance companies and developers of gated communities. However, as we suggest, government agencies may also take into consideration the effectiveness of strategies developed by non-formal, extra-legal security actors, such as dons.

Our focus on intra-urban policy mobilities is not to deny the strong influence of foreign policy models on Jamaican policing strategies. Police reform and an emphasis on community policing, propagated in particular by bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, have been important tendencies in this regard (see, for example, Harriott 2009). European and North American government security organisations and overseas liaison officers have also played an increasingly direct, on-the-ground role in the development and implementation of Caribbean security policy (Bowling 2010). In addition, Jamaican security and policing strategies are shaped by the preferences of individual politicians and senior police officers, which may originate from in-house experiences and debates rather than reflect either foreign models or the activities of non-state actors.

However, we argue that a close examination of the policing strategies employed in the Kingston Metropolitan Area over the past five years demonstrates a number of clear parallels to don-based patterns of law and order. As we describe below, there are multiple strategies that the JCF and allied government agencies have been employing, primarily in the inner-city areas of West and Central Kingston, which make direct reference to the activities of dons. This suggests the intra-urban mobility of security policies and models, with techniques circulating at the local level between dons and the police, and the JCF taking a certain level of inspiration from the ‘one order’ commanded by dons such as Dudus. However, as the general policy mobility literature suggests, the circulation of such models or techniques across different institutional contexts involves a significant amount of adaptation, friction and mutation rather than straightforward

transmission and replication, and representations of the JCF as ‘the new don’ should not necessarily be taken at face value.

### **Dons, Police and Inner-City Residents**

This section provides background to our data on recent policing strategies and their relation to the practices developed by dons. We describe briefly the history of donmanship, focussing on the strategies dons have used to maintain support or legitimacy in inner-city communities. We also sketch the history of the mostly antagonistic relationship between the JCF and these neighbourhoods, ending with a discussion of the ‘Tivoli Incursion’ of May 2010 as something of a turning point in policing strategies.

In Jamaica, the term ‘don’ is commonly used to refer to people who have authority over sections of low-income communities in Kingston and other urban areas, and who are generally involved in criminal activities such as extortion and drug trafficking. These criminal authority figures rose to power through the violent ‘garrison politics’ surrounding post-independence elections, especially during the 1970s, when politicians armed and compensated gangs in attempts to thwart political competition (Sives 2010). These gang leaders, who came to be known as dons, functioned as intermediaries through which Members of Parliament channelled resources to ‘reward’ communities and maintain their loyalty (Johnson 2011). The consolidation of the power and authority of dons came during the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s, as the ability of the governing parties to supply the urban poor with clientelist rewards diminished and dons became more autonomous, using capital they had secured illicitly through the drug and arms trade and extortion, or legally through construction, entertainment ventures and other businesses (Charles and Beckford 2012; Jaffe 2013). In recent times, dons have, therefore, embodied the role of all-round patron more fully than Members of Parliament.

While public opinion sometimes attributes the power of dons to their use of violence to terrorise residents, there has been an increased recognition that they often enjoy considerable legitimacy amongst the urban poor. This local support has been most evident in residents’ protests against the arrest, extradition, or killing of dons by police (Price 2004; Charles and Beckford 2012). The dons’ legitimacy is generally understood

as deriving from their role in providing residents with jobs and money, as well as local security through violence and alternative justice systems. Price (2004: 97) characterises the don as a “politically connected local leader who wields power, status, and prestige derived from multiple sources and activities, legal and illegal who typically provides social welfare and informal justice service”. Dons are, thus, central figures in providing social stability and protection (Moser and Holland 1997) and many residents consider their system of justice to be swifter and more effective than that of the state (Levy 2009; Jaffe 2012a). In addition, dons cultivate loyalty and consolidate their power through a range of symbolic practices that include the organisation of street dances and the use of visual culture within the communities they govern. Visual elements that can be seen as serving a legitimising purpose include posters advertising dances and other events in their honour, textual graffiti demarcating gang turf and proclaiming the names of popular dons, and murals that celebrate dons or commemorate community members who have been killed (Jaffe 2012b).

