Dependency and Marginality in Kingston, Jamaica

by Colin G. Clarke

Caribbean societies have been molded by three institutions, colonialism, the sugar plantation, and slavery, and so too have their urban systems. Colonialism implies that Caribbean cities were not indigenous creations, but transplanted from Europe; the sugar plantation indicates that the economic base was large-scale agricultural production, not urban-located manufacturing; slavery left a legacy of racial hierarchy, cultural pluralism, and social inequality. The lack of local urban roots and of a dynamic urban economy would perhaps be manageable today if Caribbean cities were small and stable in size. Reality is quite different, however. Many Caribbean capitals have more than 500,000 inhabitants, and it is not uncommon to find towns that are increasing their population at rates well above the islands' annual average of about two percent.

Rapid population increase without commensurate economic expansion is commonplace in Third World cities. Post-Second World War optimism about rapid economic "take-off" has given way to a more pessimistic and realistic appreciation of the continuing dependence of the Third World on the developed economies of Europe-North America. Development and underdevelopment are no longer construed as parallel, unrelated circumstances, but as organically linked; the Third World is poor not because it has been underdeveloped, but because it has been, and still is being exploited. The Caribbean fits appropriately within this framework, and it applies equally well to cities. Caribbean capitals and towns lack the burgeoning mercantile or manufacturing base of the European Victorian city, yet many are experiencing a Victorian type of demographic explosion. Attempts to attract scarce capital investment to Caribbean towns are pathetically inadequate to the needs for labor absorption. Political leaders in independence have rediscovered what colonial officials merely assumed; that the key positions in the world economy were taken up long ago by Western Europe and North America.

Caribbean societies have not been economically transformed by independence, nor have their cities been fundamentally modernized or economically underpinned. Without economic growth of a substantial kind, there have been few cases—despite the introduction of family planning programs—of the completion of the demographic transition to low fertility and low mortality. Moreover, rural imbalances between population and resources have largely been rectified by emigration or cityward movements. The towns, therefore, have taken much of the strain in the nondevelopment process in the period since the Second World War, and they have done so only by the proliferation of marginal systems of employment and housing.

Kingston, founded in 1692, colonial capital from 1872, and capital of independent Jamaica since 1962, exemplifies all these generalizations. There has been no major alteration in socioeconomic circumstances in Kingston between the colonial and independent eras (Clarke 1975a, Knight and Davies 1978). This lack of change, despite the sequential implementation of avowedly different strategies by the two main political parties, is one of the many problems that the country and its capital carry forward into the third decade of sovereignty. To understand the complexity of urban marginality and its rootedness in dependence, it is necessary to survey the colonial period.

Kingston's Colonial Legacy

Colonialism provided the geopolitical framework within which Kingston was created port town, commercial center, and, in the late eighteenth century, entrepôt. Dependency was inherent in colonialism. Imperial policy stimulated British manufacturing and overseas trade through the monopolistic system of the triangular run. Kingston was a vital contributor to this commerce, exporting sugar, importing West Indian slaves, and receiving capital goods and consumer items from Britain. Kingston's fortunes hinged, in particular, on Jamaica's heavily protected sugar exports, but the price it paid for its eighteenth century prosperity was the abnegation of an industrial role.

The seriousness of the dearth of manufacturing industry in Kingston became evident only during the nineteenth century, with the abolition of the slave trade in 1808, closure of the free port in 1822, slave emancipation

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in 1834, and the equalization of the sugar duties after 1850. Kingston's economy went into steep decline, and in 1877 it was reported that there was not enough employment "for one quarter of the honest and industrious poor in Kingston who would be willing to work. The idle boys and men of Kingston were supported by their mothers, aunts or grannies, who worked as servants or in other domestic and feminine occupations, or by their women who worked on the wharves, in coaling, or in loading bananas" (Olivier 1936, p. 206).

If Kingston's economy was to prove fragile, its exploitative society was depressingly rigid. Imperialism slotted Kingston into a specific niche in the North Atlantic system of mercantilism and determined its nonindustrial nature, and slavery fitted each element in the population into a hierarchy of legal estates. Kingston's society was stratified along white, brown, and black lines into citizens, freemen, and slaves. Moreover, the three major cultural categories (modified European, hybridized West Indian, and creolized African), which correlated with the legal estates, were ranked sequentially according to distinctions of family, religion, education, and economy. A major change in the social order took place in 1834 when slaves were emancipated and the majority of the population was no longer owned by the minority. Yet white domination persisted until after the Second World War within a framework set by colonialism and white racism, and reinforced by the restrictive property franchise and the pauperization of many of the ex-slaves and their descendants.

The system of free trade that Britain demanded to enable it to become the workshop of the world swept away West Indian sugar preferences and devastated Kingston's economy after 1850. Occupational marginality, though rooted in urban slavery, became more and more problematic as employment in domestic service, casual labor, petty trading, and tailoring and sewing came to typify the work of the rapidly expanding black masses in Kingston. These harsh urban circumstances were overshadowed in the 1860s by rural conflict between the ruined planter class and the emancipated peasantry. Elite insensitivity and exploitation created a reaction in the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865 and led to the establishment of Crown Colony government, transfer of the capital to Kingston, and the introduction of white, expatriate administrators.

Kingston acquired the infrastructure of a Victorian colonial capital in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Despite emigration to Central America and the United States, its population grew rapidly through natural increase and migration, rising from 27,400 in 1861 to 62,700 in 1921. By 1943 the total population living in the "corporate area" of Kingston and St. Andrew reached 237,000. The strains of growth were compounded by the Great Depression and led to the labor rebellion of 1938. This crisis, however, did usher in the period of constitutional decolonialization, beginning with the introduction of universal adult suffrage in 1944 and ending with political independence in 1962.

