# WHEN CITIZEN POLITICS

# BECOMES UNCIVIL:

## Between Popular Protest, Civil Society and

## Governance in Jamaica.

BY

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'Hungry men and women have a right to call attention to their condition and to ask of people fulfilment of promises made to them so as long as they do so without using violence'.

Rt. Excellent, Sir Alexander Bustamante,
Trade Unionist, National Hero, and first Premier of Jamaica, 1938.

# Abstract

This thesis focuses on the *problem of incivility* within the domains of citizen politics and civil society by exploring the proclivity for popular protest in Jamaica and the intersections between popular citizen protest, civil society and governance in this context. It scrutinizes the tenor of contemporary civilian politics and assesses the consequent impact on the quality of civil society more broadly. The thesis challenges the assumption within accepted definitions of civil society that civic participation is always positive. It does so by examining the manner in which citizens engage collectively to defend their interests and make claims upon the state, as well as the extent to which this model of political participation serves the agenda and promise of civil society.

Through an in-depth, country-specific, empirical case study, the thesis examines micro social processes of power at community level to raise questions about who should be represented in civil society and how the voices of the marginalized are to be heard. In this regard, it explores the role of social inequality, feelings of social injustice and political exclusion as contributory factors in the existing tenor of citizen politics in Jamaica. It also examines the challenges facing the contemporary state and the impact of violent protests on state engagement, public action and political performance. The study analyses the *lived experiences*, observations and perspectives of a wide cross section of Jamaican citizens, gleaned from face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions, as well as a range of secondary material, including audio-visual data, to illuminate this process of struggle and underscore the factors which drive violent protests in this political context.

The thesis concludes that maximum disruption, including violence, has not only become the basis of civil protest in Jamaica, but that the varied and contradictory responses of the state bureaucracy and political actors (Members of Parliament, activists, other political

officials), as well as the mass media, have directly contributed to the style and tenor of protest politics in Jamaica. This state of affairs reduces popular citizen participation over genuine concerns to mob-style incivility and undermines civil society as a source of positive and responsible citizenship. The growing political importance of grassroots-based citizen participation and community building—within the context of a global imperative to forge 'democracy from below'—lends theoretical and normative credence to emerging concerns about the current character of popular citizen mobilizations and protest. This study thus establishes the basis for a presumption in favour of civility, civil discourse and civil action as fundamental to the construction of civil society. In doing so, it extends current scholarly understandings of civil society to Third World contexts, with a specific emphasis on Jamaica.

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advice and friendship helped to lessen the load of an arduous doctoral project, I offer a huge thanks as well.

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*For my mother to whom I owe more than I can say*

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# List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| BITU | Bustamante Industrial Trade Union |
| C&W | Cable and Wireless (Jamaica) Limited |
| CAFFE | Citizens' Action for Free and Fair Elections |
| CARIMAC | Caribbean Institute of Media and Communications |
| CBO | Community-Based Organizations |
| CSO | Civil Society Organization |
| CCN | Constabulary Communications Network |
| CPTC | Creative Production and Training Centre |
| DA | Discourse Analysis |
| GCC | Government of the Civil Community |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| ICI | Informal Commercial Importer |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| IP | Informer Phobia |
| JCC | Jamaica Chamber of Commerce |
| JFJ | Jamaicans for Justice |
| JIS | Jamaica Information Service |
| JLP | Jamaica Labour Party |
| JPS | Jamaica Public Service |
| JUTC | Jamaica Urban Transit Company |
| KSAC | Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation |
| MP | Member of Parliament |
| MPM | Metropolitan Parks and Markets |
| NDM | National Democratic Movement |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| NHT | National Housing Trust |
| NWC | National Water Commission |
| NWU | National Workers' Union |
| OPEC | Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries |
| OPM | Office of the Prime Minister |
| PERF | Police Executive Research Forum |
| PIOJ | Planning Institute of Jamaica |
| PIR | Police Incident Report |
| PM | Prime Minister |
| PN | Participant Number |
| PNP | People's National Party |
| PNPHQ | People's National Party Headquarters |
| PWD | Public Works Department |
| REP | Rural Electrification Programme |
| RJR | Radio Jamaica Limited |

| | |
|---|---|
| SA | Structural Adjustment |
| SALISES | Sir Author Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Research |
| TUC | Trade Union Congress |
| UCG | Uncivil Community Government |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| US | United States (of America) |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| UWI | University of the West Indies |
| V & A | Values and Attitudes Programme |
| WTO | World Trade Organization |

# Preface

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When I was an undergraduate student at the Mona Campus of the University of the West Indies (UWI) between 1994 and 1998 I was, in Jamaican idiom, the *head cook and bottle-washer* in a fair share of student mobilizations and protest-demonstrations. For example, I was one of several West Indian students who (with support from a network of popular Jamaican reggae artistes) led a massive student march through the streets of Kingston to protest against the passage of a shipment of plutonium through Caribbean waters in 1994. *'No plutonium, blow your horns'* was our rallying cry as we implored motorists and other Jamaicans to join our collective resistance and to pressure Caribbean governments to act in line with our wishes. I also actively supported a succession of student blockades of the UWI, Mona to protest against increases in tuition fees in 1995. I participated in student marches around the Mona campus on a number of other occasions such as when police shot and killed a food and drink vendor, and when we tried to force the University administration to improve campus security or to open a newly-built wing of the library for student use.

These student mobilizations pale into near insignificance when compared to the radical student and black power movements on the Mona Campus of the UWI in the 1960s and the political protests that engulfed the Jamaican society in the 1970s. Nonetheless, I felt that I was among a large network of civically-engaged students who were politically aware, concerned, involved, driven and empowered to defend and pursue causes that we felt were just. We subscribed intensely to *'action, not a bag 'o mouth'*, a maxim borrowed from a popular song of the day. Petitions, letters or dialogue, although used, seemed to be feeble tools against a robust University administration. Massive disruption, such as blockading the gates of the University, shutting out staff and suspending all academic and administrative activity, were therefore assumed in instances as the most viable route to obtaining redress to our grievances. The negative repercussions of our actions such as

interruption of classes and loss of productivity for University workers rarely occurred to us. If they did, we did not care. To protest was our definition of freedom and thus far too exciting to be burdened by such concerns.

Looking back now with a new and informed understanding and with the benefit of time and academic distance, it is clear to me that although we were fervent, organized and armed with reasonable and relevant agendas, our activism suffered from youthful exuberance, intemperance and short-sightedness. Although we were not expected to burn down the University and carry on in a barbaric fashion to get what we wanted, in many instances, we acted in ways which departed from our standing and power as young intellectuals. University students in Jamaica still, by and large, adopt and subscribe to many of the established strategies (protests, lockdowns, blockades and mob violence)[1] in addition to retaining more resourceful tools at their disposal.

Although Caribbean activism is rooted in a long-standing tradition of active resistance against British slavery, colonialism and the plantation system, the contemporary desire for *civil* society obliges us to assert the importance of civility for the conduct of politics and the formation and/or revival of civil society even while we take stock of our specific contextual circumstances and conditions – social, economic, political, cultural and historical. In other words, in light of the search for civil politics and civil society, the contemporary models of popular protestation assumed at all levels of the Jamaican society require rethinking and new theoretical vistas. This thesis is my contribution to the beginnings of this process.

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[1] See *The Jamaica Gleaner.* (2006) 'Alleged Homosexual Attacked at UWI'. Available at: http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20060405/lead/lead3/html
The *Jamaica Gleaner.* (2006) 'Barbarous bloodlust at UWI'. Available at: http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20060406/cleisure/cleisure1.html
*The Jamaica Gleaner.* (2004) 'Marching for Peace – Students denounce violence in Spanish Town'. October 4. Available at: http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20041004/lead/lead1.html
*The Jamaica Gleaner.* (2004) 'Students versus violence'. October 5. Available at: http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20041005/cleisure/cleisure1.html

# Introduction

## 1.1 OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In an intriguing assessment of the quality of Jamaican democracy at the end of the twentieth century, noted political scientist Trevor Munroe (1999: ix) contends that the competing forces of 'deepening democracy and anarchic disorder' are struggling for dominance in Jamaica and in one form or another in many countries across the world. In Jamaica, he declares that:

> The race is advanced, and it is neck and neck…. Democratic renewal can and must win, otherwise the man in the street is going to turn to his own devices. If democratic renewal is slow and is overtaken by anarchy, sooner or later, there will be a backlash to authoritarianism (1999: ix).

This quotation goes to the heart of this study which explores the character of citizen politics and civil society in Jamaica. First, the quotation points to the possibility of a dangerous deficit in democratic revitalization in Jamaica embodied in the ostensible weaknesses in the institutions, structures and processes of representative government and civil society. Second, it predicts that in the absence of renewed procedures and practices of democratic strengthening, ordinary citizens will have little option but to install autonomous and alternative modes of governance and devise their own means to obtain redress or solve their problems.

Although not a panacea, it is the promise of civil society which is touted everywhere as sine qua non to building and consolidating democracy. It is now a truism that democracy requires a *civic organization* characterized by voluntarism, independent associations and a balance of powers between the state and society. Indeed, the theoretical consensus is that the more active, pluralistic, institutionalized and democratic civil society is and the more effectively it balances the tensions in its relationship with the state – between

autonomy and cooperation, vigilance and loyalty, scepticism and trust, assertiveness and civility – the more likely it is that democracy will emerge and endure. Democracy also requires a *civic culture* and *civic virtues* where the habits of participation and deliberation as well as dispositions of tolerance, civility, non-violence, decency and trust can be learned and reproduced (Putnam, 2002; 1995; 1993; Swift, 1999; Barber, 1998; Keane, 1988b; Fine & Rai, 1997; Foley & Edwards, 1996; Held, 1995; Diamond, 1994). It follows therefore that civil society's mediating role as a buffer between citizens and the state and as a social value founded on civility renders it crucial to any notion of renewing democracy and, in accordance with Munroe's grim prediction, what may be called 'anarchy-deterrence' in Jamaica.

At the same time, although often ignored in the scholarship on civil society, it is important to recognize that not all citizen organizations carry equal potential to perform democracy-building functions. This is because their ability to do so depends significantly on their character, that is, what type of group they are and what kind of activities they engage in. Consequently, while bowling leagues, Rotary clubs, church groups, charities and consumer lobbies are held up as ideal models of the value of civic association, it is noteworthy that some civil societies comprise groups (such as drug dealers, street gangs, hate groups and vigilantes) which uphold values contrary to civility and civicness. Instead, for many groups, criminality, violence and intolerance are their mandate. Other groups in civil society boast undemocratic goals and methods, may seek to annex the state or other competitors, reject the rule of law and/or undermine the authority of the democratic state (Boyd, 2004; Shils, 1992; Whitehead, 1997; Diamond, 1994). In other words, some civil organisations and processes exemplify chronically *uncivil* features, which immediately negate their possibility as real, participatory and functioning civil societies and their potential usefulness in advancing democratic processes, principles and aspirations. It is this kind of ambivalence which besets citizen politics and civil society in Jamaica.

### 1.1.1 'Roadblock Democracy'?

Popular protest is perhaps the most central of the democratic tools available to and employed by civilians globally to pursue rights-based causes, advance democracy and draw attention to the daily struggles they confront. In Jamaica, frequent nationwide protests and demonstrations - featuring massive road blocks, burning of tyres on major roadways, littering, looting, vandalism and violent citizen-police clashes, including at times, fierce gun battles - are tantamount to what may be seen as a 'roadblock democracy'. Further, it may be fair to say that the existing forms such popular protests take are not only 'glaring signals of the man in the street turning to his own devices' (Munroe, 1999: ix) in contemporary Jamaica but the manifestation of uncivil politics. Violence and disruptive behaviour, as methods of popular resistance, are indeed becoming a norm rather than the exception in the existing landscape of citizen politics in Jamaica, as perhaps elsewhere (see chapter 6).

The manifest cost of such violent protests to the economy are by now well-established – massive losses in productivity occasioned by extensive interruptions to commerce and the transportation sector – as well as the human consequences, measured in the virtual shutdown of the  education system and, at times, loss of life. More serious still is the considerable impact upon social stability, civic life and the rule of law, the concern over which have, in recent years, catapulted protest politics and the notion of *good* governance (UNDP, 1997) and *civil* society atop the Jamaican public's agenda. This development finds broad contextual basis in a plethora of studies (Santos & Nunes, 2004; Dalton, 2000; Norris, 1999: 257-263; Inglehart, 1999; van Deth, 1997; Hann & Dunn, 1993; Barber, 1984, 1998; Putnam, 1993, 1995) which examine the mutual interaction between the quality of democratic government and popular citizen participation. Such theoretical contributions suggest that growing cynicism about the performance of government and elected political representatives worldwide is resulting in a manifest decline in voter-participation at the polls while provoking and/or fuelling support for unconventional and elite-challenging forms of political participation and activism such as protest politics.

This kind of citizen activism is usually embodied in a variety of social movements, community projects and collective action – signing petitions, writing letters, attending community meetings, joining local initiatives and symbolic protests[1] (cf. Guha, 1997; Escobar & Alvarez, 1992; Foweraker, 1995) to more forceful mobilisations and confrontational demonstrations such as street marches and blockades.[2] Some scholars acknowledge that this aspect of civil society-in-practice may also feature potentially dangerous tendencies, involving actions as fanatical as 'support for anti-state extremist movements and even occasional cases of urban terrorism' (Norris, 1999:262). Scholars such as Keane (1996:14) contend that in certain circumstances, civil society may 'haemorrhage to death', degenerate into civil war and looting, in short, lead to the destruction of normal daily life. Whereas explosive protests and demonstrations in Jamaica often capture significant grassroots interest and media headlines, there has been little corresponding curiosity at the levels of scholarship. Where there has been scholarly interest (Gray, 2004; Charles, 2002; Meeks, 2000; Munroe, 2000; 1999; Dunn, 1999; Miller, 1999), the focus has principally been on the extent to which the structural power

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[1] Guha (1997), through extensive case studies, highlights the relevance, usefulness and power of these forms of citizen activism and protest in India. Non-violent direct action is a vital plank of India's environmental movement aided and abetted by a sympathetic media and the people's creative use of the wider political and legal system. For a more extensive discussion of this issue, see Guha (1997). See also Foweraker (1995) for examples from Latin America.

[2] For nine consecutive nights in November 2005, deprived immigrants, along with the poor working classes and the unemployed in Paris (and other cities), protested their demeaned social and economic status by engaging in coordinated acts of vandalism and arson. Protestors used home-made petrol bombs to torch some 900 cars and buildings while gangs of youths participated in fierce clashes with Parisian police. The French government likened this eruption of protest to 'genuine guerrilla warfare' (see International Herald Tribune, Europe, 2006; Agency France-Press, 2005). Far from France in the so-called 'periphery', thousands of pro-democracy activists and supporters, in April 2006, converged in the Nepalese capital of Kathmandu for 14 straight days, in forceful opposition to the autocratic reign of King Gyanendra. Blocked roads, burning tyres, brick-throwing, police-citizen clashes, anti-government poetry, peaceful marches and the police resorting to tear gas, rubber bullets, live rounds and savage beatings were the dominant themes of this citizen mobilization (see Aljazeera.net, 2006). Likewise, angry mobs took to the streets of the Solomon Islands in April 2006 to force the resignation of newly-elected Prime Minister, Synder Rini. These protests also had as their backdrop intensive violence – arson, vandalism and looting (*The Waikato Times*, 2006, April 27, p. 9).

and conditions of the Jamaican state as well as the perceived (under) performance of elected political actors propel (and perhaps justify) popular citizen action. However, existing negative currents in popular protest in Jamaica, as elsewhere, suggest that we are obliged to also account not only for the levels of citizen political participation but the nature and brand of popular citizen activism and the extent to which it contributes to the stock of civility required for civil society, properly and normatively constituted. It is upon this basis that this thesis '**When citizen politics become uncivil**' finds significance.

## 1.2    RESEARCH THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

I begin this study with this caveat. Popular protest is no stranger to West Indian society. It is rooted in a long-standing history of resistance to slavery and colonialism. Jamaica, the largest island in the English-speaking Caribbean, was the seat of much of this resistance. In fact, popular protest has been the dominant mode of struggle in the evolution of modern Jamaica and in the search for change in this postcolonial society (see chapter 4). Today, the country still lays claim to intense and frequent episodes of popular citizen mobilizations abetted by a highly democratic tradition where freedom of expression and assembly have strong bases. In 2005 alone, there were some 236 roadblock-demonstrations on record (Police Statistics, 2005). Popular protest is, in significant respects, liberatory. It represents triumph, particularly for a significant subaltern who have declared their socio-political power and ascending autonomy (cf. Gray, 2004; Price, 2004; Charles, 2002; Meeks, 1996; 2000). More importantly, it is a powerful and immediate means by which people convey their growing disenchantment with their government and conversely expose the inadequacies in the quality of governance on offer to them. The gist of the current challenge confronting civilian politics in Jamaica today is thus clear. In a context of widespread grievance over social and political conditions, personal standards of living and perceived government underperformance, 'citizens have no sense of being able to exercise effective control over the direction of the state except through vigorous and sometimes violent protest' (Baker, 2001:56).

This phenomenon symbolizes the dramatic collision between political governance, (including political decision-making, political accountability and political inclusion) and the strategies by which citizens elect to express their discontent. It also illuminates the unmistakable linkages between the character of civil society (embodied in popular protest) and the performance of representative democracy. Popular protest, as one mode of citizen political participation and activism is, then, a sort of litmus test of the nature of citizen politics and civil society as well as the quality of political governance. It is this problematic interplay between seemingly failing governance, popular protest and the construction (or deconstruction) of *civil* society within the Jamaican setting that this study focuses on. I seek answers to the following questions:

- What is the nature of popular protest and demonstrations in Jamaica?

- How far do Jamaica's grassroots protests reflect and reproduce the existing quality of governance, including the existing mechanisms of political representation and the performance of elected political actors?

- How effective are these protests in securing for (the especially disadvantaged classes of) citizens their political demands?

- What can the characteristics and temperament of such protests tell us about the quality of citizen politics and civil society in this context?

Through an empirical case study of protest politics, including the socio-cultural, political, historical and economic features at work in Jamaican society, this study seeks to understand and explain the nature and tenor of popular protest in this context. It offers critical, relevant and timely insights into the reasons eruptions of protest occur, why they occur with such frequency, why they take the forms they do, how the state responds and the impact of that response on the subsequent tenor of citizen action. The fundamental goal is to uncover the extent to which the existing models of protestation adopted in Jamaica represent a negation or a retreat of civil politics and civil society in Jamaica. Importantly, it is hoped that this country-specific study will offer a broad understanding of how the existing theoretical and empirical perspectives of civil society may be expanded to make them more relevant and useful to contemporary contexts and the

specific (socio-economic, political, cultural and historical) conditions of different societies facing similar challenges.

It is useful here to also say what the study is not about. The research is not about stigmatizing protest campaigners and participants. In this regard, it does not presume or suggest that forceful social protest is intrinsically uncivil. Neither does it equate civility with the failure of people to protest. Instead, the study recognizes the episodic mobilizations of Jamaican citizens, particularly of people on the margins, as an often useful, autonomous and emancipatory aspect of civil society without romanticizing it or extracting it from its counterpoint to the state and its quest to maintain social order and the rule of law. The study, in other words, aims to locate the moral principle in protest politics – to establish the basis for a presumption in favour of civility, civil discourse, civil action and civil society – and undermine the authority of claims about the futility of civil protest in this context. Similarly, it seeks to foreground the values that can rebut this assumption.

The study of popular protest and citizen politics in Jamaica is important because it reveals much about the possibilities and limitations for power by the poor in this context, as well as informs and/or lends support to a vision of governance and civil society more in line with its normative ideal. On this basis, I wish to introduce some theoretical considerations regarding civil society which have not been fully appreciated in contemporary writings on the subject. The goal here is to briefly highlight some conceptual deficits in current theorizing on civil society and the reason its newer outgrowths must be taken into account. Since the nature and conduct of civil society cannot be divorced from the performance of the state and its representatives, I also make some preliminary observations about the notion of governance and the existing nature of civil society and citizen activism within the specific context of Jamaica.

## CIVIL SOCIETY: ITS HIDDEN TRANSCRIPT

Civil society is commonly understood as a vast public realm of voluntary, self-generating and self-supporting organisations and/or associations which stands outside the control of the state (Keane, 1988a; Diamond, 1994; Cohen & Arato, 1992). Typical examples include churches, charities, independent media, volunteer initiatives, lobby groups, interest groups, sports clubs, fraternal, cultural educational and developmental organisations. In this regard, civil society denotes *society* voluntarily organizing itself and/or citizens acting collectively in a public sphere – to exchange ideas, express interests, achieve mutual goals, make demands or seek concessions from the state and hold political representatives accountable (Deakin, 2001; Swift, 1999; Keane, 1988a; Diamond, 1994: Cohen & Arato, 1992). Civil society is then, for all intents and purposes, a good and positive development and hence eagerly embraced by all. For political officials and ordinary citizens concerned with the quality of public life and social relations (Buddan, 2003; Boyne, 2002; Blunkett, 2001; Patterson, 2004; Robotham, 1998; Stone, 1992), political theorists and empirical social scientists disturbed by the maladies of democracy, declining associational life and social capital (Putnam, 2000; 1995; 1993; Munroe, 1999; Barber, 1998; 1984; Etzioni, 1996; Diamond, 1994; Shils, 1992), and development agencies (e.g. United Nations and World Bank) seeking accessible and structured organs through which to distribute aid and plan development projects, civil society is the solution.

Contemporary politics and political theory have predominantly focused on the virtues of civil society. Scholars such as Putnam (1995; 1993), for example, ignore the Marxian tradition which reduces civil society to a sphere of self-interest, instrumentality and conflict and instead advocate a more Tocquevillean order which posits a kinder, gentler understanding of civil society where bowling leagues, boys scouts and women's groups are full (Boyd, 2004). Others (Deakin, 2001; Swift, 1999; Robotham, 1998) focus on the work of voluntary organisations and the impact of voluntarism in society, largely positioning civil society as a realm of civic generosity and citizenship where everyone is working towards a common good. These theorists are not alone. Images of massive popular mobilisations and collective action, including the civil rights movement and

global student uprisings of the 1960s, the populist movements against the abuses of totalitarian regimes throughout Eastern Europe and Latin America in the late 1980s and anti-globalisation and trade protests of the mid 1990s, have essentially led to a romanticisation of *people power* in which civil society became an unmitigated blessing for democracy and a sort of cure-all for weaknesses in the democratic state and society (Keane, 1988; Tempest, 1997; Hann & Dunn, 1996).

But civil society is clearly not all virtuous. In the first place, its network of associations is cast so wide, it automatically and unwittingly embraces individuals and groups such as criminals, hate groups and extremists as well as values, tendencies and practices that constitute everything civility is not. Munroe (1999), for example, admits that there are groups in Jamaica which skirt the boundaries between legal and extra-legal behaviour. Swift (1999:6) posits that if civil society is a catch-all category encompassing an assortment of groupings and a diversity of social forces and interactions, then unquestionably it also includes 'fascists, terrorists, racketeers, criminal elements as well as individuals and groups committed to democracy and the much fancied neighbourhood organizations'. It would therefore appear, as Diamond (1994) suggests, that the image of a noble, vigilant and organized civil society checking at every turn the predations of a self-serving state is highly romanticised and is of little use to the construction of a viable democracy.

In other words, it is clear that civil society contains both civil and uncivil actors, and legal and extra-legal practices, processes and dimensions. In short, not all constituents of this public space rendered civil society are civically engaged for a common good. Much of the scholarly literature disregards this reality. Whereas affectations of legality as well as civil attitudes and practices are, at times, powerfully acknowledged as part and parcel of what constitutes civil society (Munroe, 1999; Whitehead, 1997; Foley & Edwards, 1996; Hall, 1995; Diamond, 1994), these notions are rarely foregrounded and given theoretical or empirical precedence in the existing debates on civil society. That civil society's *uncivil* side has been theoretically ignored, pushed away or deliberately underplayed is perhaps

the major conceptual deficit of the contemporary writings on the subject. This has led to confusion over its meaning and, in contexts such as Jamaica, may trigger doubts over its usefulness as a force for societal transformation. This is because, as Boyd (2004:5) maintains:

> In the absence of any shared agreement about the nature and character of civil society, what emerges is a strictly terminological definition that, consciously or unconsciously, seeks to avoid addressing questions about civil society's moral character (cf. Fine, 1997).

This study addresses this conceptual deficit and the extent to which it has implications for the positive value of civil society in the Jamaican society. Focusing on the actual character and conduct of civil processes such as protests and demonstrations and the extent to which they constitute and reflect civil society should go a long way in explaining the limits of current efforts to conceptualise and establish civil society. In this regard, I find Boyd's (2004:7) conceptual stance particularly useful. He argues that:

> Rather than thinking of civil society as a morally neutral space between the individual and the state, looking instead at associations [and citizen-level political action and processes] in terms of whether they are conducive to the virtue of civility may give us a better moral lens for reckoning with [its] value. Focusing on the *civil* designation of the term civil society, rather than on the domain of *society*, as opposed to the state, may help us to mediate these conceptual confusions about what counts as civil society and why (emphasis in the original).

This thesis suggests that if civil society is to be politically worthwhile not only in Jamaica but in any context, it must acknowledge and competently straddle what is clearly its twin role as a ***social value*** and as ***a set of actually functioning, participatory social institutions***. In other words, civil society must embrace both its call for civil conduct as well as collective engagement. This means we are obliged, as social science scholars, to take a more comprehensive view of the concept, including its potentially uncivil aspects. This conceptual stance is important as it not only exposes us to the real nature of civil society but gives us a good yardstick by which to assess its usefulness in society. This is even more important today, especially as the normative requirements of *good* governance increasingly collide with the complexities of governance in real world contexts such as

Jamaica. It is to a discussion of the basic theoretical parameters of this notion that I now turn in the following section.

## 1.4 GOVERNANCE AND GOVERNMENTALITY: SOME CONSIDERATIONS

Discussions of governance often take as their point of reference an assessment of the failure or success of contemporary governments of states (developed and developing) to meet the fundamental expectation of their citizens (UNDP, 1997). Conceptually, the notion is akin to the Foucauldian notion of pastoral power which 'links the individual to the state through an obligation to preserve the well-being of the citizen and attend to the needs of the population, in order to, in turn, assure a strong state' (Packer, 2003:136). Embedded in expectations of governance for poor and marginalized citizens in many countries is the fulfilment of immediate survival needs – water, food, health, housing, employment, education and (good) roads. In other words, citizens expect the state to be the provider of economic security and ensure that all citizens have access to regular, reliable and efficient basic services. There is also an expectation that the state guarantees appropriate legal protection, respects human rights by allowing civil freedoms and demonstrates the capacity to resolve conflicts without force or violence. Citizens also count on the state to guarantee political stability, eliminate corruption, ensure accountability and transparency, protect the environment and create room for greater citizen participation[3]. By definition then, the capacity of a state to adequately meet these expectations is what defines *good* governance in the minds of the average citizen.

Although these variables represent a good yardstick by which to assess the performance (and non-performance) of the state, they are essentially limited on two counts. Firstly, by virtue of this list of expectations which privileges the state as provider, it is assumed that

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[3] See, for example, The Commonwealth Foundation (2001) *Citizens and Governance: Regional Perspectives* which outlines the findings of a large scale research done with ordinary citizens in 47 countries throughout the Commonwealth. Citizens gave their views on what constitutes a good society and what roles are best played by citizens as well as the state. Refer to the discussion on the Caribbean, pp.43-54. A more theoretical perspective on this subject is provided by Amitai Etzioni in his 1995 work entitled *The New Golden Rule: Community and Morality in a Democratic Society.* Refer to chapter 1 – 'The Elements of a Good Society', pp 3-33.

governance resides exclusively with the state and its institutions. In its most generic interpretation, governance is the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs *at all levels* (UNDP, 1997:5). Here political management accords monopoly power to the state but insinuates that governance is also taking place at other levels besides the state. Indeed, drawing on the pluralist paradigm of world order, the territorial state is today increasingly seen as just one among many sites of social relations and authority (Rapley, 2006; Mason, 2005; Collins, 2004; Ferguson, 2003; Strange, 1996; Rosenau, 1990). Based on this notion of 'scattered hegemonies' (Grewal and Kaplan, 1994), institutions as wide ranging as those of global governance to the trans-national third sector – religious movements, social movements, civic associations, indigenous or tribal groups and criminal organizations – represent public and private alternatives to sovereign state authority. In short, authority alternatives can be located just about anywhere that human groups interact and make rules.

Secondly, this perspective too has been challenged by the UNDP. The recent incorporation by the United Nations of the private sector (the market) and civil society in contemporary processes of governance or in power sharing arrangements with the state also reflects the current widening of the definition of governance (UNDP, 1997). Governance is hence understood as the complex mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations (UNDP Policy Document, 1997:2-3) viz. a. viz. the state. On the basis of this fluid interaction between citizens and the state in the process of governance, the UNDP's stated prerequisites of *good* governance are worthy of note. These include participation, transparency, accountability, effectiveness, equity and the rule of law. Of course, no society can ever fully satisfy the requirements of this highly conditional and idealized model of governance. But, in applying this model of governance to Jamaica, it is undeniable that the Jamaican state retains a highly consolidated democracy in which there are high levels of political rights and civil liberties (Meeks, 2000; Munroe, 1999) even while more recent observation suggest that it has increasingly

lost its vigour (Gray, 2004). In many respects, the state has also succeeded in fulfilling some of its responsibilities, particularly with its massive programmes of infrastructure and technological developments in recent years (see Patterson, 2000).

Notwithstanding the enviable levels of freedom, Jamaica appears to fall short on the comprehensive measures used to calibrate the health, strength and stability of democratic governments. In fact, persistent economic stagnation has created conditions of social decay and instability which leads to a display of symptoms that democratic theorists consider disquieting. These symptoms manifest themselves in widespread acts of indiscipline, escalating levels of crime and violence and frequent civil disorder (Meeks, 2000; Munroe, 1999. Indeed, current citizen conduct leads some commentators to acknowledge the emergence of a new type of Jamaican citizen who is not so quietly pushing governability to its limit (Munroe, 2002; Meeks, 2000; Patterson, 1999; Stone, 1992). Shaped by the historical forces of de-colonization and 'postcoloniality' (Scott, 1999), and later moulded by the technological, socio-cultural, political and economic forces of liberalization and globalization, this so-called *new* Jamaican is proud, more informed, assertive and more demanding and resentful of authority across a range of social and political institutions (cf. Norris, 1999; Inglehart, 1999). The central argument here is that Jamaicans today are demanding more from their government but are finding the existing structures of (representative) governance unresponsive and in some instances irrelevant. Former Jamaican Prime Minister PJ Patterson put it candidly when he remarked that:

> The crisis is national in character, because it affects not only the institutions of the state, but the private sector and civil society as well. The old, non-inclusive, often undemocratic methods of power-sharing and managing power that evolved in post-Independence Jamaica can be found across the entire spectrum of the society. We find them in political parties, the Parliament, the Cabinet, church organizations, the bureaucracy, organs of the state, private sector firms, community groups. We must change our approach to governance, or we will become part of the problem to be swept aside by the emerging new social order (Patterson, 1999 in Franklyn, 2004:278).

The Jamaican populace, often angered by what many construe as political indifference and insensitivity, respond with violent expressions of popular protest. While political dissatisfaction is also reflected in voter-downturn, it is increasingly and explicitly expressed through popular protest – roadblocks, picketing, arson, vandalism, police-citizen clashes, mushrooming levels of crime, particularly homicides, the lyrical verbalizing by a multitude of reggae artistes and the almost constant maligning of the political class in the popular press (Gray, 2004; Meeks, 2000; Munroe, 1999). As seemingly contending forces unable to co-exist comfortably with each other, the overall picture of the state and civil society in Jamaica can look discouraging enough to trigger doubts as to whether the country is governable at all (*The Jamaica Gleaner*, 2006, March 17; *The Jamaica Gleaner*, 2005, November 1). Whereas the current scholarly focus seems to end with the nature of state governance, this recognition suggests that citizen behavioural norms are necessarily implicated in the construction of new theoretical contours of governance and therefore warrant both empirical and theoretical attention. For example, the extent to which criminal actors and other uncivil citizens are affecting the less tangible aspects of statehood such as authority and legitimacy is the current trend in existing political writing on Jamaica (Rapley, 2006; 2003; Gray, 2004; Harriot, 2003; 2000; Figueroa & Sives, 2003; Charles, 2002).

