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Speculative Policing

Rivke Jaffe

On Sunday, May 23, 2010, Jamaica's Prime Minister Bruce Golding declared a state of emergency. His government sought to arrest and extradite Christopher "Dudus" Coke, the country's most notorious criminal "don." Soldiers and police forced their way into Tivoli Gardens, the Kingston neighborhood where the don's headquarters were located, killing sixty-nine people in what became known as the "Tivoli incursion." Dudus was not caught until a month after the security operation and was immediately extradited to the United States, where he is currently in federal prison serving a twenty-three-year sentence for arms and drugs trafficking. After having "recaptured" Tivoli, the government established a military presence in the neighborhood that lasted over a year, posting soldiers in Dudus's former office. The security forces installed military checkpoints at all of the entrances to the neighborhood and implemented a 6:00 p.m. curfew that lasted over a month; nobody could leave after 6:00 p.m. unless they received a police permit to do so. The state of emergency was extended, and similar military curfews and a range of other "antigang" measures were rolled out in adjacent neighborhoods in West and Central Kingston, inner-city neighborhoods in the historic downtown area of Jamaica's capital. In the months and years that

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followed, politicians, government officials, and a range of commentators increasingly connected these policing measures to the possibility of fashioning a new urban future. New forms of urban intervention, they suggested, would summon a crime-free and prosperous Kingston into being.

Jamaica's recent policing strategies resonate with urban regeneration policies across the world, where new forms of crime prevention intersect with real-estate speculation. In this article I scrutinize such strategies to develop a theorization of what I call "speculative policing": an experimental, future-oriented form of policing that connects crime prevention to other forms of negotiating urban risk and uncertainty.¹ Not coincidentally, these modes of policing are applied primarily in areas of the city seen as having most potential for commercial redevelopment. Speculative policing works to establish a specific sociopolitical order, while rendering economically productive the differentiated and dynamic value of urban spaces and populations. In Kingston as elsewhere, the logic underlying this form of security governance is to make urban space safe for profit and investment. Yet the political process of implementing this mode of urban policing is itself quite uncertain, or even risky. It involves flexible, provisional forms of policy making and intervention that anticipate failure and that themselves skirt the edges of the law.

Speculative policing combines three future-oriented phenomena that engage with risk and uncertainty in different ways: preventive policing, real-estate speculation, and experimental modes of governance. These phenomena are in themselves not necessarily new, and each has developed an orientation toward the future according to what is largely an internal logic: preventing crime, capturing the rent gap, and innovating urban planning and policy. The specificity of speculative policing, I suggest, lies in the conjunction of these three phenomena in contemporary cities. Their combination implies the emergence of a new mode of urban security governance, a form of political and economic rationality that is speculative both in its underlying logic and in its everyday implementation.

1. Following the economist Frank Knight ([1921] 2006: 19–20), risk is often understood as a quantifiable, calculable form of uncertainty, while true uncertainty cannot be measured or rationalized. However, as Caitlin Zaloom (2004: 384) points out, "the analytic distinction between risk and uncertainty does not hold up under a consideration of speculation as a practice." The practices of speculative policing involve navigating and mitigating the gap between calculable and incalculable futures, between risk and uncertainty, to render it politically and economically productive. For distinct but related approaches to security and the calculation of the incalculable, see de Goede 2012 and Amore 2014.

Speculative policing has much in common with what Neil Smith (1996) described as revanchist urbanism, a repressive, exclusionary form of urban governance aimed at restoring a bourgeois sociopolitical order. In Jamaica, such revanchism is evident in the desire expressed by nostalgic upper-middle classes to reclaim a downtown Kingston they feel they lost to poverty, crime, and squalor (see, e.g., Dodman 2007), and the punitive interventions broadly seen as necessary to achieve this. However, whereas the temporality of revanchism is largely oriented toward the past, speculative policing has the future as its point of reference. It is aimed not so much at restoring a previous era as managing the uncertain futures that present a challenge to municipal governments everywhere (see Zeiderman et al. 2015).

A first element of speculative policing is its emphasis on “preventive” and “pro-active” approaches, aimed at crime prevention and future offenders. While preventive policing is by no means new (see, e.g., Browne 2015; Dodsworth 2016), the current popularity of such approaches has been read as signaling a temporal shift in policing, characterized by an orientation toward the future and a move away from post hoc crime solving toward the prevention of criminal acts (Zedner 2007). Rather than necessarily engaging with actual perpetrators or victims, such a preemptive form of policing is aimed at crime prevention and future offenders. This privileging of a biopolitical logic of population management, over sovereign or disciplinary approaches to criminal justice, entails a conceptualization of crime as a risk that can be understood and managed through actuarial calculations, similar to those that insurance companies make. This logic of actuarialism is accompanied by a prioritization of mitigating loss over punishing wrongdoing. In addition, the production of security involves a broad range of state and nonstate actors, from the police to private security companies and voluntary groups (Zedner 2007).