Major changes took place in Kingston after the Peoples' National Party (PNP) replaced the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) as the government in 1955, and constitutional changes conceded full internal self-government thereafter. A concerted effort was made to improve the quantity and quality of housing, especially in Kingston; free places were established in Jamaica's most famous fee-paying schools; and a series of tax exemptions were offered to capitalists, especially foreign entrepreneurs, in the hope they would open branch plants in Kingston where there was an enormous reservoir of surplus labor.

At the time these projects were initiated, Kingston experienced higher rates of population growth because mortality rates in Jamaica plummeted to European levels. By 1960 the population of Kingston was 376,000, and about one-half of the city's annual population increase of 20,000 were migrants. About 10,000 people entered the labor market every year, but the urban economy lacked the capacity to absorb many of them into manufacturing or formal servicing. As a consequence, they were drawn into the marginal sectors of Kingston life. Some were engaged in small-scale manufacturing and petty servicing, and others were nominally unemployed and forced to eke out a living by illegal activities. With low or irregular wages they rented rooms in tenements, rented ground spots for tiny chattel houses, or squatted. Urban marginality in employment and housing were functionally related and continuations of early nineteenth century conditions among Kingston's poor, black, lower class.

Dependent Development

In Kingston marginality intensified in the post-independence era because of the inability of the government to overcome dependence. Jamaica's two administrations since 1962 have approached the issue in different ways. The more conservative JLP, in power from 1962 to 1972 and again since 1980, adopted a capitalist stance and argued that Jamaica needs American support and investment to climb out of economic backwardness. In contrast, the PNP, under Michael Manley's leadership, developed the idea of democratic socialism and, therefore, opted for a less capitalistic path to development. It nationalized hotels, banks, and bauxite companies, and diversified its international links to include many more Third World and socialist countries, notably Cuba.

The outcome of JLP policy in the 1960s may be summarized, briefly, as resulting in rapid economic growth: gross domestic product more than doubled between 1960 and 1970, based largely on the bauxite, manufacturing, and tourist industries (Clarke 1974). On the deficit side, however, agriculture, still the main employer of labor, stagnated, profits were repatriated, and population growth continued to outstrip job creation in Kingston where marginality was already endemic. Not only was bauxite mining and tourism capital-intensive rather than labor-intensive, but like the sugar factories, they were found in rural areas.

The Michael Manley period, neither pro-capitalist nor whole-heartedly socialist, fell between two stools. Manley's rhetorical socialism scared away foreign capital and eventually frightened the brown middle class. Nationalization, so enthusiastically proscribed in the bauxite industry in the mid-1970s, became a fall-back solution in the hotel sector by the late 1970s when American tourists stayed away. When the bauxite companies reduced production in the wake of the government's levy, and when the newly created sugar cooperatives failed to reach their targets, the PNP sought IMF funds only to reject their bail-out because of the harsh terms imposed.

These two administrations, though apparently, in turn, embracing and rejecting dependency, were greatly influenced by the world economy. It was comparatively easy for Jamaica to experience rapid economic growth during the 1960s, but difficult to continue the success, let alone pursue economic growth through more radical policies after the 1973-74 world oil crisis. Observers' views have changed as well. In the 1960s, they said population growth was the major impediment to fundamental change in Jamaica; in the 1970s, they claimed

dependence constrained the pattern and pulse of growth, and that the failure of Jamaica to complete the demographic transition was yet another facet of dependent development.

The political economy of Jamaica after independence produced a veneer of mid-twentieth century modernization in Kingston. Change in the 1960s included a new port, waterfront redevelopment, suburban extensions and shopping plazas, the New Kingston commercial complex, town house developments, and the causeway to Portmore and Independence City (Figure 1). These tangible monuments to "progress" were followed by a decade of more feeble material change, with much more emphasis on redefining social values, such as giving dignity to manual labor, improving literacy, and removing the stigma attached to illegitimacy in a society where the majority of births are out of wedlock. Sadly, neither program, though partly successful in its own terms, stemmed Kingston's growth, tamed dependency, or coped adequately with the intensification of marginality.

The development strategies of the JLP and PNP indicate that the room for maneuver for small dependent countries is narrow. Unless there is some major shift in the balance of power in the world's capitalist economy, Kingston will remain the capital city of a peripheral country which will grow rapidly in population but will be condemned to influences of endemic marginality. To understand the implications, in human terms, of this depressing scenario, it is neceessary to review the process of population growth and the worsening conditions in Kingston's labor and housing markets in the post-independence period.

Population Growth

During the intercensal period 1943 to 1960, the population of urban and suburban sections of Kingston increased at an annual rate of five percent, and reached 376,000 on the eve of independence. During the 1960s, the rate of increase decelerated to three percent per annum. By 1970 the parishes of Kingston and St. Andrew recorded 550,100 residents with 506,200 in the built-up area. Emigration to the United Kingdom in the early 1960s and to North America thereafter drew off some potential migrants to Kingston and a number of the capital's own residents. Although the island's rate of natural increase fell from 33.2 to 26.1 per 1,000, Kingston still absorbed about 130,000 additional people between 1960 and 1970.

Since 1970 Kingston's growth rate slowed further. Jamaica's natural increase dropped to 21.1 per 1,000 in 1980, and emigration removed about 20,000 people from the island in each of the three preceding years. Kingston and St. Andrew probably had about 600,000 residents in 1980, but overspill into the parishes of St. Catherine and St. Thomas, to the west and east respectively of the Liguanea Plain, brought the de facto figure for the city and the settlements it has absorbed closer to three-quarters of a million. If that is so, Greater Kingston in 1980 housed 200,000 more people than in 1970 and one-third of the population of Jamaica.

