UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

Security Aesthetics and Political Community Formation in Kingston, Jamaica

Jaffe, R.

DOI
10.1515/9781478007517-007
10.2307/j.ctv11315nw.9
10.1215/9781478007517-006

Publication date
2020

Document Version
Final published version

Published in
Futureproof

License
Article 25fa Dutch Copyright Act

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):
Jaffe, R. (2020). Security Aesthetics and Political Community Formation in Kingston, Jamaica. In D. A. Ghertner, H. McFann, & D. M. Goldstein (Eds.), *Futureproof: Security Aesthetics and the Management of Life* (pp. 134-155). (Global Insecurities). Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781478007517-007, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11315nw.9, https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478007517-006

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (https://dare.uva.nl)

Download date:21 Oct 2021

5

Security Aesthetics and Political Community Formation in Kingston, Jamaica

Rivke Jaffe

To those unfamiliar with Downtown Kingston, its inner-city neighborhoods—gang territory where criminal "dons" are in charge—often appear to be chaotic, dangerous, and lawless areas. If outsiders cannot avoid traveling through such neighborhoods, they drive through as quickly as possible, to escape having to interact with residents. However, precisely to prevent ill-intentioned strangers from speeding through and committing drive-by shootings, residents have removed the drain covers at the intersections of the streets. The deep trenches this creates force cars to slow down, allowing strategically placed observers to check out any outsiders entering the neighborhood. Elsewhere, artful arrangements of urban debris—an old fridge, a burned-out car chassis—serve a similar purpose. In addition to having to navigate these improvised speed bumps, unfamiliar drivers are bewildered by the many one-way streets. Cars will turn down one of the many narrow streets without traffic signs, only to find themselves forced to reverse in the face of an oncoming vehicle.

My first visit to the inner-city neighborhood of Brick Town, in 2010, was to meet Roger, a close relative of the General, the neighborhood's former don.[1] I had no car at the time, but my former student Joshua, who worked at a government agency nearby in Downtown Kingston, was willing to give me a ride. While he wanted to help me, Joshua was scared to drive to the neighborhood alone as he had never been there before, so he chartered Flynn, a coworker who lived in an adjacent inner-city area, to join us as an "escort." Joshua's nervousness was contagious, and I also began to feel a little jittery as we stepped

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/chapter-pdf/762726/9781478007517-006.pdf
by UNIV OF PENNSYLVANIA user

into his expensive Honda. Flynn indicated the direction Joshua should drive, away from the busy market area. We moved through narrow, potholed streets and past dilapidated housing covered with graffiti referencing the General (who had been in jail for several years) and his son, and the political party with which they were aligned. Joshua drove just a little too quickly, and I tried to convince him to slow down as I studied a map of Kingston, attempting to figure out which streets were one-way and which were not. Flynn chuckled at my concern with how the government had designated a street: "Dem nuh observe one-way inna dis ya part a di world [They do not observe one-way in this part of the world]," he commented drily.

His depiction of the area as anarchic put me in mind of my first fieldwork in Jamaica, in 2000, when my overwhelming impression of the city was one of disorder. After three months in Kingston, I felt a physical relief as my plane landed in the Netherlands and the neat, orderly grid of the Dutch agricultural landscape came into view. While I had enjoyed my fieldwork, I experienced Jamaica's urban sensorium as chaotic and disorienting—its streets packed with people, cars, handcarts, goats, and lined with hand-painted stalls and signs advertising all manner of goods; people shouting at each other over the loud music blaring from vehicles, stores, and CD vendors' speakers; the smells of exhaust fumes, rotting garbage, and barbecued meat; my movements through its dust and heat on foot, or in crowded minibuses and route taxis pressed up against other sweaty passengers.

As I returned over the years that followed, and as my access expanded to areas only accessible by private car, I discovered, first, that Kingston also included many middle-class spaces with a style resembling the "orderly" aesthetics I had projected onto Dutch landscapes. More importantly perhaps, I realized that the public spaces of Downtown Kingston were actually organized in a very tight and controlled fashion. The underlying social and political logic of these low-income areas, as well as the orderly colonial grid plan that Downtown streets follow, were not evident to me initially, distracted as I was by what I perceived as chaos and disorder. It took me a significant period of time to be able to recognize the order according to which these streets operated.

To many wealthier Kingstonians, life in inner-city neighborhoods has a similarly foreign quality, and Flynn's remark on one-way resonates with their sense of Downtown Kingston as a chaotic area where national laws do not apply. However, inner-city residents *do* take the official one-way traffic rules seriously. Precisely because the traffic signs are generally unclear, when unfamiliar drivers accidentally turn down a street in the wrong direction, people on the sidewalk will immediately call out and signal for them to reverse: "One-way!

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/chapter-pdf/762726/9781478007517-006.pdf
by UNIV OF PENNSYLVANIA user

One-way! Turn back!" Belying Flynn's comment, and counter to popular opinion, residents invest considerable energy in correcting transgressions. Areas such as Brick Town are by no means lawless—their social life operates according to strong norms of appropriate behavior, including rules about who can go where. They are characterized by a system of order in which dons play a central role, but which often complements rather than clashes with state law (Jaffe 2013).

This don-based system of order, which sets norms for public conduct and guides urban mobilities, should be understood in relation to a politics of aesthetics. The formation of political communities around dons and their neighborhood territories is intimately connected to the emotional and ethical work that a range of popular culture texts, images, sounds, and performative practices do within specific urban spaces (Jaffe 2012a). In the context of urban Jamaica, with its extremely high rates of violent crime, this order and this aesthetics relate directly to issues of security. The various aesthetic forms that outsiders associate with violence and poverty, such as political and gang graffiti, or potholed roads without drain covers, may in fact be key interventions in producing a bordered space of safety for residents.