The authority of dons can also be understood in light of the historically difficult relationship between the police and inner-city residents. Many residents have a deep mistrust of JCF officers and initiatives, in part due to high levels of police brutality, including extra-judicial killings,<sup>1</sup> harassment of young men, illegal detentions and searches, and a general treatment of residents as suspects or potential suspects in crimes. As a result, many of the urban poor see the police as a force to be feared, rather than a service that protects.<sup>2</sup> The JCF’s lack of proper investigative capacity and resources, coupled with a slow court system, have also resulted in diminished confidence in its effectiveness as a law enforcement agency. The police-community relationship has, then, been fraught with challenges that stem from a longer history of colonial policing (Harriott 2000). The dons’ provision of protection and conflict resolution services have further eroded residents’ relationship with the police.

This historically shaped antagonism came to a head in what became known as the Tivoli Incursion. On 23 May 2010, the Jamaican security

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1 There were 2,200 killings in the period 2001-2010, with only two police officers convicted; see <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/jamaica-must-tackle-shocking-wave-police-killings-2012-03-08>, accessed 25 February 2015.

2 [http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session9/JM/JFJ\\_Jamicansforjustice\\_Annex16.pdf](http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session9/JM/JFJ_Jamicansforjustice_Annex16.pdf), accessed 25 February 2015.

forces initiated a joint military-police operation in Tivoli Gardens, storming barricades erected by gunmen to prevent the capture of Christopher ‘Dudus’ Coke after the then Prime Minister, Bruce Golding, signed his extradition order to the USA. Over the next three days, under the State of Emergency that was declared in sections of the Kingston Metropolitan Region, the security forces are alleged to have killed at least 75 civilians while gunmen killed one soldier in the community.<sup>3</sup> However, this was just the starting point for a crackdown on gangs. In West Kingston alone, the police detained over 700 young men who were taken in vans to the National Arena and ‘processed’, which included taking their photographs and fingerprints, with only a small percentage actually being arrested and sent to jail. Similar operations were conducted as far away as Mandeville in the central parish of Manchester.

The JCF’s anti-gang operation continued long after the State of Emergency had been lifted. The police deployed both new and revamped strategies aimed not only at ridding inner-city communities of gangs but also at developing more amiable relationships with residents. This shift is seen in the National Crime Prevention and Community Safety Strategy (NCPCSS) that was created in October 2010, which highlighted a need and opportunity for a “comprehensive security and development response ... to address the long-standing security challenges” (Ministry of National Security 2010: 4). Ministry of Security policy documents<sup>4</sup> frame the ‘incursion’ as a turning point in state security responses, emphasising the need for new or adapted methods in order to bring about sustained change. As we argue in the next section, these new strategies share characteristics with the dons’ methods of maintaining order and support, and suggest the existence of intra-urban security mobilities.

### **Post-Dudus Police Strategies and Local Security Mobilities**

We now analyse our findings in terms of recent JCF strategies and their connections to don-led strategies of rule. We focus on three broad areas

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<sup>3</sup> See OPD (2013). The exact number of people killed by the security forces has not yet been determined with certainty.

<sup>4</sup> In addition to the NCPCSS (CPCSU 2010), this idea of a turn in security strategies comes out in Ministry of National Security, JCF and JDF policy documents, concept notes, academic theses and media performances (for example, Ministry of National Security 2010; Williams 2012).

where we recognise resemblances between the methods of the police and those of dons. First, we examine recent JCF strategies aimed explicitly at crime prevention and reduction, including activities aimed at public order and conflict resolution. A discussion of a number of examples of police social provisioning follows, and we end with a review of the JCF’s symbolic strategies.

### ***Security and Dispute Resolution***

The JCF’s crime reduction activities since 2010 resemble the dons’ methods in a number of ways. These recent activities – which may include both formal strategies and less formal operational methods – include a tendency towards violent retributive policing; an active involvement in dispute resolution; and the use of curfews to implement public order.