Irrespective of changes in fertility, mortality, and emigration, cityward movement has been a constant component of urbanization. In the decade of the 1960s, for example, Jamaica's ten largest settlements absorbed almost ninety percent of the island's population growth, and Kingston was the outstanding target, absorbing one-half the total amount on its own. Kingston is still attractive to rural dwellers. Factors responsible for continued migration to Kingston are the aspirations of youth to white- and blue-collar jobs, the widespread and understandable desire among the black population for high wages and social mobility, the continued concentration of land in the hands of a few owners, the stagnation of the agricultural sector, and the steady build-up of the island's population from 1,953,000 in 1972 to 2,186,000 in 1980. Neither slum conditions nor the high rate of unemployment have deterred migrants.

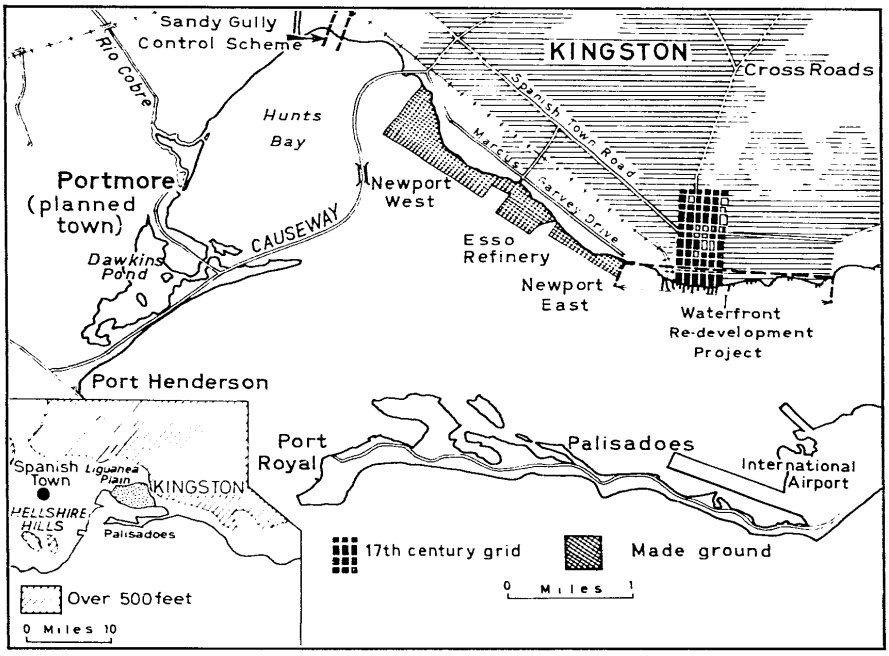

Figure 1. Kingston's location and waterfront.

Unemployment

Conditions of labor surplus were problematic in Kingston in the late nineteenth century but improved slightly in the early twentieth century because of heavy emigration and modest economic diversification. During the depressed 1930s, however, unemployment once more became characteristic of the labor situation in Kingston. Economic decline was aggravated by the rapid growth of the city's population and by the return of Jamaicans from Central America. In 1936 a commission, set up to investigate unemployment, reported that of the 90,000 people living in "the Kingston area," 5,000 were "genuinely unemployed" and added that forty percent of these were born in rural areas. If an urban labor force of 45,000 is assumed, about eleven percent were unemployed at that time (Clarke 1975a).

Since the late 1930s, unemployment has been a permanent and worsening condition in Kingston. According to the 1943 census, the number of unemployed in the capital was double that estimated in 1938 and represented 15.5 percent of the total population aged fifteen and over. As Orde Browne noted in the late 1930s, "there has thus grown up in Kingston a body of some thousands of persons for whom employment is at best intermittent. The tendency for such people to become unemployable, if not criminal, is obvious, hence the importance of measures calculated actually to reduce the urban population, and this on a considerable scale" (Orde Browne 1939, p. 84).

No such reduction in Kingston's population has occurred since the 1930s: on the contrary, the city has experienced at least a threefold growth. (Kingston's economic development in the 1950s and 1960s was far greater than Orde Browne could have foreseen, however.) To diversify the national economy and cope with urban unemployment, an Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) was set up in 1952, and a series of tax incentives were granted to encourage Jamaican and foreign entrepreneurs to invest in manufacturing industry. Between 1951 and 1960, 3,451 jobs were created through this program, virtually all of them in Kingston. Assuming a multiplier effect of two, the figure used by the IDC, about 900 jobs a year were established through the scheme. Fewer than 10,000 jobs were created in the 1950s, and that was the figure by which Kingston's labor force grew in 1959-60 alone.

Failure to achieve labor absorption through industrialization resulted in an increase in the rate of unemployment in Kingston from 15.5 percent in 1943 to 18.4 percent in 1960. On the eve of independence, over 10,000 people in the capital were looking for their first job, and they accounted for one-third of the total number of unemployed. Approximately seventy percent of this group was under twenty-one years of age, and unemployment was chronic among school leavers. These conditions were primarily the result of secular unemployment. They had existed in Kingston for almost thirty years and were associated with that quintessential feature of dependency: "an economy in equilibrium so that there is always a reservoir of involuntarily unemployed" (Maunder 1960, p. 8).

The consequence of dependent development can be demonstrated in another way. In 1960, unemployment in Jamaica was 12.6 percent, and one-half of the unemployed lived in Kingston and St. Andrew. Opportunities for employment failed completely to meet the expectations of migrants to the capital. Up to thirty-six percent of the males and fifty-one percent of the females looking for their first jobs in 1960 were born in rural parishes.