Such theorizing, while worthy of critical exploration, ignores the equally deleterious impact of such actors on the stability and quality of civil society. In order to fully understand the political significance of this shift in governance in the Jamaican context and the increased focus on its character and quality, the whole notion of governance must be problematized in line with changing political conditions. The conceptual deficit has, until now, seen the state dominating discussions on governance and an overwhelming disinclination by Jamaican scholars to give equal play to activities within the non-state realm inhabited by civil society. For analytical purposes, I therefore appropriate as my philosophical reference point, the Foucauldian notion of 'governmentality' (Foucault, 1991). Governmentality essentially provides us with an expanded definition of governance. It is an analytic perspective addressing a formation of power, which

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recognizes that a strong state depends both on the proper disposition of human beings and things (wealth, resources, means of subsistence, territory and its climate, irrigation and fertility) as well as the *conduct of conduct* (habits, customs, ways of acting and thinking) (Foucault, 1991:93). In other words, it is an attempt to reformulate the governor-governed relationship, one that does not make the relation dependent upon 'administrative machines, juridical institutions or other apparatuses that usually get grouped under the rubric of the state' (Bratich, Packer & McCarthy, 2003:4). It is, instead, a new governmental and political rationality where the process of governance becomes other than the sole preserve of the state but increasingly depends upon a pluralization of forms of governing. Rather than governance occurring through domination and coercion, governmentality allows for self-responsibility and self–discipline - 'an ongoing process of governing oneself, properly applying oneself and acting responsibly in every sphere of life' (Hay, 2003:166-167). Governmentality rests upon investing power and capacity in its population and generating mechanisms for governing *through society*. Of course, the success of technologies of management which lie exclusively outside the purview of the state depends on new kinds of citizen-subjects and their responsible everyday conduct (ibid, 2003). In this process, the state as provider of an enabling environment for the empowerment of citizens and as the focal point for governance is not diminished but governmentality accords attention to a whole set of relations of 'institutions, procedures, analyses, practices and discourses which may or may not centre upon the state' (Foucault, 1991:93). Instead, it recognizes that the *conduct of conduct* takes place at innumerable sites and hence requires rules of conduct across different spheres of society.

Inherently implicated here is the character of *both* the governor (the state) and the governed (citizens). In this sense, whereas governability incorporates and requires of citizens 'an ongoing process of governing oneself, properly applying oneself and acting responsibly' (Hay, 2003:166), it equally demands responsibility and accountability from the state and its political actors. The conduct of Jamaican citizens and, in this sense, the character and functioning of civil society, cannot therefore be appreciated in the abstract or divorced from the practices, discourses and political rationality of the Jamaican State.

This study, then, does not simply argue from a twin-level perspective – the macro level of the state and the micro level of civilian politics and civil society but, importantly, considers the interplay between them. Within the context of Caribbean studies, historically dominated by the analytical and theoretical impositions of structure (state, institutions, economy), the study therefore rescues people politics from the peripheral status to which it is customarily relegated. Whereas the thesis is not about letting the state off the hook by a thematic focus on the negative outgrowths of civilian politics, it provides a corrective to those who would assert that civil protest (no matter how uncivil) is the democratic and constitutional right of the citizen, with no consequences for the overall desire for civil society, and that any notion of civility and civil politics is strictly a function of state obligation. The following overview of the existing nature of civil society in Jamaica underscores the relevance of this empirical exploration.

## 1.5    *CIVIL* SOCIETY IN JAMAICA – THE CURRENT DILEMMA

In Jamaica, the culture of civility is vulnerable and incomplete. Persistent civil unrest, including mob action, killings, (and other violent crime) on an unprecedented scale, violent clashes between citizens and the police,  a generalized breakdown in behavioural norms, a deteriorating economic situation and an ineffective local government (Gray, 2004; Harriot, 2003; Meeks, 2000; Munroe, 1999; Robotham, 1998; Stone, 1992) exacerbate concerns over social order and civil society. A heightened exasperation with the indiscipline and violence characterizing everyday social relations and popular political action is manifested in opinions voiced on talk back radio programmes as well as articles and letters to the national newspapers, for example, where many Jamaicans deplore what they see as a culture of violence and incivility. Many maintain that a decline in moral values and discipline has rendered the country at risk for anarchy (*The Jamaica Gleaner*, 2006, March 17; *The Jamaica Gleaner*, 2002, July 4; *The Jamaica Gleaner, 2001*, February 28; *The Jamaica Gleaner,* 2001, July 9; cf. Meeks, 2000; Munroe, 1999). Widespread concern with this gradual corrosion in civil relations led former Jamaican Prime Minister PJ Patterson to convene a historic National Consultation on Values and Attitudes in 1994 involving the whole spectrum of civil society (Patterson,

1994). The result was the introduction of a national strategic programme of action designed 'to promote attitudinal change and social renewal', in short, to instil a sense of civility in the society. The Prime Minister's rationale, summed up in what became a well-known quotation, was that:

> The fight for scarce benefits and spoils has contributed to a polarized society in which we operate like hostile tribes which seem to be perpetually at war, rather than working to realize a common goal.[4]

More than a decade later, in March 2006, incumbent Jamaican Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller, in her swearing-in speech, similarly pledged 'to recapture the nation's cultural roots in terms of traditional courtesy, decency and good manners as well as break the power of criminals and restore power to communities' (*Jamaica Observer,* 2006, March 31, p. 1A). It is therefore clear that at a time when civil society is being flaunted as the most promising alternative to the maladies of public life, the virtue of civility is at risk in Jamaica. In order to understand the complex character of civil society in contemporary Jamaica, it is important to examine the norms and values at work in this society, which are grounded in the country's socio-economic, political and institutional arrangements as well as its historical and cultural trajectory. The Jamaican society has, in other words, managed to preserve several distinctive features which tell a definitive tale about the character of civil society in this context: (1) the beginnings of grassroots activism and civil society in Jamaica within profoundly anomic demonstrations of resistance against slavery and an oppressive colonial administration and the continuing struggle for better social conditions throughout the post war and post-independence periods; (2) a decline in confidence in the organized organs of civil society; and (3) a highly centralized state bureaucracy which, on the one hand, pays lip service to citizen participation and, on the other hand, stands as an obstacle to it.  I discuss these in some detail here.

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[4] For a full text of this speech, see 'Promoting Better Values and Attitudes' Address by Prime Minister, P.J. Patterson, *National Consultation on Values & Attitudes*. National Conference Centre. 1994. February 15 (Patterson, 1994).

### 1.5.1    The Beginnings of Civil Society in Jamaica

In the first place, while prevailing accounts (Robotham, 1998; Sherlock & Bennett, 1998; Beckles & Shepherd, 1996) locate civil society in Jamaica within the multiplicity of welfare organizations and initiatives that emerged after slavery to assist the newly freed slaves, this study identifies the beginnings of grassroots activism and the organization of civil society within the vigorous political rebellions and revolts mounted by Afro-Jamaican slaves to resist slavery and confront the oppression of colonial government. The struggle for freedom and rights continued into the post-war period. Although this resistance featured careful and covert organisation, planning and structured leadership among the slave community, the protestation models employed were fierce and violent – featuring brutal murders of plantation owners, acts of arson and sabotage, running away or escapes from the plantation as well as intense guerrilla warfare (see chapter 4).

The proliferation of protests and demonstrations in contemporary Jamaica thus appears to fall in line with a clear historical trajectory of successful political resistance. The study argues that, in many respects, the strategy, tone and tenor of current popular citizen action reflects this history. However, to simply explain the contemporary manifestations of protest at work in the Jamaican society and the nature of civilian politics more broadly purely in terms of a linear historical continuity would be to misunderstand and diminish the importance of the complex, conflicting and interrelated set of issues – social, political, economic and cultural – which simultaneously propel and delimit it. As I argue in chapter 4, the current approaches and models of political rebellion employed by Jamaican citizens radically deviates from, even while it reproduces some elements of, the earlier epoch of plantation and post-slavery colonial society. For one thing, the Afro-Jamaican slaves were contending with an oppressive plantation system and later an inflexible colonial administration. The violent uprisings and revolts of the period reflected the nature of the power structure. Of course, even a subliminal awareness of the political, discursive and analytic parallels is crucial in coming to terms with the character of civil society and anxiety over its existing expressions.

What therefore can the emergence of civil society within anomic demonstrations tell us about the existing form and tenor of civil society and civil relations in Jamaica? While acknowledging the historically salient issues of rights (social, economic and human) for which Afro-Jamaicans fought and the extraordinary context in which those struggles took place, it is also critical to highlight the values and political norms espoused during those periods and what impact, if any, these may have on the tenor of contemporary popular struggles and expressions. As a point of departure, I rely heavily here on noted Jamaican political scientist, Carl Stone's (1992) groundbreaking work entitled *'Values, Norms and Personality Development in Jamaica.* I restate aspects of Stone's thesis here because it continues to hold enormous relevance to understanding and making sense of the complexities of citizen politics viz. a. viz. state power in Jamaica.

Stone (1992:4) identifies three main historical periods in Jamaica – slavery, post-emancipation and post-war modernization – which are characterized by what he calls 'core values, norms regulating behaviour, institutional roles, functions and tasks in the major domains of social space and behavioural traits that derive from these underlying values and norms'. Macro changes occurring over these periods, he argues, helped to shape and reshape values and consequently norms of behaviour. For example, he maintains that the social ideology of plantation society which defined black people as worthless as important to the current struggle by many blacks in Jamaica to assert their self-worth through different means. Popular protest is, unquestionably, one of the primary means by which Afro-Jamaicans struggle against the constricting socio-economic conditions in which they live (cf. Hope, 2006; 2004; Johnson, 2006; Gray, 2004). Likewise, the core values and norms of post-emancipation plantation society in Jamaica, embodied in a body of social ideology, legitimized and reinforced the power structure of that society. The emerging civil society served a twin role. It was an acceptable channel for the articulation of grievances and to confront the constraining social, economic and political framework that constituted the Jamaican society (e.g. through the trade unions and later the political parties) and it also functioned to support the state in maintaining systems that contributed to social stability.

Through the multitude of charitable and welfare organizations that emerged since post-emancipation, benevolence and voluntarism were among the values that came to be regarded as legitimate and worthwhile since different actors could identify the benefits that would accrue to the society and by extension themselves from any philanthropic activities in which they are engaged (Robotham, 1998)[5].  It is Stone's (1992:11-13) thesis, however, that profound changes in values, norms and modes of behaviour in all domains of social space have undermined the old authority systems without giving birth to a strong new social order. The old is still crumbling but no new and coherent authority systems have emerged to replace it. In addition, strong residual influences from the old Jamaica persist and not only create a climate of competing old and new values and norms but also a contradictory mix of positive and negative norms and values as embodied in the following:

- Behavioural styles of deference and docility have been replaced by aggression, assertiveness and competitiveness.

- Rampant individualism has replaced and weakened strong family bonds and community ties of the past, thereby weakening the traditional mechanisms of social control.

- Violence and aggression are increasingly justified as legitimate responses to injustice and social oppression, resulting in increased social violence.

- Rigid codes of behaviour have given way to great diversity of behaviour modes and styles and a tendency towards experimentation and deviant behaviour. Taken to extremes, this syndrome manifests itself in a drift towards lawlessness and indiscipline and a refusal to conform to rigid standards and rules of behaviour (Stone, 1992:11-13).

Many of these values and behavioural norms have found ready home in social processes such as protests and demonstrations. At the same time, the economic and political transformations that swept Jamaica over the last thirty years, most notably Structural Adjustment and economic liberalization during the early 1980s and 1990s, have also tested the economic mettle of the state and ruptured the social consensus that held the

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[5] See Robotham, D. (1998) 'Vision and Voluntarism: Reviving Voluntarism in Jamaica'. Grace Kennedy Foundation Lecture. Kingston: Grace Kennedy Foundation.

society together (see chapter 5). Noteworthy is the considerable impact of globalization which has occasioned unprecedented levels of cultural penetration viz. a. viz. mass media, the consequences of which include intense materialism, consumerism, exhibitionist displays of status, crass individualism and inflated expectation, especially among the youth (Hope, 2006; 2004; cf. Inglehart, 1999; Norris, 1999). The effects of this revolution in values are most exemplified in the culture of the Jamaican inner city where young unemployed youth as well as low-income or poor working class men and women clamour to partake in the global consumer culture, adopt its values and lifestyles and parade its products – brand-name shoes, clothing and jewellery. This kind of conspicuous consumption not only reinforces the hierarchies of status which inform postcolonial Jamaican society but also exposes the profound gap between citizen expectation and intense material deprivation and impoverishment (Hope, 2004).

It is this gap between expectation and the failure of elites to fulfil these that contributes to an intensification of crime and other manifestations of social deviance, including civil disorder. Aggravating this situation is the romanticisation of crime, the mushrooming of drug use, as well as narcotics and weapons trafficking, the folk hero status applied to its emissaries, particularly by young poor boys, the glorification of Mafia overlords and other criminal actors in the lyrical outpourings of many popular reggae artistes and a laissez-faire attitude to the rule of law by large numbers of citizens added to a malfunctioning justice system (Boyne, 2003; Charles, 2002; Harriot, 2003; 2001). These developments all encroach on the civil sphere and thereby hold serious implications for the character and tenor of popular citizen action such as popular protest (see chapter 9). They not only paint a bleak image of the public sphere in Jamaica, but the breakdown of the social system and the values inherent here also mean a disintegration of civil society as a force for social stability. Indeed, a failure to break the clash of competing values at work in the society is predicted to result in a gradual shift towards social anarchy where raw power, including mob violence, rather than legitimate authority holds sway (Stone, 1992). Although scholarly reference is often made to this picture of uncivil values (Boyne, 2003; Meeks, 2000; Munroe, 1999; cf. Boyne, 2003; 2002), since Stone's (1992) work on *Values,*

*Norms and Personality Development in Jamaica* more than a decade ago, comprehensive look at political behaviour and the values which underpin it is yet to be undertaken. This thesis offers some insights into this arena of colliding values and how they play out within popular citizen politics in Jamaica. It however suggests that it is the weaknesses and ambivalent tendencies inherent within structured civil society (civic groups, associations and initiatives) in Jamaica which has also created room for the problematic tenor of citizen politics here. I look briefly at this issue below.

### 1.5.2   Contemporary Civil Society: Between Renewal and Decline?

The spread of civic organizations in Jamaica in recent years, including the impressive number of active and partially active community organizations ostensibly portrays a very positive image of social capital and civic engagement. Research confirms a density of some 5,700 community-based organizations (CBOs) in Jamaica, of which more than 50 percent are either active or partially active (See Box 1.1 below; cf. IDB Report, Jamaica, 2003). In fact, Munroe (2000; 1999) contends that having grown considerably in the 1990s, the presence and concentration of civic organizations in Jamaica signals an empowered and renewed civil society, a natural boost for democracy.

**Box 1.1 Jamaican Community Based Organizations (CBOs)**

| Comm. Council | Citizens Assoc. | Youth Clubs | Sport Clubs | Police Youth Clubs | Neigh. Watch | PTA | NGO | 4H | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 180 | 636 | 1336 | 220 | 287 | 533 | 654 | 777 | 778 | 5401 |
| 3.3% | 11.8% | 24.8% | 4.1% | 5.3% | 9.8% | 12.1% | 14.4% | 14.4% | 100% |

| Total CBOs | - | 5401 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Status** | | | | |
| Active | - | 2824 | - | 52.3% |
| Partially Active | - | 305 | - | 5.5% |
| Unknown | - | 1852 | - | 34.3% |
| Dormant | - | 375 | - | 6.9% |
| Defunct | - | 45 | - | .8% |

*Source*: Munroe, T. (2000) *Voice, Participation and Governance in a Changing Environment: The Case of Jamaica.* University of the West Indies: Caribbean Group for Cooperation in Economic Development.

These figures however reveal nothing about the membership and/or attendance levels recorded by each organization or give much indication of the types and levels of activism engaged in by these groups, which leads to the somewhat paradoxical perspective that 'Jamaica has a diverse civil society and myriad civic organizations but a dulled capacity for vigorous civic involvement in the social and political realm' (Gray, 2004:350). A 2003 IDB Civil Society Report on Jamaica blamed a stunted civic life in Jamaica on, among other things, weak community leadership, a lack of community spirit in some neighbourhoods, lack of unity and the desire to network, insufficient involvement of communities in the work of civil society organizations (CSOs) and, significantly, an unawareness of communities of the existence of CSOs and their services (IDB, 2003). This, of course, is not to diminish the significance of the vibrant associations and networks formed around sport and entertainment in Jamaica as embodied in the multiplicity of events and institutions dedicated to athletics, football, cricket as well as the unparalleled production and consumption of Jamaican popular culture (Munroe, 1999; cf. Hope, 2006; Stolzoff, 2000). Also of note is the establishment of the citizen observer organization, Citizens Action for Free and Fair Elections (CAFFE), the impact of the human rights lobby, Jamaicans for Justice (JFJ) and the Peace Management Initiative (PMI), the growing significance of talkback radio as an avenue of complaint and criticism and the increasing desire for the Church to play a more active role in public life (Munroe, 1999; Clarke, 2002).

For Boyd (2004:12-14) and Shils (1992:15), however, the density of associations and a spirit of voluntarism do not equal civility. Instead, they contend that the value of associations ought to be determined by the contribution that they render to the stock of civility in a society. Of course, whereas the institutions of civil society are sustained not only by their civility but also by the benefits they confer on the society, these authors nonetheless maintain that it is the ingredient of civility which makes the difference between their survival and decay. In this regard, I posit that part of the challenge facing civil society in Jamaica is the ambivalence and the perceptions of ineffectiveness which attends many of these organizations and initiatives. The consequence has been a lack of

confidence in their role as civic ambassadors or mediators between the citizenry and the state. Although the study is not concerned with the politics and functioning of civic organisations per se, I wish to briefly highlight the prevailing concerns about them as they not only offer useful insights into the quality of civil society in Jamaica, but also help explain the existing resort to episodic protests and demonstrations by loosely organised bands of citizen-protestors as a means to access the state and seek redress to grievances.

For example, despite the imposing presence of popular human rights lobby, Jamaicans for Justice (JFJ), as a pillar of citizen governance with a fresh approach to advocacy and activism within Jamaican civil society, the group, at times, suffers strong public criticism. Formed after the violent social upheavals in Jamaica in April 1999, occasioned by the nationwide protests over increases in the price of petrol, JFJ manages to hold the Jamaican state to account for state abuse embodied in its police force through peaceful and purposeful citizen action[6]. Observers, however, argue that the JFJ is linear in its thinking and orientation (perceived as anti-state and anti-police), does not represent a consensus as to what justice is and how it should be issued in Jamaica and, as a result, have squandered their opportunity to engender trust among the citizenry (see for example, Hope, 2000). There are also overt and covert suggestions of the group's partisan political alignment (with the country's political opposition, the Jamaica Labour Party) and a strong sense that it is synonymous with the brown-skinned middle class who traditionally enjoy public prestige and positions at the higher levels of the society (Hope, 2000:11). On balance however, JFJ has played a very positive role, impacting enormously on how the state responds to cases of police misconduct. Its ambivalent stance of seeking justice for the poor while retaining its middle class character and orientation is part of its current challenge.

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[6] For further details of the work and approaches to advocacy and protest of JFJ, see
http://www.jamaicansforjustice.org

Similarly, although the roots of the Christian Church[7] are deeply and firmly entrenched in the Jamaican society, serving as a significant force in the movement for abolition and emancipation, the building of an education system and providing a bedrock of support for the poorest in the society (Dick, 2002; Munroe, 1999; 1991; Espuet, 1991), some observers argue that it performs inadequately in its role as a civic actor in contemporary Jamaica. Despite its evident popularity, accessibility and presence in Jamaica, the Church has been hibernating for more than two decades, overly preoccupied with biblical teaching and becoming indifferent to the ills plaguing the society (see *The Jamaica Gleaner,* 2006, April 9; *The Jamaica Gleaner,* 2001, January 19; *The Jamaica Gleaner,* 2004, August 1). If the Church is to fulfil its role as an essential pillar of Jamaican civil society, then it 'should be in solidarity with the nation and therefore must be involved [more actively] with the state [and with the social issues and challenges that are of concern to the state]' (Dick, 2002: xv).[8] Recent appointments of members of the Church community to government boards and committees by the Jamaican state suggest that the role of the Church is being asserted as an important element of civil society and public governance (*The Jamaica Observer,* 2006, April 2). Impelling the Church into service may help to engender a renaissance of civility at all levels of the society. This view finds basis in the pressing desire to install enabling values and attitudes within the social domain and a moral sensitivity to discussions of public policy (see Ritch, 2006; Boyne, 2006). Further research would be required to give strengthen the validity of these claims.

Likewise, the Jamaican media, as media elsewhere in democratic states, play an imposing role in organising the images and discourses through which people make sense of the world (Dahlgren, 1995). In this regard, mediated representations and discourses are often the subject of much debate and controversy in Jamaica. The extensive use of the radio talk show to make claims upon the state, issue complaints or to advocate is, for instance,

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[7] The term 'the Church', in its established Jamaican usage, refers to the collective Christian presence in the society (see Dick, 2002)

[8] For an interesting discussion on the significance of the Church as an element of civil society and civic engagement, see Schmidt (2003).

set against the intense negativism and abuse of power evident in the medium. It is this inclination which challenges its role as a civilizing force in the Jamaican society. For instance, former Jamaican Prime Minister, P.J. Patterson maintained that 'the prevailing norms in mass communication facilitate a constant barrage of negativism which serves to erode national confidence and self esteem' (Patterson, 1994). This is while Munroe (1999:94) writes that 'the media have helped to discredit government and to a lesser extent the private sector, often without concern for alternatives, thereby fostering tendencies to alienation and anarchy'. It is noteworthy that the television medium has also emerged as a powerful tool in popular protest in Jamaica. How television frames and/or represents civilian protests as well as the manner in which citizens' manoeuvre within the television spotlight remains an issue of critical public concern (see chapter 7). Academic scholarship in this context is, however, yet to account for the role and influence of media as a force for civil society. In this study, I tackle this gap in the scholarship by looking at the potential and limits of the medium as an avenue of civic action.

On the whole, it is fair to reiterate Munroe's (1999) conclusion that civil society in Jamaica appears to be remodelling itself in that it shows elements of renewed vigour in the emergence and imposing strength of lobby organisations such as JFJ and the increasing use of the radio medium for public talk and complaint. This is even while it shows manifest trends of decline, and is yet to produce any noteworthy and discernable improvements in civic conduct. It is this conflicting disposition which has contributed to declining confidence in civil society's effectiveness by large sections of the citizenry. This decline in confidence in civil society has coincided with a remarkable increase in loosely organized, episodic mobilizations and protest. Most, if not all of these demonstrations, are directed against the state and hence the nature of the relationship between citizen-protestors and the Jamaican state is also theoretically salient. I summarize the broad contours of this nexus that the study deals with.

### 1.5.3   The State and Civil Society

The current Jamaican political system is, in the main, a highly consolidated democratic regime and the state is widely perceived to be not only tolerant of protests but, in many respects, highly accommodating and conciliatory towards citizen participation, broadly interpreted (Franklyn, 2002; Munroe, 1999). In this context, the nature of state power and the uses to which it is put within protest politics, as well as the relationship between protests/protestors and politicians are central to this analysis. For example, state policy and state response to protest politics, including the role of Members of Parliament and political party activists, have an enormous influence on the strategies undertaken particularly by the poor and marginalised to demand concessions and/or seek redress from the state, particularly the resort to violence. For one thing, like the media, the nature of state response to citizen protest (variously manifested as non-response, delayed response, sham response or state repression) holds far reaching implications for the tenor of citizen politics and the consequent quality of civil society (chapters 6 & 9). The acute absence of this analysis in current theorizing of contemporary citizen action also robs especially lower class groups and those who align themselves with these sectors of the wisdom that critical stock taking of their own struggles may provide. It is worth noting that the changing nature of the state and the emergence of newly powerful citizen actors such as criminals and dons further complicate the state/civil society nexus in Jamaica. These dynamic changes are being reproduced within street-level citizen activism and the extent to which these developments affect the tenor of civil society is of central importance in this study.

### 1.6   SCOPE OF THE STUDY

A study focusing on popular protest, civil society and governance is, for all intents and purposes, broad. However, the study is not about the officially recognised organs of civil society (Church, media, community organizations, charities, human rights lobbies etc.). I only make reference to these bodies for analytical purposes and in as far as they impact

upon the conduct and tenor of popular protest, strictly defined[9]. Popular protest is conceptualized in this study as a political strategy or technique of political participation at the citizen level and hence construed as a subset of or a manifestation of civil society. The term is often used to encompass a wide range of political dissent – symbolic and material. However, for the purposes of this study, I use it to refer mainly to direct street-level action – marches, blockades (roadblocks), burning debris on roadways, stone-throwing, placard-picketing, vandalism, gun battles, looting and boisterous displays (issuing threats, screaming, shouting and disrobing) as well as rioting. While the scope of the study conceptually precludes such forms of popular protest as industrial action (strikes, go-slow), I account for the caller-complaint mechanism embodied in talkback radio because of its e significance within contemporary protest politics in Jamaica.

In terms of time frame, it is pertinent to note that the main focus is on the *contemporary* manifestations of protest in Jamaica. By contemporary, I mean the period stretching from the latter half of the 20th century to 2006, although the study does draw on the historical evolution of protest in Jamaica since the 17th and 18th centuries for contextual and analytic purposes. It does not examine specific protest incidents per se but instead calls attention to particular examples in an attempt to make sense of the overall theme of the study – the reality of incivility within the domain of citizen politics and its impact on the construction of civil society in the context of Jamaica.

## 1.7    A NOTE ON METHOD

An empirical investigation into the character of Jamaican popular protest and the meanings and implications it holds for good governance, citizen politics and civil society renders this research, of necessity, a qualitative enterprise. Qualitative research undertakes studies about 'persons' lives, lived experiences, behaviours, emotions and feelings as well as about organizational functioning, social movements and cultural

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[9] See Robotham, D. (1998) 'Vision and Voluntarism: Reviving Voluntarism in Jamaica'. Grace Kennedy Foundation Lecture. Kingston: Grace Kennedy Foundation for an expansive account of the evolution of the formal structure and development of civil society in Jamaica. He also discusses some of the challenges and struggles over the construction of its moral framework.

phenomena' (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:11). In this study, this qualitative process required that I effectively enter the informants' world, and through ongoing interaction, solicit their 'perspectives and meanings' (Creswell, 1994: 161; cf. Creswell, 2003; Myers, 1997; Merriam, 2002) on the ways in which they express their discontent about social problems, why they elect to conduct their politics the way they do and their reflexive feelings about those actions. The study uses multiple research methods – observation, interviews, audio-visual materials, documents, and my impressions and reactions. I conducted a total of 30 interviews and three focus groups comprising a cross-section of Jamaican citizens – the unemployed, gangsters, taxi-drivers, students, human rights activists, religious groups, police officers, university lecturers, Members of Parliament, reporters, radio talk show hosts and disc jockeys as well as reggae artistes and music producers. I employ aspects of structuration theory and discourse analysis in order to make sense of popular protest and citizen politics in the Jamaican context. This analytic framework acknowledges the role of structure (political and social institutions) in shaping political behaviour but extends beyond structure to take stock of individual agency and citizen responsibility in shaping the character of civilian politics and the quality of civil society (see chapter 3).

## 1.8    THESIS ORGANIZATION

There are several critical tasks that this study (through ten chapters) will undertake in order to elucidate the nature of protest politics and its effects on citizen politics and civil society in Jamaica. The first examines the received portrayal of civil society and attempts to invest it with fresh conceptual meaning and socio-political significance. The main objective here is to draw attention to a central but often neglected theoretical theme in contemporary civil society scholarship: the problem of incivility within the civil sphere (Chapter 2). The second attempts to gain crucial insights into contemporary manifestations of popular citizen action by examining the historical trajectory of citizen activism and civil society in Jamaica through the lens of the slavery resistance movement.

The study fills in significant gaps in the historical-political scholarship by taking into account the *manner* in which the Jamaican people organized themselves and mobilized politically to confront the oppressive conditions of slavery and post-emancipation socio-economic conditions viz. a viz. an inflexible colonial administration. It argues that these events are to be seen as more than just a precursor to the emergence and formation of particular classes of Jamaican citizens with differing levels of power, wealth and status. These circumstances also led to the emergence of a variegated public sphere outfitted with massive numbers of poor, marginalized and powerless citizens with varying responses to their condition and certainly divergent approaches to political protestation and negotiation. In this regard, the study asks whether the existing tenor of protest politics in Jamaica represents signs of continuity or change (Chapter 4).

Another important element of this study is the interplay between political performance, the functioning of citizen politics and the nature of civil society. Within the context of the inescapable theoretical interaction between state governance and citizen politics, the thesis explores, in Chapter 5, the challenges facing the contemporary state and the extent to which it is able (or unable) to provide *good* governance by sufficiently fulfilling the expectations and needs of its citizens.

Analysing the predominant ways in which Jamaican citizens are reacting to the perceived failings of their government and their overall marginalized status is the task of Chapter 6. Emphasizing dominant political economy of the poor approaches (Gray, 2004; Scott, 1976; 1985; 1990; Piven & Cloward, 1977) and highlighting the perspectives of Jamaican citizens, this chapter examines the circumstances which drive the poor to protest and the communion of feelings and attitudes which both justifies and radicalizes their struggles. The chapter also explores how the democratic tool of protest may be used to serve contradictory ends and how the poor's seeming quest for *justice* can depart from genuine activism and civil politics, as well as obstruct the building of a real civil society.

Of course, contemporary popular protest can hardly be imagined without the sympathetic lens of the media to amplify and sustain the message and goals of protestors beyond their immediate environment. This intersection between popular protestation and media is embedded in the way the media cover protests and portray protestors and how protestors perform and manoeuvre themselves to secure their interests within the media spotlight. In the context of the political economy of media, including the enormous impact of increased competition and the fight for ratings and bolstered by the perspectives of media managers, reporters and ordinary citizens, chapter 7 examines the role of the media as a communicative intermediary between Jamaican citizen-protestors and the state. By exploring the media's treatment of protest and protestors, including the growing importance and use of radio talk back as an avenue of complaint, the chapter illustrates how the media can both advance and delimit the goals of protestors.

One of the major planks in this empirical investigation of citizen politics in Jamaica is a focus on the revolutionary changes of power at the community level, particularly the role of uncivil actors in influencing the conduct and nature of citizen politics (Chapter 8). This chapter analyses the emergence and political significance of a network of 'dons' and the phenomenon of 'donmanship' in urban Jamaica. It argues that the conduct and politics of dons and the character of the social organization over which they preside is not only the embodiment of outlaw community governance but perpetuates an urban subculture marked by a normalization of illegal and uncivil behavioural norms, including violent mobilisations and protest, and frustrates the development of civil norms and political values.

Given that social protest has emerged as the predominant tool by which Jamaican citizens raise their concerns, it is important to ask if such protests actually succeed. In order to address this, chapter 9 examines how the state acts in response to the demands made upon it. Since the fundamental challenge of this study is to balance citizens' right to protest their socio-economic conditions with the negative implications of disruptive protests for civil politics and civil society more broadly, the chapter examines how and

why state response (including the action of political officials – MPs and activists) may seemingly legitimize uncivil protest strategies. This chapter, in short, discloses (and critically examines) the possibilities and limits of the existing model of protest politics in Jamaica.