This temporal orientation of much contemporary policing can be understood as part of a broader turn toward governing through the management of risk. Beyond managing risk, however, speculative policing seeks to render it economically productive. As studies of cities from Rio de Janeiro to Mexico City to Amsterdam suggest, the most repressive forms of crime prevention take place in precisely those areas that have the highest potential for urban regeneration and real-estate development (e.g., Freeman 2012; Davis 2013; Wright 2013; de Koning 2015). Speculative policing combines the risk management of future-oriented policing with an interest in unlocking the potential of real estate. As security forces target crime threats, property owners and corporate investors feel more comfortable tak-

ing financial risks. The potential for economic profit lies in the contrast between the future economic value of real estate and the social value and crime risk associated with current residents. Politicians, bureaucrats, and developers estimate the economic potential of urban place through calculations that combine location, architecture, and reputation, in relation to the addition or subtraction of specific urban populations (low-income residents vs. office workers, criminals vs. artists). Beyond the value of land and housing, in cities such as Rio de Janeiro the regularization of water and electricity consumption concurrent with the “pacification” of low-income areas indicates a recognition of the consumer potential that can similarly be unlocked for corporate investors, if security risks are managed strategically (e.g., Pilo’ 2017).

A third element is the exploratory, experimental nature of the urban security governance strategies themselves. New policing policies are developed and implemented not so much in a linear fashion, according to a blueprint logic. Rather, the high-crime, high-value zones where speculative policing is rolled out from Kingston to Rio de Janeiro might best be seen as sociospatial prototypes. Public policy making increasingly follows a practice of prototyping previously associated with design; characterized by flexibility, provisionality, and anticipation; and understood as “creative, contingent and emergent [rather than] rational, linear and reproducible” (Kimbell and Bailey 2017: 218). Speculative policing involves prefigurative experiments that urban governance actors hope will generate a new and improved city of the future, even as they anticipate their failure. As Alberto Corsín Jiménez (2014: 381, emphasis in original) suggests, “An important feature of prototyping . . . is the incorporation of *failure* as a legitimate and very often empirical realisation.” Failure and success become blurred in this context: rather than being conceived in terms of delivering measurable outcomes or meeting preset targets, policy “success” may be reframed as having gained increased learning opportunities, or the habituation and support of various constituencies. This resonates with what Oren Halpert et al. (2013: 275) call “test-bed urbanism,” a “perpetually provisional” form of city making that involves a “tense relation between performance and aspiration.” Yet despite its nonlinear nature, what appears more stable in the context of policing is that these experimental techniques are generally tested on impoverished, racialized spaces and populations. In their discussion of the test-bed city, Halpert et al. (275) note that it is both “a rehearsal of our future and an archive of our past.” This archival feature is certainly evident in a postcolonial city such as Kingston, where colonial genealogies of differentiated policing inform the deployment of security policies (see Harriott 2000; Campbell 2015).

In this article, I develop an elaboration of speculative policing through an analysis of urban development in “post-Dudus” Jamaica. My analysis draws on a total of sixteen months of ethnographic research conducted during the period 2008–18 on donmanship and on new modes of security governance. This research included participant observation in a West Kingston neighborhood I call Brick Town, which had previously been under the leadership of an influential don I call the General. In addition, I conducted interviews with a range of actors throughout the city, including dons and their seconds-in-command, politicians, senior officers in the police and military, private security company owners and managers, and representatives of local and international development agencies and nongovernmental organizations.

The 2010 state of emergency presented a disruption to an established sociopolitical order in which dons such as Dudus colluded with politicians, bureaucrats, and police to cogovern urban territories and populations. In the next section, I provide a background to this system of donmanship. Then I discuss attempts by Jamaica’s security forces and political and business elites to capitalize on the moment of rupture to recalibrate the previous don-based urban order. I outline how a loose alliance sought to shift control to state actors while simultaneously mobilizing downtown Kingston’s potential for economic regeneration. Starting in 2010, the Jamaican security forces organized curfews in allegedly criminogenic inner-city neighborhoods, which involved the detention and “processing” of male residents. In addition, they compiled and publicized lists of “persons of interest,” alleged dons, who were summoned to police stations. These technologies of data collection and listing tended to concentrate on specific areas within the Kingston Metropolitan Region and involved various forms of legal exceptionalism. I show how these same areas were the focus of real-estate development and broader urban regeneration strategies that included the initiation of a major commercial development, a crackdown on informal economic activities, and the emergence of early indicators of gentrification such as art projects and coffee shops. Tracing the development of such urban policies and interventions for nearly a decade following the state of emergency, I end with an analysis of Jamaica’s urban security governance as characterized by a nonlinear, prototyping logic.