In this chapter, I approach security aesthetics as inherent to the production and reproduction of social difference. Specific security signs, buildings, technologies, and arrangements of bodies interpellate and move people in different ways, reinforcing existing forms of differentiated citizenship or delineating new forms of political community. Understanding the connection between urban security aesthetics and processes of subject formation requires an attentiveness to the entanglement of aesthetic forms with their material surroundings, including the built environment of cities. I understand Jamaica—a country with high levels of violent crime that is divided along lines of skin color, class, and political affiliation—as characterized by multiple regimes of security aesthetics.

In what follows, I compare and contrast the "Downtown security aesthetics" that speaks to inner-city residents in neighborhoods ruled by dons and the "Uptown security aesthetics" that makes wealthier Kingstonians who reside in the city's elite districts feel safe. I explore how these regimes both connect and separate different urban populations and territories: in discussing these different aesthetic regimes, I aim to show that they are not entirely separate and can exist simultaneously in one area. Rather than comparing different parts of the city, I concentrate on social spaces within Downtown neighborhoods such as Brick Town to examine what makes differently positioned people feel safe there and, conversely, how these feelings of safety are central to community formation.

I explore these security aesthetic regimes based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork conducted over multiple periods. In developing my analysis of

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/chapter-pdf/762726/9781478007517-006.pdf
by UNIV OF PENNSYLVANIA user

Downtown security aesthetics, I draw primarily on a long-term research project on donmanship that involved fieldwork in Brick Town, concentrated mainly in the period 2010–2013 but with follow-up visits in more recent years. My discussion of Uptown security aesthetics draws on my friendships and professional interactions with middle-class Jamaicans developed in the context of multiple research projects, and more generally on my experiences of living and working in different middle-class areas of Kingston from 2006.

Based on these different fieldwork experiences, the rest of this chapter examines the role of security aesthetics in both reproducing and realigning difference, through its shaping of communities of sense (Rancière 2006). The first section connects philosophical and anthropological work on the politics of aesthetics to considerations of spatiality and materiality, in order to develop a more emplaced understanding of the relations between aesthetic forms, bodies, and politics. The next section provides background to Kingston's sociospatial divisions and the pluralization of security. This is followed by a discussion of differentiated security aesthetics and political community formation in Downtown Kingston, with the concluding section proposing that the approach elaborated in this chapter can help us understand the role of the senses in shaping political geographies.

EMPLACING THE POLITICS OF AESTHETICS

Following the interpretation put forward by D. Asher Ghertner, Hudson McFann, and Daniel M. Goldstein (this volume), I understand aesthetics broadly as the domain of sense perception; my analysis of security aesthetics concentrates on how security and insecurity are *sensed* through bodily engagements with the urban environment. Safety is something that is felt in a corporeal way as people move through urban space: security and insecurity, apprehension and reassurance, are bodily sensations that are produced in response to a range of aesthetic forms, from architectural and design elements to gang graffiti and armed response signs. Certain markers on the urban landscape work, intentionally or unintentionally, to generate feelings of comfort and a sense of belonging, while others elicit fear and sensations of being out of place. These affective responses to aesthetics are embodied and emplaced, and as such these sensations are not distributed uniformly across the urban population. By enabling a shared way of sensing the world, aesthetic forms are central to the formation of subjects and communities, a process that is highly political—especially when connected to security.

The political role of aesthetics has been outlined incisively by philosopher Jacques Rancière (2006, 2010), whose concept of "the distribution of the

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/chapter-pdf/762726/9781478007517-006.pdf
by UNIV OF PENNSYLVANIA user

sensible" (*le partage du sensible*) emphasizes the role of art in organizing what is visible, audible, conceivable, and speakable. This attunement of sensory perception toward a shared norm—the production of what Rancière calls "consensus," or "sensing together"—is central to processes of subjectivation and the inscription of community. Any sociopolitical order, he argues, is supported by a perceptual and conceptual regime, which structures how people feel and know that an order is normal, natural, and proper. Understanding not only why sociopolitical orders persist, but also how they come to be challenged, requires attending to both consensus and dissensus, the crafting and the disruption of a shared sense experience (see also Panagia 2009).

A number of anthropologists have begun to explore ethnographically how the relations between politics, aesthetics, and sensory perception take shape in lived experience and everyday life. This anthropological work also seeks to understand empirically how the political imagination takes on a material form, critiquing Benedict Anderson's (1991) concept of imagined communities for privileging semiotics and neglecting the role of embodiment and the senses. In their work on sensory citizenship, for instance, Susanna Trnka, Christine Dureau, and Julie Park (2013) highlight the significance of the embodied sensing of the world in the formation of political subjects and communities. They suggest that sensory differentiation is central in the processes of inclusion and exclusion that structure the boundaries of citizenship: our experience of social sameness and difference works through emotionally loaded senses of vision, hearing, smell, and so on. In her work on the nexus between media, religion, and community, Birgit Meyer (2009) argues similarly for a sensorial turn in our understanding of the political imagination, but places a more explicit emphasis on the role of materiality. She emphasizes that for the imagination to be experienced as real in an embodied fashion it must be made material, arguing that "more attention needs to be paid to the role played by things, media and the body in actual processes of community making" (Meyer 2009, 6). By focusing on the religious mediation of community, Meyer's work also deliberately focuses on what she calls "aesthetic formations" beyond the nation-state and democratic politics.