In the early 1960s, endemic and high unemployment was concentrated in coastal sections of the city and, above all, in slum sections along the waterfront or adjacent to Spanish Town Road in West Kingston, where the rate ranged from just under twenty percent to over thirty percent. Since the late nineteenth century, West Kingston has been the poorest part of the capital and stands in marked contrast to social conditions found in the eastern and northern suburbs.

Unemployment in Kingston has increased during the years since independence. By 1970 unemployment reached 22.6 percent. More recently, the experiment with democratic socialism was accompanied by overall economic decline between 1976 and 1980, and island-wide unemployment soared to 26.8 percent by November 1980. Some rural parishes have been catastrophically affected, but even in Kingston and St. Andrew the rate rose from 26.5 to 29.6 percent between October 1978 and November 1980 (*Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica 1980* 1981). These long-run statistics for unemployment in Kingston are useful for charting secular increases in marginality. But they are not to be taken at face value as indicators of idleness; nor are they an adequate summary of employment stress under dependent development. The two points require further elaboration.

Formal and Informal Sectors

The pattern of employment in Kingston at independence remained basically as it was in 1943. In most capital cities it might be expected that approximately two-fifths of the labor force would be employed in public service and more than ten percent in the construction industry, but the low proportion involved in manufacturing (twenty-four percent), and in particular, the high proportion still engaged in personal service (twenty-one percent) indicated a continuing weakness in the employment structure of the city. Moreover, the census figure showing that 38,700 persons were engaged in manufacturing gave an inflated picture of factory employment. Industrial concerns with ten or more workers employed only 17,000 people in Kingston in 1960. Probably no more than ten percent of the classified labor force worked in factories, even when account is taken of enterprises established through the IDC. Over one-half of the people described by the census as employed in manufacturing were undoubtedly "bazaar economy" operatives such as carpenters, seamstresses, shoemakers and repairers, and other self-employed workers. A similar system of petty activity is revealed by the occupation tables: over forty percent of Kingstonians were in manual and service occupations, notably laboring, car cleaning, gardening, and car watching for men, and domestic service and market selling for women.

No system of social security exists in Jamaica, and the unemployed cannot remain idle indefinitely. There has therefore developed a subculture of "scuffling" or scraping a living from illegal activities such as pimping and prostitution, begging, stealing, selling or recyling scrap, and salvaging food jettisoned on the city's dump or "dungle." These activities proliferate wherever "unemployment" is a permanent and large-scale feature of neighborhood life, as it clearly is throughout West Kingston.

The bazaar and illegal economies interdigitate and are often grouped together and described as "the informal sector." In contrast, the "formal sector" entails large-scale activity, heavy capital investment, permanency of employment, regulated hours of work and pay, and sometimes the provision of pension and other social security rights. The informal sector lacks these features and is characterized by casual labor, small-scale enterprise, and self-employment. It is easy to enter informal occupations,

most of which are unskilled and require little if any capital outlay.

Throughout the colonial period and the first decades of independence, Kingston's employment structure has been split into two sectors or circuits. This urban dichotomy is a microscale expression of a global situation in which formal sector employment has largely been preempted by the developed world, leaving Third World cities largely dependent on the labor absorptive capacity of small-scale marginal employment. The basic distinction between the sectors or circuits in Kingston is essentially the same as in other Third World cities and can be reduced to finance and industrial capitalism versus penny capitalism.

In the early 1970s it was usual to treat the two sectors of Third World cities as though they were separate and to focus on the absorptive capacity of the informal sector whose employees subsisted largely by earning from one another or, on a casual basis, from the formal sector. In this way the urban poor were able to make ends meet by stringing together a number of ill-paid jobs. Most social scientists now reject the dichotomy between formal and informal employment, and argue that both are characterized by the profit motive and that both are dominated by finance and industrial capital. Moreover, the two sectors often interrelate in complex ways, the lower circuit selling cheap labor and transformed or recycled goods to the upper circuit and purchasing from it certain consumer items. For example, domestic service, which is the largest employer of female labor in Kingston, depends heavily on wages channelled directly from formal sector employment, often provided by the government.

If the dichotomy between formal and informal sector employment is increasingly being revealed as false, so too is the distinction between employment and unemployment. The high and rising rate of unemployment in Kingston during the years 1938-80 is a measure of the increasing significance of socially stigmatized and illegal (therefore undeclared) employment in the informal sector. During the last two decades, a major development has been the expansion of the ganja or marijuana trade in Jamaica and the emergence of West Kingston not simply as a major place of consumption—the Ras Tafari have been using it as a "sacred weed" for more than half a century—but as the nexus for peddling and smuggling. Indeed, as unemployment has soared to over fifty percent in some districts, ganja has become entangled with guns, gangs, and politics in a quintessentially West Kingstonian version of marginality, which has brutalized daily life to a degree unknown in most other Caribbean capitals.

Housing Quality

Why is West Kingston strongly associated with marginality? To answer that question, it is necessary to return to the link between the informal sector and urban space, which is to be found in the residential structure of the city and the workings of the housing market. Urbanization without adequate industrialization and the creation of sufficient formal employment with secure wages, has condemned Kingston's burgeoning population to high density, poor quality housing, most of which in 1960 and 1970 (Figures 2 & 3) was located adjacent to the coast on either side of the central business district, but especially in West Kingston. The problem of housing the marginal black population has been compounded by lack of government funds for home subsidies, by inflated land prices boosted by housing shortages and speculation, and by real estate profiteering.