Dons

For decades, Kingston’s low-income areas have been governed by dons, local community leaders who are generally involved in criminal activities such as extortion or drug trafficking. Historically, these dons have been local political

brokers, tied to either the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) or the People's National Party (PNP). Following Jamaica's independence from Britain in 1962, these two main political parties both channeled weapons and money to dons, relying on them to secure electoral turf by any means necessary. Within the neighborhoods they controlled in downtown Kingston, dons ensured that loyal party supporters received state housing or jobs, while intimidating or forcing out supporters of the "wrong" party. In so doing, dons were central to the emergence of a violent system of political clientelism known as "garrison politics," which transformed downtown Kingston's low-income neighborhoods into "garrison communities," fiercely defended party-political enclaves (see Stone 1980; Sives 2010).

From the 1980s, dons' connections to the transnational drug trade allowed them to gain financial independence from politicians. The most influential and wealthiest dons have been central to a system of local governance, providing neighborhood residents with access to social welfare and to employment, either within their own organizations or through their political and business connections. They have also played an important role in extralegal security provision, resolving local disputes and punishing crimes ranging from theft to rape. In various instances, the Jamaica Constabulary Force condoned or even supported this self-help form of law and order, often based on violent retribution. As their governance practices grew increasingly entangled with politicians, bureaucrats, and the police, the most powerful dons became corulers, whose interests influenced political decision making as much as vice versa (see Harriott 2008; Lewis 2012; Jaffe 2013).

This long-standing entanglement explains the initial reluctance of then Prime Minister Bruce Golding to extradite Dudas. Golding's party, the JLP, had historically close ties to Dudas and his neighborhood of Tivoli Gardens, known as "the mother of all garrisons." The "Tivoli incursion" took place in May 2010, after nearly nine months of increasing pressure from the United States and from local media, civil society, and the opposition PNP. While the security operation and the state violence it involved shocked the Jamaican public, many citizens, politicians, and businesspeople also saw the crisis as an opportunity to "dismantle the garrisons" and to fashion a new urban future without dons.

Formal and Informal Crime Prevention

Realizing this future Kingston involved, first of all, implementing new types of security strategies. Some of the interventions that took shape during and after the state of emergency were formal policing policy; others appeared to be unofficial but coordinated actions. Here I focus on two related sets of future-oriented polic-

ing measures: the compilation of rudimentary databases through place-based curfews and “processing,” and the production and dissemination of security lists of “persons of interest,” several of whom were killed by the police.

Curfews and “Processing”

Amidst widespread calls to bring an end to the rule of dons, the Jamaican security forces—the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) together with the Jamaica Defense Force (JDF)—implemented a series of military curfews directly after the May 2010 security operation, primarily in West and Central Kingston. These interventions involved cordoning off spaces categorized as risky and preventing residents from leaving for the duration of the curfew. As in Tivoli Gardens, entrances to each neighborhood would be sealed off and converted into military checkpoints (see fig. 1), while soldiers conducted searches of residents and properties throughout the curfew area, with “getting the guns” as one stated goal. In addition to temporarily controlling the mobility of residents and searching for illegal weapons, however, the curfews were central in compiling a database of suspected criminals and can be understood as a first step in making legible, governable spaces out of former “no-go areas.”

Closely related to the general curfew was a procedure euphemistically called “processing,” which functioned as a crucial part of the production of legibility. During the 2010 curfews, under the legal exceptionalism of the state of emergency, the security forces summarily rounded up thousands of men and teenaged boys from Tivoli Gardens and other inner-city neighborhoods. While these men were never charged with any crime, they were detained and “processed,” arrested without charges and held overnight in the National Arena, the city’s main indoor sports stadium. This processing involved photographing and fingerprinting the men, a strategy designed to create a biometric database for future reference.

In Brick Town, the inner-city neighborhood in West Kingston where I worked most closely, this processing took place in early June 2010. During a two-day military curfew, the soldiers went from building to building searching for contraband. Their total catch consisted of four guns (an Uzi submachine gun and three pistols) and 140 rounds of ammunition—not a very large number of illegal weapons for a neighborhood considered to be a hotbed of organized crime. In addition, the military presence enabled the public-private utility companies to come into the neighborhood and disconnect the ubiquitous illegal electricity and water connections. While this measure did not appear to have an immediate connection to combatting organized crime, it was promoted as part of a so-called regularization



Figure 1 Military curfew in downtown Kingston, 2010. Photo by author.

strategy that sought to regularize (rather, recommodify) the “irregular” or free use of electricity, water, and housing in neighborhoods run by dons.