While these ethnographers hint at the role of space and the built environment in these sensory processes, their engagement with the emplacement of embodied experience has tended to be limited. In my analysis of Jamaica's security aesthetics, I focus on the role of both materiality and spatiality in producing politico-aesthetic order. This chapter focuses not so much on the built environment per se, as on the "material-affective encounters" that the editors of this volume highlight, and on the geographies of these encounters.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/chapter-pdf/762726/9781478007517-006.pdf
by UNIV OF PENNSYLVANIA user

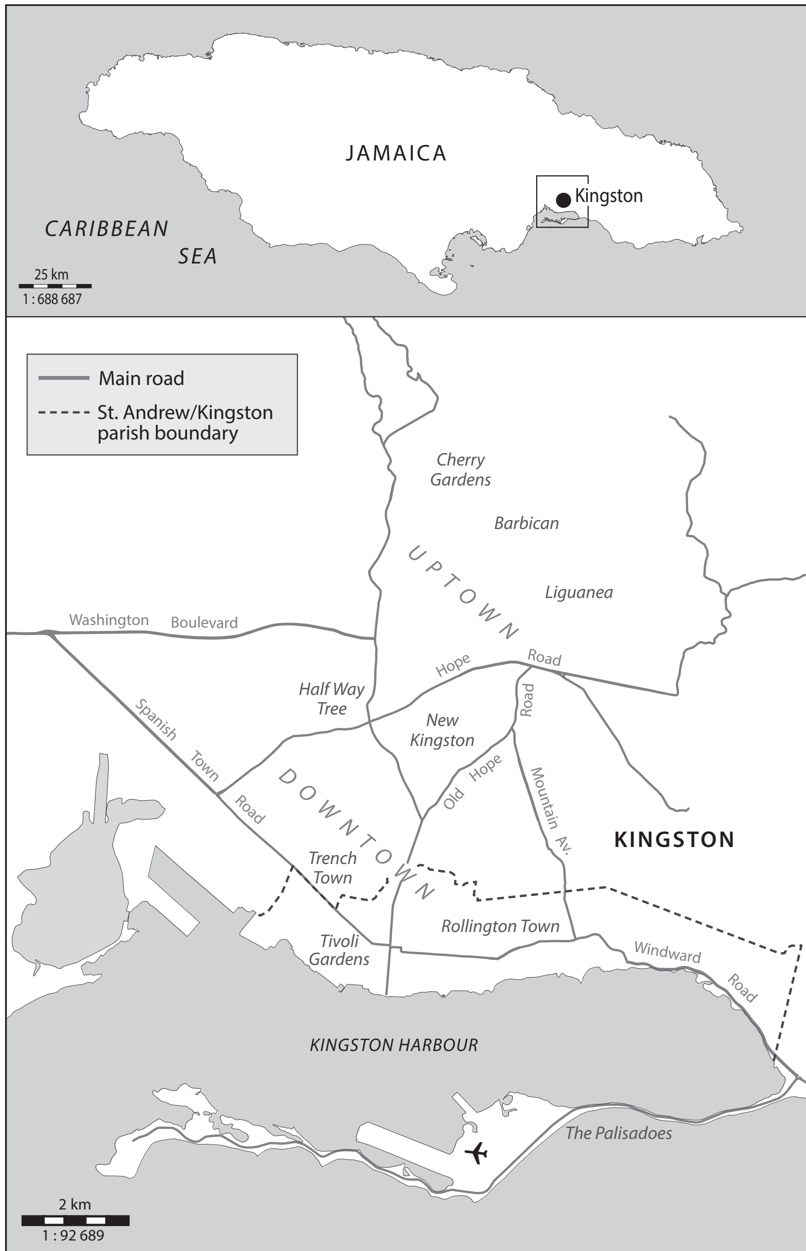
My analysis concentrates on sensorial engagements with urban surroundings, including prominently, but also going beyond, the city's built forms. Through an analysis of visual markers such as graffiti and urban debris, but also of other, less bounded sensorial stimuli (such as smells, temperatures, and exposure to different types of bodies), I seek to understand how these aesthetic forms shape different securitized communities of sense, but also *where*. In this sense, the chapter highlights the geographical dimension of two of the modalities set out by Ghertner et al. (this volume): it analyzes how sociospatially distinct forms of calibrating vulnerabilities, of socially regulating assessments of risk, intersect with elements of urban fortressing, those "interventions in built form [that] deploy visual and other sensory signals to fashion aesthetic norms about how security looks, sounds, and feels."

By attending to urban space and its differentiation, I also hope to shift analyses of political sense-making away from the privileged territory of the nation-state and toward forms of political geography that emerge within nations and beyond the direct control of state. In the next section, I explore the sensorial politics of difference within don-controlled inner-city "garrisons." I analyze how Downtown and Uptown Kingstonians experience safety within these spaces and consider the differentiation of security aesthetics in relation to the formation of distinct political communities. Rather than associating these aesthetic regimes only, or primarily, with feelings of fear and a sensory attunement to threat, I emphasize their function in generating positive sensations of safety, comfort, and familiarity.

SPATIALIZED DIFFERENCE AND SEGMENTED SECURITY IN KINGSTON

As my reference to Uptown and Downtown Kingston suggests, this broad binary is a central type of urban imaginary that spatializes urban difference along lines of class as well as skin color (see Map 5.1). While urban life encompasses more types of sociospatial order than these two realms alone, these realms reflect a form of division that is central to the lived experience of urban residents (Carnegie 2017). Roughly speaking, Uptown is associated with wealthier "brown" Jamaicans of mixed or ethnic-minority descent, while Downtown is understood as the part of the city where impoverished "black" African-Jamaicans live. While analyses of census data indicate that Kingston's residential segregation along lines of skin color decreased significantly during the twentieth century (Clarke 2006), in my experience many residents from a range of social backgrounds narrate Kingston in terms of a combination of class and skin color mapped onto a largely bipolar sociospatial structure. The ethnoracial categories of brown and black are not strictly phenotypical,

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/chapter-pdf/762726/9781478007517-006.pdf
by UNIV OF PENNSYLVANIA user



Map 5.1 Map of Kingston. Created by Rowan Arundel, based on map from Jaffe (2012b).

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/chapter-pdf/762726/9781478007517-006.pdf
by UNIV OF PENNSYLVANIA user

but coproduced with class and urban space, with geographical designations—Downtown, or "inner-city"—used as adjectives that are taken to self-evidently mean lower-class and black. These dichotomous frames shape differential readings of bodies across the urban landscape, based not only on skin color and class markers (such as clothing and speech) but also on their spatial location (Jaffe 2016).