The first tendency, to employ punitive methods as a strategy of crime prevention, is most evident in the JCF’s use of ‘persons of interest’ (POI). During the State of Emergency the police published lists of POI, announcing the names, alibis and addresses (as far as known) of alleged dons, and summoning them to the local police station for questioning. The police, in their updated policy on “persons of interest,” underline that the term POI is “not a euphemism for wanted persons” but refers to “any person the police believe may be able to assist in a criminal investigation”.<sup>5</sup> During our research, however, we were told by multiple respondents that those dons who showed up after being summoned were warned to leave their neighbourhoods and relinquish their leadership role, or else they would be killed. One West Kingston resident explained the effect on the dons as follows:

If you notice, as they are named you see them run go give up themselves. One time you wouldn’t find them do those things, but now them just run go in to the police. ‘Cause them know if them don’t come in when the police say to come in by certain time, when time police see them, them liable to die.<sup>6</sup>

Another respondent, from a community in the St. Andrew Western constituency, concurred. He explained that, where previously the dons

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<sup>5</sup> See *Jamaica Observer* (2011).

<sup>6</sup> Interview, 2012.

generally did not feel threatened by the JCF, a POI listing currently had the effect intended by the police: “Nobody don’t want to be called don nowadays. Because if you labelled as don, the police put you on Wanted list, and might come kill you.” The effectiveness of this strategy was also suggested by the posting of notices throughout the Central Kingston neighbourhood of Tel Aviv in 2011. In those posters, a man commonly known to be the local don announced that: “I Donovan Ainsworth, otherwise known as ‘Pepsi’ or ‘Calla Danks’, write this notice to officially inform all politicians and members of the security forces who have classified me as a gang leader or a don that I am neither”. Presumably, this announcement was intended to prevent violent action on the part of the police.

This strategy of discouraging dons from remaining in power through threat of death can be seen as something of a continuation of a longer tradition of police extrajudicial killing. However, it also resembles the dons’ own system of ‘jungle justice’ in which certain crimes are punishable by banishment or death, although they may be preceded by a warning (Charles and Beckford 2012; Jaffe 2013). In contrast to previous police killings, the POI strategy appears to operate on a clearly (if never formally) communicated understanding that the punishment for donmanship is either banishment or death.

The dons’ alternative justice system also includes softer measures of dispute mediation and resolution, and we see security and justice strategies that seem to display parallels to these approaches. In 2013, the Cabinet approved a new Ministry of Justice policy (Ministry of Justice 2012), which resulted in several Restorative Justice Centres (RJC) being opened in inner-city areas across the island. Police and community members may refer local disputes to centres rather than to formal institutions such as the court system – an alternative but comparable system to the ‘jungle justice’ system in which both police and residents would refer incidents to the don.<sup>7</sup> The Restorative Justice Policy recognises that dons “set the tone for community values and are said to have a hand in all dispute resolutions of significance” and that many inner-city residents

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<sup>7</sup> As Duncan-Waite and Woolcock note (2008: 29), “The police request the Don to intervene to prevent small gang feuds, petty theft, and shop breaking. Police will also refer criminals to the [jungle justice] system so that immediate action can be taken and the community tensions arising from the incident can be calmed to prevent further trouble.”

are disenchanted with the formal justice system (Ministry of Justice 2012: 12). It seeks to develop alternative dispute resolution practices through the RJC’s to “address a profound disconnect between the formal and informal systems of conflict resolution which is perhaps the most challenging phenomenon for advancing crime reduction strategies” (Ministry of Justice 2012: 23). The RJC’s are explicitly intended to counter the dons’ punitive, retributive form of dispute resolution (what the Ministry of Justice calls ‘reprisal culture’) with a restorative form.