The Brick Town raids did not appear to be very effective. Many people who would otherwise have been detained had removed themselves from the neighborhood well before the security forces came in, either because they had inside sources notifying them of a pending curfew, or because they could guess that the neighborhood was a high-priority area that would be targeted early on. Other residents told me that they had escaped being detained and processed because they were recognized by individual police officers involved in the raids who vouched for them. Some of my main contacts fled to the countryside to stay with family there, and some of them had still not come back years later. (This permanent displacement may in fact have been an anticipated effect, as I discuss in further

detail below.) Many of the water and electricity taps were quickly reconnected as soon as the military left—during follow-up visits in the months and years that followed, I found many people had managed to circumvent the various antitheft technologies the electricity company had tried to implement, and they were back to the old system of “bridging light.” Three of the four weapons seized during the curfew had been found hidden away in one business establishment, but over the years that followed, it became clear that the proprietor could not be prosecuted for illegal possession of weapons, as it could not be proven beyond a doubt that he knew they were on his property.

What, then, was the function of such curfews and processing, beyond a performative show of force? I suggest that we can see them as playing a central role within the development of future-oriented policing in Kingston. The identification, measurement, and management of risk necessitates an ongoing process of data collection, organization, and analysis. In other contexts, the “actuarial archive” that enables governance actors to know and manage insecurity may involve large quantitative datasets and complex proprietary algorithms (e.g., Amoore and Raley 2017). In low-income, high-crime urban areas, the possibilities of compiling statistical databases for purposes of preventive repression are often limited. In Kingston’s inner-city neighborhoods, the security forces work with blunter tools, both in compiling rudimentary databases of risky persons and in repressively preventing future crime. Biometric data is collected through force, risk calculations are made based on simple correlations of bodily identity markers and place of residence, and preventive policing often involves the violent curtailing of the lives of those expected to commit future crimes.

In an interview,² a retired senior JCF officer, whom I call Edmund, explained to me that the processing of inner-city men was an intentional police strategy, necessary for the compilation of a database of real and potential criminals. Under normal circumstances, the police have very limited means of identifying suspects. There is a widespread reluctance for witnesses to testify against suspects, making material evidence such as fingerprints and eventually DNA all the more important. But even when certain individuals have been identified as suspects, the police are often at a loss regarding how to find them, as there is no national registry of names and addresses. In addition, some inner-city residents, including criminals, simply do not exist within the state’s bureaucracy. Their existence has never been registered through birth certificates, educational degrees, or tax regis-

2. Interview, November 2014.

tration numbers, and they remain true unknowns to the formal system: unidentified, unregistered, nonexistent.

Edmund explained: “You have a suspect by an alias, you don’t even have a true name . . . just, known as ‘Jughead’ or ‘Skatalite.’ It’s very, very complex.” There had been attempts to pass legislation making it mandatory for all Jamaicans to carry identification cards. Similar schemes in Brazil have been used mainly as a means of surveillance intended to make low-income populations more legible (see Koster 2014). In Jamaica, politicians have been highly reluctant to pass a national ID law because, as Edmund put it delicately, their constituencies do not always stand to benefit—the collusion between politicians and dons is a major impediment. Given this lack of political support, the police looked for other ways to compile a database, not so much even for crime prevention but for the future apprehension of suspects. They had had no legal basis on which to photograph or fingerprint suspected criminals, but the state of emergency provided the chance they had been waiting for, to collect biodata for future use, for solving future crimes that they would most likely not be able to prevent.³

The curfews and processing, then, can be understood as an anticipatory form of policing that frames citizens as potential criminals based on their area of residence. The construction of a crude database of names, photographs, and biometric data was explicitly place based, relying on a conception of criminogenic spaces, where future crime risk is calculated through a combination of residential location and “suspicious” markers such as gender, skin color, and styles of clothing.