Within Downtown Kingston, residents differentiate between neighborhoods based on their political affiliation to either the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) or the People's National Party (PNP). In the Cold War context of the decades following Jamaica's independence in 1962, both parties concentrated low-income supporters in so-called political garrisons in Kingston's inner-city areas. Through a system known as garrison politics, they supplied local leaders—who later became known as dons—with money and weapons in order to defend and expand their political turf, resulting in hundreds of deaths due to electoral violence (Sives 2010). While recent elections have been largely peaceful, Downtown Kingston's neighborhoods remain divided by a deeply felt "political tribalism," and the dons who lead these areas have largely maintained their party-political affiliation, even if much of their income now comes from extralegal activities rather than from politicians.

These sociospatial differentiations are often connected to safety, and residents use levels of violence and crime to distinguish both between Uptown and Downtown, and between different garrisons or "ghettos." Media representations of Downtown Kingston depict inner-city areas as highly dangerous; both the daily newspapers and the televised news are a constant stream of brutal homicides, armed robberies, and police killings. Indeed, such violence is sadly commonplace. Yet many inner-city residents do not necessarily move about anxiously, in permanent fear of crime, of the don, or of the police. In my research on donmanship, residents of Brick Town and other inner-city neighborhoods often stressed the role of a strong don in guaranteeing security, and particularly in preventing theft, rape, and murder. The widespread legitimacy of the most successful dons has relied on the capacity to "set the order," to establish social norms and to punish transgressions swiftly and effectively, whether through violent retribution or through banishment (see also Charles and Beckford 2012). In contrast, neighborhoods without an effective don may suffer from higher rates of crimes, perpetrated by both locals and outsiders.

Inner-city residents often do not move easily outside their own neighborhood—while they may feel safe in their own community, they are often more fearful of entering other low-income areas. The historical legacy of political tribalism and more recent gang conflict is a fragmentation

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/chapter-pdf/762726/9781478007517-006.pdf
by UNIV OF PENNSYLVANIA user

of Downtown between JLP and PNP neighborhoods, run by rival dons, and residents venturing into adjacent neighborhoods even for social visits may be misrecognized as hostile strangers. A different set of anxieties limits the movements of inner-city residents to and in Uptown Kingston, where the unfamiliar aesthetic order of upscale spaces of work, leisure, and consumption—their air-conditioned chill, their specific norms of acceptable appearances, and proper intensities of sound—often elicits a physical sensation of being out of place. The urban poor know that their presence in wealthier areas is often construed as a security threat, and a fear of being humiliated in encounters with security guards, salespeople, or snooty office workers accompanies many people when they leave the familiarity of Downtown.

Like Downtown residents, Uptown residents generally do not rely primarily on the police for their security needs (see Jaffe 2012b). Rather, many wealthier Kingstonians have turned to private security companies, retreating behind walls and into gated communities protected by armed security guards. As in many other segregated cities (see, e.g., Caldeira 2000), public space, poverty, and danger are easily conflated, and fear of crime leads many Uptown residents to retreat into highly secured, privatized spaces. Many of them rarely venture into Kingston's public spaces, moving swiftly between fortified enclaves of residence, work, and leisure in tightly locked SUVs that are protected from theft and carjacking by vehicle tracking systems. Stories abound of husbands prohibiting their wives from venturing "below Crossroads" (roughly south of New Kingston, shown on Map 5.1), and Jamaicans of all class backgrounds constantly expressed surprise at my working in inner-city neighborhoods.

Yet there are certain public spaces in Downtown, at certain times, that Uptown Kingstonians do frequent, including two specific social and physical spaces: the market and the street dance.[2] In what follows, I concentrate on the aesthetic formation of safety and political community in inner-city areas such as Brick Town, starting with a discussion of the features and effects of Downtown security aesthetics that work through the larger space of the neighborhood, followed by a consideration of the smaller, more specific time-spaces within which Uptown security aesthetics are mobilized.

DOWNTOWN SECURITY AESTHETICS

The same aesthetic features of garrisons or ghettos that make outsiders feel unsafe may be central to residents' feelings of security. The sights, sounds, and other sensations that Uptown Kingstonians have learned to read as *chaka-chaka* (messy, disorganized), and that they associate both discursively and extralinguistically with poverty and violence, are central to the don-based sociopolitical

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/chapter-pdf/762726/9781478007517-006.pdf
by UNIV OF PENNSYLVANIA user

order that is often the most effective security system available to residents. While the visual aesthetic that dons mobilize is not a style characterized by smooth lines, grids, or materials, their shaping of the landscape is not haphazard or chaotic. The drain covers that are removed, the potholes, and the informal speed bumps do not necessarily elicit a sensation of neglect. Rather, they are recognized as deliberate interventions (or noninterventions) in the cityscape that realize the slow movement of vehicles. The burly men hanging out on the corner, some blocking the streets with their cars, are not potential robbers, but are actively engaged in surveilling all passersby and repelling unwelcome intruders—the feelings of protection they provide is analogous to that of uniformed guards, gates, and security cameras in elite areas.

For Uptown Kingstonians, the ubiquitous murals of deceased dons and political and gang graffiti may contribute to a "ghetto look" associated with poverty and violence. This is a "look" not altogether dissimilar from the aesthetic regime used in New Delhi to evaluate whether a space is a "slum" or not (Ghertner 2015), or from the visual signs of disrepair and alleged danger targeted by "broken windows" policies in U.S. cities. To local residents, however, these murals and inscriptions both mark important public sites within the neighborhood and visually assert place-based genealogies of power and protection. The murals depicted in Figure 5.1, for instance, mark out a genealogy of local leadership within the neighborhood, of different deceased leaders of a criminal organization with close historical connections to the PNP. Not coincidentally, this wall of fame is situated along a street associated with the birth of this political party, rooting this leadership in national political history. The men in these portraits gaze directly at passersby, some smiling, some stern, all everyday reminders to residents of who is watching over them. Like other important political portraits, the murals of the most important leaders are cared for and restored if necessary. Such visual updates often entail repainting dons' features in fresh detail, but may also involve a modernization of their clothes or jewelry to reflect more recent fashion. Maintaining the artworks is a way of ensuring that the memory of these leaders does not erode.[3]

To many inner-city residents, such visual interventions in the urban landscape combine to produce a "security atmosphere," a set of material-affective relations that is atmospherically immersive and lies in between bodies, objects, and material spaces (Adey 2014; cf. Ben Anderson 2009). In this context, this enveloping spatiality can produce a sense of intimacy and comfort, of being watched over and protected, even while these responses to surveillance may coexist with more ambiguous affective impacts, such as wariness and tension. As Darren Ellis, Ian Tucker, and David Harper (2013) note, the affective

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/chapter-pdf/762726/9781478007517-006.pdf
by UNIV OF PENNSYLVANIA user

Figure 5.1 Commemorative murals. Photograph by author.

atmospheres of surveillance work at the edges of consciousness, with the system of surveillance remaining almost but not quite unnoticed, the feelings it produces not directly qualified or registered through linguistic representation.