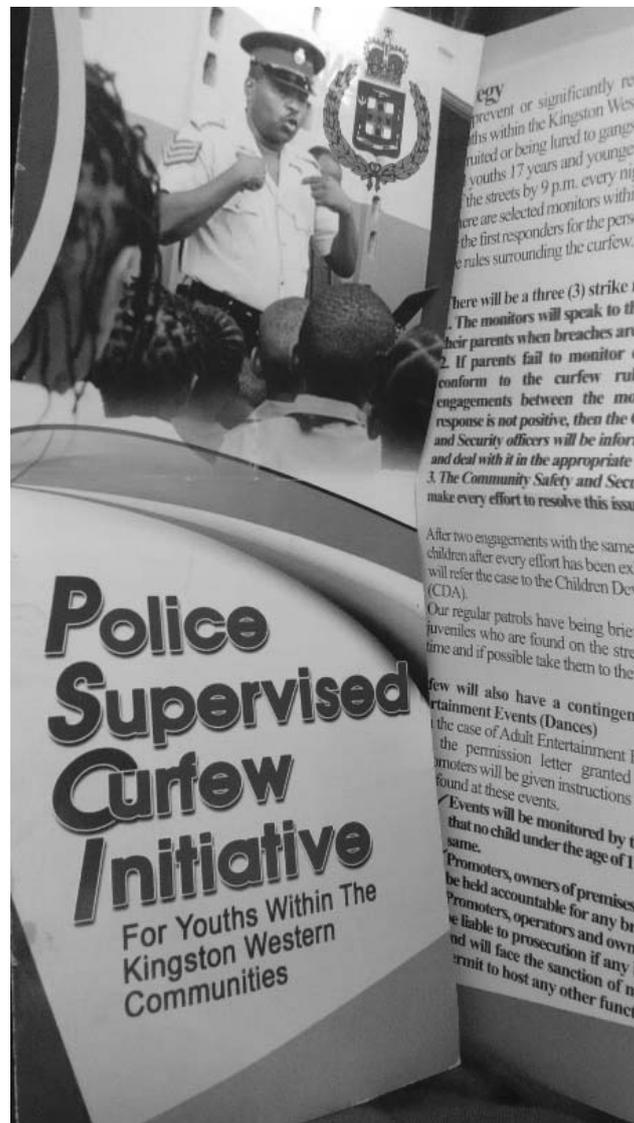
We see a third type of police activity that resembles the dons’ methods of maintaining public order in the use of curfews. Here, we refer not so much to the military curfews organised by the JCF in search of weapons and wanted persons but rather to a softer style of youth curfew. Dudus was alleged to have a rule prohibiting children from being out on the streets after 8:30 p.m. and, in fact, he referred to this as one of his achievements in a letter he wrote asking the US judge presiding over his case for leniency (*Jamaica Observer* 2009; *Jamaica Gleaner* 2011). While doing research in Central Kingston in 2012, teenagers also explained to the second author how the don in their neighbourhood maintained curfews for young people. They described how their don would not allow children under the age of 12 to be on the street after 8:00 p.m., while a 10:00 p.m. curfew applied to those over 12 but under 15.<sup>8</sup> In early 2014, a new police initiative appeared to echo this practice. In the Kingston Western Police Division, the JCF’s Community Safety and Security Team announced a 9:00 p.m. curfew for children aged 17 and under, which would rely on local residents trained as ‘curfew monitors’ to implement the policy. In addition, children’s presence at community dances was forbidden. In a flyer outlining the initiative (Figure 1), the Division stated that “the idea of a curfew in the home or even the community is not new, but the uniqueness of this strategy is obvious in the involvement of the police” (JCF 2014). The head of the Division described the initiative, which was apparently met with considerable support amongst residents, as “part of an effort by the police to return discipline in the area and keep youngsters who are being lured by gangs out of crime” (Matthews 2014a). Together, these measures of retributive policing, alternative dispute resolution, and

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<sup>8</sup> Such community curfews are not the sole purview of dons. In the West Kingston neighborhood of Fletcher’s Land, for instance, community members organised their own 9:00 p.m. curfew to protect children from ‘bad influences’ (Interview 2010; Dunkley 2007).

youth curfews are intended to replace the rule of dons but, at the same time, they reproduce some of their most popular measures.