The study concludes (Chapter 10) with reflections on the viability of uncivil citizen politics for the renewal of civil society. Importantly, it also argues for the refashioning of current theoretical perspectives to take account of uncivil manifestations and tendencies that stand in the way of the development of civil politics and real civil societies. It reiterates that a culture of civility also depends as much on the transformation of the state (including its own public civility, performance and accountability) as on the intervention and participation of the various organs of civil society.  I now take a closer look at current and historical theoretical theorising of civil society and the implications this may hold for the practice and conduct of civilian politics in Jamaica.

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# Bringing Back the *Civil* in Civil Society

## 2.1    INTRODUCTION

No society is a shining model of civility. Every civil society, past and present, has exhibited tendencies that explicitly challenge the idyllic concept of civil society as a haven of openness, non-violence, solidarity and justice (see Boyd, 2004; Keane, 1996; Shils, 1992). In fact, in his seminal work, *Reflections on Violence*, John Keane writes that nothing calls attention more to *the problem of incivility* within contemporary society and the potential for disintegration into a totally *uncivil society* than the bloodletting and conflict – wars, genocide, ethnic cleansing, firebombed cities, concentration camps, terrorism, gang warfare – that have plagued the twentieth century and announced the start of the new millennium (1996:14-19). The threat, fear and reality of violence (and I add to this the breakdown in the rule of law and *civil* values) are acknowledged by Keane as extreme forms of incivility which always seem to lurk behind the concern with civility, thereby making incivility the ghost that permanently haunts civil society (ibid,1996).

The nature and character of civic institutions, including social movements and other aspects of citizen politics, is implicated in this indictment on civil society. Yet *the problem of incivility* is almost always overlooked in the contemporary scholarly discourse on civil society (see for instance, Putnam, 1995; 1993; Etzioni, 1996; 1995) and by key development agencies – United Nations, World Bank, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) – where the presumption is of a liberal and tolerant order comprised of public-spirited, altruistic citizens working for the good of all. This study acknowledges Keane's (1996) thesis, which suggests that actually existing civil societies have the potential to destroy the very civility upon which their character as *civil* society depends. The premise here is that the normative ideal of civil society is

inextricably bound up with various civic attitudes and practices that surround it in our lives (Barber, 1998:13; cf. Boyd, 2004; Swift, 1999; Hall, 1995; Shils, 1992; Elias, 1998). Our desire for civility must therefore take into account the complexities and ambiguities of social agency and human responsibility, specifically those elements that constitute *incivility* within civil society that cause real disruption in the building of a truly civil society.

So what exactly do we mean when we use the term *civil society*? How useful is it to make a distinction between *civil* as opposed to *uncivil* society? What factors make some societies appear more civil than others, and attendant to this, why is the concern with this *problem of incivility* more acute in some societies than in others? How should we make sense of the tendency of some civil societies towards self-destruction? To what extent does this predisposition exacerbate anxieties about the quality of citizen politics as well as the performance of the democratic state? Can political science scholarship continue to pay lip service to this concept without resolving these fundamental dilemmas? To begin with, despite civil society's high standing as a concept in academic scholarship, emerging global realities now demand that we interrogate its worth and usefulness (Boyd, 2004; Foley & Edwards, 1996; Whitehead, 1997; McIlwaine, 1998; Tempest, 1997; Shils, 1992). A theoretical focus on civil society is by no means novel. The current predicament, however, stems from confusion over its meaning and mandate, as well as disillusionment with its political capabilities and actualization within different societies. Benjamin Barber (1998:12) convincingly captures the conceptual commotion surrounding this seemingly promiscuous notion:

> So important has civil society become to the conduct of politics that nearly everyone has his own notion of what it means. Is there a core conception or objective definition that we can agree on? Do not count on social science for an answer…. As a political phrase, civil society has both empirical and normative meanings. It tells us something about how we actually do behave even as it suggests an ideal of how we ought to behave. Efforts to extricate our ideals from our actual practices usually end up nullifying the meaning of both. Academic political science has all too often been guilty of exactly this kind of nullification.

Attempts to arrive at a suitable theoretical synthesis of civil society have proved to be difficult. Indeed as societies evolve and their politics undergo complex and dynamic changes, civil society itself undergoes paradigmatic shifts, thereby requiring us to look anew at the concept. This research recognises a deficit in the prevailing conceptual analyses of civil society – an over-emphasis on the associational constituent of civil society and a diminished consideration of the behavioural attitudes and practices, which incidentally comprise its name. Boyd (2004), for example, argues persuasively that:

> Focusing on the *civil* designation of the term civil society, rather than on the domain of society, as opposed to the state, may help to mediate [the] conceptual confusions about what counts as civil society and why. A better understanding of the virtue of 'civility' itself and the respect in which any given association [or social and political process] is properly speaking 'civil' may be the most satisfactory criteria to make these determinations [emphasis in original].

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This attempt to de-construct civil society in a way that brings the *civil* in its name back in is crucial. For example, Fine (1997), in a persuasive critique of current civil society theory, argues against the reactive privileging of civil society:

> The simple family remedy of identifying civil society with ethical life not only avoids confrontation with the uncivil nature of civil society but opens the gates to the hunt for the Alien or Other deemed responsible for its 'deformations': be it the system, politics, the parties, Marxism, consumerism, technology, totalizing discourse, and in some nationalistic versions even Jews and foreigners. This is why, in the end, contemporary 'civil society theory' does not prepare us for the violence of civil society but for a *ressentiment* which knows no peace (Fine, 1997:25-26).

I go further to suggest that if civil society is to be politically worthwhile in any context, it must acknowledge and competently straddle what is clearly its twin role as a *social value* and as *a set of actually functioning, participatory social institutions*. In other words, civil society must embrace both its call for *civil conduct* and *collective engagement*. In this chapter, I therefore examine the conventional portrayal of civil society and attempt to invest it with fresh conceptual meaning and moral significance. My central focus is to explore critically the current conceptualization of civil society embracing the notions of citizenship, civicness and social capital.

My overarching objective is to draw attention to a crucial but often neglected theme: the problem of incivility within the civil sphere, particularly in the domain of citizen activism and protest. These modes of unconventional political participation are rarely extractable from their counterpoint to the state and so I also examine the dynamic nature of civil society's historical relationship with the state and the extent to which civil society can serve the requirements of democracy. An investigation into the everyday social and political practices of citizens, particularly the extent to which they are conducive to the virtue of civility and civil society is imperative. Such discussions also assume wider theoretical significance as they permit valuable insights into the moral dynamics of power and social order in contemporary societies. Indeed, at the end of the day, debates about civil society lead us to a renewed awareness of the fusion of the moral, the social and the political in the constitution of all human communities (Hann & Dunn, 1996:3).

## 2.2    CIVIL SOCIETY – EARLY DEFINITIONS AND DEPICTIONS

An extensive scholarship exists, which chronicles the genealogy of civil society (see DeWeil, 2000; Hall, 1995; Cohen & Arato, 1992; Seligman, 1992; Keane, 1988a; 1988b) and so I will avoid a detailed historical account[10]. Rather, my preoccupation here will be the extent to which the early idea of civil society, at least since the Scottish Enlightenment, accounts for the possibility of incivility within the so-called *civil* sphere. Civil society arrives in historical thought as an apparent source of goodness – founded on rights, associations, the public sphere and normative assumptions (Cohen & Arato, 1992; Pietrzyk, 2001). Early writings on the subject from the mid-eighteenth century seem

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[10] Civil society has its roots in the classical political philosophy of Aristotle (who is credited with the first usage of the term) and later within the Enlightenment tradition (1750-1850) which emerged alongside the rise of Western capitalism and liberalism. John Locke, as well as the Enlightenment philosophers such as Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson, Montesquieu, de Tocqueville, Hume and Kant contributed to its early celebrity. The Aristotelian tradition links civil society and the state as one entity and focuses almost entirely on the character of human nature and how it may be tamed (by the state). This is while the Enlightenment acknowledges civil society and the state as separate or independent realms and is generally preoccupied with the stability of the social order. It is important to note that post-Enlightenment writers such as Hegel and Marx positioned civil society as a staunch critique of bourgeois society.

geared towards reconciling with this normative goodness while attempting to regulate its potential badness, that is, its potential to become uncivil. In fact, the anxiety throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was about how to create and sustain a self-governing social order and proper or fitting conduct among and between individuals and groups. Indeed, the very notion of *civil* society acquired new fillip by virtue of attempts to propagate a new code of manners within civil society and establish cultures of decency and civility in societies where it had most conspicuously been absent (see Hall, 1995; Shils 1992; Elias, 1988).

This obsession with preserving order in society coincides with a negative view of human nature – given to what some saw as egoistic passions and innate liberty (see DeWeil, 2000). Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*, for instance, expresses severe pessimism about human nature, especially when divorced from the social unit of civil society. The condition of mankind outside the *civil* sphere was, for Hobbes, a state of nature where the character of life was entirely uncivilized. In his famous phrase, there was only 'War, where every man is Enemy to every man…. And the life of man, solitary, nasty, brutish and short' (*Leviathan*, 1651 in Flathman & Johnston, 1997; cf. DeWeil, 2000:14). In other words, it would appear that civil society was the hypnotic required to tame the savage beast in human nature and to save man from himself. At the same time, however, it became clear that the political community that Aristotle conceptualized as ethical, free and equal, was, in actuality, exhibiting serious ills – inequalities, divisions and conflict – thereby exposing civil society's less blissful qualities. There is theoretical acknowledgement of civil society's inherent ambivalence manifested in the emergence of a Habermasian view of civil society as a predominantly 'bourgeois' public sphere that was wealthy, masculine and white – and the discord and inequalities attending the modern division of labour (see Habermas, 1989; Keane, 1988a; Fraser, 1997; Fine, 1997; Held, 1996; DeWiel, 2000).It was the anxiety over such a political reality, which necessitated a system of rules to regulate behaviour and guarantee peace and self-preservation.

Hobbes's civil society was tantamount to the state and its laws. The dramatic contrast between inequality, violence and civil society justified the need for a strong, powerful state that would foster cooperative enterprise and peace within society (Keane, 1996; 1998b). Hobbes clearly placed little faith in the associations of civil society as we know it, seeing them as the foremost limiting condition on the political order. Boyd (2004:57) argues that the groups that most bedevil Hobbes fall into the category of 'what we might consider today to be the archetype of a modern voluntary association ranging all the way from private clubs or religious congregations to political demonstrations, militias or street gangs'. The political problem, Boyd maintains, is to determine which one of these potentially dangerous groups should be classed as 'lawful' or 'unlawful' (ibid, 2004:57). By Boyd's thesis, Hobbes's innate pessimism about groups is tied to the broader conflicts he envisioned between associational liberty and sovereign power. I will discuss in further detail later the evolution of this (adversarial) relationship between civil society and sovereign state power and the implications for citizen politics.

Suffice to say, however, that finding and preserving a role for the state in the context of the construction of a *civil* society is a fundamental preoccupation of modern political thought. For Hobbes, civil society can only flourish within the context of a strong state. This is while Scottish Enlightenment thinkers such as Ferguson, Locke and Kant, argue for a view more in line with the contemporary vision of liberal democracy – a (weaker) state whose role is not to replace the state of nature but to protect individual rights and freedoms (DeWiel, 2000; Pietrzyk, 2001; Keane, 1988a; Simmons, 1997). The fundamental challenge here to balance the right of the citizen to act individually (giving account of his or her liberty) even while s/he is positioned socially (within a social contract) and bounded by the state and rule of law (Keane, 1988a). Confronting early civil society theorists was also the effect of modern capitalism on the theoretical portrayal of civil society. I briefly draw on the perspective of Adam Ferguson as it is his vision of civilization as both progress and decorum, which assumes precedence in the Anglo-Saxon elucidation and eventual monopolization of what constitutes a *civil* (civilized) society.

### 2.2.1   Civilization as Civility?

Whereas for the early philosophers, politics was the sum of civility, and the state was the source of social cohesion and order in society, for the emerging modern nationalists, civil society was also a non-political, self-organized order with its own rules aside from those imposed by the state and symbolized the natural development of each society (DeWeil, 2000). It is this new vision of civil society as unique to each polity that represents one of the defining accomplishments of the Scottish Enlightenment. Adam Ferguson (1723-1816) is perhaps the first political thinker to make a critical distinction between various cultures and peoples. However, his theoretical and philosophical conceptualization of the term civilization effectively ranks societies hierarchically according to their level of material, social and economic progress or more precisely their *civilization*. De Weil (2000:19) puts it with Fergusonian candour when he says the 'principal pursuits [of nations] diversify their manners as well as their establishments'.

Modern commercialism, including the development of private property and industrialization was furthermore, if problematically, added by Ferguson (along with his Anglo-Scottish contemporaries – Smith, Hegel and Hume) to the gauge by which to measure *civility* and *civilization*. To be civil was therefore to be not only mannerly but also wealthy, educated and industrialized. By this token, the Anglo-Scottish thinkers felt that under certain conditions, civility and productivity are mutually reinforcing:

> As civility develops, society becomes more orderly. This order encourages productivity by creating interdependence and cooperation. Through the division of labour, productivity flourishes and society prospers both in its wealth and cultural refinement. The more civil a society, the more orderly and wealthy it can become' (DeWiel, 2000, 99-100 paraphrasing Adam Smith; cf. Pietrzyk, 2001).

This economic rationalization resonates today in much of the literature on development, which suggests that economic progress will be stifled without social stability and civil society (UNDP, 1997) and conversely that social problems such as crime, poverty and unemployment cannot be resolved without sustained economic growth. As Keane (1996:20) argues, Ferguson's civilization thus establishes a continuum of progress from 'rudeness [otherwise termed *primitive barbarism*] to refinement in which *civil* society is

understood as a polished and refined form of society with regular government and political subordination' (Keane, 1996:20). Specifically, if economic well-being is crucial to the making and unmaking of civil society, and not all governments are able to exhibit the economic capabilities necessary to serve civil society, then ought this idealized notion be expected of all societies? Ferguson's thesis also begs answers to other critical questions: Is a society whose government fails to produce economic wealth and displays attributes opposed to Ferguson's measure of civilization – poverty, illiteracy, violence and political instability – necessarily uncivil? Can the assumption of civilization neglect the historical, structural and institutional factors, which have undermined the progress of some societies? Indeed, could it not be argued that it is the coercive contact with so-called civilised Europe, which unleashed unprecedented violence on the 'primitive other', which has contributed to many of the problems these societies face today?

Ferguson's thesis does demonstrate that the socio-political and historical conditions that give rise to civil society will not be the same everywhere but his fundamental prerequisites for the realization of civilization appears to be based on a narrow and elitist view of the Anglo-Saxon experience and is therefore suspect. This is not to say that the whole notion of progress, particularly the ability of states to generate economic growth and to feed, house and protect their citizenry is not mandatory to the survival of civil society but assessments of the quality and character of the political community cannot hinge on this alone. Modern capitalism has apparently brought economic wealth to some societies but not the social and ethical community that Aristotle envisioned as civil society. Self-interest, a loss of public spirit or the 'disinterested love of the public', represented for Ferguson the most expressed manifestation of civic decline. It is this emphasis on the fundamental tension and contradiction between the selfish goals of individual actors, intrinsic inequalities, divisions and conflict and the need for some basic collective solidarity in a moral community that underscores one of the essential dilemmas preoccupying much of the historical analysis of civil society (see Fine, 1997; Keane, 1988a:51).

Indeed, modern capitalism exacerbates these problems by partly fostering the stark inequalities among citizens as well as deep-rooted discrimination against women, the working class, foreigners and the poor. The failure to question the high price of liberty is also problematic. This is because, as DeWeil (2000) rightly argues, freedom has the potential to approach a kind of lawlessness, even savagery. It is in fact this recognition of the potential for what maybe called *negative liberty* that focuses early analytic attention on how to create and maintain order in civil society. For Keane (1988a:52), the rationale is apparent – 'civil society cannot remain 'civil' unless it is ordered politically and /or subjected to the higher surveillance of the state (Keane, 1988a:52). It was also this preoccupation with 'excess' freedom that led Hobbes to install a more or less authoritarian state – highly visible and well-armed whose function was to permanently order and pacify warring, contentious, acquisitive individuals (Hobbes, 1651 in Flathman & Johnston, 1997; Keane, 1988a).

Of course, the current concern with social order and civility, as I argue later in this study, must also consider the violence often perpetrated by the state and the frequency with which some are dogged by incivility. It is also worthy of note, however, that the commitment to social stability forms a fundamental aspect of civil society's normative agenda but it is an objective which cannot be accomplished by any means necessary. This is because it erroneously elevates violence as the singular obstacle to the building of a truly civil society and neglects the equally essential element of 'civic virtue' – active participation by 'public-spirited' citizens committed to the social order. I now look at the current reading of civil society prevalent in scholarship and political debates to see how far it advances the theoretical discussion on the contemporary character of citizen politics.

## 2.3    RE-INVENTING *CIVIL* SOCIETY: THE CONTEMPORARY VERSION REVISITED

A certain degree of frustration and polemic often attend the contemporary intellectual pursuit of civil society and this particular study is not exempt. Many scholars engaged in

discussions and analyses of civil society quickly recognize its contorted theoretical complexion and are likely to agree that it is:

> like trying to pin multi-coloured jelly to a wall; difficult to see in its totality because we are all made colour blind by our own ways of looking at the world, while its fluid composition makes the concept hard to grasp' (Fowler, 1996, quoted in Swift, 1999:13).

That it is a 'conceptual ragbag' (Swift, 1999:01) even drives some investigators, irritated by its complexities and contradictions, to question the utility of the notion altogether, reducing it to a mere *slogan* and effectively dismissing it, in Marxian terms, as fraudulent and redundant, seductive but ultimately specious (Kumar, 1993). Keane (2004), for example, talks about the 'multimodality and paradox of civil society'. This is while other scholars (Obadare, 2005; Boyd, 2004; Whitehead, 1997; Tester, 1992) all expound on the moral ambivalence of civil society. At the same time, no other concept has managed to capture the imagination of democratic scholars everywhere than civil society. Its intrinsic, albeit primitive power is acknowledged not only as a 'shining emblem' (Gellner, 1994:1) but as part of the 'magic' and 'hurrah' (ibid, 1994) of democracy, especially given its extraordinary impact on the democratic transitions which have taken place in Eastern Europe and Latin America since the 1980s[11]. At present, the international donor community maintains a hyped view of civil society as the source of people empowerment while the concept is becoming increasingly ubiquitous in development studies, and analyses of political democratization as well as efforts to gauge the health of established democracies. Due to its variegated history and the current attempt to ground it within different historical, political, economic and geographical circumstances, civil society carries myriad construal in scholarship.

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[11] The impact of civil society on political democratization was powerfully demonstrated in Eastern Europe in 2004 when thousands of Ukrainian citizens staged weeks of peaceful but systematic protests against what they felt was rigged Presidential Elections. Thanks to non-violent 'people-power', Ukraine's Supreme Court was forced to intervene and, in a landmark decision, voted to nullify the results of the elections and call for a fresh vote (see *Time*, Europe Edition, 2004, November 28).

Commonly understood, it is 'the (public) space between the market (a non-state privately controlled or voluntarily organized realm) and the state (military, policing, legal, administrative, productive and cultural organs)' (Keane, 1988a:1). This idea of a public space resonates with the thinking of the Scottish Enlightenment and particularly that of Alexis de Tocqueville who fastened civil society to associationalism. Civil society thus came to denote the existence of a vast collection of institutions (the church, independent mass media, community and/or action groups, voluntary organizations, professional, cultural and philanthropic associations, non-governmental organizations and citizen cooperatives). Civil society therefore rests on a complex of coordinated activities beyond the direct control of the state such as 'voluntarism, charity, community organizing, grassroots activity, advocacy, representation, citizen engagement and service delivery' (Swift, 1999: 5). The modern interpretation of civil society thus reflects the capacity and willingness of citizens to organize voluntarily at various levels to make the formal bodies of the state adopt policies and undertake initiatives consonant with their perceived interests. In short, civil society seeks from the state concessions, benefits, policy changes, relief, redress or accountability (Diamond, 1994; McIlwaine, 1998; Pietrzyk, 2001).

Given that this study is about the nature of some aspects of this citizen activity and the manner in which they are undertaken in Jamaica, I lean towards this highly sociological variant of civil society because it is essentially a declaration of society organizing itself. It also rejects the over-reliance or dependency on the state by citizens and instead treats civil society as an activity in its own right, which is not reducible to the economic structure and merely separated institutionally from (but not necessarily designed to contest) the state (Pietrzyk, 2001). I will elaborate further on the kind of relationship that state and civil society ought to foster if interaction between both entities is to be beneficial when I look more closely at the role and character of the state viz. a. viz. civil society in Chapter 5. Usually, because the composition and character of civil society is taken as a given, issues relating to the constituents of civil society are rarely up for debate. It is thus significant to note that the Tocquevillean elucidation of civil society shows partiality towards the presence of a *dense network* of politically-efficacious citizens.

These citizens are charged with promoting 'the stability and effectiveness of the democratic polity through both the effects of *association* on citizens' 'habits of the heart' and the ability of *associations* to mobilize citizens on behalf of public causes' (Foley & Edwards, 1996:38; cf. Putnam, 2000; 1993; 1995). Beyond the official or recognized social assemblages and groupings, therefore, I also include as indicative of civil society 'networks and relationships, which may or may not crystallize into [formal] groups but which nevertheless connect individuals together in some non-coercive, reciprocally purposive manner' (Munroe, 1999:78). This expanded depiction is remarkably compelling as it effectively captures all forms of social interaction and takes into account the whole notion of informality, that is, the 'vast arrays of often uninstitutionalised and hybrid social activities and 'modes of struggle and expression' (Bayat, 1997:55) that are deeply embedded in local communities. Much of the political participation undertaken by Jamaican citizens takes place within the ambit of this latter characterization, a theoretically compelling occasion for civil society scholarship to begin to account for these types of informal activities and groupings. Popular protest, particularly street demonstrations and roadblocks in Jamaica, for instance, finds conceptual place under the rubric of what Cohen & Arato (1992) refers to as 'non-institutional collective action'.

By virtue of this, protest activity in this context may or may not involve a dense network of citizens, formally organized and carrying a reliable membership such as that of the feminist and environmental movements. Yet, its dramatic, consistent modes of expression and collective ethos means that it cannot be divorced from the context and transformations in citizen politics as well as the very appearance and logic of civil society. In short, popular protest is not simply a political tool used by new social movements to achieve their various objectives but also a mode of struggle and expression portraying distinctive characteristics. Paradoxically, like social movements, protests are perceived as an abnormality, variously described as anomic, fragmented and irrational (Cohen & Arato, 1992) and do not fit comfortably in the otherwise normative, integrated, focused, democracy-enhancing vision of civil society. As I alluded to in the introduction and will argue throughout this study, popular protest in contexts such as Jamaica emerge, in part,

as a direct consequence of the failure and inadequacies of the institutions of interest mediation embodied in civil society. In Foweraker's (1995:10) words, 'since interest groups and political parties no longer respond to popular demands, social movements [including popular protest] arise to press these demands'[12].

The commonly accepted Tocquevillean characterization of civil society as a purely associational sphere (see for e.g. Putnam, 2000; 1993; 1995) also neglects to direct close attention to the potential of collectivities of citizens engaged in actions that are, in his own words, not necessarily 'religious' or 'moral' but, possibly, concretely 'immoral' or 'illegal'. Indeed, as Swift (1999: 6) argues:

> If by definition, civil society incorporates a miscellany of groupings and a diversity of social forces and interactions, then unequivocally it also includes fascists, terrorists, racketeers, criminal elements as well as individuals and groups committed to democracy and the much fancied neighbourhood organizations.

In other words, despite civil society's commitment to the democracy project and the common good, we cannot presuppose that it is 'an unalloyed force for Good' (Swift, 1999:16; cf. Obadare, 2005; Boyd, 2004; Whitehead, 1997; Tester, 1992). Recent contributions to the civil society debate grapple with its highly generalized, catch-all definition and contested nature, with some scholars positing that the current scholarly and political usage unavoidably calls the very notion of *civil* society into question (Swift, 1999; Foley & Edwards, 1996; Diamond, 1994; McIlwaine, 1998). Indeed, it would appear that all definitions of civil society require the following caveat: an overly broad categorization is problematic especially in light of the fact that there is little precise agreement as to which groups it should ideally represent.

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[12] For an expansive theoretical discussion on the intersections between popular protest, social movements and civil society, see Cohen, J. & Arato, A. (1992) *Civil Society and Political Theory*. Cambridge: MIT Press. (Refer to chapter 10 – 'Social Movements and Civil Society'). See also Foweraker, J. (1995) *Theorizing Social Movements*. London: Pluto Press.

But if civil society is therefore not to be all things to all people, then it must re-invent itself in a way which captures both the *civil* and *society* dimensions of its name. It is crucial, for instance, to retain an emphasis on, *inter alia,* the legality of its actions for a group to be deemed to function within civil society. The theoretical basis for such an argument finds clear groundings within Lockean Social Contract theory. For its principal proponent, John Locke, to be a member of a particular community is to have a prima facie obligation to obey its laws (see earlier discussion, section 2.2). Smith (1996:43) maintains that 'our acceptance of the benefits of a civil society as indicated by our continuing to live in the society, using its institutions (such as courts), voting in elections, shows that we have accepted the social contract' (cf. Simmons, 1993). I therefore find useful Philippe Schmitter's (quoted in Whitehead, 1997:100; Munroe, 1999: 78) working definition of civil society, which situates it as a set or system of self-organized intermediary groups that:

(1) Are relatively independent of public authorities and private units of production such as firms and families.

(2) Are capable of deliberating about and taking collective actions in defence/promotion of their interests or passions but [as a matter of course]

(3) *do not seek to replace state agents or private (re)producers or to accept responsibility for the polity as a whole but*

(4) *do agree to act within pre-established rules of a 'civil' or legal nature* [my emphasis].

This notion of civil society not only emphasizes the functional collaborative element of civil society (points 1 & 2) but also weighs in on the conduct of its members and the character of their activity (points 3 & 4). Civil society is therefore much more than the capacity of citizens to freely organize themselves into groups to take action compatible to their interests but an arena where political efficacy is cultivated and positive values are encouraged and exhibited (Hall, 1995; Barber, 1998; Diamond, 1994).

Rather than a simple unit, civil society is, in effect, a compound property which rests on conditions or norms of autonomy, collective action, non-usurpation and civility (Whitehead, 1997:100). I draw particular attention on the notions of non-usurpation and civility because very few contemporary interpretations of civil society pay attention to their implications. Based on the prerequisites outlined in Schmitter's elucidation of civil society, usurpation would refer to a political situation in which there is an attempt by independent network(s) of citizens to compete with and/or attempt to oust the state from its position of power. Potentially, this is in order to take full control of the governorship of the polis. Such a political condition, without doubt, is in radical contradiction to the theoretical construction of civil society. To the extent that a group seeks to supplant the state or other competitors and rejects the rule of the law and the higher authority of the state, it is not a component of civil society. Rather, it may do great damage to democratic aspirations (Diamond & Morlino, 2005; Munroe, 1999; Diamond, 1994). Therefore, whereas vigorous collective action and political negotiation are fundamental elements of civil society, anarchism, violence and incivility do not appear to have a place in a genuine construct.

My reference to civility here is not necessarily as restrictive as Schmitter's who effectively constrains citizen conduct only within 'pre-established rules' (Whitehead, 1997:100), but rather takes into account a more exhaustive dimension of public civility based on behaviour within and by groups. Shils (1992:5) maintains that people's 'good or poor manners in their immediate dealings with other persons make a difference in the quality of daily life of the members of the society but they are not directly important in politics'. At the same time, Stone (1992) argues that (public) norms of behaviour generally have as their motivational sources values and attitudes. 'Values are general guidelines which define what is important, worthwhile and worth striving for' while 'norms set rules of behaviour designed to express a commitment to a society's underlying values' (Stone, 1992:1). Values are important because they are internalized, that is, they are driven by the agency within the individual and enforced through guilt and self-control whereas norms must rely on external sanctions.

In other words, people are more likely to follow public norms when there are social and legal consequences for their compliance or disobedience (Hechter & Horne, 2003). To render any social grouping uncivil therefore demands an appraisal of its values, attitudes, behavioural norms, and in light of this study's focus on citizen politics, the character of its civic engagement. It is the latter which critically challenges and complicates the traditional definition of civil society. Indeed, this study recognises that actors in civil society can participate in both civil and uncivil actions. It also acknowledges that otherwise civil actors may, for a variety of reasons, feel compelled to act in uncivil ways. These actors, in my view, are not outside civil society. For example, citizens confronted with the denial of social justice often feel compelled to behave uncivilly. This, I believe, should not condemn them automatically to being cast out of civil society. So by renewing focus on the uncivil, some contemporary scholars (Obadare, 2005; Boyd, 2004; Whitehead, 1997; Tester, 1992) have begun to recognise the complexities and contradictions inherent in current understandings of civil society. This study builds on this work by recognising such ambivalence and by suggesting that civil society theory account for these ambiguities in contemporary political and social contexts.

The table I delineate in the following section may help us to navigate, at least in broad terms, the boundaries between civil and uncivil society. This classification relies on the preceding discussion as well as the work of scholars such as Boyd (2004); Barber (1998), Diamond (1994), Putnam (1993:1995), Swift (1999), Whitehead (1997); Fine (1997) and Foley & Edwards (1996). I will use this framework to help elaborate theoretically on the character of civil society broadly understood as well as its existing manifestation in contexts such as Jamaica.

### 2.3.1    Characterizing Contemporary Civil Society

Table 2.1  Positive and Negative Features of  Civil Society

| Characteristics of a 'Civil' Context | Characteristics of an 'Uncivil' Context |
| --- | --- |
| A certain degree of social/political cohesion exists among citizens. | Extensive social/political cleavages prevail. |
| Civil liberties (freedom of assembly, expression, movement) are permitted and fully utilized. | Civil liberties are either severely restricted or non-existent. |
| Citizens participate collectively in public affairs, take active interest in public issues. | Citizens rarely participate in associations, initiatives or projects and are more concerned with their own self-interest. |
| Citizens regard the authority of the state and are not inclined to supplant it. | The legitimacy of the state is constantly under threat as citizens undertake aggressive anti-state actions. |
| Citizens are kind, respectful, trustful and tolerant, display/support positive values and attitudes. | Citizens display unkind, cruel behavioural tendencies and negative values and attitudes. |
| Citizens generally adhere to the law. | Illegal / unlawful behaviour and activities (criminal violence, corruption, extortion, drug trafficking) are widespread. |
| Unequal relations may exist in society but disadvantaged/marginalized sectors or groups are represented. | Unequal/ divisive relations exist among groups and the disadvantaged basically fall through the cracks (neglected). |

While this conceptualization of the characteristics of a civil and an uncivil society appears to be relatively straightforward, the boundaries between both sets of characteristics are often hazy and imperfect. It is important to acknowledge, however, that attributes found in contexts deemed as civil do not preclude their existence in social settings that are in clear contravention of some of the fundamental tenets of civil conduct and/or practices. At the same time, on this continuum of civil and uncivil society, contexts broadly satisfying the above criteria will nevertheless do so to differing degrees. This means that while none will achieve the highest level of civility, it is possible for some civil spheres to so deteriorate as to show evidence tantamount to what Keane (1996) calls a 'totally uncivil society'. Indeed by Keane's (1996) thesis, the presence of widespread violence without doubt pushes a society closer to the uncivil end of the spectrum. On the other

hand, social cleavage and civic disengagement, though characterized as attributes of an uncivil society, can lie somewhere on the margin of a civil and a less-civil society as the manifestations are present across all societies. My idea here, however, is to outline the characteristics that may demonstrate a tendency to civility or incivility. In other words, where certain variables extend beyond a particular level or where a society demonstrates ubiquitous negative attributes, it may ultimately render itself uncivil.