The material interventions effected by dons tend to be connected to the system of garrison politics—in PNP areas such as Brick Town, especially during election times, the color orange will be in evidence on walls, in flags, or in people's dress, while JLP areas shade green (see Figure 5.2). As residents are socialized into political partisanship, the colors, hand signals, and sounds of the political party generate positive sensations. Sharon, a resident of a PNP-affiliated community in Central Kingston where I did previous fieldwork, described the affective experience of the singing of the party anthem at political rallies: "When they play the party anthem, shivers just run down your spine. You put your hand over your heart and everyone is singing . . . it's so beautiful!" Sharon and two of her friends demonstrated this by singing the first lines of the PNP anthem, "Jamaica Arise." Such experiences underline the potential of music to produce political subjectivities through emotional impact and bodily sensation. Like party anthems, party colors, logos, and hand signs can

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/chapter-pdf/762726/9781478007517-006.pdf
by UNIV OF PENNSYLVANIA user

Figure 5.2 "PNP ZONE," political graffiti. Photograph by author.

come to work in a precognitive fashion to produce sensations of affinity, intimacy, and familiarity. Together, the aesthetic forms related to dons and partisan politics combine to form a style of "garrison aesthetics," a set of sensory relations to the material environment not entirely dissimilar to those of the military base to which the term originally referred.

Our bodily responses to specific aesthetic forms are learned; our senses need to be attuned along specific distributions. Downtown security aesthetics is not only embedded in the general landscape of the neighborhood streets and the people and objects that fill them, it also relies on a constant, often subconscious monitoring of the neighborhood atmosphere. Feeling safe in this context requires an intimate sensorial knowledge of what danger feels like. The ability to sense whether the area is "cool" or "hot" in terms of political or gang conflict, to perceive when violence is imminent, relies on a deeply embodied knowledge of which sounds, sights, and sensations one needs to attend to in order to remain safe. These sensorial skills involve glancing automatically at men's waistlines or judging the weight of a backpack slung over a teenager's shoulder to assess whether they are carrying a weapon. They involve recognizing

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/chapter-pdf/762726/9781478007517-006.pdf
by UNIV OF PENNSYLVANIA user

which bodily movements tend to be followed by bloodshed; which silences indicate calm, and which indicate that gunfire might be about to erupt; which sounds are gunshots fired in celebration or warning and which are intended to kill. While residents have described these skills and sensibilities to me, my immersion has never been such that they became natural to me; I never really internalized this knowledge of where to look or what to hear as reflexes.

The regime of Downtown security aesthetics sketched here is intimately related to the system of donmanship. Interventions into the built environment, such as the improvised speed bumps described previously, work as coded elements of "fortress design," help slow down movement, and regulate access to the neighborhood. The neighborhood-level political community that can form around a don is produced aesthetically through a range of popular culture expressions that generate feelings of intimacy and generate an almost supernatural aura around these leaders (Jaffe 2012a). The shared experience of belonging to a specific sociopolitical order that these sensory skills and experiences produce—the Rancièrean consensus—connects directly to a feeling of being safe, of being protected within the bordered space of that order. The design of urban divisions, both between different Downtown neighborhoods and between Uptown and Downtown spaces, calibrates feelings of security and belonging simultaneously.

UPTOWN SECURITY AESTHETICS IN DOWNTOWN SPACES

As noted above, wealthier Kingstonians tend to eschew the Downtown area, and more generally those urban spaces marked aesthetically as poor and dangerous by their "messy" visual order, and by their intensities of heat, smell, and noise. Yet under certain circumstances, middle-class Jamaicans do leave the safety of Uptown to seek out precisely these spaces of poverty and crime. How can we explain these visits? What motivates Uptown residents to leave their zone of comfort, and how can a focus on sociospatially differentiated security aesthetics help understand what makes such transgressions of established class and color boundaries possible?

I suggest we can understand the motivations in the context of larger shifts in Jamaican cultural politics. Articulations of ethnonational belonging and cultural authenticity have shifted from a model of "Creole multiracial nationalism," embodied by brown Jamaicans and with a state-led emphasis on folk traditions in rural areas, toward one of "modern Blackness" (Thomas 2004). This latter framing, fed by a range of national and international influences, privileges Blackness as the basis for national belonging and re-roots the site of cultural authenticity in the urban space of the "ghetto." In this context, as

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/chapter-pdf/762726/9781478007517-006.pdf
by UNIV OF PENNSYLVANIA user

brown middle-class claims to cultural citizenship became less self-evident, performances of Jamaicanness have increasingly come to involve the embrace of aesthetic expressions of Blackness. This is discernible in the new middle-class enthusiasm for consuming certain elements of Rastafari culture, previously spurned as a dirty and disreputable form of Blackness (Jaffe 2010). In addition, I suggest that, whereas claiming some level of familiarity with Kingston's ghetto spaces might have been a threat to middle-class status a few decades ago, it has now become a distinct element in performances of national belonging, pursued by some, if certainly not all, segments of the urban middle class. Two specific time-spaces that enable such performances are the Downtown street market early on Saturday mornings, and various inner-city street dances held late at night. While Uptown visitors would not seriously entertain the idea of living in Downtown Kingston—it would never be a space of home—this part of the city has become more viable as an occasional space of consumption and leisure.