**Figure 1:**  
**Flyer advertising JCF youth curfew, 2014**



*Image courtesy of Tracian Meikle*

### ***Provision of Public Goods and Services***

In addition to activities in the realm of alternative justice and public order – interventions directed more clearly at reducing crime locally – the JCF has also adopted other methods aimed at building a relationship with communities through the provision of material goods and services. Some of these strategies may be seen as falling under the umbrella of

community policing, which has been officially part of JCF policy since the early 1990s.<sup>9</sup> Intensified in the last few years under USAID funding, hundreds of police officers have been trained to build a better rapport with community members under the theme “working together to build safer communities”. The trust-building activities that are listed under this new initiative in official reports on community policing in Jamaica include the formation of police youth clubs, regular meetings with communities and other stakeholders, and provision of support to neighbourhood watch groups (Chambers 2014; Weller 2012). However, some of the activities that the police are presently engaging in go beyond the official initiatives outlined in these community policing policies and reports; they reflect a more customised strategy to target certain communities after the ‘incursion’ in May 2010. These initiatives appear to resonate with what residents cite as dons’ positive contributions, such as supporting back-to-school and holiday treats, organising dances, distributing jobs and “supporting the community” (see Chambers 2014: 7).

We now discuss a number of police activities in 2014 that bear a resemblance to this type of community support, focussing specifically on the JCF’s organisation of a Christmas treat, a health and wellness fair, and their distribution of groceries to ‘shut-in’ community members. The police engage in these strategies as part of attempts to build a relationship with ‘the community’. In their staging of these activities, it is also interesting to note the headlining of these activities as police (rather than government) initiatives, as well as the sponsorship of the private sector. This is a separate strategy from the state’s distribution of social services – these activities are not about linking the community to official state social services. Rather, the JCF presents itself as the lead benefactor of these services, in a similar fashion to the dons’ self-representation (and we might add, echoing a longer tradition of politicians’ presenting themselves as community patrons).

Christmas treats are popular events usually organised by community leaders, including dons, to reach out to residents. In 2014, the Kingston Western Division organised such a treat, a large affair themed ‘Bring

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<sup>9</sup> The programme was not properly incorporated into the activities of the force until the mid- to late 2000s (Chambers 2014). In 2006, the new Community-Based Policing (CBP) campaign was developed, including the establishment of a Community Safety and Security Branch (CSSB) (JCF 2010).

Disney to Town', with over 30 rides, costumed cartoon characters and other forms of entertainment, and over 5,000 gifts prepared to give to local children. The list of sponsors encompassed over 30 organisations, including businesses as diverse as Mayberry Investments and Breezes Bahamas.<sup>10</sup> This use of sponsors to stage a massive treat mirrors dons' use of networks beyond the neighbourhood to provide goods and services to residents. These contacts and networks may include government agencies but, as in the case of the JCF, the private sector and NGOs are also typically involved. Beyond reaching out, the treat was also a symbolic show of the police's local and national clout. While residents may be aware that a treat is funded through resources that do not stem solely from either the don or the police, they tend to credit the organiser for bringing resources into the community. In staging a Christmas treat the police sought to present themselves to the community as a conduit through which residents could receive benefits from external parties. This can be seen as an attempt to establish a more trusting relationship with residents, moving away from the antagonistic policing for which the JCF is known.