I however lodge a caveat. The above table, although offering broad theoretical indications, is not a specific criterion to be used to measure the civility or incivility of democratic polities everywhere. It is rather a general guideline, which should be helpful in coming to terms with the real nature of civil societies and to possibly gauge the levels of incivility or uncivil practices in different political contexts. It is also worthy of note here that the delineation of grades of distinction among civil and less civil societies has a great deal to do with political culture and democratic customs, including norms of behaviour and political attitudes. Part of my concern in this study is to determine whether these elements only become extremely negative and problematic during periods of unusually intense conflict, crisis and strain (Diamond et. al, 1990) or are effectively normalized or normalizing elements of a society. For example, as we will see in the case of Jamaica, civil and uncivil characteristics not only coexist in the same societal space, albeit at varying degrees, but appear to actively compete for dominance (cf. Gray, 2004; Munroe, 1999). The weaknesses of civil society and the dangers posed by various forms of incivility are generally evident among particular groups within the civil sphere in many democracies, old and new (Boyd, 2004; Munroe, 1999; Keane, 1996; Shils, 1992).

Munroe (1999:79) contends that the activities of many of Jamaica's informal people (unemployed, street hustlers, squatters, vendors) 'skirt the boundaries of civil and lawful behaviour'. Others, including active criminal gangs, participate in small as well as large-scale illegal activities including drug trafficking, robberies, extortion, fraud and murder (Johnson, 2005; Gray, 2004; Harriott, 2000; 2003; Charles, 2002; 2003). The uncivil encroachments of this lumpenproletariat are not new. Neither is it exclusive to Jamaica.

It is worthy of note that even some so-called law-abiding citizens also, at times, engage in 'antisocial forms of individualism and group organization [such as violent street protests] that substitute for, or even seek to subvert, the forms of civil associationalism [and democratic goals] celebrated by theorists of civil society' (Whitehead, 1997:96). They also often contribute to the widespread consumption and trafficking of narcotics and other acts of deviance plaguing many societies.

In examining the survival strategies and resistance routines of the informal people in parts of the Middle East, Asef Bayat (1997:2000) was struck by the manner in which a new and more autonomous way of living, functioning and organising the community was in the making, Using metropolitan Iran as a frame of reference, he argues that the urban poor have become a collective force by virtue of their way of life which engenders common interests and the need to defend those interests. He coined the term 'quiet encroachment' to describe this way of life as a 'silent, patient, protracted and pervasive advancement of ordinary people on the propertied and powerful in an effort to survive hardships and better their lives (Bayat, 1997: 57). Since criminal groups and social deviants are also a collective force with common interests and often a common political agenda, the values and political attitudes they espouse and through which their behaviour is conditioned are such that their practices and politics must also be scrutinized as an aspect of the uncivilness of the civil sphere. The rationale is that unlike organized workers or students, the vast networks of informal people represent groups in flux and structurally operate outside institutional mechanisms such as factories, schools and civil associations through which they can express grievance and enforce demands (Bayat, 1997; 2000; Piven & Cloward, 1977; Scott, 1976; 1985).

This attention to a lack of institutional capacities on the part of people on the margins signifies a deficit of what may be called *bargaining capacity*. In other words, these folks lack the power what Piven & Cloward (1977:25) see as the power of 'disruption'. This is simply the application of a negative sanction such as the power to go on strike or the withdrawal of some crucial contribution on which others depend, a natural resource for

exerting power on others. While highly instructive, this conceptualization renders groups that fall outside official or formal collectivities as fluid and powerless, albeit agentic. Specifically, it ignores the presence and authority of influential groupings such as criminal gangs and (Mafia) dons (also called area leaders), who are a notable part of the informal sphere in many developing and developed countries and engage in aggressive political acts such as the stage-managing of hostile protests and demonstrations and participating in criminal activities (murder, extortion, vigilantism). It is these alternative sources of power, which, to my mind, translate into *bargaining rights* – Piven & Cloward's (1977:24) 'power of disruption'.

It is for this reason, as I shall argue in this study, that the subsistence ethic alone cannot account for the nature of citizen politics in the context of Jamaica. Nonetheless, extra-legal practices, although outside the boundaries of the normative view of civil society (see Table 2.1), assumes relevance by finding theoretical context within discussions of peasant resistance, social empowerment and the survival tactics of the poor (Scott, 1976; 1985; 1990; 1998; Bayat, 1997; 2000; Gray 2004). Such arguments are remarkably useful in understanding the nature of the informal sphere but they ignore the grave consequences of violence and illegal behaviour for social stability and the rule of law and do not help in expanding our understanding of what is required for civilized governance. In other words, whereas the reality of chronic unemployment, external debt burdens and soaring inflation exacerbates Jamaica's social condition and drives illegal activity, economically reductive arguments should not assume precedence over or obliterate the relevance of taking greater stock of political values, social attitudes and behavioural norms. Of course, this is not to say that more economically robust societies, boasting strong civil societies and sound democracies are exempt from the emergence/ proliferation of uncivil actors with anti-democratic goals and activity.

These 'uncivil interstices' assume many forms although Whitehead (1997:96) identifies the Mafia, which has its origins in Italy [13] as the most globally recognized symbol of this 'flourishing of incivility'. The Mafia aside, there is growing anxiety regarding the increasing incidents of sheer criminality and street violence within so-called sensitive locales of the post-industrial polyarchies of France, Britain and the United States. Indeed, this suggests that the weaknesses of civil society are no longer confined within conventional Third World settings and the impact of criminality on civic associationalism and civil society, more broadly, is of more than passing political significance. This recognition opens up the proverbial can of worms at the heart of this study: Can uncivil actors and forms of association belong in an interpretation of civil society that demands a more intimate examination of legality, civility and tolerance, which some scholars (Barber, 1984; 1998; Hall, 1995; Putnam, 2000; Whitehead, 1997) cite as an indispensable part of its civic and political culture?

The established view in the scholarship on civil society (see Barber, 1998) assumes that all citizens have automatic membership in civil society, but this does not guarantee that all and sundry will abide by the rules governing the polity. Is there a civic boundary that might be drawn? The reality is that modern (jurisdictional) citizenship, under the guise of universality[14] and inclusivism, has effectively admitted a category of 'uncivil citizens or persons enjoying political rights but not submitting themselves to the constraints imposed by 'civil society', [among which] must surely include a requirement of civility'

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[13] The term Mafia not only refers to the Italian organized crime families, embodied in the Costra Nostra, Ndrangheta Calabrion and Napoli Camorra but also to the more generalized and broader connotation of organized criminal activity, taking place globally.

[14] Benjamin Barber argues that if the idea of open citizenship is not to become a one-way door through which undesirables are continuously ejected, it must be conditioned by the premise of biological universality. In his thesis, grounded on strong democracy, the exclusion of particular sets or classes of human beings from potential membership in the polity because they do not conform to a prior standard is not permitted. He, however, admits that the procedural conception of citizenship, which has a welcome openness and dynamism, is subject to certain dangers. Of course, one of the fundamental dangers is the inclusion of sets of citizens who contribute very little or whose actions are inimical to *civil* society. See Barber, B. (1984) *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*. Los Angeles: University of California Press. Refer to Chapter 9 – 'Citizenship as Community: Politics as Social Being'.

(Whitehead, 1997: 95). Indeed, based on the delineation of the negative and positive features of a civil society in Table 2.1 above, adherence to the rule of law and to norms of respect, kindness and tolerance, are critical constituents of a civil context. Given, however, the obvious divergence between what Whitehead (1997:96) reasons is 'our inclusive view of citizenship and our tacitly more restrictive view of the requirements of civil society', the line between civil and uncivil actors may increasingly become blurred. After all, 'human nature is compound; it is potentially both benign and malevolent, both cooperative and antagonistic' (Barber, 1984:215; cf. Boyd, 2004). In this regard, a closer look at the construction of citizenship and the role of the citizen in civil society should help in differentiating between the actors and actions committed to civility and civil society and those inimical to it.

## 2.4    CIVIC VIRTUE, CITIZENSHIP AND CIVIL SOCIETY.

Adam Ferguson, in his seminal work, *An Essay on the history of Civil Society*, (1767: 51) proclaims that:

> No system of laws, either of political or of natural laws itself can preserve a political society. Without the maintenance of civic virtue, the strength and vitality of political community can be easily eroded. Even the best political institutions are not a sufficient device to maintain liberty of individuals: the liberties they enjoy cannot be long preserved, without vigilance and activity on the part of the subject….

By virtue of Ferguson's claim, the rule of law, while fundamental, is not a sufficient condition for the health of civil society and the defence of civil liberties. Indeed, the very definition, if not stability, of civil society hinges on active fellowship among citizens. At the same time, the argument for citizenship demands journeying beyond its traditional legal and national definitions to give greater prominence to the role of civic activity, in essence, the duties and obligations of the citizen (Deaken, 2001; Putnam, 1993; Barber, 1984). There is consensus as Putnam (1993:87) suggests that 'citizenship in a civic community is marked, first of all, by active participation in public affairs. Interest in public issues and devotion to public causes are the key signs of civic virtue'. Of course, introducing activity as a measure of citizenship poses particular conceptual difficulties.

Primarily, the very nature of the activity must, inevitably, come under scrutiny. The various activities that take place within the arena of civil society are informed by different values. For example, it is commonly accepted that individuals undertake particular actions guided by the 'values inculcated through their background, education and experience, priorities and values [which] may well include a commitment to the 'common good' but are by no means certain to do so' (Deaken, 2001:7). The concept of civil society favoured in this research perceives it as more than merely a set of social institutions but also, fundamentally, a social value. Indeed, civil society is thought of as a process and a state of mind – a social process that generates trust and mutual understanding (Hall, 1995; Deaken, 2001).

I accept, however, that while the activities undertaken in its name may bear this in mind, in reality, political action by citizens, guided by their various value systems and states of mind, can and often do fall on either side of the common good. With few exceptions, the current scholarship emphasizing civic virtue (Barber, 1984; Putnam, 1993; 1995: van Deth, 1997, UNDP, 1997; Deaken, 2001) affords only secondary attention to the values that drive behaviour generally and civic activity in particular. Instead, the analysis tends to restrict itself to a meagre interpretation of responsible citizenship, measured in terms of membership, attendance and participation in voluntary/civic organizations and initiatives. In other words, the essential question implicit here is whether the apathetic, lethargic or alienated, by virtue of their inertia, should ultimately face exclusion. One of the positive characteristics of a civil society is the collective participation of citizens in public affairs and their active interest in public issues (see Table 2.1). Indeed, in Barber's view, 'given the importance of active participation to the definition of citizenship itself, the autonomous individual would seem to enjoy the 'right' of citizenship that he can forfeit only by his own action – which is to say, by his own inaction' (1984: 227). He goes on to argue that criminals forfeit their citizenship not because they revert to 'the state of nature' but because they have ceased to engage in talk, deliberation, and common action and have substituted private force for public thinking' (Barber, 1984:227-228).

Since civic virtue (participation) is as much a part of my conceptualization of civil society as civility (including legality, tolerance, inclusion, non-violence, commitment to the common good), criminals, by virtue of both their 'action' and 'inaction', have effectively divorced themselves from the civic community. The conceptual problems however do not stop here. Civil society scholarship must also reconcile with citizens whose actions, on the one hand, render them as civic and public spirited but whose values and private actions on the other hand, depart from civicness and civility. I discuss this matter in detail later when I look at the case of rogue leadership at the community level in Jamaica (Chapter 8). Certainly, activity is crucial to (responsible) citizenship and civil society but in Putnam's (1993:88) words, 'not all political activity deserves the label 'virtuous' or contributes to the commonweal' (cf. Boyd, 2004; Deakin, 2001; Whitehead, 1999). Any study which has, as its point of focus, (uncivil) citizen politics is therefore obliged to consider whether so-called public spirited citizens necessarily (or at all times) embody the kind of social capital that is beneficial to the civic community and to democracy?  It is within this framework that I look more closely at the nature of social capital and how it potentially affects civil society.

### 2.4.1    The Social Capital Factor

Since Robert Putnam (1993)[15] occasioned alarm by unearthing evidence suggesting that there has been a widespread decline in associational life in America, a great deal has been made of social capital. There is, however, considerable disagreement as to its conceptual definition – what should be included in it, how it may be measured and whose capital – the individual or community – is at issue (Putnam, 1993; 1995; 2002; Offe & Fuchs, 2002; Inkeles, 2000; Heffron, 2000). Whether interpretations restrict social capital to a narrow

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[15] In his controversial article, *Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital*, Putnam argues that by almost every measure, American's direct engagement in politics and government has fallen steadily and sharply, with millions withdrawing from the affairs of their communities over the last two decades. This development he contends is problematic since the greater the density of associational membership in a society, the more trusting its citizens, as trust and engagement are two facets of the same underlying factor – social capital. Social capital is then the features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust and which are crucial for facilitating cooperation among citizens for mutual benefit. For a more extensive reading on social capital and civil engagement, see Putnam (1993; 2002).

or limited range of phenomena or go for breadth and openness, it usually demands the same thing. For example, whenever the term 'capital' is used, it is reminiscent of Adam Smith's economic interpretation, which saw it as inclusive of the *productive abilities* of the people in any nation. By deductive argumentation, social capital is to be understood as *social capabilities* that are derived from individuals and groups and to which these same folks can draw on to attain particular goals (Inkeles, 2000; Heffron, 2001). This social capability thus infers 'a collectively-owned resource' (Offe and Fuchs, 2002:189) that is entrenched in a range of vertical and horizontal associations, multiple ties and acquaintances and social behaviour within and across individuals, groups and associations. Although it does not spare us the conceptual difficulties, I adopt here as my working definition Putnam's elucidation, which privileges the community over and above the individual and designates social capital as 'the features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit' (1995:67).

If a large amount of this collective capacity or resource is therefore available and widely dispersed throughout a society, it is felt that the benefits to that society will be economic performance, strong state and good government (Putnam, 1993; 1995; Offe & Fuchs, 2002). The converse is also true – if there is a small or negligible amount of social capital available in a society, the effects will be poor economic performance, a weak state and a government unable to serve its citizens' needs. For Putnam (1995:67):

> Life is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social capital. In the first place, networks of civic engagement foster sturdy norms of generalized reciprocity and encourage the emergence of social trust. Such networks facilitate coordination and encourage the emergence of social trust. Such networks facilitate coordination and communication, amplify reputations and thus allow dilemmas of collective action to be resolved… Finally, dense networks of interaction probably broaden the participants' sense of self, developing the 'I' into the 'we', enhancing the taste for collective benefits.

Indeed, the overwhelming contemporary concern with civic virtue and with rebuilding social capital is inextricably linked to the catastrophic effects of its absence on

community and social life. This view finds roots in Edward Banfield's description of the people of Montegrano in Southern Italy in 1958:

> No one in town is animated by a desire to do good for all of the population. Even if sometimes there is someone apparently animated by this desire, in reality he is interested in his own welfare and he does his own business. Even the saints, for all their humility, looked after themselves. And men, after all, are only made of flesh and spirit (Banfield quoting the words of a Montegranesi, in Reis, 1998).

Banfield described as 'amoral familism' this striking absence of deliberate concerted action to improve the impoverished conditions of the community among the people of Montegrano. He designated it as an ethos of backwardness in which social solidarity and the feeling of belonging and collaboration did not extend beyond the home environment. In fact, 'amoral familism' betrays efforts to build social capital and foster civic virtue as people will show concern or interest with public affairs only at the prospect of short-term gain (Reis, 1998). These arguments, substantially guided by Putnam's seminal empirical research on social capital, while highly convincing, are theoretically inadequate. Rather than analytical, they tend to be descriptive and therefore cannot extend to formulating a theory of human behaviour (Latham, 1997). For instance, Putnam does not prepare us for the theoretical possibility that social capital may not possess the quality or stock imperative to foster the kind of collaboration and trust that is needed to bring the above-mentioned benefits to the larger community. In any case, according to Heffron, (2000:252), trust and cooperation are 'temporary and contingent, can as easily be unmade and the world reduced in the next instant to relative anarchy and anomie. Indeed, they are in constant flux, the product of unstable forces'.

To what extent, then, do the social structures (institutional capital) of a society embody and reinforce the norms and values of the civic community, its practices and patterns of culture, modes of communication and association and psychosocial characteristics as expressed in qualities such as trust and cooperativeness (Inkeles, 2000)? Secondly, can citizens foster trust and cooperation in order to serve malevolent ends? Theoretically, these questions are crucial and must be answered as it is these values found in groupings

such as the family, clan, school, health and education systems and importantly in the political system, particularly the rule of law (Putnam, 1993; Inkeles, 2000), which determine the quality of the social capital available for citizens' use. Whereas the civic community is not likely to be entirely conflict free (Putnam, 1993), the insistence of violence and anomie in contemporary societies such as Jamaica and the increasing physical aggressiveness of citizen politics demand that we look keenly at the quality of associational life and of social capital as a crucial aspect of mandatory requirements of social order. What I am hinting at here is this: is there such a thing as a *negative* social capital? I am using negative here to suggest unconstructive, unhelpful or damaging. Up to this point, we have been effectively forced to assume that social capital is necessarily constructive. Indeed, we have had no reason to suspect otherwise. Yet, it is clear that the very notion of associability, which is generally all-inclusive (Putnam even speaks of warders fraternizing with prisoners as an element of social capital formation, vertical as opposed to horizontal, notwithstanding) may have to become highly discriminatory, at least if it is to continue to constitute a reasonably safe indicator of the type of social capital that Putnam holds up as the model.

Without question, secondary associations (churches, voluntary organizations, sports clubs, cultural groups) generate social capital of the sort highlighted by Putnam. However 'whether this "social capital" is truly a "public good" available to society at large and capable of producing the effects ascribed to it, is another matter' (Foley & Edwards, 1996:41). For example, if associations are to foster genuine cooperation and trust, they cannot be polarized or politicized but instead must bridge social and political divisions and be autonomous from political forces (Foley & Edwards, 1996; Whitehead, 1997; Alexander, 1998; Swift, 1999). Further, if we are to define collective action in its broadest possible interpretation, then the social capital (which in this context implies some form of collective action) generated by illegal entities such as gangs, clans, Mafias and conspiracies must also be accounted for and called upon as part of the resource accessed and used by some citizens to attain their individual goals. Indeed, although an emphasis on legality in my conceptualization of 'civil' society effectively robs these groups of a

place in this sphere, it does not mean that social capital is not being formed in their midst, used to the advantage of an increasing number of citizens and impacting on civil society, social order and democracy.

### 2.4.2    A Place for Negative and Positive Social Capital

In this regard, it is worth noting that Putnam's later work (2000) as well as the case study of Eastern Europe by Paldam and Svensden (2001) distinguish between *positive* and *negative* social capital. The positive elements are those that strengthen community ties, facilitate collective action and civic engagement as well as promote social values of trust and norms of reciprocity. These qualities produce high social capital. Conversely, negative social capital includes social problems such as crime and anti-social behaviour, which is stark indication of low social capital.  This study acknowledges that there are often real and sharp conflicts among individuals and groups in civil society (squatters, vendors, political party-affiliated groups), which in the absence of political settlements, often spill over into civil disruption and violence (Foley & Edwards, 1996; Whitehead, 1997; Alexander, 1998; Swift, 1999)[16]. The complexity of these kinds of social capital, which operate both horizontally across communities and among citizens as well as vertically in patron-client relationships, is uncovered and discussed in detail when I look at one case of informal (citizen) organization, politics and governance in Jamaica in chapter 8.  In this sense, I fully endorse the view, widely shared view by many scholars (Barber, 1984; Putnam, 1993; 1995; 2000; Latham, 1997; van Deth, 1997; UNDP, 1997; Swift, 1999; Deakin, 2001) that civic associations, in the main, contribute positively to the effectiveness and stability of democratic government.

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[16] For a convincing case study of the positive and negative dimensions of social capital, see Ogbazghi, P. (2005) 'Features of Social Capital in the Squatter Settlements of Asmara: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly'. In *Survival on the Edge: The State, Squatters and Urban Space in Eritrea*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Tilburg, The Netherlands, Chapter 11, pp 227-250.

A decline in citizen engagement and social capital, however, within and among communities is also blamed for a number of serious social problems and the impotence of the political system to deal with them (Putnam, 1995). Further, it is agreed that the successful social integration of citizens into extremist organizations (Mafia, terrorist cells, rebel groups and criminal gangs) can also present a major threat to the stability of the social and political system (Rapley, 2006; Mason, 2005; Soeters, 2005; Norris, 1999; van Deth, 1997). Consequently, while there is generally a positive correlation between civic associations and civil society, the quality and stability of civil society and of democracy appear to be highly contingent upon the type and quality of the associations as well as the manner in which they seek to attain their varied goals (Boyd, 2004; Swift, 1999). The Jamaican case represents an interesting political model of these theoretical complexities. For example, whereas there are over five thousand community-based organizations (CBOs) in Jamaica, of which more than 50 percent are either active or partially active (see Box 1.1, Chapter 1), it is uncertain what effects, if any, membership in these groups have on building the norms of trust and cooperation that Putnam speaks so highly of.

Although an increased density of civic organizations signals an empowered and renewed civil society and a natural boost for democracy in Jamaica (Munroe, 1999), the number of episodic, impulsive, and at times violent street demonstrations, some of which have done more to impinge on rather than enhance civil democracy, had also risen sharply. As I will argue later, when I discuss the contemporary nature of popular protest in Jamaica in Chapter 6, this sharp increase in street protests may itself also suggest a positive manifestation of collaborative action and resistance, albeit belligerent, and the emergence in the country of a vast network of issue-oriented protest campaigns. Yet, it may also suggest the retreat of civil politics and a decline in the quality of civil society. Some scholars (see for e.g. Foley & Edwards, 1996) argue that, although often underestimated, new social movements do foster aspects of civil community and advance democracy. At the same time, while proving useful in terms of drawing attention to the social conditions citizens face, the jury is still out as to whether violent grievance politics is the most effective way to obtain concessions from the state. I take up this issue in chapter 9.

Indeed, the major political concern in recent years seems to be how to stem the number of disruptive street protests and the need to develop appropriate mechanisms to empower community-based organizations as a means of strengthening Jamaican democratic governance (Munroe, 2000; Meeks, 2000). It is hence the rise of aggressive citizen politics, embodied in popular protests and the challenges it poses to democratic governance and civil society in Jamaica, which underscores the fundamental theoretical dilemma in this study. A significant part of this dilemma rests with the prevailing view of Jamaica's civil society organizations, many of which are critiqued for being 'too limited in their focus, too attack minded in their style, too class bound in their leadership, too dependent for finances from organizations with their own agenda' (Buddan in *Sunday Gleaner*, 2003). Their ability to press demands on behalf of marginalized sectors, foster social cohesion and generate positive public values and a sanguine public self, is suspect.

This is not to say that the Church and the independent mass media as well as voluntary and intermediary/advocacy organizations in Jamaica have not witnessed an expansion of their roles and are emerging as legitimate competing 'counter publics' (Fraser, 1997), though weak and marginalized in particular contexts (see Munroe, 1999 – chapter 5). The explicit role of these publics is to form critical avenues of civic engagement and contribute to the integration of individuals in society and consequently to the stability of the system (Barber, 1998; Etzioni, 1996; Putnam, 1995; Van Deth, 1997). I put forward the argument in this study, however, that their inadequacies as linkages between the demands and needs of the population and the output of the political system, in large part, have an impact on the extent to which citizens resort to more aggressive modes of political participation, expressed in loosely organized, and episodic citizen mobilizations and protests. This brings me to a subject which I alluded to briefly in chapter 1, on which I wish to expand here. This is the observation in many quarters that a specific theoretical link can be identified between the problems of democratic society and the retreat of civil society (Boyd, 2004; Munroe, 1999; Norris, 1999; Diamond, 1994). My interest in this regard is the correlation between civil society and the democratic state within the context of the explosive nature of contemporary protest campaigns in some polities.

Most people would agree that popular protests are fundamental to the health of democracy. Indeed, some citizens jealously guard this right because, as I shall illustrate in subsequent chapters, aggressive protest action is seen to be vital to the progress of the Jamaican society, particularly within the context of the search for justice and a better way of life by its people. Resolving the dilemmas of uncivil citizen politics in Jamaica therefore obliges me to ground this discussion within the context of civil society's apparent theoretical debt to democracy and the democratic state. In other words, what exactly is civil society's obligation, if any, and can its apparent two-faced character undermine rather than advance democracy? On the other hand, what is the role of democracy in making society civil?

## 2.5   CIVIL SOCIETY: ANTI-POLITICS OR DEMOCRATIZING THE STATE?

Understanding civil society's role in the construction of democracy is a much more complex phenomenon than the prevailing scholarship reveals. In the first place, that civil society and democracy are inextricably bound in their relationship with each other betrays the often simplistic antimony between them as locked in a zero-sum struggle (cf. Held, 1996; Diamond, 1994; Keane, 1988b).[17] If civil society is to serve democracy and if the democratic state is to both empower and regulate civil society, it is unhelpful and misleading to portray the state/civil society nexus as predominantly adversarial or polarized. Secondly, given the vast variations in the character and form of civil society and social capital as discussed, we can no longer take for granted that the correlation between civil society and democracy is necessarily always positive. I look at these two issues in turn. The contemporary renewal of a 'civil society versus the state' dichotomy had its source in the inadequate versions of the concept unreflectively revived in

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[17] It is important to note that the matter is a bit more complicated than stated here because the historical construction of a relationship between civil society and the state has always been polarized. The early literature reveals a closing of ranks around two sharply distinct theoretical poles. The first represents those who embark upon a contemptuous course of attempting to, completely, emancipate civil society from an absolutist and paternalistic state. The second epitomizes those who emphasize a preference for sovereign state action and stricter state regulation over the conflict-filled nature of civil society. Refer to discussion on Hobbes and Locke as well as later Enlightenment thinkers.

discussions on Latin America, Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa since the late 1980s (Cohen & Arato, 1992; Tempest, 1997). The experience of the Eastern Europeans, for example, against an official communist totalitarian state and party system provided the stimulus that drove democratization in many societies through the resurrection of civil society viz. a. viz. the mobilization of a variety of independent groups and so-called grassroots movements. The transitions from authoritarian and communist regimes, however, appeared to encompass two very different efforts. The first urged the importance of protecting and renewing a pluralistic, self-organizing civil society embodied in popular movements, and which were to maintain its independence from and resistance to the authoritarian state. The second rested in a challenge to a public-oriented state by neo-conservatives who saw the small state as a good state (Keane, 1988b).

It was this anti-state sentiment, which commentators such as Vaclav Havel came to refer to as 'anti-politics'. For example, Tempest (1997), in commenting on the evolution of civil society in Eastern Europe, remarked that the construction of an antagonistic parallel society was designed to gradually undermine the already crumbling legitimacy of the communist states and to install a new entity - a democratized civil society. For Hall (1995:1), the term civil society quickly transformed itself into the 'opposite of despotism and became the space in which social groups could exist and move'. Likewise, Cohen & Arato (1992:86) put it bluntly when they posit that 'where there existed a single, ideological pecking order which tolerated no rivals, a counter-movement had already began to reorganize 'society' against the state through associations and forms of public life'. This modern configuration of the state/civil society relationship is therefore, in Gramscian terminology, 'the site of alternative hegemonies' (Alexander, 1998:68). It was therefore no wonder that the theme, concept and spirit of the resurgent civil society, having been all the rage, quickly became the yardstick by which societies, especially those in Latin America, en bloc measured the worth and vitality of their civil society. Foley and Edwards (1996:46) maintain that, in such contexts, 'civil society is treated as an autonomous sphere of social power within which citizens can pressure authoritarian regimes for change, protect themselves from tyranny and democratize from below'. Of

course, while it became crucial to root out state authoritarianism, install a Western-style democratized civil society, and assert its ascendancy, scholars ignored a most crucial probability. Foley and Edwards (1996:46) wrap it up in this one question, which represents one of the paradoxes of civil society: "If civil society is a beachhead secure enough to be of use in thwarting tyrannical regimes, what prevents it from being used to undermine democratic governments"? In other words, according to Diamond (1994:5):

> We need to comprehend not only the multiple ways it [civil society] can serve democracy, but also the tensions and contradictions it generates and may encompass. We need to think about the features of civil society that are most likely to serve the development and consolidation of democracy. We need to form a more realistic picture of the limits of civil society's contributions to democracy and thus the relative emphasis that democrats should place on building civil society among the various challenges to democratic consolidation.

We have already confirmed that not all groups contribute positively to civil governance, positive social capital and *civil* society (Boyd, 2004; Paldam & Svensden, 2001; Putnam, 2002; Swift, 1999; Whitehead, 1997). In addition to identifying extremist organizations and illegal networks of citizens, Foley and Edwards (1996) add established interests who may detain social resources thereby blocking society's ability to meet the demands of the dispossessed, as in the Southern United States up to the advent of the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Social blocs, they contend, may also form, each with their own band of associations, to battle one another for control of the state as in contemporary Lebanon or the plural states of Western Europe before the 19th century political settlements. In addition, political forces may also forge powerful ties with community organizations and civil associations, polarizing society and at times threatening social order as in post-World War II Italy and contemporary El Salvador. At the same time, as I will illustrate in the Jamaican case, rather than augment democracy, divisive political solidarities, including civic associations that follow these divisive political patterns, may very well sharpen social cleavages and actually undermine the capacity for effective governance (Foley and Edwards, 1996:46).

These observations underscore the importance of fully understanding the real role of civil society in the contemporary period. It is clear that we can no longer take for granted that civil society holds benefits for the democratic state. Instead, we are compelled to take into account civil society's variable role and contributions, that is, discern how and under what circumstances a society's organized constituents contribute to political strength or political failure. The common expectation throughout the West that the new democratized civil society is at once 'an agent of transformation and its result' may be ill-conceived, resulting from 'a common unwillingness to take an openly critical attitude toward the liberal model of civil society' (Cohen and Arato, 1992: 32-33). Further, that there was an almost immediate withering away of civil society after the fall of communism is an example of the promise of civil society showing signs of weakness and failure from early on. Clive Tempest (1997) is among those whose scholarship critically examines the 'myths' of East European civil society.

According to his thesis, so overwrought and sensational were the reports of civil society's resurrection versus the political realities of other contexts that it is fair to assume that the Eastern Europeans may have emulated a fantasy. He goes on to argue that they 'overstated, idealized and misunderstood the real nature of state and civil society relations in the west' [referring to societies such as the United States) (1997: 133), having failed to account for the incivilities, violence and apathy to be found in Western civil society. In other words, while Eastern Europe lauded civil society as a key explanatory variable in the collapse of communism, the West was expressing doom about the vitality of its own civil society (see Putnam, 1993; 1995). The historical platform upon which Eastern Europe spawned civil society and the specific socio-political context within which the notion was re-fashioned and re-presented, particularly as the fodder for democracy, hence rendered it inadequate as a model elsewhere. Indeed, Eastern Europe may have emulated a fantasy and romanticized the benevolence of new social movements. This is however not to say collective action such as those expressed in popular protest do not play crucial roles in new and established democracies in taking on board neglected or repressed demands and impelling the political system to engage with marginalized groups

and/or forgotten issues. As I shall argue in the case of protests and demonstrations in Jamaica, the actions of groupings within civil society may sometimes collapse in violence as frustration increases in the face of an unresponsive political system. Yet, these issue-oriented protest campaigns, if undertaken in a coherent and cohesive manner, also have the potential to build trust, habits of cooperation (even in the short term) and cement civic action among participants.

The truth is, where the political system is minimally responsive, as in Jamaica, they can boost the vitality of civil and political society by mobilizing people, and at the very least, stimulate discussion and debate. At the same time, where the state is unresponsive, its institutions are undemocratic, or its democracy is ill-designed to respond to citizen demands, the character of collective action will be decidedly different than under a strong and democratic system. Citizens will instead find their efforts to organize for civil ends frustrated by state policy or at times actively repressed or ignored (Foley and Edwards, 1996:48). A natural consequence of this state of affairs is the growth of increasingly hostile forms of civil association as well as an expanding number of citizens driven into either active militancy or self-protective apathy (Foley and Edwards, 1996). It is within this scenario that the ability of civil society to also oppose and weaken the democratic state is most probable. It would therefore appear that a democratic civil society requires a democratic state and, conversely, a strong civil society necessitates a strong and responsive state. At the same time, the strength and responsiveness of a democracy seem to rely heavily on the character of its civil society (Putnam, 2000; 1995; 1993; Barber, 1998; 1984; Foley and Edwards, 1996). The attributes I outlined in Table 2.1 provides a good starting point by which to determine what constitutes a civil society as opposed to an uncivil society. Fundamental to this study is therefore the argument that, like democracy, civil society is not exportable. It cannot be copied from another society nor is it a plan following predictable patterns. Rather, it represents social units, which emerge out of the natural differences between people, spontaneous, and, also like democracy, it 'grows up indigenously and in country after country, it looks different, feels different… it cannot be imposed top down, it grows bottom up' (Barber, 2003:02).