Given the fact that Downtown does remain associated, both discursively and statistically, with much higher levels of violent crime than other parts of Kingston, how do Uptown residents balance a desire to be there with their fear of being victimized? What allows their general sense of insecurity to be temporarily suspended? I suggest that those wealthier Jamaicans who do visit Downtown seek out temporally bounded places that are characterized by the presence of Uptown security aesthetics. This classed aesthetics relies on a mix of sensory stimuli associated with the order and safety of the city's wealthier areas. In short, the insecurity that Uptown visitors to inner-city neighborhoods experience is mitigated when certain material-affective encounters with the urban environment that are associated with danger—heat, noise, smells, the lack of a linear visual order—are diminished or modified.

Quite a few older Uptown residents and some younger professional couples make a point to do their weekly produce shopping in the Downtown open-air market. Middle-class status is generally tied up with specific, sanitized spaces of consumption. The supermarket plays a particularly important role in this regard; it is a symbolic site of formal fixed prices, gleaming aisles and shopping trollies piled high with imported goods that many inner-city residents spoke about to me in terms of both inaccessibility and yearning. Yet a certain "rootsiness" can be achieved by complementing supermarket shopping with trips to the market for fresh local produce, maintaining a relationship with "your vendor," and performing a type of streetwiseness that involves bartering to get the freshest goods for the best price. Various Uptown people of my acquaintance frequented the Downtown market, but all of them went there

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/chapter-pdf/762726/9781478007517-006.pdf
by UNIV OF PENNSYLVANIA user

only very early on Saturday mornings, usually around 5 or 6 A.M. This timing is not coincidental, as it is associated with a very different market aesthetics than other times of the day or week.

One important feature is the coolness of the early morning market. Heat is not conducive to a middle-class status, as it is incompatible with middle-class hairstyles and professional dress codes. More generally, heat (or "hotness") is associated with public space (in contrast with the air-conditioned temperature of middle-class private space), and consequently equated with poverty, crime, and an overall reputation of "volatility." Due to its higher altitude and a greater prevalence of greenery, Uptown neighborhoods tend to be physically cooler than Downtown, but the "hot" reputation of the poorer areas refers to both temperature and alleged temperament. The cooler temperature of the early morning market has other sensory implications. Toward the end of the day, the market tends to smell strongly of squashed and rotting vegetables that have been baking in the sun, of decreasingly fresh fish and meat, of garbage accumulating in the gutters, and of buses, cars, and loaded handcarts inching through the packed streets. Both the heat of the sun and the throngs of people jostling past the stalls make for a sweatier, more intimate tactile experience. In contrast, at 6 A.M., the market presents an orderly visual appearance, with the produce still displayed in neat stacks, looking and smelling fresh. The streets are largely free of litter, and the limited number of shoppers at that hour means the noise level and the measure of physical contact are not very intense. Within the general context of Downtown, these features combine to present a very calm sensory landscape, certainly for a market district. To the extent that this is possible, this is a version of Downtown that approximates the aesthetics of Uptown, while maintaining the "authentic" aesthetics of poverty and informality.

Younger middle-class people may not be as invested in shopping at the street market. Their visits to Downtown are more likely to be in the context of dancehall and reggae parties, both directly associated with inner-city areas. For these visitors (many of whom are university students), participating in the dancehall and reggae music scenes is a way of feeling closer to an "authentic" form of national culture (Pereira Martins 2009). Specific street dances have tended to be popular among the Uptown crowd, including Passa Passa, a weekly Wednesday night dance that was held in the West Kingston JLP garrison of Tivoli Gardens until 2010, and Ole Hits, a Sunday night dance in Rae Town, a PNP neighborhood in Central Kingston. As Donna Hope (2006, 128) notes, the dance is a site that "temporally connects the 'uptown' middle classes

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/chapter-pdf/762726/9781478007517-006.pdf
by UNIV OF PENNSYLVANIA user

with their 'downtown' inner-city counterparts within spaces that are considered dangerous and volatile, particularly because they are peopled by Kingston's urban poor." What aesthetic adaptations are necessary to suspend the sense of danger?

While the dark of the night would generally contribute to the menacing character of an inner-city space, like the early morning market the timing of the dance means that the experience is much cooler than during the day. Somewhat older visitors prefer to attend Ole Hits, which favors classic roots reggae, a genre associated less with violence than dancehall. Yet at all street parties the booming music and crowds of partygoers create an intense atmosphere, even if Uptown visitors often maintain a bit of a distance to the sensory heart of the party, remaining on the fringes of the most heated dancing. But it is precisely what Julian Henriques (2010) identifies as dancehall's "vibrations of affect" that literally force Uptown and Downtown to move to the same frequency, enabling an embodied consensus that temporarily transcends class and ethnoracial boundaries.

In addition to the minor adaptions of environmental intensities of heat and sound in the specific time-spaces of the early morning market or the late-night dance, another form of aesthetics that is perhaps less explored resides in the bodies of people. An important visual and sonic sensory stimulus for feeling safe resides in the presence of other Uptown Kingstonians, their social position obvious through a combination of features including skin color, clothing, hairstyle, speech, and physical bearing. While crowds of poor people are easily construed as an indication of insecurity, the presence of others who look and sound like you is an essential part of Uptown security aesthetics. Like the marketplace early on a Saturday morning, the sight of other brown people and the sound of their similar accents form a critical aesthetic element. However, another category of strangers also contributes to a feeling of safety among "native outsiders": the tourists—mainly Japanese but sometimes European or North American—who frequent Downtown dancehall parties with much less trepidation than many middle-class Jamaicans. The presence of these lighter-skinned (if not always white) dancehall fans also works in a reassuring fashion, as there is a widely shared national concern with shielding tourists from Jamaica's violence. This aesthetic function of emplaced human bodies connects to work by Arun Saldanha (2007) on what he calls the viscosity of race, the material-affective process by which bodies with specific phenotypes (complicated by dress, behavior, and context) gather and stick together within certain spaces.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/chapter-pdf/762726/9781478007517-006.pdf
by UNIV OF PENNSYLVANIA user

In the market and at the dance, a specific blend of sensory presences, absences, and intensities allows an approximation of Uptown security aesthetics. This remains a thin veneer that stands in delicate balance with the dominant aesthetics of poverty and violence that generates feelings of insecurity as well as cultural authenticity. Uptown visitors' different perceptual attunement means they may not notice those features that make local residents feel safe, nor do they recognize the indications of potential violence—their always fragile sense of security depends in part on a perceptual naiveté. My own perhaps more robust sense of comfort and safety in these same areas is similarly bolstered by my underdeveloped radar for conflict.