Whereas Kingston's brown middle class was satisfactorily accommodated and the white upper class often luxuriously housed in 1960, the lower class in general, and the marginal population in particular, were confined to densely populated neighborhoods in the south of the capital (Figure 4). Indeed, there was a marked coincidence between high population density, poor quality housing, unemployment, and low class, which seems to have persisted with few modifications, except for a general worsening of conditions, especially in the slum areas, between 1960 and 1970. In every instance West Kingston appeared as the most rapidly deteriorating area (Figures 2 & 5).

Intensification of the housing problem in Kingston between 1960 and 1970 is easy to explain. To provide adequate accommodation for Kingston's 130,000 new residents at a density of four persons per house (the ratio used by the town planners), 32,500 new houses would have been required between 1960 and 1970. Even if this rate of building had been achieved, it would have made no impression on the preexisting housing problem. The year 1965, which was the central point in the post-independence economic boom, was quite the best for new construction, but fewer than 2,500 new units were completed under various government and private schemes. In most years of the decade, the output of all types of government-financed housing barely exceeded 1,000 units. Furthermore, the majority of the new houses were provided in twenty-six mortgage insurance schemes, which, like earlier ones at Mona Heights and Harbour View, drew most of their residents from the more densely populated middle-class areas rather than from the West Kingston slums (Figure 6). Clearly, the JLP found it easier to underwrite the loans of other agencies than to supply the funds required for low income housing. Kingston's poor are quite unable to make reliable repayments for long-term loans.

Data from the Sanitary Survey of Kingston and St. Andrew show that even more people concentrated in the slum areas of Kingston in the years after independence (Clarke 1975b). Between 1960 and 1967 almost fifty percent of the city's total population growth was absorbed in West Kingston in neighborhoods adjoining Spanish Town Road. This zone of dilapidated, single-story housing increased in population from 120,000 to 164,000, and the greater part must have been accommodated under conditions that were either overcrowded to start with or rapidly became so if the local planners' ratio of more than two persons per room or eight persons per water closet is used as a yardstick (Figure 7).

The housing situation in Kingston did not improve during the 1970s. In 1977 almost 7,000 units were completed by public and private sectors in Jamaica, but the number dropped to 4,400 in 1978 and 1,400 in 1980 as the economy contracted and confidence in the PNP government waned. The result was massive unemployment in the construction sector (*Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica 1980* 1981). Assuming that Kingston and St. Andrew's population grew by 100,000 during the 1970s, then 25,000 units would have been needed just to keep pace with new household formation, let alone make an impact on overcrowded dwellings. The shortfall is obvious, but how have Kingstonians been housed?

Housing Markets and Housing Policy

House ownership in 1960 was confined to the upper-class sections of suburban Kingston; renting was the norm elsewhere, even for the middle class. Among the urban poor, rented accommodation took three forms: (1) rooms in single-story tenements, often with several tenements per plot; (2) ground spots, on which individuals con-

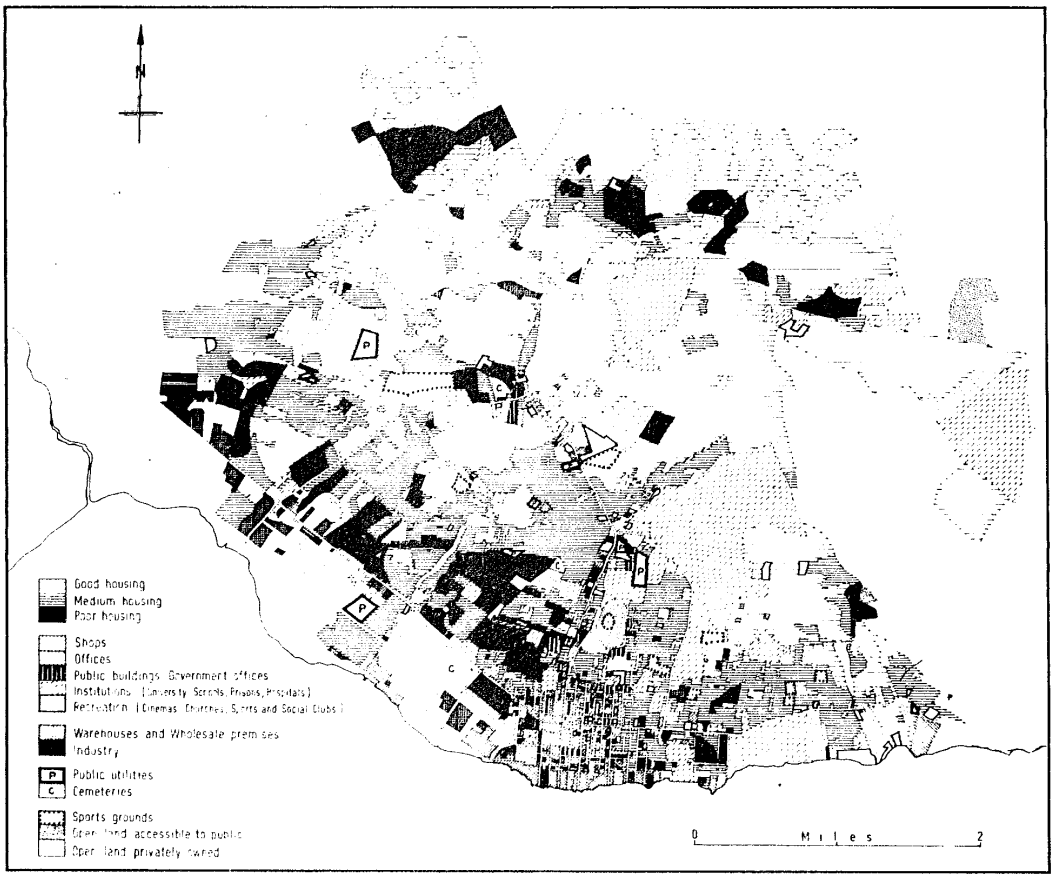

Figure 2. Land use in Kingston, 1960.