Current analyses then ought to perceive civil society beyond mere organizations, associations and institutions and, instead, construe it as 'a way of life, a set of ingrained attitudes, a culture of independent thinking … cooperation, of conflict as well as consensus' (Dewey quoted by Barber, 2003:02). It is within this realm of shared values, beliefs and everyday social practices and *lived experiences* – the rudiments holding human communities together – that civil society in developing countries like Jamaica finds resonance. This research thus demonstrates why a focus on aberrant social and political behaviour, including illegality and violence within citizen political action, is essential to any contemporary discourse on civil society. In other words, political science scholarship ought to acknowledge that at the core of this esoteric normative ideal called civil society is a limited understanding of its 'potential to be negative' (Swift, 1992:05).

## 2.6   SUMMARY

The prevailing conditions of civil society raise important questions about its character, relevance and usefulness in (positively) affecting and effecting social order and democracy in contemporary societies. It would appear that civil society requires a novel interpretation which recognizes the likelihood of political values, behavioural norms as well as tendencies and practices that directly and openly contravene, if not ultimately contradict, what John Keane calls 'the *ideal* concept of civil society as a haven for openness, non-violence, solidarity and justice' (1996: 10). If anything, civil society has an organic relationship with society. This means that it mirrors not only 'the ethnic, gender and class [and political] fractures that exist within every society (Swift, 1996:16), but also the political culture and the socio-economic conditions that prevail in every context. As such, any deconstruction of the concept must take into account the conflicts that such fractures and political culture engender and the continuing potential for a general breakdown in political and civil values attendant to other social problems.

This chapter also forces us to consider the contrasting and, at times, overlapping contexts – civil and uncivil – in which some societies currently operate. Since, all societies contain some degree of incivility, what is it that makes this problem more problematic for some

than others and its impact on civil society and democracy more detrimental? A look at some of the constituent features of a civil and uncivil society, as reflected in Table 2.1, should offer a reliable theoretical framework for answering this question and assessing the nature of civil society in any given polity. Jamaica, for example, possesses a stable regime, featuring a deeply institutionalized and consolidated democracy and enjoys broad-based legitimacy (see Munroe, 1999; Meeks, 2000; cf. Gray 2004). However, in times of uncertainty and stress, such as during the April 1999 three-day nationwide riots, Jamaica appeared highly vulnerable to breakdown, its legitimacy substantially undermined, and civil values were not the norm. It is therefore clear, based on the arguments presented in this chapter, that civil society, with its complexity and inherent contradictions, comprises a diversity of social forces and interactions 'playing both negative and positive roles, depending on the context' (Munroe, 1999:80).

Given also the new political realities at work in the contemporary world, particularly the increasing empowerment of deviant actors and the normalization of violence, we are now obliged, as social scientists, to re-construct, re-interpret and *re*-present *civil* society to accurately reflect the complexities of this sphere. It is important, for example, to begin to take into account, on a much wider scale, the informal politics and unconventional political practices undertaken by ordinary citizens and see them as an active component of the contemporary interpretation and character of civil society. In other words, it is clear that we cannot simply narrow the civil society universe only to those demonstrating civic norms, as both formal groups and informal networks and relationships (playing negative and positive roles) also impinge on the character of civil society and the tone of citizen politics in any context. Further, in the quest to come to terms with the real nature and complexity of contemporary citizen politics, we are also obliged to find answers to the following broad questions that underpin this study:

(1) Is the increasing discontent of citizens with the quality of governance globally, including the performance of representative governments and official civil society, giving rise to unconventional and alternative modes of political engagement?

(2) What is the nature of these unconventional political practices and how effective are they in securing for (the especially disadvantaged classes of) citizens their political demands?

(3) Based on how citizens globally now relate to the state and the state to them, are we witnessing a rebirth of reinvigorated citizens no longer self-interested and 'bowling alone' or a retreat of civil norms of political engagement and negotiation and a decent into uncivil society?

It is to the answers to these questions within the Jamaican context that I turn to in the subsequent chapters. First, I take pause to examine the methods and procedures used to gather and analyze the data drawn upon in this study and the theoretical underpinnings upon which they are based.

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# Protest Politics in Jamaica: Towards A Theory of Method.

## 3.1    INTRODUCTION

This thesis is most concentrated within the sub-discipline of political behaviour and examines the patterns of citizen politics which fall under the rubric of unconventional political participation. I focus specifically on the character of popular political protest (riots, demonstrations, marches, and civil unrest) and its impact on the quality of civilian politics and civil society and the relevance it holds to the conduct of governance in Jamaica. An intellectual inquiry into the character of Jamaican popular protest renders this research, of necessity, an open-ended enterprise and thus intrinsically qualitative. Qualitative research instruments are most suited to this study because at its core it is an investigation of people's attitudes, values, opinions, beliefs and the feelings they hold towards the state, their fellow citizens and their community and, significantly, also of the behavioural norms and lived experiences that reflect those innate values (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003:12; Strauss and Corbin, 1998:11). Qualitative research uses multiple research methods (observation and participant observation, interviews, questionnaires, documents and the researcher's impressions and reactions) that are interactive and humanistic, increasingly involving active participation by participants and sensitivity to the participants in the study (Creswell, 2003; Myers, 1997). In the case of this study on the character of Jamaican popular protest, this qualitative process requires that I effectively enter the informants' world, and through ongoing interaction, solicit their 'perspectives and meanings' (Creswell, 1994: 161; Bryman, 1998:52; Flick 2000) on the ways in which they express their discontent about social problems, why they elect to conduct their politics the way they do and their reflexive feelings about those actions.

The study is therefore obliged to examine the political culture norms inherent within the Jamaican society which impacts on people's beliefs and attitudes about the system and ultimately determines their behaviour towards the system. It also requires a critical look at the systems and mechanisms of state governance that organize and structure the social space in which citizens operate. Here, I take into account the extent to which the quality of governance impacts upon and/or directs the kinds of behavioural norms that become manifest in political protest. The political rebellion in which Jamaican citizens participate is therefore not alienated from the role of the state and the quality of its political performance. Neither is it estranged from the political culture and values evolved over a period of time as well as the historical circumstances, which attend to such development (see Ritzer, 1996:20). This task logically begs for an approach which takes into account both subjective meanings for the actors involved in generating, living through and experiencing social protest as well as the social structures which condition such meanings and are constituted by them. Structuration theory (Giddens, 1979; 1984) represents one such approach and I will discuss this in more detail later. Suffice to say, the essence of a good qualitative research design rests on a set of procedures that are simultaneously open-ended and rigorous and that do justice to the nuance and complexity of the social situation under study (Flick, 2000). The fundamental methodological goal of this research is thus embedded in an interpretive understanding of human behaviour and social action. However, before I discuss the philosophical assumptions and theoretical orientation underlying the interpretive approach, I look at the possibility of a research design specific to studying popular protest in Jamaica.

## 3.2    TOWARDS A RESEARCH DESIGN FOR STUDYING POPULAR PROTEST IN JAMAICA.

Crafting a methodological approach for a study, according to Blaikie (1993:7) is about delineating 'how research should or does proceed. It includes discussions on how theories are generated and tested, what kind of logic is used, what criteria they have to satisfy, what theories look like and how theoretical perspectives can be related to particular research problems. A research design therefore represents the approach of the researcher

and defines his or her choice of method and the way in which these choices fit the research study. But methodological issues involve more than just the choice of technique and the mechanics of its application. What is of great significance yet perhaps least discussed is the peculiarity of the context in which these methodological tools had originally been discussed (Diani & Eyerman, 1992). Indeed, 'tools originally made applicable towards specifically defined scientific purposes are often uncritically applied in very different theoretical and empirical contexts' (Diani & Eyerman, 1992:1). It is for this reason that I attempt to examine the specific methodological issues and concerns that may be worth noting in a study of political protest in Jamaica.

As a point of departure, the study of protest is often undertaken under various labels and within different fields of analysis such as revolution, social conflict, deviance and collective behaviour (Rucht & Ohlemacher, 1992). For example, scholarly interest in researching collective action in general, and social movements and mobilization processes in particular, has grown considerably since the 1960s (Jasper, 2003; Scott, 1990; 1985; Castells, 1983; Piven & Cloward, 1977; Tarrow, 1994). This empirically-oriented research on social movements proffered new theories such as *identity* and *resource mobilization* as well as different ways of looking at citizen politics and direct citizen action. Within the Third World context, the work of Foweraker (1995), Bayat, (1997; 2000) and Escobar & Alvarez (1992) is some of the more instructive. However, despite the Caribbean's longstanding historical relationship with political rebellion, the theoretical and empirical interest in the subject remains stunted in Jamaica or, at the very least, limited to a re-investigation of protest within the context of the historical past. Notwithstanding this gap in scholarship, the extraordinary global rise in protest activities since the mid-1990s and the highly publicized nature of these events (both globally and domestically) have renewed scholarly interest in the contemporary aspects of the field as indicated by the large numbers of qualitative case studies now available (Posner, 2004; Scott, 1985, 1990; Bayat, 1997, 2000; Guha, 1997; Walton, 1997; Gurr, 1980).

Whereas, for example, comparative analyses of social movements have revealed the impact of national political systems and cultures on the development of collective action (Diani & Eyerman, 1992) and others have focused on the powerful impact of democratic citizen action and covert and overt resistance, very little scholarly attention is paid to the character and personality of contemporary political protest and its impact on the nature of citizen politics and the quality of the emergent civil society. It is with this latter aspect, within the context of Jamaica that I am preoccupied in this research. For my purposes, I adopt Rucht & Ohlemacher's (1992:77) definition of a *protest event* as 'a distinct collective action pursuing an explicit goal by the use of confrontative, disruptive and even violent means'. When I use the term protest and protest action, cycle, campaign, event or performance, I am referring to specific activities such as demonstrations, roadblocks, riots and general civil disturbance. I am interested in the dynamics of the protest act itself, the feelings it communicates and where and how it intersects with the requirements of civil action and civil discourse in the Jamaican context.

It is generally agreed that 'behaviour is a function of both the environmental situation in which actors find themselves and the psychological predispositions they bring to these situations' (Greenstein, 1969, quoted by Kavanagh, 1983:4; cf. Gurr, 1980). I am therefore obliged to evaluate the patterns of interaction, sentiment and performance that generate, sustain and rationalize violent popular protest in Jamaica. This means abstracting and interpreting the points of view of the protest participant, other citizens and the institutional agent (state/state officials) at which the protests are directed. The *protest participant* in the case of Jamaica, which I will deconstruct in greater detail in later chapters, engages in the gamut of possible actions – bearing placards, actively mounting roadblocks, shouting, screaming, bawling, throwing missiles (bottles, sticks, stones), spurting expletives, undressing (to expose nakedness), addressing the media or political official, marching and singing. The protest participant also includes those who prefer to call radio talk back programmes or write letters/articles to the newspapers. I also include in this framework other citizens (non-participants or protest observers). These individuals may be readers, listeners and viewers of media output (including journalists who report

on protest activities) and academics who analyze the dynamics and power relations at work in the social environment,  the police who monitor or suppress protests, the political representatives and other state agents and public officials who often arrive at the scene of a demonstration to appease protestors as well as spectators or by-standers who just happen to be at the scene of a protest event.

Although I use the term protest observer to refer to a bystander, it is worth noting that the bystander may also be a symbolic supporter of or covert (or passive) participant in the protect action. He or she may also wittingly or unwittingly become absorbed in the action or the mood of the event. Indeed, journalists and academics who, in their own sphere of activity and work, make claims upon the state on behalf of particular networks of citizens (such as the poor and disadvantaged) and/or engage in the debates and issues on the public's agenda have an enormous impact on protest participants and are thus much more than mere observers. Indeed, although much of the literature on popular protest and social movements tends to focus almost exclusively on the actual participants, I wish here to broaden the focus to incorporate the views, perspectives, beliefs, values and motivations of the latter group whom I describe as non-protest participants or observers on the grounds that protest in the Jamaican context plays out as a continuous interaction between participant and observer groups. The Jamaican media, for example, as I discuss in chapter 7, by virtue of their coverage (treatment) of popular protest, are implicated in the construction and performance of protest and the production of meanings and perspectives about political rebellion in Jamaica. The mutual impact of these various groups on each other is thus not to be overlooked as they each have a stake in the construction and existence of a truly civil society outfitted with civil citizens conducting civil politics.

In order to arrive at a research design for studying protest Jamaican style, I also set out to ascertain how each set of interviewees understand and interpret the nature of protest in this context, a perspective which is often automatically linked to their view of citizen politics and the quality of organized civil society more broadly. I therefore posed questions such as 'why do Jamaicans protest', 'how do citizens protest' and 'do you

approve of the actions undertaken by citizens during protest'? In order to get their perspectives on the quality of civil society and to gauge their confidence in the organized systems and institutions of citizen politics and governance, I asked interviewees to rate the performance of or give their opinion on some popular civil society groups such as, among others, the Church, the media and the recognized human rights lobby group, Jamaicans for Justice (JFJ). It is important to note here that the historical personal involvement of some of my 'protest observers' (academics, journalists, concerned citizens, police, politicians) in demonstrations and the strong allegiance of some to particular political beliefs - impact significantly on the meanings they attach to this kind of political action. Having been heavily involved in protest activities as a University student in Jamaica, but with more critical distance now as researcher, I am also implicated in the production of knowledge (see Diani & Eyerman, 1992). This is often reflected in lopsided political analyses and academic theorizing which downplays important elements such as the changing nature of citizen politics and civil society by virtue of the increasingly aggressive and violent tactics being employed by protest participants in some contexts (cf. Bayat, 1997).

In the case of Jamaica, there has been a pro-structural[18] theoretical tendency within Jamaican scholarship on citizen politics. By pro-structural, I mean an over-emphasis on structural factors such as modes of production which define social formations and direct the range of actions available to social actors. Thus, the state and the market, which structures the nature of the economy, determines employment opportunities, and/or

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[18] The historical reliance on structural explanations in Caribbean scholarship (and even media-driven political commentary) is driven by Marxist oriented political analysis and theory building and the extraordinary influence of North-American inspired political economy writings. Stone (1991) sees the tradition of Marxist-Leninism, dependency theory and anti-imperialist writings which have had a strong appeal among Third World scholars, as part of the weaknesses of the Caribbean's claim to science. It is worth noting that much of the recent scholarly work from the Caribbean have relied less on Marxist–oriented and/or anti-imperialist approaches but have instead focused on a sort of economic reductionism which privileges statist and market principles in the search for determinants of human behaviour. See Stone, C. (1991) *The Development of a Caribbean Political Science*. University of the West Indies. Kingston: Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER).

conditions levels of poverty and marginalization, have come to assume precedence in contemporary analyses and commentary of citizen action in Jamaica (see Price, 2004; Charles, 2002; Meeks, 2000; Munroe, 1999). As a context, the decade of the 1990s, which is largely marked by worldwide anti-globalization/ anti-trade protests, also saw a privileging in political science scholarship of the processes and structures that drive people to protest rather than a focus on the nature of the activity itself and its impact on the construction of real civil societies. Interestingly, due to the fear of mob violence and 'anomic democracy' (Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki, 1975, quoted by Norris, 1999), the 1960s and 1970s saw explanations for outbursts of protests carry a focus on the personality, attitudes and norms of protest participants.

The fundamental problem therefore with contemplating and rationalizing popular protest through a purely structural lens is that structuralist arguments tend to assume a far too rigid causal determinism in social life. The efficacy of human action or agency tends to get lost in the language of structure (Sewell, 1992:2). Agency here refers to individual or group abilities (intentional or otherwise) to affect their environment (McAnulla, 2002:271). In other words, the weakness of this approach lies in its overstatement of structural factors in guiding and directing human behaviour and under-stating the role of agency and praxis in also shaping those very structures. So, although a focus on the nature of the Jamaican state and the quality of its political performance, including the external factors impinging on its ability to provide good governance, offers enormous insights into the rationale for popular protest, this research is concerned to give adequate regard to the diversity of agential actions and the value frameworks that each member of the political and cultural community holds which drive them to behave in particular ways when making claims upon the state. I also account in this study for the peculiarities of the social context under which some citizens live, including citizen-inhabited sub-cultural systems operating independently of the structural power of the state with rigid rules and loyalties which affect the manner in which people within this sphere organize themselves and take collective action to defend their interests.

In this scenario, the metaphor of structure no longer implies permanence and stability and citizens are not cleverly programmed automatons who simply react to the absolute influence of structure. Rather, structure (which, here, represents the Jamaican State and social and economic structures) is not impervious to human agency, that is, the strivings for a better way of life embodied in the angry and frustrated voices which provide the motivations for popular collective action. It is these agential actions by citizens which cause structures to absorb change in the same way that the nature and quality of structure influences the types of political behaviour citizens display. One of my aims in this research is therefore to redirect attention methodologically by shifting the unit of analysis from a rigid focus on structures to individual actors. This is not to diminish the fact that a focus on structure 'has had the effect of moving social movement actors from the margins to the centre of society' (Diani & Eyerman, 1992:6). It is, however, important to reiterate that this paradigmatic shift in methodological approach is not to further oppress protest participants who often have genuine concerns, or downplay the accountability of structural factors in inducing particular behaviours. Rather, my goal is to examine critically the implications of disruptive direct (collective) action, as embodied in protest and demonstrations against the Jamaican State by citizens in pursuit of collective goals and in defence of collective ideals. I also examine the conflicts and issues that arise during these dynamic processes and their impact on the quality of citizen politics and civil society, more broadly.

Indeed, my approach resembles closely the theoretical notion of structuration (Giddens, 1979; 1984) whereby structure and agency closely interact and are mutually dependent. Here, structures shape people's practices but it is also people's practices that constitute and reproduce structure. In other words, the study recognizes that structures do enable (as well as constrain) what individuals do even while individuals or groups who are powerful or innovative enough may also affect structure and may even, in turn, lead to the transformation and reconstitution of the very structures that gave them the capacity to act (McAnulla, 2002; Sewell, 1992; Giddens, 1979; 1984). My analysis of popular protest, citizen politics and civil society therefore begins with what Stone (2002: xi) calls

a 'model of community where individuals live in a web of associations, dependencies and loyalties, and where they envision and fight for a public interest as well as their individual interests'. So rather than assume a purely structural frame of reference which forces people to act in predetermined ways, this study accounts for the circumstances and conditions that provide Jamaican citizens with their images, conceptions and expectations of the state and how those images, conceptions and expectations shape their desires and visions as well as their actions. It is through the case study method that I hone in on the peculiarities of the Jamaican context. It is therefore to the issues and dimensions of this research method that I now turn.

## 3.3   THE CASE STUDY METHOD: ISSUES AND DIMENSIONS.

Yin defines the case study as 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (1994:13). Clearly the case study design is particularly suited to this study since the objective is to examine the nature of one aspect of political behaviour (popular protest) and the political values and social norms in which they are grounded. The case study is a common qualitative method which allows for the use of multiple methods or triangulation and reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon in question. In my research into the nature of citizen politics and the quality of civil society and governance in Jamaica, I relied heavily on a wide variety of qualitative instruments - focus groups, participant observation, in-depth interviewing for gathering primary data. Secondary data was also collected from the gamut of sources – transcripts of national broadcasts by political officials, political statements, police statistics and incident reports, books, articles, taped radio and television interviews, discussion programmes, newspaper articles as well as radio and television reports and commentaries. In order to come to terms with Jamaica's centuries-old tradition of protest and resistance and the intensity and complexity of its contemporary outgrowth, no one source of evidence is likely to be sufficient (or sufficiently valid) to derive a fullest understanding of the character and dynamics of citizen politics in this context.

This multi-method or eclectic approach is therefore fundamental. The case study research design is crucial here as it allows the researcher to pull together a range of different kinds of empirical sources and substantiation, which has to be abstracted and collated to derive the best possible explanations (Gilliam, 2000). Such a research design would also need to account for sudden, unexpected changes in the social context that may challenge the conclusions drawn or, at the very least, accept that theoretical analysis of such a phenomenon is not static.  This kind of qualitative research is, in other words, required to possess what Janesick (2003:73) calls 'an elastic quality much like the dancer's spine'. Just as dance mirrors and adapts to life, she argues, 'qualitative design is adapted, changed and redesigned as the study proceeds due to the social realities of doing research among and with the living'. Yet the case study is as much about the process of inquiry about the case as it is about the product of that inquiry (Stake, 2003). The bulk of case study work, according to Stake, is done by individuals who have only an *intrinsic* interest in the case and little interest in the advance of science. Their designs aim the inquiry towards understanding what is important about that case within its own world (Stake, 2003:140). In this study, I undertake what is called an instrumental case study (although my interest in the case is also intrinsic). An instrumental case is examined mainly:

> to provide insight into an issue or redraw a generalization. The case [popular protest and demonstrations] is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else. The case is still looked at in depth, its contexts scrutinized, its ordinary activities detailed, but all because this helps the researcher pursue external interests [quality of citizen politics, civil society and governance in Jamaica]. The case may be seen as typical of other cases or not. Here the choice of case is made to advance understanding of that other interest. Because the researcher simultaneously has several interests, particular and general, there is no line distinguishing intrinsic case study from instrumental; rather a zone of combined purpose separates them (Stake, 2003:137).

My case study therefore aims to facilitate a holistic understanding of the complexities of the social phenomena under investigation (se Lincoln & Guba, 1985). But what does this mean in the context of my selected case, which is popular protest, and what it says about citizen politics and civil society in Jamaica? Here, the case study allows for an understanding of the simultaneous, multiple and interrelated political activities engaged

in by citizens, the dynamics of their interaction with each other and with official and unofficial channels of redress as well as how they confront the state regarding their concerns. Although it is important to allow the case to 'tell its own story', we cannot be sure that a case telling its own story will tell all or tell it well (Stake, 2003:143 quoting Carter, 1993; Coles, 1989). Since 'we come to know what has happened partly in terms of what others reveal as their experience' (Stake, 2003:145), this is where the critical eye of the researcher comes in to interpret and/or make sense of what the case reveals or does not reveal. Here, the case study thus relies on an interpretive ethos grounded on the premise that  interpretation, as embodied in hermeneutic analysis, is the work of thought which consists of deciphering the hidden meaning in the apparent meaning, in unfolding the levels of meaning implied in the meaning (Myers, 1997 quoting Ricoeur, 1974: xiv).

Overall, the case study design allows people to construct their own realities and arrive at their own truths based on their lived experiences and on their own terms. As the case researcher, I must, however, emerge from the social experience – the observation or the in-depth interview – to choreograph another, the research report. In other words, I am also a part of the construction of knowledge because I am obliged to construct and reconstruct the details of what I have been told and what I uncover during fieldwork - specific protest events, social processes and political activities as well as opinions and perspectives on these events, processes and activities. In this sense, according to Stake (2003:149) the case study requires:

> accurate descriptions and subjective yet disciplined interpretation, a respect and curiosity for culturally different perceptions of phenomena and empathetic representations of local settings – all blending (perhaps clumped) within a constructivist epistemology.

At the same time, the case study method is indebted to four commitments on which it finds authority – to bring expert knowledge to bear upon the phenomena studied, to round up all the relevant data, to examine rival interpretations and to ponder and probe the degree to which the findings have implications elsewhere (Yin, 1994; Stake, 2003). In other words, part of my goal here is to decipher the extent to which an in-depth look at

the case of popular protest in Jamaica may allow for analytic generalizations about citizen politics elsewhere and/or unmask new theoretical propositions about the nature and quality of civil society more broadly[19]. Before I tackle the specific issues of sampling and generalizability, it is important to examine in more detail the philosophical and theoretical assumptions which guide my attempt to make sense of the phenomenon of political protest in Jamaica.

## 3.4   INTERPRETIVISM AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM.

I begin this discussion with a caveat. Qualitative research is not a synonym for interpretive research and so qualitative research may or may not be interpretive depending on the underlying philosophical assumptions of the researcher (Myers, 1997). Qualitative research may therefore be positivist, interpretive or critical. This study thus draws on a qualitative interpretivist framework, grounded in discourse analysis and social constructionism to analyze the character of protest politics in Jamaica and how it structures and is structured by the quality of civil society and the performance of the Jamaican state. Interpretive researchers start out with the assumption that access to reality is through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings. Interpretive studies thus generally understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them (Myers, 1997:4; Denzin, 1988). I adopt and apply here as my analytical reference frame Patton's (1985:1) notion of qualitative interpretivism, which he suggests is:

> An effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting – what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings

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[19] It is to be noted that the experience of uncivil politics is by no means exclusive to Jamaica, but is a generalised global phenomenon. The plethora of intensely hostile citizen mobilisations across both developed and developing countries in 2006 – Solomon Islands, East Timor, France, Nepal – provides ample evidence of this. This is because disruptive social protest remains a forceful resource especially for minorities, the economically and socially-disadvantaged and other groups alienated from the established order. As a consequence, this case study on Jamaica is useful in coming to terms with the international dimension of this new pattern of citizen politics.

are, what the world looks like in that particular setting….The analysis strives for depth and understanding.

The emergence of overly aggressive modes of protest and demand-making and the rise in influence of rogue actors in the local community are two aspects of the complex changes in the management and negotiations of power currently underway in Jamaica. The interpretive approach represents an attempt to transform the way in which Jamaican researchers think about and conduct research on civilian politics and civil society. It carries a powerful appeal in this study because to examine the *character* of popular protest immediately lends itself to personal beliefs, attitudes, values and interpretation. In other words, the researcher using the interpretive approach can never assume or achieve a value-neutral stance but is always implicated in the phenomena being studied. There is no access to reality here unmediated by language and preconception (Bryman, 2004; Silverman, 1993). It is on this premise of subjectivity and interpretation that I employ as my theoretical starting point the ideas of social constructionism.

### 3.4.1    Social Constructionism

Social constructionism radically challenges the positivist hegemony of objective fact and objective reality, that is, the view that conventional knowledge is based upon objective, unbiased observation of the world. Social constructionism then operates within an ontology that does not recognize the fact/value dichotomy and instead focuses on the different meanings with which our worlds have become invested (Burr, 1995). From this perspective, popular protest does not exist independently of the meanings people attach to it or the way it is socially constructed. It also cannot exist outside the existing social practices, processes and meanings that are operative in the Jamaican society, including values, ideas, culture, politics and institutions. Social constructionism is valuable to this study into the character of contemporary popular protest and the quality of citizen politics and civil society in Jamaica because it is based on the premise that our understandings of ourselves are constructions rather than objective descriptions, and as it is human beings who have built these constructions, then it is (at least in principle)

possible to re-construct ourselves in ways which might be more meaningful for us (Burr, 1998).

Constructions represent 'the efforts of people to make sense of their situations, out of the state of affairs in which they find themselves. They are interpretations based primarily on experience - to 'see it with my own eyes' or to 'hear it with my own ears' is the best evidence that one can muster to demonstrate to him or herself the validity of his or her constructions' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:70). At the same time, constructionism contains a relative quality whereby social phenomena and their meanings are continually being constructed and re-constructed (revised) by social actors through social interaction as they engage with the world they are interpreting. Social phenomena are produced through:

> the [social] interaction of a 'constructor' with information, contexts, settings, situations and other constructors (not all of whom may agree) using a process that is rooted in the previous experience, belief systems, values, fears, prejudices, hopes, disappointments and achievements of the constructor (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:143).

Indeed, constructionism is rooted in the notion that 'the world and the objects in the world may be in themselves meaningless; yet they are our partners in the generation of meaning [and that] objectivity and subjectivity need to be brought together and held together indissolubly' (Crotty, 1998: 44). It is fair to say then that the world is being constituted in one way or the other as people talk, write and argue it. How Jamaican citizens therefore construct and ultimately re-present the social phenomena of popular protest is crucial to the nature of our knowledge about the nature of citizen politics in this context and the way civil society may be understood. Of course, 'social constructionism provides us with little guidance for how we should choose a course of action, what 'discourses' we should support, which marginal voices we should allow to speak and this leads to a frustrating impotence' (Burr, 1998:16). It is worth noting, however, that as the researcher is not objectively situated within the qualitative research context and is instead intrinsically implicated in the production of knowledge, he or she

will advance his or her own (hopefully not uncritical) interpretation of the flow of events.

As I argued previously, value-free political phenomenon is impossible, and if the goal is to explore, with some profundity, people's experiences, practices, values and attitudes and to establish their meaning for the actors involved, then the empirical political researcher is obliged to honour (although not uncritically) people's social constructions. For example, my own participation in protests and demonstrations enhanced my awareness, knowledge and sensitivity to the challenges faced by groupings of citizens within the context of seemingly unbendable administrative or bureaucratic structures. However, my exposure to tertiary education and my fidelity to particular standards of behaviour (legality, tolerance, discipline) influence the perspectives I hold regarding citizen conduct. Although every effort is made to ensure fairness, these biases may shape the way I view or understand the data and the way I interpret the experiences, beliefs and opinions of others. Indeed, as Creswell (2004:182) suggests, the qualitative researcher 'systematically reflects on who he or she is in the inquiry and is sensitive to his or her personal biography and how it shapes the study'. This introspection and acknowledgment of biases, values and interests (or reflexivity) is in recognition that 'the personal self [is] inseparable from the research self' and represents 'honesty and openness to research, acknowledging that all inquiry is laden with values' (Mertens, 2003 quoted by Creswell, 2004:182). Many social constructivists emphasize the role of language, text and discourse – verbal, written, visual and performative – in the construction of the social world. It is therefore upon the premise of text – its uses and effects –that I examine the importance of discourse analysis as method of research in this study.

### 3.4.2   Discourse Analysis

Fairclough (2003:124) identifies discourses as 'ways of representing aspects of the world – the processes, relations and structures of the material worlds, the 'mental world' of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth, and the social world'. Of course, particular aspects of the world may be represented differently, so he argues that we are generally in the

position of having to consider the relationship between different discourses. In other words, 'different discourses are different perspectives on the world, and they are associated with different relations people have to the world, which in turn depends on their positions in the world, their social and person identities, and the social relationships in which they stand to other people' (ibid, 2003). Discourse analysis, then, is based upon the assumption that 'language is an irreducible part of social life, dialectically interconnected with other elements of social life, so that social analysis and research always has to take account of language' (Fairclough, 2003:2). It is clear that Fairclough's work on discourse, strongly influenced by the work of Foucault (1972), tends to emphasize the political nature of discourse analysis, the struggles surrounding meaning and the interconnectedness of power and language. Here, language analysis is linked to social theory and is seen as a forceful social practice which sometimes produces, confronts, engages and changes hegemonic systems and processes. In other words, discourse analysis helps us to reconcile the connections between the use of language and the exercise of power (Fairclough, 1995:209).

Discourses are therefore not analyzed in the abstract but their sense or meaning derives from their situated use. All of this data are filtered through personal lenses - people's experience, feelings and actions - that are themselves situated in specific socio-political and historical moments. It is clear then that in this study, our ideas about what is desirable behaviour, the value choices we make and how we choose to act in particular circumstances are shaped by education, persuasion and the general process of socialization (Stone, 2002; Stone, 1992). Discourse analysis is therefore best suited for this study because it seeks to understand people in their social, economic and cultural contexts, how they respond to dynamic, complex and often sudden changes in their circumstances within these contexts and the way in which language in all its embodiments operates to create, recreate and maintain social realities. This means relying on strong interpretive skills and the ability to draw together many diverse bits of information, whether negative or positive, to present a defensible portrayal of the social reality under investigation. This type of research inquiry, I submit, is significant as

Jamaica's experience with disruptive and violent citizen politics have highlighted the dangers of uncritical investigation of behavioural patterns viz. a. viz. the structural power of the state.