“Persons of Interest”

An additional form of future-oriented policing was also initiated during the 2010 state of emergency, when the police began to publicize lists of “persons of interest” who were summoned to police stations. These persons were alleged dons, who were sometimes listed by their real names and sometimes only by their aliases. The newspapers and television news shows put out calls for people known as “Not Nice” and “Government,” naming their general address. As a researcher

3. Human rights organizations came to similar conclusions, noting: “It appeared that the security forces believed the State of Emergency gave them carte blanche to detain young men for the purpose of developing an unlawful database of young men who can then be tracked as being ‘known to police.’ The State of Emergency was operated in a discriminatory fashion as security forces focussed their operations in inner-city (socioeconomically depressed) neighbourhoods, rounding up only and almost all young men in these areas for the purpose of ‘processing’” (Byers et al. 2011: 24).

working on donmanship, I used this publication to gain a more comprehensive understanding—an informal database of my own—of who was in power where. However, the legality of this practice of public naming and criminalizing was highly questionable.⁴

Those who showed up at the police stations were held for a little while, processed, and generally released, as the police had no evidence on which to detain them beyond what the state of emergency allowed; they were not suspects, just persons of interest. In Brick Town, I soon heard rumors of what residents called an “embargo”: if the police see persons of interest with other people or hear that they are getting in trouble, they will “crack down on you,” that is, kill you. The Brick Town don, who had succeeded his more popular father, left the place following the “person of interest” listing and never returned to a leadership position, taking seriously the warnings he had apparently received.

In mid-2012, Keith, one of my main interlocutors in Brick Town, explained to me that this “persons of interest” strategy, which had continued after the state of emergency ended, seemed to have had some effect on local gunmen: “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.”⁵ The fear of being killed by police resonated more broadly throughout downtown Kingston. In the Central Kingston neighborhood of Tel Aviv, the man commonly held to be the local don, Donovan “Pepsi” Ainsworth, had announcements posted through the area stating, “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” (see fig. 2).

The consequences of being listed as a person of interest cannot be seen separately from a more long-standing practice of police killings (see Amnesty International 2016). For several years, the JCF killed around 200 citizens annually, peaking to

4. In addition, the differentiated nature of the practice was glaringly evident in the case of the so-called X6 killer, a wealthy, politically connected businessman who shot at a taxi that had run into his BMW X6 vehicle, killing a teenage passenger. Initially, none of the main newspapers published the alleged killer’s name, arguing that it was very important that the privacy and anonymity of suspects of serious crimes be protected. The blatant “outing” of alleged dons emphasized the extent to which this concern for privacy is applied according to class position and political protection.

5. Interview, August 2012.

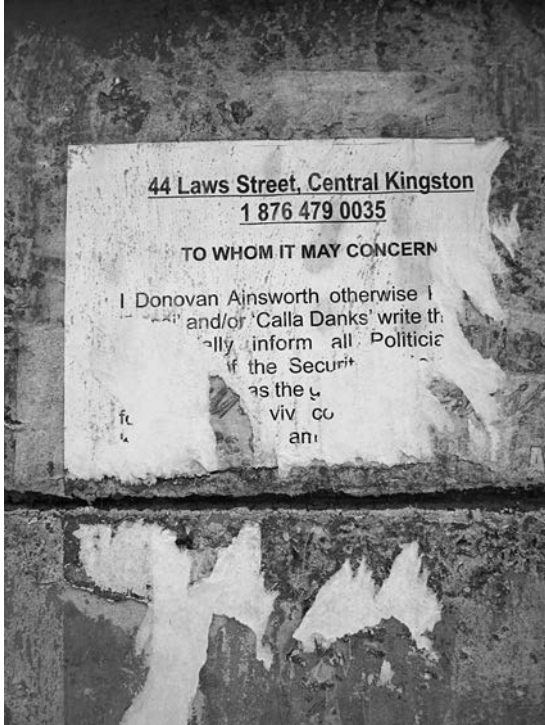


Figure 2 Poster disavowing the status of don, 2011. Photo by author.

382 persons in 2010.⁶ In a context in which a majority of Jamaicans sees the justice system as largely incapable of successfully prosecuting crimes, extrajudicial killings are often understood popularly as a more effective way of bringing criminals to justice. However, these killings are not necessarily punitive or framed as criminal justice per se. Rather, police understand them as having a clear preventive character. In a media interview, Reneto Adams—a former senior superintendent of police who retired from the JCF following a brutality scandal—explained the preventive logic of police killings: “I use a ‘crocodile and alligator’ analogy—you don’t kill the ferocious alligator and the ferocious crocodile; you have them killed or terminated in the eggs before they are hatched. It is simple logic” (Green 2011). As such, the lists of suspected criminals, followed by the permanent displacement or death of those listed, can be understood as a strategy intended to mitigate urban uncertainty by preventing future crime in specific sections of urban Jamaica. As a technique of government and a sometimes lethal form of normative

ordering, Jamaica’s list of persons of interest is not entirely dissimilar from the “kill lists” and “no fly lists” developed by the US government in the context of preventing terrorist attacks (see, e.g., de Goede and Sullivan 2016).