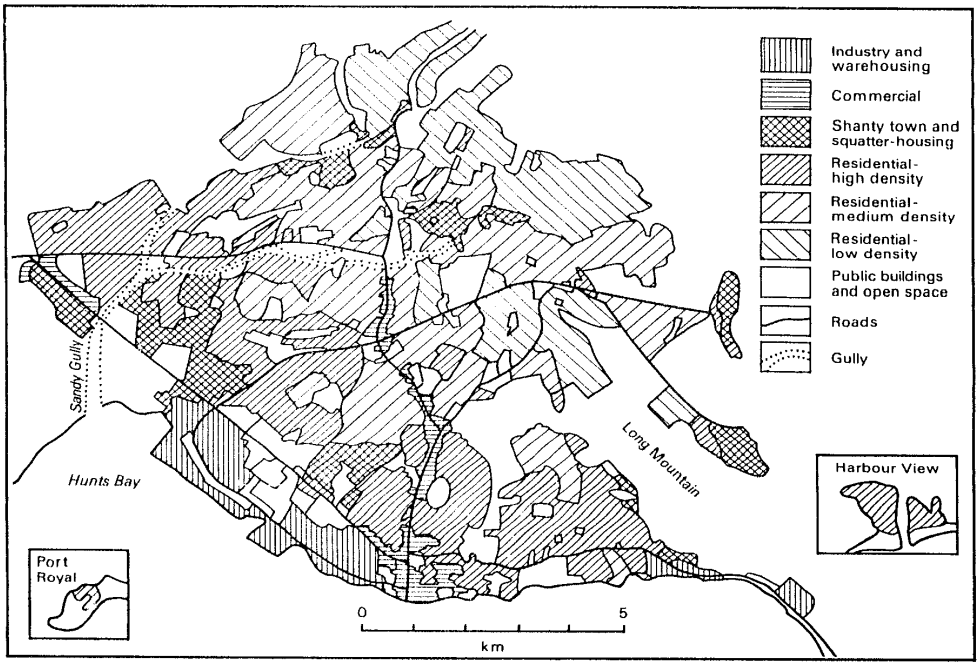

Figure 3. Land use in Kingston, 1970. Source: Town Planning Department, Kingston.

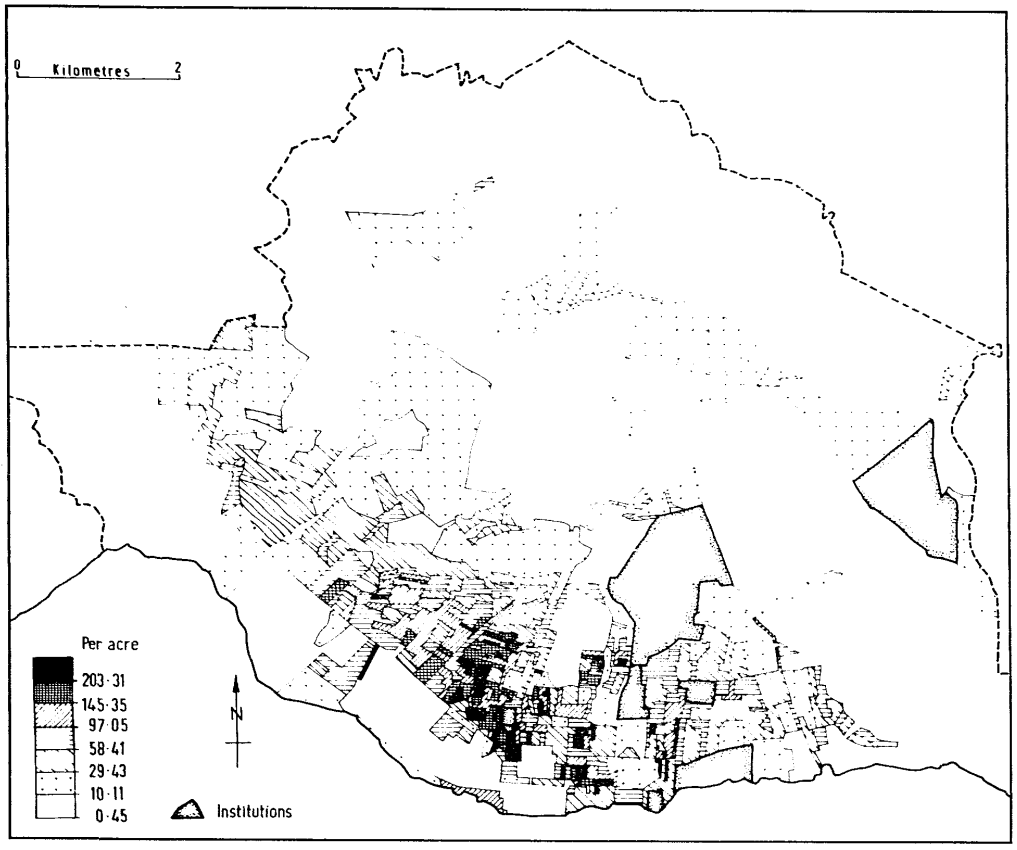

Figure 4. Distribution and density of population in Kingston, 1960.