## 3.5 SAMPLING CONSIDERATIONS.

Although the issues that attend the notion of sampling are invariably encountered in quantitative research, it is one of the more significant issues to be confronted when designing even a qualitative research project (Merriam, 1998; Sarantakos, 1993). This is because sampling influences the trustworthiness of research findings. Trustworthiness in this case is the ability of the researcher to persuade his or her audience 'that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 290). It has been suggested that in order to increase the credibility of data findings and better understand social reality, multiple sources and respondents must be selected from a diverse population (Mayoux, 2002: 2; Gergen & Gergen, 2000; Selltiz et al., 1976). However, as Arber (1993:71) argues, 'where the researcher's aim is to generate theory and a wider understanding of social processes or social actions, the representativeness of the sample may be of less importance'. Having accepted this position, I adopted a more flexible research design which allowed me to not only identify and analyse the Jamaican case, but also ensure that my empirical findings contain the potential for generalizability to a broader, Third World context. Although there are peculiarities in terms of individual and institutional norms and behaviour that are specific to Jamaica, given the extent to which violence increasingly mars civilian politics throughout the developed and developing world, there are huge lessons to be learned from the Jamaican case. Secondly, as the units of analysis in this study encase the individual, community (civil society) and the state, it is important to situate the site of the study both geographically as well as institutionally.

### 3.5.1 The Site of the Study

I focus mainly on the urban and rural Jamaican community as the main research sites. The city of Kingston (population, 660,000), for example, embodies the complexities of

everyday urban life in Jamaica. It contains a varied mix of interests, values, ideologies, contrasting socio-political and economic conditions and, importantly, is most often playing host to the most energetic, if not most violent, political action by citizens. I call particular attention to Kingston's inner city communities, particularly those labelled garrisons (see chapter 8). I examine the kind of organization, culture, political values and attitudes as well as interests that have evolved over time within these areas and how these norms have served to influence the type and character of citizen politics undertaken here. For example, the epicentre of crime in Jamaica takes place within the confines of these materially disadvantaged communities (Harriot, 2000; 2003). As a result, the sternest policing and state imposed violence tends to occur here, which sets the tone for violent protests over controversial police shootings and/or alleged police killings. It is also here that rogue citizen-actors called dons (see my discussion of this phenomenon in chapter 8) assume autocratic control, install their own (outlaw) system of community governance and directly and indirectly influence the kinds and character of the political actions undertaken by citizens resident here. I also incorporate in my analysis 'outer' Kingston (those who reside not in the 'inner city').

I take account of not only their own political norms but the opinions and perspectives they hold about citizen politics conducted by folks located in the lower socio-economic strata of the Jamaican society. Given the historical stratification of the Jamaican society based on colour, class, race, gender and status (Stone, 1980; cf. Hope, 2004; Gray 2004), the study assumes a conscious awareness of how this distribution of power may influence how different groups define protest, interpret the actions of protestors and view the quality of civil society more broadly. I also include in the research field the concerns and actions of rural residents in parishes such as St. Catherine, St. James and St. Thomas. This is essential as popular protest in Jamaica is by no means a solely urban phenomenon. Indeed, protest activity (especially over inadequate provision of social services) is perhaps more frequent in rural areas given the wide range of their concerns. A focus on this geographical site allows me to draw pertinent comparisons about the nature of political action in rural as opposed to urban Jamaica, which in turn leads to important insights into

the political values, attitudes and norms which guide the behaviour of rural residents and the extent to which they differ from those concentrated in urban communities.

### 3.5.2   The Sample

Although the research site (as outlined above) is carefully delineated, the population of interest in this study is still fairly diverse. Before I explain the rationale behind my choice sample, I give a summary outline of the participants. The following sample represents a broad spectrum of Jamaican citizens at all levels of the society (from the state level to civil society). I have grouped the selected participants in the following distinct categories[20]:

**Table 3.1 – Sample of Interviewees[21]**

> **'Informal People':** uninstitutionalized; unemployed or self-employed) people - taxi-drivers; political activists/followers, students, vendors; hustlers; farmers; shopkeepers gangsters.
> **Community/Civil Groups** – Church leaders/members; human rights activists; Youth group members.
> **Professionals (Employed Sector**) – Lawyers, Public Relations Executives, Graphic Artists, Urban Planners, Teachers/University Lecturers, Police Officers, Security Guards.
> **Political Officials** – Cabinet Ministers (Minister of Justice), Members of Parliament, Heads of Political Party affiliate groups.
> **Media Practitioners** – News Editors, Reporters, Talk-Show hosts (radio & television), commentators, Radio disc jockeys and announcers (male and female; older/younger).

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[20] This categorization does not mean that participants only spoke strictly from their own sphere of knowledge. To the contrary, some participants played multiple roles and so were able to respond to the research themes from a personal, professional and political perspective. For example, I interviewed a cab-driver who hails from one of Kingston's most volatile inner city communities. He attends (orthodox Christian) Church regularly yet he calls himself a Rastafarian. The Rastas in Jamaica by and large reject the teachings (though not the fundamental values) of Christianity while maintaining highly radical views regarding the state system which they have given the biblical label Babylon. The conflicting ideological stimulus which motivates this respondent had to be taken in account. At the same time, this overlapping of roles is not necessarily problematic, at least from the standpoint that, by virtue of wearing several caps, these respondents were able to bring the diversity of their experiences to bear on the issues discussed. At the same time, I was aware that the caps people wear sometimes conflict thereby impinging on the coherence of their narratives.

[21] Although most interviewees did not seek anonymity, I have elected not to identify them by name. Instead, I employed the symbol PN throughout the thesis to refer to Participant Number. Hence, the interviewees are labelled PN1, PN2 etc. In cases, such as PN18*b*, where I use an italicized letter, it is to distinguish between two speakers in a focus group setting.

Given the nature of the study, it became appropriate to select a research sample on the basis of 'your own knowledge of the population, its elements and the nature of the research aims, in short based on the researcher's judgment and the purpose of the study' (Babbie, 1995:113). I employed both purposive and snowball sampling techniques to identify the participants involved in this study. Purposive or judgmental sampling is really a conscious effort to select subjects who seem to meet the study's needs (Baker, 1999:138). These non-probability sampling approaches provide the researcher with the capacity to actively select the participant relevant to the research design and to discover, understand and gain more insight on issues crucial to the study (Patton, 1990; Merriam, 1998). The initial selection of participants for this study was purposive, based on my own personal relationships with individuals who have in the past been involved heavily in protest activity, public initiatives or who either display support for activist causes or are known commentators on matters of public interest.

In addition, I undertook an extensive literature review on the nature of governance and the current condition of civil society viz. a viz. the structural power of the state and how citizen politics (particularly popular protest) in Jamaica is constituted or configures itself within this process[22]. From that process, I was able to clearly identify various respondents at multiple levels of the society who could explicate the current conditions that drive protest and influence social order in Jamaica, as well as to make sense of the dynamic processes of change (in values, politics, culture) that are taking place in the country. I was aware however that popular protest, which although encompassing cultural forms of resistance such as music and performance, mainly means street demonstrations and blockades in the Jamaican context and takes place episodically and largely spontaneously. As such, there were no organized lists of protestors and very few officially recognized protest lobbies (e.g. human rights lobby group Jamaicans for Justice) available to be

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[22] See my theoretical discussion in chapters 2 and 5 where I deal substantively and extensively with the manner in which popular protest, civil society and the performance of the state intersect in Jamaica.

interviewed. In this scenario, it is unlikely that a researcher will be on the spot[23] when a protest occurs. Indeed, in the context of Jamaica, there are no notices posted and rarely are there predictable signs that suggest that a demonstration will occur at a given time.

The snowball sampling method became crucial as a springboard to other potential participants, who could be either protest participants or non-participants, including concerned citizens with general opinions about the conduct of civilian politics and quality of state governance in Jamaica. This approach usually requires the researcher to make initial contact with a small group of people who are deemed relevant to the research topic. These respondents are then used to designate other potential informants who subsequently nominate other respondents and so on (Bryman, 2004; Patton, 1990; Sarantakos, 1993). Since the nature of this technique is inherently subjective, its reliability and representativeness was of some concern to me. For instance, snowballing automatically lends itself to a certain bias and I found that some respondents tended to nominate a set of interconnected people whose ideology or socio-cultural and political frame of reference is complementary to theirs[24]. I found this tendency strongest among media practitioners in Jamaica who frequently nominated their colleagues and members of the intelligentsia who stuck with those persons within their own (professional and

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[23] On February 13, 2004, while conducting an interview in a middle class community in Upper St. Andrew (way above mainland Kingston), a breaking news was reported on the radio suggesting that a violent protest was ensuing in the Downtown Kingston business district, following a controversial shooting by the police. Missiles were being thrown and police vehicles were set ablaze. Given the spontaneity of the protest and the tense, volatile context in which it had occurred, it was impossible and dangerous to have presented myself at this research site. I nevertheless made that protest the subject of further interviews and interrogated media reportage and subsequent commentary and public opinion in order to gauge people's feelings and attitudes towards this citizen action.

[24] Chevannes (1995) makes reference to what he calls the 'Barnes bias' during his use of the snowballing sampling technique in his ethnographic study of social origins of the Rastafari movement in Jamaica. Brother Barnes was Chevannes' first informant who rapidly mobilized his colleagues thereby extending the network of potential interviewees. However, the problem was that the informants essentially became *Barnes' network* (1995, p. x). Chevannes writes that his reliance on Barnes' network does not invalidate the data but cautions against faulty generalizing. See Chevannes, B. (1995) *Rastafari, Roots and Ideology*. New York: Syracuse University Press. (Refer to Introductory Chapter).

social class) rank. Fortunately, this tendency for sampling bias became less of a problem because of my awareness of it and my request for interviews with persons of lower socio-economic status. Through the agency of one political activist as well as a beat reporter with 'connections' and intricate knowledge of the inner city, I was put on to several persons who could speak eloquently about the way of life in the slums and their attitudes and perspectives regarding the cause for violent protest and citizen action in these communities.

The snowball approach also led to me engage with some Jamaican entertainers whose work predominantly deals with social commentary and 'protest music'[25].  It is worth noting also that despite their enormous wealth and improved social status, many of these participants grew up among the disadvantaged underclass and have maintained very strong emotional connections with and partiality for the concerns of the poor and marginalized. As such, I found they provided comments informed by an awareness of multiple perspectives. I constantly refined and adjusted my questions in order to fill gaps in the data or to look for specific bits of data in order to shed light on the emerging theory (Charmaz, 2006).

## 3.6    REFLECTIONS ON DATA GATHERING -- THE PROCEDURES

I used several steps to secure and conduct formal interviews. Firstly, I communicated with the participants via telephone and then sent an information pack (See Appendix A) to their electronic mailbox. The information pack briefed the potential participant on the nature of the study, solicited their willingness to participate (see example of consent form in Appendix B) and outlined their rights and privileges as a participant. My preliminary

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[25] It is now almost a truism that Jamaican music, which emerged organically within the Jamaican society, has always been a reaction to this society, a by-product of it or a violation of all it holds dear. The specific empirical boundaries of this study (the character of street protest and demonstrations as an insight in the quality of citizen politics and civil society in Jamaica), did not allow me to elucidate the enormous and powerful role of reggae/dancehall music as popular protest and account for its potential as part of the construction and /or transformation of civil society in Jamaica. The significance of the study is not limited or diminished by this omission but this subject is worth future scholarly investigation and research.

contact also allowed me to discuss or clarify any issues of contention, request permission to audio-tape the interview and establish a convenient date, time and venue for the interview to be conducted. Reading the information pack was not the general course of action taken by my participants. In fact, most participants tended to care very little about formal procedures such as signing consent forms or reading letters and information packs. This level of informality is not unusual in the Jamaican context where orality (and aurality) is the culturally preferred mode of exchanging information. More often than not, I employed a very conversational, interactive interviewing technique even while I still asked direct questions and, in instances, probed for further responses. Further, as informality and story telling is the fare of all social classes in the Jamaican society (again this is a legacy of an inherited oral-aural tradition carried over from the period of slavery), the open-ended, unstructured and conversational interview is often privileged by researchers conducting qualitative research in this context. (I discuss this aspect in greater detail below).

Suffice to say, having worked in the field of journalism as a news reporter and producer and within the Jamaican entertainment industry as a publicist for several years, I was constantly aware that if I presented myself as too formal especially to the ordinarily (informal) Jamaican, the research would appear to them as overly official and hence they would speak less freely, become uncomfortable or act in a manner which suggests that they were being judged according to the quality of their English language and the extent of their eloquence. Given the heavy colour, race, class and status hierarchies at work in the society, the interviewer in Jamaica (whether journalist or researcher) must be able to speak the language of the interviewees, convey respect and essentially make them feel comfortable in their own skin in order to successfully derive the depth and/or information-rich data he/she seeks.  I tried to allay these potential problems by encouraging participants to speak in the language they prefer and, in instances, adopting and mirroring the same informality or casualness of speech and mannerism that they did. Most informal people (ordinary folks) responded in the Jamaican vernacular (called patois) while the more educated and articulate participants stuck to the more formal

English Language. Of course, as is the norm in Jamaica, most participants instinctively moved back and forth between these idioms depending on the nature of the information or how animated the story was that they were telling.

### 3.6.1    Accessing and Interviewing Participants

Gaining access to participants can be one of the frustrating challenges of conducting fieldwork. I therefore had to become creative and obliging, taking into account the informality of the Jamaican way of life and conducting almost all my interviews in the setting of the participants' institutional location - offices, media houses, police stations, on the street, parties and recording studios. For example, one more than one occasion, I had to attend an entertainment event (cocktail party, artiste meeting, watch a song recording done, which incidentally took several hours) before the space and time was allotted to accommodate our discussion. On another occasion, I travelled around the city of Kingston for several hours in order for my interviewee (a cabdriver) to facilitate our discussion. Gaining access to participants whose institutional locale is the inner city proved to be the most problematic. This is because inner city communities in Jamaica are known sites of criminality, including intense gang violence and therefore tend to be unsafe for persons who do not reside there. Although I had garnered, through both formal interviews and informal conversations, the perspectives of poor Jamaicans, the point of view of the inner city resident was significant to the study. This is because it is here that some of the most violent, disruptive and aggressive protests by Jamaican citizens take place, mainly over alleged police brutality and controversial killings. It is also here that the response of the state, especially through its security orders, to popular protest most clashes with the desire for *civil* protest and *civil* society.

Further, it is within the inner city that intense material deprivation, impoverishment, garrisonization, extra-legality and political corruption so compromises state governance that rogue citizen-actors called dons have been allowed to masquerade as civic-actors and install problematic values and political behaviour. Undertaking any kind of research or interviewing within the slums, outside the boundaries of journalist covering a story is

fraught with risk and usually requires obtaining permission from the local area leader or don who either endorses the research and/or implicitly or explicitly decides whether residents are allowed to speak openly about their community and its politics. The voice of the inner city resident was, however, not silenced or absent from the study. Through personal contacts acquired through the snowball network, I was able to speak at length with persons who were born in, reside or maintain a presence within particular communities. I also attended a very popular dancehall (music) event – *Passa Passa* on the outskirts of the volatile ghettoes of Tivoli Gardens and employed the participant observation technique to get a sense of the general behaviour and attitudes of residents within their own spatial environment. I supplemented this with informal (unrecorded conversations) with several self-styled 'bad-man' (gangsters) about the organization, regulations and politics of their community. This conversation was a delicate process. Due to known instances of reprisal attacks on inner city residents who dare to speak openly or give information (particularly to the police and increasingly to journalists) about extra-legal happenings in their communities, an acute level of what I describe as 'informer-phobia'[26] has been consolidated in this context.

It is worth noting that my role as a former journalist might have influenced the tenor of the responses given by some participants. For instance, although my questions were non-threatening, one human rights lobbyist tended to assume a defensive stance and appeared to view me more as a journalist asking probing and suspicious questions rather than as an academic researcher seeking clarification and an elucidation of the meanings and interpretations it attaches to popular protest and citizen politics in Jamaica. Although I accept responsibility for failing to put this interviewee at ease, this stance is understandable and not uncommon. The Jamaican media and public opinion in general has maintained heavy criticism of human rights groups and these organizations have been forced to defend themselves in the quest to maintain their credibility and effectiveness.

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[26]Informer–phobia is a fear of being classified as an 'informer'. I will discuss the institutionalization of informer-phobia in the inner city and the wider cultural distaste for dispensing relevant information to the authorities in Jamaica in chapter 8.

Suffice to say, the transposition of my role as researcher for an alternate or previous identity (news journalist) had the unfortunate result of disallowing candid and perhaps more subjective (read as personal) perspectives from some participants.

Tied to this is the strong allegiance that some interviewees have to either of Jamaica's main political parties, the Jamaica Labour Party and the People's National Party and the fact that they felt the need to both assume and defend political positions. These participants agreed to speak freely and openly only after being convinced of my own non-partisanship and being persuaded that that my research would not be detrimental to Jamaica's image overseas. The opposite also proved to be true. The desire to please the researcher forced some respondents to offer responses they deem suitable or to provide uncritical commentary as if somehow this were a test or a penalty was attached to unsuitable responses. For example, one participant invited me to: 'now *you* give me *your* opinion' as if to match my opinion against his or to query the extent to which his responses were right or wrong. Finch (1984) writes extensively on this matter of interviewees soliciting the opinion of the researcher in order to calibrate the suitability, pertinence or correctness of the responses being offered.

### 3.6.2   The Interview

Interviews 'capture the multitude of subjects' views of a theme so that the researcher comes to see the respondents' complex social world' (Kvale in Baker, 1999:220-225; cf. Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Merriam et. al, 2002). I chose to employ the in-depth interview approach as my main data gathering technique as it allowed me to explore people's subjective experiences and the meaning that they attach to those experiences. In-depth interviews are guided conversations utilizing open-ended questions and various forms of (informal) probing to facilitate a discussion of issues in a semi-structured or unstructured manner (Devine 2002 quoting Lofland and Lofland, 1984:9). I conducted thirty in-depth, open–ended, semi-structured interviews and three focus or group interviews during the months of January to June 2004. These interviews were taped recorded and lasted for approximately one hour, although several exceeded the hour.  My goal throughout my all

interviews was to garner detailed descriptions, feelings, attitudes and perspectives regarding the character of protest and demonstrations as well as the about the performance of the Jamaican state which motivates and rationalizes this type of political behaviour consistently witnessed in this context.

I also inquired about specific protest incidents that sparked national interest, the extent and quality of the response from the state toward protest activity generally and, significantly, the quality of organized (official) civil society in creating a buffer between citizen and the state. This was important as I was concerned to explore the extent to which the absence or decline of credible, influential and effective civil society groups, initiatives and organizations in Jamaica  have resulted in the 'man in the street turning to his own devices' (Munroe, 1999: ix) by way of violent, disruptive protest and demonstrations. Increasingly aggressive protest activity is also reflective of the changing political culture (including behaviour, norms, attitudes and values) at work in the Jamaican society (see Hope, 2006; Stone, 1991; cf. Gray, 2004).  My goal in this study and throughout the fieldwork was to allow my participants to engage in the process of rethinking how Jamaicans perform protest and to question whether the existing approach has served them well.

### 3.6.3    Assembling Secondary Data

Given the nature of this research project – an assessment of the character of popular protest and civil society in Jamaica – it became imperative to collect and analyze both primary and secondary data. Primary data in this case represents the data which I generated through interviews, focus groups as well as direct and/or participant observation. Secondary data refers to materials (documents, archival records, audio-visual output) already generated and archived by other sources. I use the word 'text' to refer to the gamut of written and audio-visual materials that became relevant to this study - books, journal articles, speeches, reports, surveys, newspaper articles, news items and commentary, police statistics and incident reports, speeches, political statements, reports, interview transcripts, video footage (of demonstrations and riots) radio and television

reports and broadcasts, talk radio discussions and taped conversations, recordings of song/performance and pictures. The interrogation of text is important in corroborating evidence derived from other sources and they tend to specify issues in greater detail than interviews can. The data provided from these sources may also be different from or not available in spoken form. Texts also endure and thus give important historical insight (Burns, 2000; Hodder, 1998). Further, 'as elements of social events, texts have causal effects – i.e. they bring about changes in our knowledge (we can learn things from them), our beliefs, our attitudes, values and so forth' (Fairclough, 2003:8). The question in this regard becomes not how truthful the account is but how useful it maybe in understanding and perhaps in doing something about the subject under investigation – uncivil protest in Jamaica.

As is often the case elsewhere in the world, the collection of secondary materials in Jamaica can be a tedious affair. The archival database or record-keeping systems in many government and non-governmental organizations are, more often than not, archaic or non-existent. Indeed, there does not appear to be a strict policy in Jamaica concerning making documents and records available to members of the public. Access to information thus tends to be the sole domain of the officials heading particular organizations or departments and the persistence of the researcher. While in Jamaica, I collected data from the Police Statistics Department, the Ministries of National Security, Water, and Justice, the office of the Prime Minister (OPM), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), University of the West Indies library, Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies - SALISES, Jamaicans for Justice (JFJ) (human rights lobby group), Citizens' Action for Free and Fair Elections (CAFFE), the People's National Party headquarters (PNPHQ), *The Jamaica Observer*, *Jamaica Gleaner*, Radio Jamaica Communications Group (RJR), HOT 102 FM, Power 106 FM, Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), Caribbean Institute of Media and Communications (CARIMAC) library, the Broadcasting Commission, Creative Production and Training Centre (CPTC), Jamaica Information Service (JIS) – the government's official news agency), the Rural

Electrification Programme (REP), Flames Productions, Penthouse Recording Studios and Gagamel Studios.

The data I gathered dealt specifically with conventional and unconventional political participation and behaviour. For example, I was able to gather a printed and updated set of crime statistics and the police yearly incident reports of protests and demonstrations. Sadly, due to a glitch in its database, the usual highly detailed incident reports of citizen protest (mainly roadblocks) since 1999 are no longer available. This has proven problematic as the mere recording of the total number of protests per annum since 2000 does not provide the sort of details on the character and nature of protest activity that are indispensable to this study. This, however, does not make the data any less valuable since I was able to supplement these statistics with detailed reportage from Jamaican media sources such as the *Jamaica Gleaner* and the *Jamaica Observer* as well as radio reportage. In addition, I got access to the incident reports for the years prior to 2000 from which I can draw reliable conclusions based on certain patterns of behaviour and their degrees of consistency and/or variability. I also gathered tape clips, video footage, news reports, discussions and interviews that dealt specifically with the subject under investigation – protest, crime, general citizen behaviour norms as well as opinion, attitude and commentary on said issues from news reporters, editors and media libraries.

I also incorporate vital historical materials and texts (looking at Jamaica's historical past) particularly the narratives, perspectives and rationale for violent protest over time to see the extent to which the contemporary dispensation represents continuity or change. David Scott (1999), in examining post-colonialism in Jamaica and the movement towards the present historical moment, which he labels 'post-coloniality', argues for a stronger and more definitive link between the historical present and the historical past in attempts to understand and explain social reality. The current nature of political protest and citizen politics more broadly is therefore not alienated from but conditioned by the historical slave rebellions for emancipation and the subsequent construction and socio-political development of the Jamaican society. These, as I discuss in chapter 4, in significant ways,

have helped determine the character of citizen politics and the emerging civil society. Although primary data (interviews, focus groups, observation) garnered from empirical investigations often assumes precedence over secondary data (documents) in most social science research, I do not privilege one over the other here. My interviews, focus groups and direct observations have had equal bearing on my findings and conclusions as documentary and audio-visual (media-driven output).

Given the episodic nature of street demonstrations in Jamaica and the mediated avenue (radio, television) through which popular protest captures public attention, I relied heavily on coverage, reports, facts, narratives and information from the popular press. The dearth of contemporary analyses on this mode of political participation in Jamaica has served to effectively elevate media outputs as strategic and vital sources of knowledge. The increasing and widespread use of this data source by Jamaican academics confirms this fact. The subjective nature of journalistic reportage is undeniable, so I did not try to escape it. However, for academic clarity and analytic accuracy, I have supplemented and cross-checked the visual and textual data with personal interviews and discussions as well as with some of the current analytic work exploring the issue of political behaviour (Gray, 2004; Charles, 2002; Meeks, 2000; Munroe, 1999) in Jamaica more broadly. The images that I have used as illustrations throughout this study depict various representations of protest activity. They are meant to convey both *internal narrative* – the story that the image communicates, as well as *external narrative* – the social context that produced the image and the social relations within which the image is embedded at the moment of viewing (Banks, 2001:1-12). While visual images are sometimes meant to be read at only the most superficial level (Banks, 2001), the Jamaican media, as media everywhere, employ arresting images of some aspect of popular protest, and social disorder more generally, to capture the public's attention and to subliminally invoke particular messages. The popularity of television news broadcasts of demonstrations appears to derive from this strategic manipulation of information. Indeed, protests and demonstrations, at one time, seemed to have formed the main corpus of television news output engendering intense competition between two television stations.

In my attempt to make sense of the complexities of contemporary protest activity in Jamaica, I therefore foregrounded media output and sought the meanings that people attach to it. Through a critical interpretive look at the visual images (TV footage, press pictures) of protest activity and with an awareness of the theoretical attributes which constitute a civil and uncivil society (see Table 2.1, chapter 2), I asked the following questions of my participants: Do protestors behave differently when the media is present at the site of a demonstration?; who are these protestors?; how do they behave (what exactly do they do)?; why are they doing it?; are you satisfied with how media has covered protest?; (if not) how would you have preferred to have it covered? These types of questions were analytically significant as they placed media at the centre of political behaviour and showed effectively how this interaction between protest participants and the (television) news journalist influence the manner in which Jamaican citizens elect to conduct their politics. On a much wider scale, I took into account the general output by Jamaican media, especially radio because of its increasing popularity, 'in your face-ness' and widespread usage as an avenue of complaint and debate. The goal was to show the extent to which media itself has helped to shape the current values, attitudes and norms at work in the Jamaican society.

## 3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

The sources of data in field research – observations, texts and interviews – all share in common a focus on language and so, in keeping with the interpretative theme, I focused on language and employed one form of discourse analysis (text analysis) as my main method of interpreting and analyzing the data. Text may be written or visual material or spoken conversations which, once transcribed, can be deconstructed. This is what Fairclough (1992) refers to as formal discourse analysis. It is important to recognise that texts are open to multiple interpretations. Indeed, 'as the text is reread in different contexts, it is given new meanings, often contradictory and always socially embedded' (Hodder, 1998:111; see also Fairclough, 1992). 'Text and context are in a continual state of tension, each defining and redefining the other, saying and doing things differently through time' (Hodder, 1998:112). Newspaper reportage of protest may thus differ from

television coverage as well as from personal perspectives recorded in interview transcripts and from the statistical evidence and police reports on protest incidents. Indeed, as one interviewee told me (PN1- see appendix) 'when you see a thing happen and you hear it pon de [on the] news, its two different things'. My aim is therefore to explore multiple and conflicting voices as well as differing and interacting perspectives and interpretations. I now outline the ways in which I attempted to make sense of the data, a process which Denzin (1998:314) calls the 'art and politics of interpretation'.

### 3.7.1   Analysing the Data

My goal in this research was to achieve a contextual, situated understanding of popular protest in Jamaica, hence I attempted to uncover the meanings particular types of protest carry for those involved. I then described, based on my interpretation and that of my interviewees, what such knowledge may demonstrate about civilian politics in the Jamaican society. I then cross-referenced this knowledge to the data provided through documents and other texts. In other words, I constructed a system of analysis dependent on *thick* descriptions and *thick* interpretations. The importance of intertextuality is significant here. Intertextuality refers to:

> how texts draw upon, incorporate, recontextualize and dialogue with other texts. It is also partly a matter of the assumptions and presuppositions people make when they speak and write. What is [therefore] 'said' in a text is always said against the background of what is 'unsaid' – what is made explicit is always grounded in what is left implicit' (Fairclough, 2003:17).

The newspaper articles, reports, commentary, speeches, recorded conversations, police reports, statistics, visual footage and observation all form an intertextual chain with the actual performance of protest on the street because elements of each are interpreted and incorporated and represented within the study and serve to either confirm perspectives and/or extend the interpretation of the protest phenomenon. Of course, the process of making sense of this enormous mountain of data did not just happen. Given the vast quantity of data - documents and interview transcripts (some 350 typed pages) that I had to confront, it was necessary to code the data according to themes. I read through the hundreds of pages of transcripts several times as well as other numerous documents –

speeches, newspaper reports and commentary, police incident reports on protest activities as well as other texts relating to the subject. I highlighted, using different colour markers, various themes, some overlapping, others contrasting. The following table outlines the initial narrative themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data:

**Table 3. 2 – Narrative Themes**

| Main Themes | Sub-themes |
|---|---|
| – Protest Incentives and Rationale | – Justice, injustice, survival |
| – Protest Descriptions | – Uncivil protest tactics |
| – Attitudes to violent protest/peaceful protest | – Values and norms |
| – (Perspectives on) state response | – State performance and accountability |
| – Politicians and protest | – Partisan politics and its impact on protest |
| – Media and protest | – Impact of media coverage and treatment |
| | – Talk show as protest |
| – The state/quality of civil society | – Performance of official civil society groups |

Continuous sifting, deliberation and reflection on the data allowed me to recognise significant trends and patterns in the data and isolate related themes. For example, in identifying the sub-themes above, I unearth the possible linkages between feelings of injustice and the need to survive (poverty) with the inclination to stage protest. How the Jamaican state responds to the sources of protest also possibly influences the frequency and brand of political rebellion undertaken. I also identified potential explanatory linkages between partisan politics and the character of protest as well as the impact of media coverage and treatment of protest on the kinds of protest performance assumed by Jamaican citizen-protestors. After several readings of the data which fall within the main clusters, I discovered the multiple uses and emphasis on certain words and expressions which facilitated greater understanding of the complexities of protest activity in this political context and thus thick descriptions in the writing-up phase. For example, the notions 'justice' and 'injustice' were common themes ascribed as the rationale for protest by my interviewees.

I therefore placed these within the cluster labelled *protest incentives and rationale* and created a sub-theme which includes justice. This concept thus assumed centrality in my interpretation and analysis of the data. I also took account of the frequent usage of words such as disruptive, violent, excessive and uncivil during classifications of protest activity by interviewees within all clusters of the sample (refer to sample outline in section 3.5.2 above). These discursive elements were highly significant to my analysis as they allowed me to compare them against my theoretical framework and the research objectives. Specifically, the discourses constantly spoke directly to the *character* of contemporary protest as my interviewees have seen, lived and experienced it. Because the incentives for protest is seen to be credible by so many of my interviewees, I also had to determine how clusters of beliefs, feelings and opinions were related to each other, to what extent they were in conflict and what this revealed about the larger phenomenon under investigation. This was important as it helped to confirm or disconfirm any preconceptions and pet theories that I may have had about the nature of popular protest in this context. This required that I be constantly aware of the social context (and at times, the political leanings) which underlay the perspectives on offer and to be able to navigate through contradictory opinions and positions.

The discourses of concern to this study have to do with conceptions of civil politics, and specifically, civil protest. I have therefore found it useful to match interviewees' concerns, perspectives and feelings about popular protest against the existing reality of protest as embodied in the text such as newspaper reports, audio-visual materials, police reports etc. The views of students, some unemployed and self-employed persons as well as those who work in creative industries (reggae entertainers, talk show hosts) can be seen as shaped by their own personal experience of protest but also by an often anti-establishment discourse based on their views of and feelings towards authority, particularly political authority. This did not, as I discovered, mean that they did not form critical opinions of the current practice of protest operative in Jamaica. At the same time, the language of politicians, political activists and public sector representatives represent an insider knowledge and expertise of the workings of the system and the challenges that

impinge on the state's capacity to act. This did not so much undermine the rationale of the ordinary citizen whose discourse is justice and survivalism (see chapter 6) but it helped to strike a balance.

### 3.7.2    Discourse Analysis and Media

Since the arrival of the electronic mass media, popular protest worldwide has made an almost paradigmatic shift from an activity of public participation to include an activity of visual spectacle. Media in Jamaica have come to assume such a centrality in protest politics in this context, in terms of coverage and treatment, that many of the meanings and interpretations that my interviewees attached to popular protest was constructed from their interaction with the media, particularly television. The mass media in this context also provides a mechanism through which citizens seek and project their identities and engage in actual or vicarious behaviours. In fact, 'through media and their symbols, we make sense of our lives through the frame of a dramatic structure' (Sayre & King, 2003:12). To this extent, the perspectives held by my interviewees cannot be divorced from what they see on television or read in the newspapers over time and which, no doubt, predisposed them to a particular understanding of, and relationship to protest.