A comparable event that showcased the ability of the police to bring social services to West Kingston was a health fair held in December 2014 at the Denham Town Police Station. Like the Christmas treat, the Kingston Western Health and Wellness Fair was organised with strong support from outside entities, including the Kingston Public Hospital and St. Joseph's Hospital. In promotional communication on the social networking platform, Instagram, members of the Division touted this event as a way of building a partnership with residents through community policing, demonstrating an intentional move not only to provide residents with necessary services but also to communicate their new role in these areas.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to the health fair and the Christmas treat, the Western Division also introduced the Shut-In Project, which delivered some 400 bags of groceries to hundreds of home-bound residents, representing another initiative aimed at garnering community support.<sup>12</sup> The donation of food

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<sup>10</sup> <https://instagram.com/p/wygPptKnQ-/?modal=true>

<sup>11</sup> <https://instagram.com/p/wJ2XNlqnWy/?modal=true>; <https://instagram.com/p/wJKiyKnVI/?modal=true>

<sup>12</sup> <http://instagram.com/p/w-9U4tKnSx/?modal=true>

items to the elderly is an important aspect of the material provisioning strategy used by dons to gain legitimacy in the neighbourhoods over which they preside, demonstrating care for vulnerable community members. Carried out by the police, the Shut-In Project communicates their changing role in West Kingston. Going beyond formal or informal referrals to social services, the JCF, like the dons, appears to have added to its mandate the provision of community welfare. This desire to reformulate its role to encompass welfare in addition to crime control was evident in a caption accompanying a photograph of an event organised by the police to celebrate an elderly resident’s birthday. The police officer pictured described the event as “significant and symbolic based on our long term strategic plan and promise to the residence [sic] of our division re: improving the life expectancy of members and also the quality of life”. Such initiatives and communication show an expansion of police duties beyond security and order and towards a more holistic care for the community, with the JCF taking on the responsibility for services that are typically the remit of other agencies. These actions by the police reflect the practices of dons who have most fully embodied the benefactor role in recent history (see Sives 2002).

### ***Symbolic Practices***

In addition to their role in security and social provisioning, dons’ local legitimacy has also been attributed to their use of symbolic practices and the JCF appears to be attending to the efficacy of such less tangible strategies as well, focussing on the power of street dances and visual culture. While the initiatives described in the previous subsection relate clearly to the JCF’s distribution of material goods and services, their staging of a street dance – the ‘Police Citizen Link Up’ event in October 2014 – straddles the spheres of social provisioning and symbolic practices. Such events contribute to community well-being by providing entertainment, by enhancing an area’s reputation as safe and lively, and by bringing tangible financial benefits to local vendors and entertainers. For many inner-city communities, these are important social events and residents repeatedly listed the ban on street dances during and following the 2010 State of Emergency as an important grievance. As noted above, many such dances were either staged or endorsed by dons, and were

seen by residents as one of the dons' positive contributions. Against the background of the restrictions imposed on inner-city street dances, we could interpret the police's organisation of their own dance as making a statement that they, too, could be the source of such a contribution.

The 'Police Citizen Link Up', held at the Denham Town Police Station was spearheaded by Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Steve McGregor and the Kingston Western Police Division, of which he was the Head. Like other such dances, the 'Link Up' had a star-studded line-up of guest artistes including Freddie McGregor and Beres Hammond, and offered attendees gate prizes ranging from large, flat-screen television sets to smartphones. In advertising the event on social media, one of the Division's senior officers presented it as follows:<sup>13</sup>

This going to be the #party to be on Friday. Yep ... right at the Denham Town Police Station ... Don't tell mi unnu forget the party vibes on this side of twon [sic]! Just pree the line up!!! [...] #PartnershipBetweenPoliceAndCitizens (((LOUD))) #Tivoli #TG, #TrenchTown #Rema #jungle #DenhamTown

In referencing the "party vibes on this side of town", the advertisement implicitly recognised the popular Passa Passa street dance that was held on a weekly basis in Tivoli Gardens under Dudus' rule, until the incursion and the curfew imposed on the neighbourhood in 2010. At the time, Passa Passa was the largest street dance in Jamaica, attracting visitors from around the island and overseas to party on the streets until daylight. The dance was a source of pride to many Tivoli Gardens residents, as it brought both income and fame to the neighbourhood and strengthened the area's reputation as being safe (a status largely attributed to Dudus' order). The 'Police Link Up' was positively received by the residents who turned out in large numbers for the night and, as with Passa Passa, visitors included celebrities from beyond the community such as track star, Usain Bolt, and cricketer, Marlon Samuels. The community members complimented the police on their initiative, with one of the residents stating that it was one of the best events in the area in recent years (Matthews 2014b).