Yet what actually keeps outsiders safe is in many cases the order maintained by a don. This was certainly the case with Passa Passa, with Tivoli Gardens run under "One Order" of Christopher "Dudus" Coke, Jamaica's most influential don until his extradition to the United States in 2010, whose rules included a prohibition on violence against outsiders in his community. Similarly, the central marketplace has long been tightly run by, and divided between, dons from the two adjacent garrisons, who organized a system of security and hygiene while charging vendors with "market fees." Even as the aesthetic interventions that dons make may be either imperceptible to outsiders, or perceived as part of what makes a neighborhood feel dangerous, it may well be precisely this system that prevents visitors from harm. This balance of perceiving and not perceiving, of recognizing and misrecognizing different aesthetic forms, allows Uptown Jamaicans to visit inner-city neighborhoods and feel physically and emotionally closer to the political community of the nation, while remaining largely oblivious of the don-led political community that is central to shaping these areas.

TOWARD A POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF SENSATION

How do political powers mobilize aesthetic means to simultaneously produce a sense of security and a sense of community? As Ghertner et al. (this volume) outline, security aesthetics can be analyzed as a governmental modality, a way of managing social and political life that works through inclusion and exclusion of subjects from a political community of sense. In Kingston's inner-city areas, dons draw on the politics of aesthetics to create among residents what we could read in Rancière's terms as a perceptual consensus—the shared attunement of the senses is central to the formations of political subjectivities around donmanship. They realize informal, apparently "disorderly" visual and infrastructural interventions into the built environment that act as forms of fortressing, expressing a specific security-cum-political order.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/chapter-pdf/762726/9781478007517-006.pdf
by UNIV OF PENNSYLVANIA user

Yet the dons' neighborhood work is not the only "calibration of vulnerabilities" at work in Kingston. The city and its Downtown areas encompass multiple, overlapping regimes of security aesthetics, through which risks are imagined and affectively experienced in different ways by differently situated subjects. The fortressing intent of dons' "designs" is visible to some, but not to others; these interventions lie somewhere in the middle of the "spectrum of visible security," articulating an "aesthetic paradox" (Coaffee, O'Hare, and Hawkesworth 2009) that is crucial to allowing the copresence of normally segregated publics.

Despite a widespread fear of Downtown Kingston among wealthier Jamaicans, they feel relatively safe there under certain circumstances. In efforts to reaffirm their belonging to a different community of sense, that of the Jamaican nation, they seek out some of these same areas—I have suggested that the early morning market and the street dance work as learned time-spaces where dangerous authenticity can be experienced safely through the approximation of an Uptown security aesthetics of sensory order. Here too, being able to inhabit public space while feeling comfortable and safe is central to feelings of political belonging (cf. Noble 2005), even if the political community in question is not coterminous with that of inner-city residents. Uptown and Downtown Kingstonians can occupy the same material surroundings simultaneously, but be subject to distinct processes of aesthetic interpellation.

Can these different aesthetic regimes—tightly connected to both security and political belonging—coexist without bleeding into each other? How much of an Uptown aesthetic regime do outsiders bring with them when they visit Downtown? How much of it do they lose? What residues might they leave behind? One preliminary answer might lie in current police attempts to "dismantle the garrison" and diminish the power of dons by harnessing the power of aesthetics. A clear attempt at creating dissensus among inner-city residents is the police's "gang mural removal" campaign, during which don murals or texts referencing dons were painted over in "constabulary blue" (see Figures 5.3–5.5). The building in Tivoli Gardens that had functioned as Dudus's former headquarters was similarly taken over by the police and repainted in blue and white in the same style as Jamaica's other police stations. Such interventions in the built environment are evident efforts to disrupt the dominant aesthetic, political, and security regime.

In this chapter, I have sought to elaborate how differently positioned residents experience this sensory belonging and nonbelonging in an emplaced and embodied fashion, within a violent and divided cityscape. This elaboration is a preliminary move to develop a political geography of sensation: a spatially

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/chapter-pdf/762726/9781478007517-006.pdf
by UNIV OF PENNSYLVANIA user

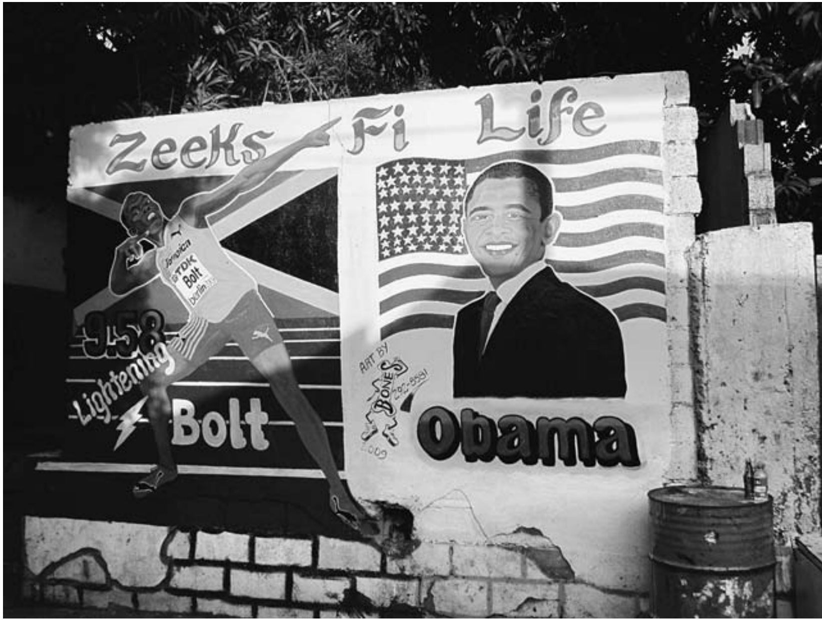


Figure 5.3 Mural celebrating neighborhood don “Zeeks,” reading “Zeeks Fi [For] Life.” Photograph by author.