Interestingly also, the innate emotiveness and tendency to orality of the Jamaican people, embodied in how they choose to perform protest, particularly viz. a viz. media, renders media discourse fundamental to this analysis. For example, it is worth noting the tendency to drama in the Jamaican personality which emerged as discursive elements of the transcribed text. Indeed, many utterances which I encountered in my perusal of the interview transcripts did not simply describe a state of affairs but were so intense as to do what Silverman (1993) sees as 'performing' an action. Uttering such performances, he argues, 'commits speakers to their consequences' (Silverman, 1993:120 quoting Austin, 1962). For instance, when my interviewee, in describing how Jamaicans protest, declares, 'we bun dung de place' [we burn down the place], he is not necessarily describing the collective state of minds of the Jamaican citizenry or picturing a reality but rather

*performing* some action. Indeed, there seemed, sometimes, to be a thin line between *describing* an action and *prescribing* a course of action (see chapter 7).

The gist of media discourse analysis usually involves comparing and evaluating media (television and radio) representations, in terms of what they exclude, what they foreground and what they background, where they come from and what factors and interests influence their formulation and projection and so forth (Fairclough, 1995). Television representation, for instance, is not just constructed portrayals, visual stories about what is happening in the world but also, to a great extent, talk. 'This talk is public talk, usually talk taking place in a studio. It consists of people talking to themselves but its communicative intentionality is such that it is aimed at the television audience beyond the studio (Dahlgren, 1995). That media is often owned and controlled by dominant economic institutions impacts on the types of coverage it offers (Street, 2001; Herman & Chomsky, 1994). At the same time, it is worth noting that this type of political economy approach has been criticized for being reductionist in its approach to texts and for assuming ideological effects of texts upon audiences without investigating how audiences read texts (Fairclough, 1995:47). This of course does not mean that ideology is absent but it must also account for the private, individualized contexts in which people consume media products, in this instance, how Jamaican citizens respond to the mediated images of protest they receive and the effects it has on their definition of civil protest.

Media discourse analysis also involves being conscious of more than just the immediate situation of the communicative event (in this case, coverage of a protest) but also the wider social and cultural context (in which such protest takes place). This is because the media are shaped by the wider society while, at the same time, playing an essential role in social and cultural changes. The analysis of media texts must reflect these changing constructions and meanings. For example, although journalists talk about stories, journalists, according to Fairclough (1995:91) 'don't only recount events, they also interpret and explain them, try to get people to see things and to act in certain ways, and aim to entertain'. Fairclough identifies two facets of media narrative that are relevant

here: (a) 'the actual *story*, a basic chronologically ordered series of events including the participants involved in them; and (b) the *presentation*, the way in which the story is realized and organized as a particular text' (1995:91). It is therefore this multiplicity of purpose that I am obliged to take into account in the Jamaican media's treatment and coverage of protests as well as the treatment of issues of complaint by callers to radio talk shows. In my analysis of my conversations with news reporters, editors and radio talk show hosts about protest politics – how they view protest events, how protesters relate to them and how they re-present the events that they witness to the wider public, I examined whether the stories the journalists recount of protest are fictional or factual and /or the extent to which they aim to inform, educate or simply entertain their listening or viewing audience. In other words, I remained conscious of the fact that all media is a representation of reality and the dramatic and sensational representation of protest events maybe a response to commercial pressures to entertain (Street, 2001). How a protest event or issue is therefore negotiated, mediated, constructed, re-presented and/or interpreted by the journalist/talk show host not only reveal much about the quality of civil action and civil discourse in the Jamaican context but exposes the extent to which the media becomes a constituent element of the very character of popular citizen action (see chapter 7 for an extension of this discussion).

### 3.8    Summary of Data Analysis

Overall, the analysis in this study gave space to a diversity of voices which represented multiple perspectives. The following chart demonstrates how the various voices in the study are categorised for analytical purposes.

Table 3.3        Voices Represented in Analysis

| Elite Voices | Ordinary Voices | Ordinary Voices |
|---|---|---|
| Academics, Political actors Govt. officials Reporters Public commentators Texts - documents audio-visual materials, statistics, newspaper | Lawyers, Radio talk show hosts, Activists Entertainers Students Rural dwellers | Unemployed Self-employed Hustlers Gangsters Garrison dwellers |
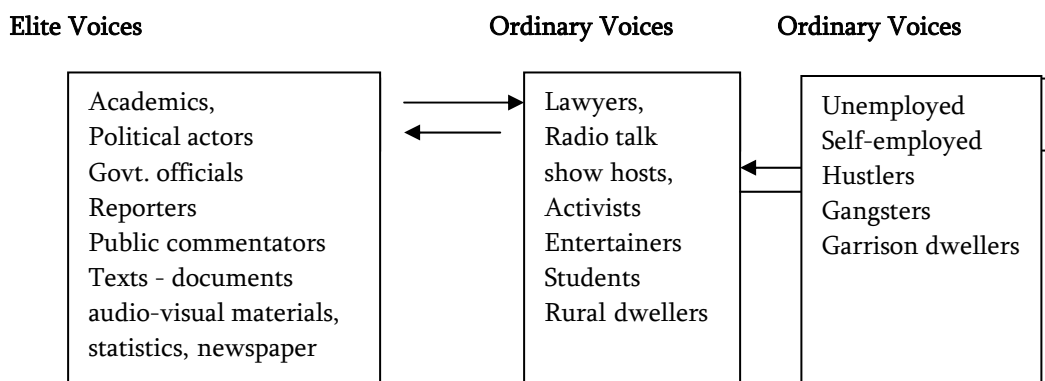
I must emphasize that the elite voices, while indispensable, were not positioned as more credible or legitimate in the study. Rather, as the above table indicates, elite voices were given as much space as the ordinary voices. In fact, many times both sets of voices were essentially interactive (as indicated by arrows). Other times, they challenged and contradicted each other based on individual interpretation of certain themes and/or shared similar meanings. This is not to say that there are not hegemonic discourses of power based on race, class and social status that may have helped to shape some ideas interviewees' hold of civil behaviour and therefore civil action and civil discourse. I tried to be open-minded about the frames of meaning that emerge mostly from the data. This meant attempting to understand themes, patterns, relationships and associations and then deriving firm analytical judgment and theories, which aim to account for the phenomenon under study.

## 3.9    SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the epistemological and ontological considerations underpinning the methodology employed in this study. It articulated a meta-theoretical framework based on qualitative interpretivism and social constructionism. I employed aspects of structuration theory and discourse analysis to make sense of popular protest and citizen politics in the Jamaican context. This analytic framework acknowledges the role of structure (political and social institutions) in shaping political behaviour but extends beyond structure to take stock of individual agency and citizen responsibility in shaping the character of civilian politics and the quality of civil society. The chapter also explored the quality and politics of the relationship between the researcher and researched as well as the more practical and procedural issues of gathering, organizing and analysing the data. Here, I outlined how the data was categorised into various themes in the search for discursive patterns. I also delineated the diversity of voices (including audio-visual text and performance) in my attempts to interpret the data and to draw theoretical judgements. It is to the actual case study on Jamaica and the more substantive analysis of my research findings that I now turn in the remaining chapters.

# *Collective Bargaining* By Riot: Citizen Politics in Jamaica Since Slavery.

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Jamaica's history is the history of protest. For close to four hundred years, popular protest, in all its forms and by every usage of the term (riots, uprisings, rebellions, disturbance, revolts and demonstrations) has been the official answer of the Afro-Jamaican people to enslavement, colonization, domination, tyranny, oppression and injustice. This long-continuing resistance has, as its historical and political starting point, the liberation movement involving African slaves, which stretches from the period of the English conquest of Jamaica (1655- 1665), the Maroon Wars of the mid-17th and 18th centuries to the massive slave uprisings from 1831 onwards which eventually culminated in (full) emancipation in 1838. Riots and civil disturbances also persisted throughout post-emancipation Jamaican society, becoming as commonplace as slave revolts were during slavery. Simmonds (1983:1) captures this extraordinary attention to popular collective action when she argues that 'to protest against negative developments and stagnation, Jamaicans assembled and participated in acts of open defiance and violence'. Indeed, the contemporary historical account exhumes over eighty separate instances of violent disturbances and spontaneous popular direct action in the (immediate) post-emancipation period alone.

The political scholarship, for instance, gives particular theoretical weight to the landmark Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865, positioning it as a symbol of the failure of (colonial) governance in Jamaica and, although less explicitly, as a precursor to the persistence and indispensability of protest in this context (Manley, 1974; 1991; Sherlock & Bennett, 1998; Dick, 2002). This was manifested later in the violent Labour unrest of the 1930s and 1940s, the agitation for Universal Suffrage in 1940s, Jamaican Independence and Black Power movements of the 1960s

(including the Walter Rodney riots of 1968), the violent partisan political upheavals of the 1970s as well as even the more contemporary popular action, embodied in the fuel protests of 1979, 1985 and 1999 (Charles, 1977; Munroe, 1999; Meeks, 2000). An examination of the political meaning of these extraordinary events is thus imperative if one is to obtain theoretical insights into the profound ways in which popular struggle not only helped to shape the Jamaican society but also determine the character of its politics. It is therefore through the historical lens of this deep and abiding resistance movement that I attempt to fully understand and make sense of the distinctive personality and temperament of citizen politics and the character and quality of civil society in present-day Jamaica. In this chapter, I explore the nature of the struggles of the early Afro-Jamaicans against British plantation slavery — their modes of organization, leadership, tactics and resources – and significantly, the extraordinary politico-historical circumstances which rendered the movement indispensable and necessitated and institutionalized an apparatus of violence in the performance of political rebellion in this post-colonial society.

It is not my aim to undertake a revisionist interpretation of slave emancipation or to regurgitate the history of the period. Rather, my attempt is to fill in significant gaps in the historical-political scholarship by taking into account the *manner* in which the Jamaican people organized themselves and mobilized politically to confront the issues and conditions of slavery. I argue that the social, economic and political oppression as well as the institutionalised racism which attended colonial and post-colonial society is to be seen as more than just a precursor to the emergence and formation of particular classes of Jamaican citizens with differing levels of power, wealth and status. It also has to do with the  divergent interpretations of and responses to their condition, which not only made way for a variegated civil society but also the emergence of different approaches, especially by poor, marginalized and powerless sectors to political protestation and negotiation. In other words, the violent political tactics resorted to during the slave emancipation period – rebellions, insurrections, riots – are, for all intents and purposes, predecessors to the unconventional character of contemporary popular protest which the re-negotiation of power and rights inevitably enacted in the Jamaican society.

Using general references and specific incidents, I will therefore argue for the emergence of a militant black population in Jamaica with its own unique forms of social organization and political behaviour – a development which not only defies the traditional European elite view of them as an acquiescent people but which challenges the prevailing definition of civilization and civility. At the same time, while certain continuities with regard to the rationale and seeming indispensability of this brand of popular protest are evident, I argue that given the radical socio-political transformations which have taken place in the Jamaican society since slavery and the political tolerance for protests and civic participation, the absence of comparable changes with regard to the contemporary approaches and tactics employed during citizen protestation is an anomaly which needs to be transformed and transcended.

## 4.2    THE SYNDICATION OF SLAVERY & WHITE POWER IN JAMAICA: AN OVERVIEW.

If one is to understand the politics of protest in Jamaica and the reasons this brand of citizen politics and participation has come to play such a central role in this society, it is important to go as far back as the evolution of the sugar plantation in West Indian society as a whole. This is because:

> the West Indian sugar and slave plantation brought into existence a special kind of society created for sugar; Jamaican customs and culture were fashioned by sugar; sugar for two hundred years, was the only reason behind Jamaica's existence as a centre for human habitation (Sherlock and Bennett, 1998: 157 quoting Hearne, 1965).

Since the mid-1600s, sugar, as a commodity for export, carried tremendous economic potential for European planters and by the start of the 18th century, sugar had established itself as king, replacing tobacco, ginger, indigo, cotton and coffee as agricultural mainstays. The West Indian islands had by this time become the jewel in England's crown as insatiable European demand for the product had made a West Indian plantation an enormously profitable investment. So sweet were the returns on sugar that European nations even went to war with each other to defend their possessions abroad (Augier et al., 1960). Within the British Empire, Jamaica inspired the greatest interest and hence the highest investor confidence. This island was not only the largest of the West Indian

possessions but was possessed with available undeveloped land, which offered investors a more favourable opportunity than the more fully developed smaller islands of the Eastern Caribbean (Augier et al., 1960). Sugar, in other words, enhanced the economic importance of the island.

However, the nature of sugar production was such that considerable capital was needed to set up a factory. Machinery was expensive and for a plantation (or sugar estate) to run economically, it had to be big enough to keep the factory constantly supplied with cane throughout the crop season. Each estate then had to be both a farm and a factory. The pattern established was clearly not for small yeoman farmers but large estates which were heavily capitalized, in short, the plantation system (Parry & Sherlock, 1971:66-67; Hart, 1965). Since running a sugar plantation was a highly expensive undertaking, sugar became a rich man's crop, which made the British planters and merchants connected to the trade in sugar largely people of financial substance and power. The sugar estate thus became the bastion of white power (Sherlock and Bennett, 1998) and the 'plantocracy' they created assumed the only voice of West Indian society (Augier et. al, 1960). The white planter class went to desperate lengths to maintain this source of livelihood and power. But in order to meet the demands of an ever-expanding sugar production and trade, the sugar estate required a large and disciplined force of cheap, unskilled labour capable of withstanding tremendous physical exertion in a warm climate. Enter African slaves and the induction of slavery in the Caribbean.

It is a historical truism that the basis of slavery was economic. However, 'the attitude of the white planter towards the Negro slave was one of genuine contempt arising from an ingrained belief in his own racial superiority. In his eyes, the Negro was an inferior being, less than a man, towards whom one may be condescending if he "keeps his place" ' (Hart, 1965:15). Throughout the 18th century, African slaves thus became the most important part of an estate's *stock* - having been classified with the estate animals. Hart quotes the words of a planter-historian who provides a rationale for this above classification:

In general, they are devoid of genius, and seem almost incapable of making any progress in civility or science. They have no plan or system of morality among them. Their barbarity to their children debases their nature even below that of brutes. They have no moral sensations, no taste but for women, gormandizing and drinking to excess, no wish but to be idle. They are represented by all authors as the vilest of the human kind… [They are] savages in every sense of the word, marked by bestial manners, stupidity and vices (p. 16).

In order to extract maximum profit from their labour in the shortest possible time, the planters therefore recklessly sacrificed the Negro life. The slaves were thus driven to extremes, kept hard at work by lashes of the whip, subjected to severe beatings, torture and bodily mutilation for the slightest offence or disobedience. They were given no relief. Some kind of work was found for every slave for as much of the working day as possible, and by night, work continued by the light of lamp and torches (Augier et al., 1960; Hart, 1965; 2002). Parry & Sherlock, (1971:146) writes that:

the planting process was extremely and unnecessarily labourious and could have been done far more quickly and efficiently by the use of ploughs; but a planter had little incentive to buy ploughs and to train ploughmen and plough cattle when he could dispose, out of crop, of the labour of a large gang of slaves.

Indeed, it would appear that the large garrison of white slave owners had built up a deliberate tyrannical system to dehumanize and brutalize the slave. The presumption was that the imposition of rigorous discipline would avert any notion of open rebellion, including personal attacks, or disobedience among the slave population. Thus, typical penalties included flogging for threatening a white person, the loss of a hand for striking a white person, the loss of an ear for theft and for repeated thefts, hanging. The punishment for mutiny was savage in the extreme and, in some places, included being burned alive (Augier et al. 1960; Parry & Sherlock, 1971). In the face of an absence of any intermediary or intervening force to provide effective restraints on the planter's behaviour or institutional structures for redress for the slaves, brutal acts of violence upon the slave community were habitual and numerous. The introduction of sugar was much more than the spread of a profitable crop and a new industry. It also enacted a revolution which changed the whole racial composition and social structure of the West Indian islands. In other words, the workings of plantation society reflected the emerging

political stratification of West Indian society along racial lines, as the following characterization by Sherlock & Bennett (1998:151) illustrates:

> Black slave and white master; slave quarters and great house; provision ground and plantation; outlawed [African indigenous] religions, cults and established church; justice for whites and legally instituted injustice for blacks; civil rights for whites and restricted movement for blacks; freedom of movement for whites; pickney gangs for blacks and schools for whites; the 'bongo image' against the 'busha image', yard-talk and English; slave and freeman.

The landless, whether white or coloured, and the ever-increasing number of Negro slaves played no part in government except as recipients of laws. Property and capital were necessary for membership of the ruling classes and government was the privilege of a small influential group. Among the free and white, there were further sub-divisions based on wealth and social standing. There were also distinctions among the slave population – brown vs. black, Creole vs. African, skilled vs. unskilled, household vs. praedial or field (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998; Augier et al., 1960; Parry & Sherlock, 1971). Clearly, in the words of Parry & Sherlock (1971:156), 'a favoured place in the slave hierarchy did not necessarily make a man contented with slavery'. Every aspect of this hierarchical, colour, class and status-coded plantation life represented conflict and became fertile incubators and ready catalysts for rebellion and resistance. Much of the historical literature up to the mid-1980s, however, assumes an almost imperialist perspective and emphasizes the economic aspects of slavery, particularly the decline of sugar even while it de-emphasizes the role played by slaves in lending the issue of their emancipation more urgency and in strengthening the hand of the abolitionists (see, Curtin, 1968; Augier et al, 1960; Parry & Sherlock, 1971; Hall, 1959). In other words, these accounts give only scant attention to the relentless struggles waged by slaves against their oppressors and instead focus on the brutal repression of slave rebellions by white slave masters and later a British colonial administration. Shattering the myth of a docile people, acquiescing in slavery, it was popular resistance involving thousands of Afro-Jamaican slaves in open rebellions as well as more concealed resistance, which forcefully signalled the birth of citizen politics in Jamaica.

Riots, as the chief *collective bargaining* tools, became the central means through which the oppressed peoples challenged slavery and the hegemony of colonial rule and demanded redress against repressive laws and deplorable living conditions. It was in the heart of the alliances formed by the slaves to achieve emancipation and later against oppressive post-emancipation conditions that some of the violent tools of political negotiation and participation that Jamaica witnesses today were honed and some semblance of civil society promulgated. I therefore examine as a point of departure the context within which some of these alliances were formed and suggest that these developments ought to be theoretically accounted for in historical discussions about the early development of civil society in modern Jamaica.

## 4.3    ORGANIZING AND MOBILIZING FOR FREEDOM – EARLY GLIMPSES OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN JAMAICA.

Students of politics who subscribe to the often rigid interpretation of civil society prescribed in scholarship as 'organized public life and free associations beyond the tutelage of the state' (Alexander, 1998:67; cf. my discussion in chapter 2) would arrive at the very illusory conclusion that a civil society was non-existent in Jamaica during plantation slavery and only emerged post-emancipation with the formation of official welfare organizations aimed at assisting the freed Afro-Jamaican peoples. Indeed, within the spatial environment of plantation society marked by social exclusion and division, where African slaves were classified as chattels and had no civil rights, civil society, in its most formal construct, was not allowed to develop. Where some semblance of associationalism existed, it would appear, in Marxian terms, to be fraudulent and redundant. This is because, hemmed physically and psychologically within the boundaries of the sugar estate with political representation and religious instruction sealed from him, the slave existed almost wholly at the mercy of his master. Tribal and linguistic differences largely barred communication while festivities, which lent themselves to camaraderie and could be distinguishable as an aspect of unionization, were minimized. Organization and mobilization was naturally difficult to foster under these circumstances.

This does not mean that horizontal relations were not fostered and sufficient amounts of social capital were not generated amongst the slave population and manifested in collective action. Indeed, despite his status as mere property, the slave remained very *human* in a *social sense* with a rooted objection to being forced to work as an animal (Hart, 1965). Hence, civil society, more loosely defined as 'the networks and relationships which may or may not crystallize into [official] groups but which connect individuals together in some non-coercive reciprocally purposive manner' (Munroe, 1999:78), was inevitable. Despite being effectively detached from their cultural roots, indigenous religions and social norms, which emphasized brotherhood and family responsibility (Barnett, 2001), the African inhabitants of plantation society, in many ways, resurrected their lost social capital and begun to lay what I argue were the building blocks of (loosely) organized, if not official civil society. I discuss in the following sections how the slaves organized themselves and engaged in powerful collective action in the face of overwhelming odds to secure their freedom and later to struggle for rights and justice as freed peoples. I, however, wish to draw as an example of the early formation of associationalism and civil society (albeit loosely structured, informal and fluid) the situational and analytic paradigm of the street-based entrepreneurship and informalism within which Afro-Caribbean slaves were heavily involved during and after slavery.

I emphasize the centrality of the street (surrounding market centres) as the amphitheatre of not only economic, cultural and political activity but also the theoretical context within which social capital materialized and allowed for the transformation of Jamaican slaves into central actors in the slavery resistance and post-emancipation popular movements. The market and the street acquired prominence during slavery but particularly during the transitional apprenticeship (period of half-freedom between 1834-1838 aimed at preparing slaves for full freedom) and post-emancipation phases when the British planters and estate owners, aiming to escape the enormous costs and burden to feed a massive slave population, allotted both male and female slaves plots of land (later called provision grounds) on which to cultivate their own crops, on their own time, for their own consumption. Both male and female slaves exploited this opportunity by selling

the surplus from their provision grounds at weekend markets. The very exercise of planting, harvesting and selling their own crops transformed the provision grounds into an arena of economic independence and material betterment as well as a source of personhood and personal autonomy (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998; Momsen, 1996). The urban slave could, for example, hire himself out, decide on the length of his working day, and to a certain extent, determine his income. Given that the daily work routine and leisure activities of urban slaves were much less closely monitored than those of plantation slaves, this offered the former the kind of lifestyle which permitted indulgence in a range of activities (Simmonds, 1984).

In fact, so important had the Sunday market become that the otherwise stringent laws restricting the mobility of the slaves were relaxed, at least where marketing activities were concerned. As higglers, peddlers and roving vendors took advantage of this weekend flexibility and freedom, the streets around market centres quickly transmogrified into vibrant shopping places, where urbanized slaves, particularly women, exchanged goods, made their living, fostered enduring friendships, built horizontal relationships, feasted, entertained each other, shared gossip, debated and quarrelled (cf. Sheller, 1997; Momsen, 1996; Sherlock & Bennett, 1998 – refer to chapter 15; French, 1995). It is this arena of small-scale entrepreneurship, marketization and informalism, dominated by a ready and active network of urban slaves exhibiting elements of *civic engagement* and social cohesion, which ultimately created an enabling environment for organized slave resistance in Jamaica. The operation of Sunday and Saturday markets in major towns and the convergence of hundreds of slaves provided a fluidity of movement and allowed them to become periodically immersed in the mass of shoppers and sellers as well as assume some measure of anonymity.

It is also worth noting that recent historical scholarship on slave resistance, particularly those seeking to engender Caribbean history, is awash with evidentiary transcripts of the impact of women in this domain during and after slavery (Shepherd, 1995; Beckles & Shepherd, 1996; Wilmot, 1995; Reddock, 1995; Mintz, 1996; Momsen, 1996; Sheller,

1997)[27]. Together, these analyses confirm that it was the near permanent presence and cohesiveness of slave women (and later freed women) in the public spaces of towns, and notably, their monopolization of the public spaces of the markets which played an important role in the development of a politically active Afro-Jamaican public. Indeed, it was the presence of vast and highly visible networks of women that facilitated crucial flows of information between town centres and the rural countryside and between urban markets and (plantation) fields which enabled the slaves to orchestrate and execute collective action, including various forms of resistance in the cause of freedom and social rights (after emancipation). Indeed, as I argue later, given their numerical dominance in urban public spaces, it was also women who filled the streets and squares during popular mobilizations or demonstrations and played impressive roles in some of the most violent public disturbances and riots (Sheller, 1997; cf. Wilmot, 1995).

The flexibility enjoyed by urban slaves in the economic sphere also extended to social activities, which itself influenced the associationalism indispensable to the construction and definition of civil society. Slave leisure included seasonal or holiday activities such as Christmas and Easter. These were officially sanctioned by the authorities during and after slavery and closely supervised by masters and the police. It also comprised various social events which took place throughout the year, (sometimes illegally and without consent) during leisure time, on weekends and at nights (Simmonds, 1984), such as 'Janoe Canoe'

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[27] I consider in greater detail elsewhere, the differential roles of women in Jamaican popular protest. See, for example, Johnson, H. (Forthcoming) '(Defiant) Rituals of Resistance: Situating Higgler Women in the Protest Performance of the Jamaican Poor'. See also chapters 6 and 7 of this work where I position the media as part and parcel of the constitution of feminine power and draw into focused, critical analysis the controversial protest performance of disadvantaged women as a credible and powerful aspect of citizen action. As my discussion in chapter 6 will illustrate, this development is also the most manifest precursor to the character of present-day street-side markets in urban Jamaican and importantly the aggressive popular struggles and resistance still being undertaken by the collectivities of *private* individuals - higglers, street vendors, hustlers – who operate here to defend their claim of ownership and/or customary rights to this *public* space.

(now referred to as 'Jonkunnu')[28], other music and dance festivals, as well as carnivals, involving large processions of extravagantly costumed musicians and dancers. These social gatherings not only gave the slave community unique opportunities to come together to celebrate the joyous aspects of their African heritage and light-hearted entertainment, but offered them a cathartic escape from their appalling, routinized and tyrannized existence on the sugar plantations as well as momentary laxity of supervision and control (Simmonds, 1984). Although held under some measure of control and toleration, these forms of social congregation were largely feared and disdained by the white planter class and thought to contain within them a subversive potential. Slave festivities were generally regarded by slave masters as grotesque habits which were morally unhealthy. Horns, shells and drums, for example, were considered to be uncouth or rude instruments and therefore forbidden.

It was, however, their disruptive and potentially destabilizing effect on the white slave-owning class which led to widespread concerns about the non-enforcement of laws regulating slave festivities. Simmonds (1984) outlines in great detail the arguments made in support of the political condemnation and prohibition of slave entertainment, many of which were designed, she argues, to 'prevent the negroes from having sufficient time to bring their dangerous plots to maturity' (1984:4). Repression and cultural denigration notwithstanding, it was this cultural sphere of urban slave entertainment, involving so-called 'barbarous music' from the 'negro drums' (ibid, 1984), as well as the activities of the economic sphere, which encouraged sociability and camaraderie among the community of African slaves in the West Indies, fostered social cohesion, horizontal relationship building and networking (as opposed to the vertical, top-down, hierarchy installed on the plantation) and generated requisite levels of trust among these enslaved peoples. Perhaps

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[28] Jonkunnu (John Canoe) is a Jamaican traditional dance of African origin. A strong feature of the dance is its characters, all males, whose movements match their roles. Some of these characters are Devil, Cowhead, Horsehead, Actor Boy, Belly Woman, Warrior and Wild Indian. The rhythm of the Jonkunnu music is quite distinct from other ritual folk music with its fife and rattling drum, carried on the shoulders and played with sticks. See http://www.jcdc.org.jm/folk_forms.htm

more importantly, it was this sort of Putnamian social capital formation, civic engagement and associationalism – (bowling together) – that later translated into political activism and became indispensable to the slavery resistance movement. It is, hence, within this civic context that I seek to understand and come to terms with the nature of the collective struggles undertaken by Afro-Jamaican peoples.

## 4.4    SLAVE RESISTANCE – ORGANIZATION, RESOURCES AND TACTICS.

Although this chapter has, as a chronological starting point, the 1800s, slave resistance in Jamaica can be traced as far back as the 17th century. This struggle for freedom and justice assumed three significant forms (Patterson, 1969; Sherlock & Bennett, 1998; Hart, 1965):

1) *Flight from the Plantations* – Here, slaves staged 'runaways' from the sugar plantations to form independent, garrisoned settlements in the mountainous regions of the island. (They later acquired the name maroons or runaway slaves).

2) *Passive Resistance* – This took the form of individual action in which some slaves refused to work or eat. Other forms of hidden transcripts included sabotage on the estates, the use of poison, arson, go slows, destruction of property or damage to it and in some instances, a wilful misunderstanding of instructions.

3) *Revolt/Insurrection* – Organized, open rebellions.

Although these resistance forms generally overlapped in the sense that they operated simultaneously, I draw particular attention to the *flight from the plantation* here because it unquestionably represents the first period of active and successful attempts at resistance to oppression and injustice in Jamaica. Beginning in the 1670s, hundreds of slaves, later labelled 'maroons', signalled their early rejection of slavery by devising creative schemes of escape from the sugar plantations and establishing highly fortified settlements in the rough, mountainous terrains of the island. The series of uprisings, called the Maroon Wars, which they led against British forces to secure their freedom, carry enormous analytical significance as it not only compelled the British to sign a Treaty granting freedom and legitimizing Maroon settlements but it also created the political precedent for the struggles for emancipation by other slaves some two centuries later. But what kind of organization, resources and tactics were employed by the Maroons in these seminal

struggles? In other words, what was the character of this resistance and to what extent did this character underscore its success? To begin with, under the oppressive regime of British plantocracy, freedom was the closest thing to impossibility. Although Jamaican slaves had a long tradition of passive slave resistance which continued for the almost four centuries of slavery, there was collective consensus that the restoration of freedom was remote if they continued to accord with this strategy. They also recognized that despite enormous tribal and linguistic differences among them, emancipation strongly depended on organized effort with each other. The Maroons were therefore the first to demonstrate that strategic planning, organization and leadership were not only possible but indispensable to the liberation movement.

Historians have correctly observed that during the initial stages of Maroon resistance, there was an absence of a general leader or chief of the body (Hart, 1985) and so the Jamaican Maroons concentrated their forces under different bands under the direction of different leaders. Jamaican political history recalls names such as Cudjoe, Cofi, Tacky and the enterprising and mysterious female warrior called Nanny as one of the first examples of strong grassroots leadership emerging from within this informal sphere. The Maroons were compelled to effect negotiations between smaller bands of Maroons and take critical decisions to coordinate their operations into two main groups – the Leeward and Windward Maroons. This was necessitated by the common threat to their survival, embodied in the sustained and earnest organization of the planter-led islandwide attack on them, the brutal punishment landed upon those who were recaptured (execution, amputation of limbs) and the covert nature of their own resistance plans and organization. The Leeward Maroons were under the elected leadership of an able general called Cudjoe whereas the Windward Maroons were under the command of the guerrilla leader, Cuffee. There were also other subordinate captains such as Accompong, Johnny, and Cudjoe's brothers Cuffee and Quao with clearly defined responsibilities. These included providing the community with food and organizing hunting parties to track wild hogs. They were also expected to direct and supervise the women in planting provisions and managing domestic affairs (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998; Hart, 1985).

Of crucial note here is the extent to which runaway slaves accepted the requirement of organized resistance and the elected leadership of Cudjoe and his sister, the revered female warrior, Nanny. Sherlock and Bennett (1998:136-137) note that:

> not even Cudjoe's name carried with it a greater sense of power and of authority than did that of Nanny, rebel leader and tactician, who by sheer force of personality and her powerful oaths of loyalty breathed courage and confidence into her followers.

As a counter-response challenge to their traditional cultural repression, the Maroons committed themselves to an autonomous way of life with their own customs and laws even while they had to endure the insecurities and privations of guerrilla warfare. It is obvious that a workable hierarchy of effective and respected leadership as well as a trusted partnership and a mutually beneficial relationship had been promulgated between these bands of slaves and a great deal was achieved as a result. The election of Cudjoe resulted in a more regular and connected system of warfare, and the maintenance of regular contact with the slaves who remained on the plantations also speak to the development of a sophisticated intelligence network and a highly developed capacity for negotiation and cohesiveness in times of great stress and against the power of those they deemed to be their oppressors (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998; Patterson, 1969; Hart, 1965; 1985).