Another recent symbolic strategy utilised by the JCF in inner-city areas relates to the control of visual images in public spaces. Starting in 2013, the police initiated an anti-mural campaign aimed at eradicating

<sup>13</sup> [http://instagram.com/p/uu\\_-GKqnR8/?modal=true](http://instagram.com/p/uu_-GKqnR8/?modal=true)

“visual images that reveres (sic) gangs” and targetting both portrait murals and textual graffiti in Kingston, St. Catherine and the western parish of St. James.<sup>14</sup> In some neighbourhoods, they have painted over decades-old murals, including those of famous Tivoli Gardens dons such as Jim Brown and Claudie Massop and several images of the former Matthews Lane don, Early Bird (see Figure 2). In various cases, they have removed most memorial images, including those of lesser-known dons and other young men who have died violently, including at the hands of the police. The orders for the campaign, which came from the Police High Command, constituted part of the strategic plan for dismantling gangs after Dudus’ extradition and were communicated by the police as an effort to “take back the communities” from dons and gangs (Cunningham 2013). In an interview, a senior police officer described the campaign as part of the broader ‘regularisation’ of inner-city neighbourhoods, designating guns, violence, illegal utility connections and murals as elements in comparable need of ‘cleaning up’:

We decide the negative must go with the gun them ... anything that incite violence ... fear leave the people after the Dudus incursion as henchmen gone, lots of cleaning up after the incursion ... JPS regularize ... NWC regularize ... so this was a part of it.<sup>15</sup>

As the JCF places importance on the aesthetic realm, visual images become part of the battleground of the police versus dons, and their erasure represents a symbolic assertion of authority by the police. SSP McGregor even joked that the residents could paint his image on the walls if he succeeds in ‘bringing order’ to his Kingston Western Division (McFadden 2013).<sup>16</sup> While police personnel interviewed by the first author said that the communities supported their move to erase the murals, preliminary research in the neighbourhoods involved did not corroborate such a wide consensus – some agreed with the police that murals had a negative impact, while others felt that the police had erased beloved

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<sup>14</sup> Senior Police Officer, Interview, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Senior Police Officer, Interview, 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, the announcement in March 2015 that SSP McGregor would be transferred from West Kingston to the parish of St. James prompted a street protest by residents, who argued that his departure would lead to increased violence in the area (Matthews 2015). Echoing inner-city protests following the arrest or death of local dons, this demonstration seemed to confirm McGregor’s achievement of don-like status.

family members. One mural artist referred to the police as the ‘new don’, noting the unilateral way in which they had removed the images. Another resident told the story of the police pulling a mother away from a week-old mural of her deceased son, which she was trying to prevent from being painted over.

**Figure 2:  
Painted-over murals in West Kingston, 2014**



*Image courtesy of Tracian Meikle*

The police seek to assert their local dominance not only by removing these community memorials but also in their use of the colour ‘constabulary blue’ to paint over them. The strongest display of this aesthetic takeover is the painting of Dudus’ former headquarters in Tivoli Gardens, which the police used during the Tivoli Incursion and continue to use to oversee the community. The building is now painted blue and white, as are other police stations across the island – a strong symbolic show of who is now in charge.