Inner-City Regeneration and Real-Estate Speculation

I consider these future-oriented crime prevention strategies—which were largely focused on the neighborhoods bordering the historical commercial district in West and Central Kingston—in relation to activities associated with increasing the real-estate potential of the same area: a crackdown on informal economic activities, a major commercial construction project, and a number of indicators of nascent gentrification.

6. A total of 3,514 persons were killed by police in the period 1991–2010 (Byers et al. 2011: 12). The number of police killings dropped sharply in 2014 following the establishment of the Independent Commission of Investigations (INDECOM), which initiated the first meaningful prosecution of such killings.

Many Jamaicans hoped that the “clean-up” of downtown Kingston that the state of emergency set in motion would herald a new era of commercial redevelopment. A letter writer to the *Jamaica Observer* who described himself as a “20-year-old hopeful citizen” expressed these sentiments rather poetically (Edwards 2014):

Travelling through the infamous Tivoli Gardens for the past couple of years has been rather exhilarating. Beyond the barricades, stripping paint, empty buildings, and criminal associations, Tivoli is perfect. . . . With less juice boxes strewn across the area, space is available to build businesses. If you observe, there are mechanic shops, restaurants, boutiques, furniture stores, funeral parlours, bars. . . . The community also has multiple recreational spaces, churches, schools, a theatre, a cemetery, a police station, a health centre, a home for the aged, and a stadium. . . . No gilded residential area, with all their pompous occupants, cultured lawns, endearing security systems, and magic dust can trump such sustainable genius. I'm jealous. Minus the criminality, splash a new coat of paint, get the schools up to par and watch and see this bewildered titan resurge beyond the stigma and heal its vilest lacerations. Then I tell you, it will be the platinum real estate no one will refuse.”

While perhaps a little overoptimistic regarding the potential of Tivoli's 1960s public housing development, these hopes seemed slightly more realizable a few blocks down, where the city's past and perhaps future glory was evident in the crumbling but still impressive facades of its colonial Georgian architecture. Realizing the platinum potential of this real estate, however, required concerted effort on the part of both public and private actors.

Speculative policing involved not only the preventive repression of organized crime but also the more general removal of economic activities considered both criminogenic and aesthetically incompatible with urban modernity. In addition to their antigang measures, in the months and years following the 2010 security operation in Tivoli Gardens, JCF activities in downtown Kingston also concentrated on removing informal activities, with frequent sweeps intended to permanently remove informal vendors, cook shops, and other small-scale enterprises. In a similar move to the “aesthetic criminalization” Asher Ghertner (2015: 99–124) identifies in his work on slum removal in Delhi, the Jamaican authorities classified informality as a visual and legal nuisance incompatible with post-Dudus urban renewal. The importance of optics was evident in the practice of removing vendors and their goods from only the main commercial thoroughfares, while allowing them to continue in the less visible lanes and back alleys.

Another letter writer commended this crackdown, which appeared more sus-

tained than previous half-hearted attempts to remove informal vending, and connected it to a major construction project by telecommunications giant Digicel: “The heart of our city must be free from the chaos that was once downtown Kingston. The police force must be unreservedly congratulated for its action, no matter how belated; I truly hope this is not just another nine-day wonder. In the same breath, the move by Digicel to headquarter their operations downtown must be congratulated and exemplified by other private and public entities” (Chambers 2010).

Construction for Digicel’s regional headquarters, an eleven-story office tower featuring wind turbines, solar paneling, and a geothermal cooling system, started in 2010, and the building was officially opened in 2013. Located on the border of Tivoli Gardens, the structure was among the largest developments to have been completed in downtown Kingston in years, and it was difficult not to interpret this investment as a major indication of urban regeneration. In welcoming Digicel to downtown Kingston, then Prime Minister Bruce Golding said, “We are delighted with Digicel’s commitment to spearheading the rejuvenation of downtown Kingston and will continue to partner with the company not only to ensure a smooth transition to its new home, but to drive the redevelopment of downtown Kingston” (Digicel Jamaica 2010). While the construction work provided an important employment opportunity for local residents, observers hoped that more long-term economic effects would emerge as hundreds of middle-class employees moved from Digicel’s former offices in uptown Kingston to the new downtown headquarters.⁷

In addition to the authorities, middle-class Jamaicans were enthused about the new presence of such a modern, environmentally friendly space in downtown. Karin, a middle-class blogger and yoga teacher, joined the politicians in praising the corporation, asking:

Will the relocation of the Digicel headquarters downtown . . . be a catalyst for further development downtown? I’m hoping that the hundreds of people that will undoubtedly work and visit the building will be eating, shopping and generally spending money with the surrounding downtown businesses, large and small, and not simply staying indoors in the “food court” to be included in the building. Downtown Kingston has amazing potential. The waterfront views are beautiful, the neighbourhoods historic, the shopping great, and the people warm and welcoming. . . . Big up to Digicel for having the vision. (Edmonds 2012)

7. For more on Kingston’s uptown-downtown divisions, see Carnegie (2014, 2017).

Few commentators dwelled on the question whether the warm and welcoming low-income population would benefit from this economic development, or whether these commercial activities might eventually result in their displacement. The Brick Town residents I spoke to were equally hopeful that Digicel would mean an improvement to their lives.