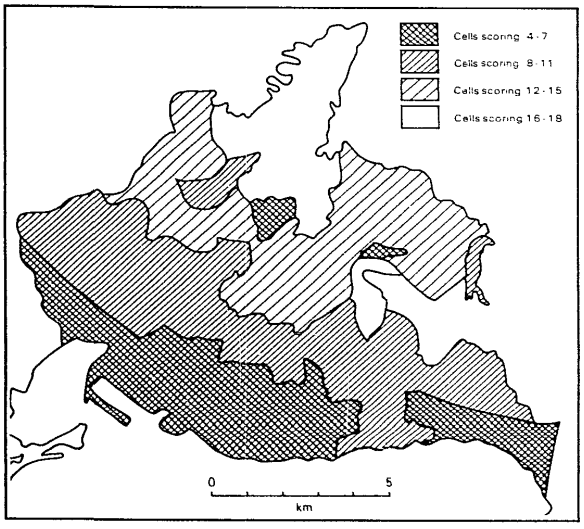

Figure 5. Residential quality in Kingston, 1970. Residential areas are ranked from poor (low scores) to good quality (high scores), based on age and size of dwelling units and value of the land. Source: Knight and Davies (1978) and Town Planning Department, Kingston.

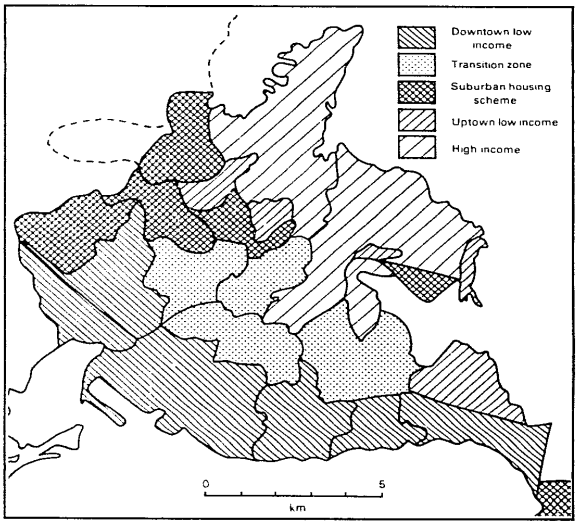

Figure 6. Class and residence in Kingston, 1970. Source: Knight and Davies (1978) and Figure 4.

structed single-room, wooden houses for their own occupation or to sublet; and (3) rooms for rent or small apartments in government housing schemes. West Kingston comprised all these types, and East Kingston had small houses and some tenements. As Kingston's population increased after 1960, new single-story buildings were crammed into the already overcrowded rent yards, and private tenements were further subdivided in the belt wrapped around the central business district. A similar process has taken place in government-controlled property in West Kingston (Hanson 1975).

For the poorest of the poor, who were unable to pay rent, the cheapest solution was squatting. Three thousand squatters were enumerated in Kingston and St. Andrew in the 1960 census, but the police estimated 20,000 squatters in 1961. Squatter settlements were located on vacant land at the fringe of the tenement area in West Kingston and at the outskirts of the built-up area of the city, mostly on government-owned land. Dwellings consisted of one-room huts constructed from packing cases, fish barrels, cardboard, and polythene. Population densities were higher in the older squatter settlements than in the newer ones, and whereas low fences sufficed on property boundaries where there were recently captured plots, high stockades had been raised around each parcel in the older camps. The morphology of many of the older squatter settlements closely resembled that of the rent yards of West Kingston, but neither displayed the development trajectory commonly associated with urban squatting in Latin America, largely because both lacked that sense of security bestowed by ownership of land or its promise (Clarke and Ward 1980).

Squatter settlements and rent yards in Kingston are distinguished by tenure, not by fabric. Both systems can be combined and described as shanty towns because they are static and lack sewerage and piped water. Ann Norton (1978), who factor analyzed Sanitary Survey data for 1968, calculated that seventy percent of the variance in Kingston's residential structure is explained, statistically, by crowding (thirty-seven percent), suburbs (twenty percent), and shanty towns (twelve point five percent). According to Norton, 80,400 people, or twenty-three percent of the total in her study, lived in shanty towns. Gerald Hanson's map for 1974 (Figure 8) shows that many of the shanty towns coincided with 1960-vintage squatter settlements near Spanish Town Road and with poor quality shacks located on the fringes of the gully system in the north of the city at independence (Figure 2).

Squatting has been affected by government action in two ways since 1962: by clearance and by improvement. During the 1960s, the squatter settlements at Trench Town and Back o' Wall (Tivoli Gardens) were cleared for urban renewal, and the schemes involved 450 and 800 units respectively. But despite oral promises to the contrary, the new housing was not allocated to the original squatters but to the backers of the political party in power, the JLP. During the 1960s, and extending into the 1970s, the overt dissatisfaction of West Kingstonians with the inequalities of the urban social system was institutionalized and harnessed by the two political parties. Provision of homes and jobs became a major political exercise carried out for the benefit of supporters of the victorious party. Paradoxically, the struggle in West Kingston was not for structural change; it was to secure power for one's party and through it, to obtain resources which were in chronically short supply. Thus, prior to the establishment of the National Housing Trust after the 1976 election, housing schemes in West Kingston were symbolic rather than ameliorative, more a question of party patronage than of national policy.