**Figure 3:**  
**Instagram advertisement for Police Citizen Link Up dance, 2014**



Source: [https://instagram.com/p/uu\\_-GkqnR8/?taken-by=garfield\\_bucka\\_taylor](https://instagram.com/p/uu_-GkqnR8/?taken-by=garfield_bucka_taylor)

The JCF’s utilisation of visual culture to displace dons also involves the use of flyers and other forms of advertisement to urge inner-city residents to embrace the police. Official community policing strategies include buying advertising space on public buses and manufacturing bumper stickers that encourage police–community partnerships. The promotional material for the Kingston Western Division’s social initiatives also portray the police in a certain light visually. The poster for the ‘Shut-In Project’ features one photograph of a resident hugging the highest-ranked police officer in the area and another with an officer as part of a happy group of community members. The poster for the ‘Police Citizen Link Up’ dance features the name and image of SSP McGregor in the upper left corner (Figure 3). Its design mirrors the general aesthetic used for dances and stage shows in Jamaica, including the famous ‘Champions in Action’ annual stage show previously organised by Presidential Click, the entertainment branch of Dudus’ business empire (Figure 4). Like their organisation of the street dance, the removal of murals and the dissemination of visual images that portray the police in a positive light underscore the importance that the JCF places on the symbolic realm in their new crime-fighting strategies. In fact, the 2010 National Crime

Prevention Community Safety Strategy lists murals, memorials and other beautification projects as part of their 'rapid impact' strategies in the intensified fight against crime and the dismantling of donmanship in inner-city communities (CPCSU 2010: 30).

Figure 4.  
Poster advertising Presidential Click's Champions in Action stage show, 2009.



Source: <http://www.dancehall.mobi/2009/08/12/champions-in-action-2009-is-on-this-saturday/>

## Conclusion

During our research in different inner-city communities, various residents talked about their communities in two timeframes: before and after the incursion. They noted the increased involvement of the police in their area and the crackdown on gang activity. In this article, we have sought to understand recent JCF strategies in inner-city neighbourhoods – across the realms of security and public order, social provisioning and symbolic practices – through the lens of intra-urban policy mobilities. While many of the activities described in this article have longer roots in

past practices by the JCF, we argue that observations of the police since 2010, and especially in West Kingston, demonstrate an intensification of such activities in particular neighbourhoods and a shift in the intended goal of the strategies. We have proposed that it is not coincidental that a range of post-Dudus police initiatives resemble practices used by dons in communities over which they preside.

This post-Dudus policing approach has involved a range of measures that extend far beyond security measures into the social provisioning and aesthetic spheres. Rather than only removing dons and their visual markers, the police have sought to replace their activities with their own versions. Together, these policies have the effect of changing inner-city residents’ view of the police, whether positively or negatively. Some welcome the increased police presence and efforts to replace the don’s rule. In West Kingston, however, a group of male residents spoke of recent JCF activities in this way: “It is all about power, the police say them a the real don now, them doing everything the don do. Even Ellington doing so much wrong and him in uniform. Who worse, him or the little man them?”<sup>17</sup>

Rather than suggesting that recent police strategies have a negative impact per se, the point we seek to make is that, in these actions, the JCF is acknowledging and seeking to fill the practical and symbolic void left by dons such as Dudus – and perhaps that of earlier political patrons. As the policy mobilities literature underlines, the move of policies and strategies from one institutional actor to the next is not linear or unidirectional. In the case of dons-to-police movement of practices, it could be suggested that both dons and the JCF have studied the longer historical tradition of Members of Parliament who strategically use a combination of violence, social provisioning, and symbolic practices to become neighbourhood-level or even national strongmen. Conversely, Jamaica’s contemporary electoral politics and politicians are also shaped by the dynamics of both donmanship and policing. These complex mobilities tend to involve significant friction, and the JCF’s adoption of a patronage role involves a range of adaptations, remodelling and rebranding.

While the recent shift in policing strategy is by no means a guarantee of the permanent displacement of donmanship by the JCF, it does

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<sup>17</sup> Interview, 2014.

highlight the range of needs – from material welfare to symbolic forms of political inclusion – that underlie Jamaica’s high rates of crime and violence. While sometimes problematically reminiscent of the dons they disparage, recent JCF policies confirm the need for alternative strategies to dismantling organised crime, utilising approaches that may have been developed or refined by criminal leaders in the first place.

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