Nevertheless, I began to wonder if gentrification could be imminent, especially as I began to notice a number of standard early indicators. The food court in the Digicel building sold lattes and smoothies—one online review noted that “it’s super clean and doesn’t even feel like downtown which is important if I’m actually gonna stomach eating here” (Yanique 2013).⁸ A local chain of coffee shops that had previously only had branches in the fanciest commercial areas of uptown Kingston opened a space in Central Kingston. A well-connected Australian artist opened an art gallery and vegetarian café in a former beer brewery on the border of Tivoli Gardens. While art enthusiasts would on occasion visit the National Gallery of Jamaica, one of the few elite institutions in downtown Kingston, this new project persuaded wealthy Jamaicans to venture into backstreets they would have avoided at all costs just a few years before. Could this mean domestication by cappuccino, and a slow encroachment of the creative class and their edgy art projects (Atkinson 2003; Ley 2003)?

Prototyping Urban Regeneration

Following the various policies and interventions affecting Kingston over time, I became increasingly aware of the provisional, experimental nature of Jamaica’s security governance. The “success” of police actions and urban regeneration—whether assessed in terms of homicide rates or sustained changes in investment patterns—rarely appears to be more than partial or tentative, but this does not seem to perturb politicians and policy makers. Decreases in the homicide rate prove only temporary, real-estate investments wax and wane, and legal challenges force certain policies to be deemphasized. Yet to focus on such measurable outcomes may be to miss one of the main points of speculative policing. Concrete, quantifiable results, I suggest, are less important than facilitating and normalizing new ways of administering urban life.

In November 2013, I sat on the steps of a small business in Brick Town, talking to the owner, Lion, about the attempts to regenerate downtown Kingston, includ-

8. Another reviewer, however, commented, “The security guards are awful . . . maybe it’s because my complexion isn’t as light as they’d like it to be. I am constantly harassed whenever I dine there” (Junior Byrd 2014).

ing the construction of the nearby Digicel building and the ongoing attempts to remove informal vendors from the streets. I asked him whether he thought the changes would affect Brick Town positively or negatively. I tried to explain the concept of gentrification to Lion, but he interrupted me: “Yeah man, I seen it happen in New York.” The same thing had happened to Jamaicans he knew in Brixton: “Them cyaan [cannot] pay the rent.” He knew exactly what gentrification was, but he still thought it would be a good thing for downtown Kingston, even if it involved the displacement of poorer residents. When I asked him whether he thought urban renewal could ever affect him negatively, he shook his head adamantly and told me he was not at risk, as he was renting his shop from a “brethren” who lived in the United States, and “him no go sell me out.”

Gesturing across the road from his shop toward the wholesale grocery stores run by Chinese immigrants, I asked Lion if he could imagine them being replaced by little boutiques. He surprised me by informing me that the buildings now housing the wholesales had previously been tenement yards occupied by families: “In the 1980s, all of the wholesale used to be yards. People used to live there, but the man who used to run the place run them out.” The General, the neighborhood’s former don, had forced the families to leave to make place for the Chinese wholesalers. Perhaps the post-Dudus form of speculative policing had incorporated the dons’ informal policing tactics (see Meikle and Jaffe 2015), effecting a strong-arm displacement of low-income residents while advancing commercial interests, and evidencing an analogous assessment of the respective value of real estate and of certain groups of citizens.

When I visited Brick Town a few years later, Lion had moved his business to a shabbier building in a quieter part of the neighborhood. His US-based brethren had asked him to move out of the other place so that a family member could set up a business there. While a financial disagreement with Lion had played a part in this decision, it appeared possible that the new commercial opportunities in the downtown area had also been a factor. Yet it remained unclear whether any of the changes would endure. Elsewhere in West and Central Kingston, the fancy coffee shop had closed, and the art space folded after the Australian artist moved back home. The Digicel building remained a busy hub, but its office workers rarely ventured outside, and security guards still cast suspicious glances at neighborhood residents. Still, a new cluster of commercial properties on the downtown waterfront—a coffee shop, a branch of a well-known ice-cream parlor, a swanky bar, and an outpost of a seafood restaurant popular with tourists (fig. 3)—seemed to signal further attempts to introduce uptown consumer spaces in former no-go



Figure 3 New commercial complex in downtown Kingston, 2019. Photo by author.

areas. The construction of Chinese-funded government offices suggested that state actors were also continuing to invest in downtown Kingston’s new future.