Figure 5.4 “Zeeks Fi Life” mural, painted over. Photograph by Tracian Meikle.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/chapter-pdf/762726/9781478007517-006.pdf
by UNIV OF PENNSYLVANIA user

Figure 5.5 Painted-over mural. Photograph by Tracian Meikle.

sensitive way of understanding how different aesthetic forms work to delineate multiple political communities, through their elicitation of emplaced experiences of fear, comfort, and longing that connect the scales of the street, the neighborhood, the city, and the nation.

NOTES

1 All names of persons used in this article are pseudonyms, as is the name of the neighborhood "Brick Town."

2 Other, slightly less porous public spaces might include museums and art galleries and certain government buildings in Downtown Kingston, as well as specific events, such as charity runs. In contrast to the market and the street dance, however, these spaces and events tend to be "made safe" by private security guards.

3 My visual analysis of these artworks is closely informed by research done by Tracian Meikle, whose forthcoming dissertation provides a detailed ethnographic and aesthetic analysis of such memorial murals.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/chapter-pdf/762726/9781478007517-006.pdf
by UNIV OF PENNSYLVANIA user

REFERENCES

Adey, Peter. 2014. “Security Atmospheres or the Crystallisation of Worlds.” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 32, no. 5: 834–851.

Anderson, Ben. 2009. “Affective Atmospheres.” *Emotion, Space and Society* 2, no. 2: 77–81.

Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. London: Verso.

Caldeira, Teresa. 2000. *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation and Citizenship in São Paulo*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Carnegie, Charles V. 2017. “How Did There Come to Be a ‘New Kingston’?” *Small Axe* 21, no. 3: 138–151.

Charles, Christopher, and Orville Beckford. 2012. “The Informal Justice System in Garrison Constituencies.” *Social and Economic Studies* 61, no. 2: 51–72.

Clarke, Colin G. 2006. *Decolonizing the Colonial City: Urbanization and Stratification in Kingston, Jamaica*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Coaffee, Jon, Paul O’Hare, and Marian Hawkesworth. 2009. “The Visibility of (In)Security: The Aesthetics of Planning Urban Defenses against Terrorism.” *Security Dialogue* 40, nos. 4–5: 489–511.

Ellis, Darren, Ian Tucker, and David Harper. 2013. “The Affective Atmospheres of Surveillance.” *Theory and Psychology* 23, no. 6: 716–731.

Ghertner, D. Asher. 2015. *Rule by Aesthetics: World-Class City Making in Delhi*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Henriques, Julian. 2010. “The Vibrations of Affect and Their Propagation on a Night Out on Kingston’s Dancehall Scene.” *Body and Society* 16, no. 1: 57–89.

Hope, Donna P. 2006. “Passa Passa: Interrogating Cultural Hybridities in Jamaican Dancehall.” *Small Axe* 10, no. 3: 125–139.

Jaffe, Rivke. 2010. “Ital Chic: Rastafari, Resistance and the Politics of Consumption in Jamaica.” *Small Axe* 14, no. 1: 30–45.

———. 2012a. “The Popular Culture of Illegality: Crime and the Politics of Aesthetics in Urban Jamaica.” *Anthropological Quarterly* 85, no. 1: 79–102.

———. 2012b. “Criminal Dons and Extralegal Security Privatization in Downtown Kingston, Jamaica.” *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 33, no. 2: 184–197.

———. 2013. “The Hybrid State: Crime and Citizenship in Urban Jamaica.” *American Ethnologist* 40, no. 4: 734–748.

———. 2016. *Concrete Jungles: Urban Pollution and the Politics of Difference in the Caribbean*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Meyer, Birgit. 2009. “From Imagined Communities to Aesthetic Formations: Religious Mediations, Sensational Forms, and Styles of Binding.” In *Aesthetic Formations: Media, Religion, and the Senses*, edited by Birgit Meyer, 1–28. Dordrecht: Springer.

Noble, Greg. 2005. “The Discomfort of Strangers: Racism, Incivility and Ontological Security in a Relaxed and Comfortable Nation.” *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 26, nos. 1–2: 107–120.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/chapter-pdf/762726/9781478007517-006.pdf
by UNIV OF PENNSYLVANIA user

Panagia, Davide. 2009. *The Political Life of Sensation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Pereira Martins, Sanne. 2009. "Uptown Top Ranking: Negotiating Middle-Class Masculinity and Sexuality in Kingston, Jamaica." MA thesis, Leiden University.

Rancière, Jacques. 2006. *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. London: Continuum.

———. 2010. *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*. London: Continuum.

Saldanha, Arun. 2007. *Psychedelic White: Goa Trance and the Viscosity of Race*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Sives, Amanda. 2010. *Elections, Violence and the Democratic Process in Jamaica, 1944–2007*. Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers.

Thomas, Deborah. 2004. *Modern Blackness: Nationalism, Globalization and the Politics of Blackness in Jamaica*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Trnka, Susanna, Christine Dureau, and Julie Park. 2013. "Introduction: Senses and Citizenships." In *Senses and Citizenships: Embodying Political Life*, edited by Susanna Trnka, Christine Dureau, and Julie Park, 1–32. London: Routledge.

Downloaded from https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/chapter-pdf/762726/9781478007517-006.pdf
by UNIV OF PENNSYLVANIA user