Nonetheless, it would be unfair to dismiss the PNP's involvement in Kingston's housing problems as entirely a matter of establishing bailiwicks from which to confront the JLP strongholds. In keeping with its socialist orientation, the PNP recognized the importance of giving security of tenure to squatters and of providing infrastructure and amenities. By 1980 nineteen squatter sites were being upgraded by the government in collaboration with the United States and The Netherlands. Moreover, in that same year the World Bank completed 5,500 core units

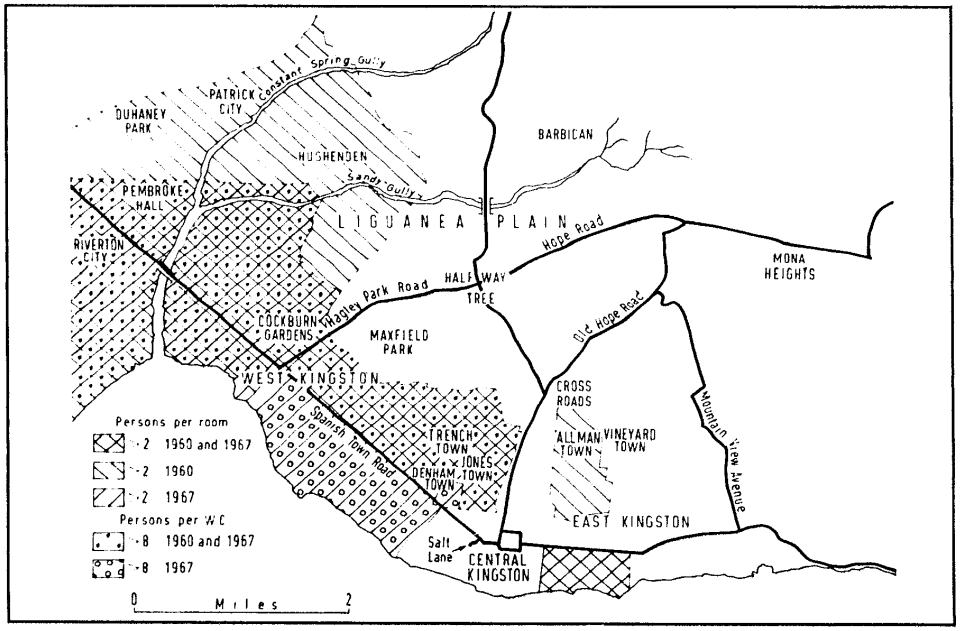

Figure 7. Incidence of overcrowding in Kingston, 1960 and 1967.

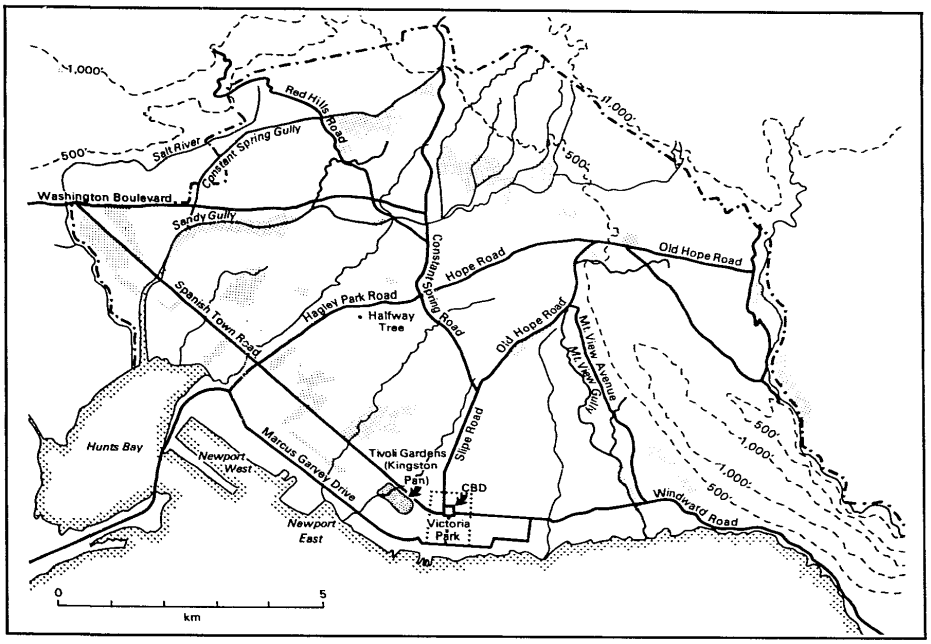

Figure 8. Shanty towns in Kingston, 1974. Source: Hanson (1975) and Figure 2.

under its site and service program, the object being to provide essential infrastructure prior to, rather than after, self-help housing had taken place (*Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica 1980* 1981). These well-intentioned projects failed to provide new or improved units on anything like the scale required in Kingston. None of them addressed the fundamental problem of the tenements and rent yards, which are far more numerous than squatter settlements and are set in an intractable matrix of rental property.

Conclusion

Kingston, in colonial and post-independence eras, has been characterized by its enormous marginal population. In Marxist terms, that population forms a lumpenproletariat which endures persistent poverty. The reserve army of labor, which in advanced capitalist countries expects to be drawn into new enterprise, is on permanent leave in Kingston.

As Kingston has grown, most of the new employment has been created by informal means, and self-employment has been married to self-help housing in the form of rent yards and squatter settlements to create do-it-yourself urbanization. Evidence for Kingston over at least the last half century shows that marginality—informal employment and precarious squatting and renting—is growing, not declining, and that it is fundamentally related to dependent capitalism and helps to sustain it by keeping wages low.

The JLP, in power again since 1980, intends to expand the formal sector of the economy so that it can generate wealth and absorb surplus labor. This promised expansion will be a gradual process of change and may come to grief if world recession continues or if peripheral capitalist development follows the same course as in the 1960s. Whichever political party is in power, it is unlikely that Jamaica's economic position will be transformed. It might be possible to ameliorate housing conditions in Kingston by nationalizing urban land; but improving Kingston's economic base and achieving the demographic transition to low fertility may have to wait for a new international deal for the Third World.

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