If real-estate investment and other signals of economic regeneration developed in an uneven, tentative fashion, the provisional character of the post-Dudus security policies and practices seemed even clearer. Human rights activists and news media challenged the ethical and legal permissibility of publicly naming “persons of interest” and noted the discriminatory, class-based character of its implementation (Byers et al. 2011: 14; *Jamaica Gleaner* 2011). In response, the JCF (2011: 3–6) issued procedural guidelines for the “naming, publication and general handling” of persons of interest, but it is unclear whether this affected the extralegal practices associated with this form of listing.

Other formal and informal security policies appeared to be more of a “success,” in that they were subject to less legal and public scrutiny and in fact were formalized, expanded, and/or institutionalized. This “prototyping” of policies appeared to be at work in relation to both the formation of databases and the spa-

tial logic of the curfew. More broadly, it is conceivable that the policing strategies first trialed under the state of emergency paved the way for normalizing a previously unacceptable degree of militarization of urban policing.

The rudimentary database that the security forces began to construct in 2010 certainly seems to have worked as something of a prototype. In 2017 the Jamaican government passed the National Identification and Registration Act, which will establish the National Identification System, a database assembling biographic, demographic, and biometric information. This mandatory system of registration will record each person's name, address, sex, citizenship, marital status, facial image, fingerprints, signature, and eye color. This database, set to be rolled out in 2019, is promoted explicitly as an important tool in the fight against crime (NIDS Project 2019).

Meanwhile, murder rates went back up, and in 2017–18 the government passed the Zones of Special Operation Act and established a new state of emergency in sections of the island, which lasted until January 2019. These acts involved a new series of spatially circumscribed curfews in areas declared “zones of special operation” or ZOSOs, including Denham Town in the West Kingston area and neighborhoods in the tourism hub Montego Bay, where the security forces were granted legal powers to stop, search, and arrest persons without a warrant. By mandating a military-police joint command to administer these special operations, the ZOSOs furthered the militarization of policing, a tendency compounded by the appointment of a JDF major-general as commissioner of the JCF. In addition to extending policing powers to the military within the ZOSOs, the government pledged to quadruple the JDF's annual recruits and to invest US\$66 million to enhance JDF capabilities, suggesting a more general shift toward military predominance in security.

Was the 2010 state of emergency a failure, in that it was followed so quickly by another one? Or might we read it as a successful prototype, in that it paved the way for another to follow so quickly, without major political or popular push-back? I suggest that the policing interventions developed from 2010 onward can be understood as beta versions of a form of “agile” future governance, testing and prefiguring the concept of accumulation by militarized dispossession.

Conclusion

Speculative policing emerges at the intersection of multiple engagements with risk, combining a preventive approach to future crime with an interest in enhancing risky investments and an experimental logic of governance in the making.

In Kingston, citizens are framed as potential criminals based on their area of residence, but major interventions tend to materialize primarily when these areas have significant commercial potential. Such framings approach some urban spaces and populations as threatening yet amenable to techniques for managing them with greater certainty, so that businesspeople feel safe to make investments. Speculative policing involves a combination of future-oriented urban interventions, in which different governance actors align to recalibrate the existing socio-political order. This form of urban policing need not involve a mastermind or even a master plan; rather, it stems from a shifting alliance of the security forces with political and business elites. Senior police officers seek to follow international trends in compiling anticipatory databases, while politicians and investors see opportunities to shift power relations and enhance profits. While relations between and among these different interest groups are often marked by conflict and competition, when crisis erupts, a shared project may emerge around urban change. By making unruly areas and their residents more legible, they act to render uncertainty more knowable and risk more calculable.

However, as recent developments in Kingston show, these combined urban interventions are themselves a gamble. This form of urbanism rarely follows a linear process, and its modes of engaging risk are provisional and tentative. Where politicians, business leaders, and senior police officers saw the state of emergency as a chance to make don-controlled urban spaces safe for investment, the “success” of this new form of policing is by no means guaranteed. In some cities, the political-economic-security coalitions that seize on such moments of rupture or disaster see their efforts pay off (Gotham and Greenberg 2014), but the possibility of failure is real. This may be a disappointment for some investors and policy makers, while leaving others indifferent. Such failure may in fact come as a relief to some residents of areas targeted for regeneration. The uncertainty of success and the uneven distribution of gains are part of the speculative nature of these interventions.

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