Sherlock and Bennett (1998), in cataloguing the insurrections and uprisings which heralded and defined the Maroon wars in Jamaica, provide critical insights into the nature and temperament of this resistance. Beginning their documentation as early as 1670, they note a widespread pattern of slaves setting alight sugarcane plantations. In explaining the potency and considerable impact of this protest action, they describe a cane-piece fire as 'a most tremendous object; no flame is more alarming, none more rigid, none more rapid, and the fury and the velocity with which it burns and communicates cannot possibly be described' Sherlock & Bennett, 1998:134). Within the nearly two decades (1673-1690), hundreds of slaves rebelled by plundering estates, killed their master and other whites and retreated to secure positions in the mountains on the borders

of the parishes of St. Ann, Clarendon and St. Elizabeth. From their fortified positions in new village settlements, they raided the plantations on which they had given years of toil and which remained the source of bondage for many of their fellow slaves. The widespread nature of desertions by slaves to the nearby mountainous regions of Jamaica continued throughout the 1730s and the success of their rebellions against the Assembly-configured troops soon gave the impression of an island besieged by a series of disasters (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998). Within a twenty-year period, the Maroons had managed to assemble a formidable army with huge successes to show for it. They were increasing their settlements, bolstering their supply of arms and food by raiding and plundering neighbouring plantations and in periods of war, murdering the troops of whites sent to suppress, enslave or annihilate them and increasing in confidence and resourcefulness (Hart, 1965:29). Ineffectual efforts were made to subdue them and although they suffered greatly in surprise attacks and well projected assaults from government militias, many planters succumbed to the fear of their lives and abandoned their plantations (ibid, 1965; cf. Sherlock and Bennett, 1998:140).

By 1737, after sixty years of fighting and in the face of successive losses in guerrilla warfare against Cudjoe's forces, the political authorities relented, agreeing that the best way of resolving the Maroon war was to advocate peace talks. This resulted in a peace treaty signed between Leeward Maroons and the whites on March 1, 1739 and with the Windward Maroons on June 23 of the same year. The treaty guaranteed 'the liberty and freedom of Cudjoe and his followers and their right of ownership of all lands in the vicinity of their towns' (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998:140). Paradoxically, the peace treaties required that runaway slaves who had joined the Leeward and Windward Maroons within the last two-year period were to return to their masters with full pardon and that Cudjoe and his captains were to repress any other attempts by Negroes at Maroon settlement (Hart, 1985). This treaty accomplishment was an important victory, enormously valuable in boosting the confidence of the slaves even while it represented, at least for a period, a clear weakening of the white's power and hold on Jamaican society. The controversial aspects of the treaties, however, meant that freedom was tenuous and

transient; social and political stability never assured, and an enduring and organized counter action involving plantation slaves impractical and unrealizable. It is worth noting that the peace treaties not only put an end to marronage as a viable option of resistance and a path to freedom, but it heralded the Maroon leaders' abandonment of their exemplary revolutionary role which had brought hope to thousands of their fellow slaves trapped in plantation slavery. Indeed, that they effectively agreed to become allies of the government and betray other runaways symbolized, to my mind, early signs of the slave community succumbing to disunity and partiality as they seriously compromised their principles and the cause for which they had fought[29]. While the treaties ensured that flight to rugged terrains and mountainous interiors were closed routes to freedom, they also consolidated the lesson that rebellion was perhaps the slaves' singular option and that, according to Sherlock & Bennett (1998:142), 'the plantation was the final battlefield'.

Slave uprising and rebellions thus continued unabated for another fifty years, even in the face of bloody repression. Of note are the Tacky War of 1760 and the second Maroon War, which began in 1795. I however wish to forward to the 19th century in order to account for the politics and character of the continuing resistance movement, embodied in the emancipation rebellions from 1831-32. These rebellions are analytically crucial because they marked the climax of the Afro-Jamaican struggle against slavery and the ultimate granting of Apprenticeship in 1834 and 'full free' in 1838. My goal here is not to retell the story but to show the extent to which the political circumstances of the time underscored the emergence of a brand of citizen politics in Jamaica, marked by adversarialism and hostility, which has persisted through to contemporary times.

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[29] Hart (1965) provides a contrary explanation for this development. He argues that the Maroons under Cudjoe had little choice but accept this clause as a partial victory for freedom and that the treaty was a compromise accepted by a wise rebel leader as to fight under such difficult conditions might have jeopardized the victory already secured. He further notes that there is no evidence that the Maroons took any steps to implement this clause during Cudjoe's lifetime. However, although often ignored in the historical scholarship, it is acknowledged that the government later offered substantial rewards to the Maroons for their services in the capture of runaways. It is also a true that on occasions Maroons hired themselves out as mercenaries and fought alongside government forces against their fellow slaves during revolts on the plantations (see pp. 40-41).

## 4.5 THE CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF POPULAR STRUGGLE AND COLLECTIVE ACTION PRE & POST 1838

With all previous rebellions crushed, the beginning of 1831 saw slavery firmly entrenched in Jamaica, an oppressive machinery which had not only manifested itself institutionally and politically but had become stronger and more vicious (Hart, 1965:69). This, of course, was set against a Negro community still refusing to submit to white captivity and domination and egged on by an emerging conviction, invested in them by Baptist missionaries, that there was no moral justification for slavery. An atmosphere of expectancy had also been promulgated amongst the slave community as news filtered in the islands of the mounting of the intense anti-slavery campaign in Britain (Hart, 1985) and the passing of legislation to ameliorate the conditions under which slaves were forced to work. It is therefore within this context of anticipation and hope of emancipation that I seek to understand these rebellions. As a point of departure, it is important to note that unlike previous rebellions, the leadership of the emancipation rebellions contrasted sharply to that of former revolts. These leaders 'formed the elite of the labour force, men who had exercised as much authority as a slave could exercise, some of them deacons of the Baptist Church, literate, aware of events in Britain [protests/parliamentary submissions against slavery], and especially the work of the abolitionists' (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998:213).

The leadership of Sam Sharpe (now National hero of Jamaica) was particularly recognized during the period leading up to 1831. A deacon in the Baptist Church with a massive following, 'Daddy Sharpe was an outstanding leader who impressed all whom he met with his sincerity, intellectual grasp, oratorical power and personal magnetism' (ibid, 1998:213). Sam Sharpe not only signalled the emerging power of the church as an organizational force and a recognizable leader in the later formation of official civil society but the nature of his leadership and following was such that it rendered the Christmas rebellion (or what is sometimes referred to as the Western Liberation Uprising) which he led, one of the landmark events of Jamaican history. I call attention first and foremost to the character of the citizen-led political protestation and negotiation that Sam

Sharpe, at least in theory, attempted to fashion. Rather than a call to arms, Sharpe's petition to the slaves, who had gathered under the guise of a prayer meeting, was to deliberately withdraw their labour after the customary three-day Christmas Holidays in December 1831. All slaves were required to return to the plantations but to refuse to do work unless their owners were prepared to recognize their freedom and pay wages to them. Significant to this analysis is that they were bound by oath not to engage in the destruction of property or open hostilities with planters unless pre-emptive attempts were made by their masters to force them to work as slaves (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998). Violence was, in short, to be the last resort and was to be used only in self-defence.

Sharpe's intent was clearly to organize and execute a general strike and invite negotiations. It is worthwhile to note that the strike as a political weapon (of non-violent resistance) was not uncommon in those times but it was certainly not open for use by slaves. Nevertheless, the proposal attracted enormous support among a slave population convinced of their right to freedom. Slaves inhabiting estates on the entire Western belt of Jamaica comprising the parishes of Trelawney, St. James, Hanover, St. Elizabeth and Westmoreland heeded the call for strike action. For example, in Trelawney, some nine-tenths of the slave population refused to turn out for work. Their calculation was that a refusal of the majority of slaves in the Western parishes to work as slaves after Christmas would be sufficient to bring the system to an end. The plantocracy, however, failed to yield to the tenets of the work stoppage organized by slaves. The defensive build up/response of the government militia and the disturbing news that emancipation would not be granted prompted the slaves to immediately abandon peaceful protest and resort to open rebellion. Armed with cutlasses, sharpened sticks and wooden clubs, the slaves actively challenged the militia and soldiers in aggressive warfare (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998:219). Although Sharpe's army was untrained, inexperienced and inadequately equipped for guerrilla warfare, they compensated for this with the use of *fire* power, by burning down many sugar factories and estate buildings.

It is crucial to reiterate here that a legitimate work- to-rule was the original intent but set against an oppressive slave administration bent on keeping them in a brutal system of enforced labour, genuine and reasonable political negotiation was virtually impossible. The torch thus became the only tool through which the slaves could expose the vulnerability of the sugar plantation. Indeed, burnt-out sugar works, estate buildings and ravaged cane-pieces through the five Western parishes and as far away as in East Portland, where discontent also erupted, were a testament that the slaves, though defeated, had destroyed an appreciable part of the material basis of their enslavement. They had, in other words, succeeded in rendering slavery an expensive system to maintain (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998:220-221; Hart, 1965; 1985). The response of the plantocracy is of theoretical purchase as an embodiment of the popular distaste for (slave) resistance and protest. The plantocracy and the military instituted tyrannical punishment to the perpetrators of the insurrection. These included summary trials, savage floggings and hangings. The historical record reveals that about 750 slaves were convicted and some 580 publicly executed, including leader, Samuel Sharpe. However, the timetable for emancipation had already been reset. Like the rebellions and uprisings of Windward and Leeward Maroon nearly two centuries before, the Christmas rebellion had served a significant purpose. Thanks to the work of religious missionaries and British abolitionists, who rode on the momentum it provided to capture public opinion and sympathy in Britain, it proved to be incredibly useful in moving the emancipation agenda forward and hastening the passing of the Emancipation Act in 1834, paving the way for full freedom in 1838 (Dick, 2002).

### 4.5.1 Post Emancipation: The Struggle for Rights and Justice

'A race had been freed but a society had not been formed'

(Lord Harris, 1838, quoted in Dick, 2002: xiii)

This statement by Lord Harris, Governor of Trinidad & Tobago in 1838, is perhaps the most instructive commentary on the catalyst for protests during the post-emancipation

period in Jamaica. To understand the socio-political dilemma which confronted post-emancipation Jamaican society demands reckoning with the conditionalities imposed on the grant of freedom. Put bluntly, although offered in theoretical terms in 1834 (with the passing of the Emancipation Act), freedom remained an elusive goal for another four years. This unfortunate development is tied directly to the institution of a period of nominal (or semi) freedom called apprenticeship (1834-1838) in which all slaves over the age of six years old were to be *prepared for freedom* by becoming apprenticed labourers on the sugar plantations of their former owners. This was no doubt a vexing period for Afro-Jamaican slaves. Apprenticeship was in actuality a camouflaged form of enslavement and a clever attempt to perpetuate the established order. In other words, although officially free, the ex-slaves lived in circumstances akin to slavery. Poor wages, appalling working conditions and high rents for provision grounds were only some of the bullying tactics employed by former slave owners to extract continuing labour from the freed peoples. So, from 1834 onwards, the Afro-Jamaican ex-slaves not only struggled against persistent poverty but even worse, stood in contention with a colonial administration which largely catered for the elite classes (Augier, 1996; Bolland, 1996; Craton, 1996; Sherlock & Bennett, 1998).

Upon emancipation, legislative power was vested in a colonial governor and House of Assembly. The membership here was confined to landowners, a constitutional system which only served to consolidate the inequities in the society. Local government and the judiciary were also controlled by the white propertied class. Official civil society was thus part and parcel of the establishment (Barnett, 2001). It soon became clear that in the words of Dick, (2002: xiii):

> no thought was given to where the largest population of ex-slaves in the British West Indies would live. No community was prepared for them, no government was established that was inclusive of their racial group or responsive to their needs and no social amenities were provided for healthcare, recreation or education (except for a small education grant). The primary concern of the British government was how the planters would survive, having lost the commodity of free labour.

The years 1838-1865 not only exacerbated the inequities of the system but immobilized the social, economic and political standing of blacks. The absence of available socio-economic and political opportunity structures to the black majority was increasingly reflected in unfair taxation, restricted franchise, extreme disparities in wealth distribution, lack of arable land, inadequate and irregularly paid wages (on account of the terms of employment for black workers controlled by white employers) and, not insignificantly, a repression of indigenous cultural practices aided and abetted by a biased judicial system (Craton, 1996; Bolland, 1996; Simmonds, 1983; Sherlock & Bennett, 1998; Wilmot, 1996; Dick, 2002). It was against these institutionalized patterns of social exclusion and lack of rights that Afro-Jamaican men and women struggled. In other words, in many respects, freedom had done little to alter the socio-economic and political circumstances of the black community, a state of affairs which provided a ready basis and rationale for protest. Popular struggle was already a tried and tested (and perhaps singular) political weapon and thus Jamaica's creolized freed peoples turned their attention to not only emancipation but also to questions of governance [or lack thereof] and rights.

Resistance initially took the form of withdrawal from the regular field labour on the sugar plantations but conflicts over rent and wages in the immediate post-emancipation period and the tensions created by the disadvantaged position of the former slaves eventually led to violent confrontations. As it was females who comprised the majority of the labour force, slave women became crucial players in the success of the strategies employed in the resistance movement. Market women or higglers, for example, often went undetected as bearers of information to rural districts. In largely non-literate societies, women's concentration in the towns and markets gave them an advantage in gathering oral information, while their economic and familial ties in the countryside enabled them to disseminate important information more quickly than official channels (Sheller, 1997). Many examples of violent language recorded in the British records were spoken by women, whether during slavery and apprenticeship, or in later court-house scuffles and riots; when violence occurred, working-class women were often at the

forefront, brandishing not only insults and provocation but quite often weapons as well (Sheller, 1997). For the most part, however, both male and female labourers joined hands in mounting determined and protracted resistance to unfair treatment not only against overseers and plantations personnel but against representatives of the colonial state: policemen, court-houses, militias and particularly against a judicial system which persistently failed to effect appropriate compromises or fair judgment (Wilmot, 1995; Simmonds, 1983).

In a fascinating discussion, Simmonds (1983) addresses the extent to which the Afro-Jamaican freed peoples, in agitating against the injustices of the planter-class dominated colonial administration, weaved threads of collection action post-1838. She focuses on the series of riots which took place throughout the 1840s and 1850s around the struggle of blacks to practice their indigenous religions and the attendant divisions which appeared in the Baptist Church between persons giving attention to Africanisms as opposed to the more European-centred Afro-Christianity. The tension between Europeanism and Africanism persisted because the ruling classes were strenuously opposed to the latter. Clashes and public disturbances therefore constantly erupted over attempts to ban public festivities engaged in by blacks and to outlaw celebrations such as Christmas. The white ruling class saw Christmas and August celebrations as not merely a disruption of economic activity but continuing Negro threat. Simmonds (1983) argues that this threat included more than violence, encompassing Afro-Christian practices termed Obeah and Myalism, which the planter class understood only as heathenism and associated with black exuberance in the streets. White and coloured leaders drew clear distinctions between European cultural patterns which they considered uplifting, and the practices derived from Africa or from slavery which they deemed debasing. In the West Indies, civilization was seen to be in conflict with primitivism, and the victory of the former could only be achieved, it was thought, by controlling or eradicating 'corrupt and debasing influences' (Simmonds, 1983:10).

Although much of these riotous conflicts were brought before the courts for adjudication, justice remained elusive. More often than not, the Jamaican authorities were prone to give support to the groups committed to preserving and strengthening European cultural influences in the island. Of significant analytic purchase however is that the justice that the blacks sought collided with the laws passed to prevent black assembly. One such was the '*Act for preventing tumults and riotous assemblies, and for the more speedily and effectually punishing the rioters'*. This act essentially defined the extent to which an assemblage would be regarded as a riot[30], outlined the mode of dealing with rioters and provided protection for the police forces should the rioters be maimed or killed. These laws were the all-encompassing political weapons held in the hands of the Jamaican Assembly composed of the white, male property-owning ruling classes to ensure the legal and legitimate suppression of black cultural expression, religious organization and commercial activities (Simmonds, 1983:15). Political redress or political power clearly could not be sought or found through political means. By 1865, rising discontent over social conditions and impoverishment, continuing discrimination and outright racism as well as institutionalized violence against the former plantation slaves had sparked a new kind of militancy among them which spilled onto the streets of almost every corner of the island. It must be noted here that although the Church, as manifested by non-conformist missionaries, had emerged as a recognizable civic organization dedicated to education, welfare and other charitable efforts and had created the basis for communal cooperation and Christian principles in this colonial society (Dick, 2002), it was the violent street- level protests, which began at Morant Bay in the parish of St. Thomas, (an area traditionally backed by the Maroon bases of the Blue Mountains), involving thousands of ex-slaves, later called The Morant Bay Rebellion, which represented a landmark configuration of popular protest. It underscored the rationale for later political

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[30] It is important to note the usage of the word 'riot' as opposed to 'protest' or 'civil disturbance' here. Although many of the protests carried out during this period were highly violent, this was a clearly deliberate effort on the part of the Jamaican Assembly to collectively bracket all forms of collective struggle by the black lower orders as 'riots' and thus legislatively cast them in breach of the law. This had the effect of illegitimating popular protest as one form of collective action and political participation while legitimizing the grounds for their prohibition and repression.

struggles from the 1930s onwards, including the contemporary citizen action that Jamaica is witnessing today. I review these political protests in the final sections.

## 4.6 THE MORANT BAY REBELLION

The Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865 is a historical watershed for the maturing and consolidation of the loose networks and relationships (which may or may not crystallize into official/formal groups) which have come to best define civil society in Jamaica. Enjoying the eventual relaxations on the policies on assembly, movement and expression, a mighty civil society emerged, from above and below led by George William Gordon and Paul Bogle. It is important to highlight the differences in standing and technique of these two leaders. George William Gordon was an upwardly mobile coloured planter, business man and independent Church leader, who championed for the rights of the poor in the Jamaican Assembly. This is while Paul Bogle, who became the rebel leader in 1865, was a peasant small holder and one of Gordon's black deacons (Craton, 1996). These men thus clearly occupied different spaces in the social and ideological structure of colonial-dom, a significant factor in the contrasting approaches and strategies of political participation, protestation and negotiation. As two emerging civic leaders, they had a central mission - to protest against the intolerable economic circumstances, the paucity of social services for the poor and the injustices of the legal system.

Given his role and voice in the Jamaican Assembly, Gordon recognized and used political (parliamentary) power as a lever to raise the socio-economic conditions of the poor while Bogle, without the benefit of institutionalised political voice, resorted to a more militant type of organization (Barnett, 2001). It is to be acknowledged that the events that precipitated the Morant Bay Rebellion were not unlike previous revolts, except in this instance, violent protest by the masses assumed precedence in the face of the persistent inflexibility of the colonial state to the demands of civil society, expressed via conventional means such as petitions and lobbying. Bogle operated a strong organizational network in the Blue Mountain Valley, involving both men and women

and, by all accounts, not only held meetings but also opted for the use of petitions and letters as first option. Craton (1996:197) writes that the events accelerated when:

> [George William] Gordon was sacked as a St. Thomas Vestryman and JP for criticizing the operation of justice and a lack of social services in the parish… Shortly afterwards, Governor Eyre refused to even see petitioners, including Paul Bogle [and his large followership], who had walked the 45 miles from St. Thomas into Spanish Town.

The failure of the colonial administration to address their grievances, particularly low wages on the estates and the oppressive and partial administration of the law, as expressed in the protracted Court-imposed eviction of persons over non-payment of rent in addition to attempts to arrest Paul Bogle only served to intensify the fury of the people against the judicial system, embodied in the Morant Bay Courthouse. It should therefore come as no surprise that the Morant Bay Courthouse became the political and institutional centre of the ensuing rebellion. The historical record reveals that hundreds of Afro-Jamaican men and women, on Paul Bogle's orders, marched to the sounds of drums, cow horns and conch shells upon the authorities in Morant Bay, where the hated Vestry was in session. This march is perhaps the most described and researched aspect of citizen politics in Jamaica and includes a fascinating examination of the impressive roles played by women in the confrontation which sparked the Morant Bay Rebellion. Scholars foreground women such as Rosanna Finlayson, Caroline Grant and Sarah Johnson, who raided the police station for 'guns, bayonets and swords', and directed the attack against the men who had taken refuge in the courthouse (Wilmot, 1995; Sheller (1997). Wilmot (1995:292) suggests that some women may have had their own agenda for participation, as the following excerpt illustrates:

> Elizabeth Faulkner, who lived at Church corner, a mile from Morant Bay, wanted to kill John Bonner Barrett, a black shopkeeper in Morant Bay because of his dishonest business practices. Mary Ward and other women, who urged the killing of Charles Price, a black contractor and former Assemblyman, were labourers who had worked for Price and had not been remunerated.

These women (supported by men) did not so much hijack the rebellion or depart from its central mission but clearly undertook vigilante justice in an arena where justice through

legitimate means would have been virtually impossible to obtain. The confrontation at Morant Bay resulted in the burning down of the Morant Bay Courthouse, the release of prisoners, looting of the town and estate provision grounds and the killing of 20 whites, including the Custos. The retribution was however swift and extreme, with more than 430 men and women shot down or put to death after trial, 600 publicly flogged, 1000 houses burned and George William Gordon and Paul Bogle publicly hanged (Craton, 1996). Nonetheless, it is fair to argue that the institution of more aggressive tactics such as riots and marches on the part of the former slaves served its intended purpose – the abolition of the colonial House of Assembly and substantial social, economic and political reforms under a new Crown Colony Government. Civil society organizations – charities, community groups, citizen initiatives and economic cooperatives flourished in this new public sphere. The Morant Bay Rebellion symbolized an important part of the struggle of freed peoples in Jamaica to construct a society that reflected their new status as free citizens. This struggle has almost always assumed a confrontational character. Fighting with governors, complaining to the Crown and Parliament about social conditions and the repression of lower orders, while not high politics, gave the Jamaican political community a particular political style which would survive more than half a century later (Augier, 1996). In other words, the constant neglect of the welfare of the society as a whole meant that riots would remain the predominant means of collective bargaining for the Jamaican poor and the essential character of the emerging civil society.

## 4.7 THE LABOUR RIOTS OF THE 1930s

The emergence of popular protest as a predominant tool of political negotiation in Jamaica expressed itself most clearly in the years up to the 1930s. Indeed, while public opinion, economic cooperative societies and welfare organizations burgeoned to empower the masses and press demand for social change, high unemployment, low wages and poor social services were contributing to widespread discontent. Frustration again gave way to aggression, resulting in the riotous Labour movement of the 1930s and 1940s. It was against the backdrop of these violent labour uprisings from 1938 onwards that the Jamaican proletariat called attention to their economic circumstances. This historical

moment is significant as it was these riots which created the context within which local political organization and indigenous political leadership had its embryonic beginnings in this post-colonial society.  As is clear from the preceding discussion, Jamaica, prior to 1938, was a deeply racially divided society run by a Crown Colony government. While the white merchant and plantation owning classes hoarded wealth, and a carefully delineated middle and professional class was the beneficiary of economic security, generalized unemployment, poverty and hopelessness characterized the life of the black masses. Agricultural wages were extremely low in an island economy still dominated by the sugar industry. Rural peasant farming was condemned to poor hillside lands, rendering it unproductive while poor working conditions or joblessness were typical features of the urban proletariat.

Suffering colonial control and exploitation, underpaid and despised, the Jamaican labour force naturally saw in episodic eruptions of violence, a potential source of bargaining power. Bereft of effective trade union representation and political organization but spurred by widespread sugar strikes and agitation for higher wages which were occurring throughout the wider Caribbean – Puerto Rico, St. Kitts, British Guiana, Grenada, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago – since 1935 (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998:366-364), Jamaican workers, from the sugar plantations in rural townships to dock workers on the Kingston waterfront, erupted in civil unrest in May, 1938. They soon attracted the leadership and representation of two stalwarts of the emerging labour movement, Alexander Bustamante and Norman Washington Manley. Through these men, strikes, mass meetings and marches became the initial platforms upon which the urban and rural proletariat staged their protests against low wages and working class poverty and pressed home their demand for work. Constantly broken up by the police and aggravated by the intractable response of the colonial government, including the arrest of trade union activist/leader, Alexander Bustamante, the labour unrest was to enter an explosive phase characterized by a conflux of workers' riots, throughout the country.

During weeks of civil disorder, thousand of sugar workers on Jamaica's major sugar producing complexes set fires to cane-fields, destroyed plantation buildings while their urban counterparts clashed violently with the police during continuous labour strikes. When the dust of civil unrest had settled, eight workers lay dead, having been shot and killed by the police, thirty-two were wounded, 139 sustained other injuries and some 400 were imprisoned (Manley, 1975; Sherlock & Bennett, 1998). Although it was economic hardship more so than a lack of political rights which brought the urban and rural masses into open protest (Schmeider, 1993), these labour riots brought about widespread structural and social changes - improved living standards, the emergence of an active trade union movement, the development of the country's major political parties, the attainment of Universal Adult Suffrage and eventually, self-government and independence in 1962.

Two developments are of theoretical significance here. First, the labour unrests exposed the inadequacies of Crown Colony rule and increased the desire of the Jamaican citizenship for home-grown political leadership. Secondly, it gave birth to a trade union movement inhabited by a politically-engaged citizenry drawn from both the middle and lower classes. It was by virtue of this organized political action and strong citizen negotiation that the violent protests were converted into political progress. The fracture of this labour movement into two independent and ideologically opposed political camps produced Jamaica's first formal political institutions, a structure of local state power and two important nationalist leaders. For example, from a collection of labour unions called the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union (BITU) sprung the conservative Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) led by Alexander Bustamante. Meanwhile, with roots firmly tied to the Trade Union Congress (TUC), (today known as the National Workers Union - NWU) arrived the radical progressive People's National Party (PNP) headed by Norman Manley. It was continued political pressure, mainly by the latter, which resulted in the official granting of self-government and universal adult suffrage in 1944 and Jamaica's migration from its 'colonial condition to full and sovereign nationhood' (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998: 372). With the full acceptance of a two-party political system and an *elected* majority in the

legislature, the cornerstones of democratic government had been laid in Jamaica. However, despite unyielding commitment to democracy and to improving the lot of the working poor, the ideological polarity between Bustamente's capitalist-oriented JLP and Manley's Socialist PNP resulted in the polarization of the Jamaican society around these political blocs. This polarization became the frame for the bitter political clashes and intense antagonism which characterized the 1970s as each competed for the greater share of the people's vote. The political transition from colonial rule in Jamaica therefore became characterized by the casting aside of what Gray (2004:34) describes as 'the earlier genteel politics of native elite leadership in favour of a tough, unforgiving, bare-knuckled approach to political contestation' and state governance. The introduction of the discriminatory practice of earmarking work, political favours and other benefits on the basis of political party and trade union affiliation ushered in a political culture defined by patronage, partisanship and violence (Gray, 2004; Charles, 2002; Rapley, 2003; Stone, 1980; National Committee on political Tribalism, 1997). I will look at the impact on citizen politics of these unfortunate developments in Jamaican political governance in greater detail in later chapters.

## 4.8    SUMMARY

Critical to this research is that positive developments were taking place, but, seemingly, inevitably, in an atmosphere of antagonism. By Munroe's thesis (1999:81) 'violent behavioural norms under-girded the society's advance with adversarialism, with its armoury of weapons, most notably the strike, central to working class progress and to the strengthening of civil society as a force for expanding democracy'. At the same time, the changing global and national economic and political circumstances of the post-independence era, most notably the introduction of the Structural Adjustment mechanism, globalization and economic liberalization during the early 1980s and 1990s, would combine to impact on Jamaica's democratic life in multiple ways. The trade unions, for example, which had been perhaps the chief weapon of organized, modern civil society, contributed to reducing autocratic rule at the workplace, helped to enhance upward social mobility for the black working class, improved levels of real income for

unionized sectors and their dependents and brought the interests of labour to bear on national decision-making, lost its strength and role as a vital cohesive element of civil society (Munroe, 1999- refer to chapter 5; Manley, 1991). This meant that the strike, although still employed by working class groups, had lost much of its power as a tool of political protestation and negotiation.

Other developments such as 'stagnant or declining per capita income, a significant proportion of citizens living below the poverty line, widening income inequality, rising levels of violent crime, high unemployment and low wage employment, deteriorating roads, inadequate water supply and sewerage systems' (Munroe, 1999:43), meant that the withdrawal of labour could only be used by specific sectors. Therefore, the unemployed, on account of being unable to strike, or 'to withdraw some crucial contribution on which others depend' (Piven & Cloward, 1977:24) but who are still entitled to the commodities defined as public goods, resorted to the more intense street-level protests and demonstrations. Open political struggles, including roadblocks, burning of public property and other forms of vandalism, placard-bearing and violent confrontations and clashes with the police remain the popular means of expressing discontent in Jamaican civilian politics. Indeed, as my discussion in subsequent chapters will reveal, the resort to more militant styles of political protestation and negotiation, including open violence, is invariably seen by Jamaican citizens as the most viable option to raise the visibility of their demands and to force redress from the state bureaucracy. In order to come to terms with the rationale behind these approaches and their impact on the transformation and/or building up of a truly civil society, it is imperative that I take into account the nature of the structure of governance under which Jamaican citizens now operate and the quality of governance provided to them. This discussion must, inevitably, include the existing performance of political representatives and the state system as well as the various (economic) constraints impinging on the capacity of the state to offer 'good governance' to its citizenry. It is to this discussion that I turn in Chapter 5.

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# The 'Seige-ure' of the State and The Changing Nature of Citizen Politics

## 5.1    INTRODUCTION

> *Youths a wipe car glass fe get a meal …fe de hungry whe dem a feel*
> *Government, we need a betta [deal]*
> *Dem say promise is a comfort to a fool …So right ya now, yuh betta cool*
> *Yuh nuh want see nuh rise in a de tool…*
> *Yuh likkle curry meat a nuh much… just gi we whe we vote fah.*
>
> (Youths are wiping car windows because they are hungry
> Government, we need an improved situation
> They say a promise is a comfort to a fool
> You do not want to see a rise of the tool [increase in gun crimes]
> Your small efforts are nothing, just give us what we voted for.
>
> (Queen Ifrika, *Zinc Fence Community,* 2004)

> I had come to see that everything was radically connected with politics and that however one proceeded, *no people would be other than the nature of its government* [my emphasis].
> (Jean Jacques Rousseau)

The lyrical protestation of Jamaican entertainer, Queen Ifrika, embodies and reproduces the existing mood – dissatisfaction, anger and frustration – of the citizenry regarding the performance of the Jamaican State. As my discussion of the slave revolts against the British plantocracy and subsequent riots against an inflexible colonial (Crown Colony) government in chapter 4 reveals (and as affirmed by the latter quotation from Rousseau), it is the performance and character of the state which appear to bear heavily on the nature and tone of civilian politics within a particular society. This is because in every national context, it is the structural power of the state that ultimately shapes and determines socio-economic interaction and effectively conditions the everyday life of citizens.

Orr (2004) argues that it is the state which is ultimately charged with the responsibility to deliver the security and the economic, social, political and judicial goods that its population demands – a political approach which reflects the top-down view of governance. The state's capacity to deliver these goods therefore has enormous implications for its legitimacy and the quality of governance it provides in the eyes of the citizenry and, hence, the nature of civilian politics. As governance requires an interactive two-way process between the government (of states) and the governed (citizens) (Orr, 2004; Packer, 2003), any notion of *good governance* must encompass citizen participation – the processes and institutions through which citizens articulate their interests and resolve their differences (Mbogori & Chigudu, 1999; UNDP, 1997). This study is about the street-level protests by which Jamaican citizens to make claims upon the state and the impact of this brand of citizen politics on the quality of civil society. Of course, how the state itself relates and responds to citizens' demands also has a great deal to do with the nature of citizen politics and the quality of civil society. It is this latter phenomenon that I focus on in this chapter.

For all intents and purposes, the dichotomy between the state and civil society is an imposed, if not artificial one[31]. It is clear that politicians and bureaucrats do not hold the monopoly on politics nor is politics strictly within their precincts. Indeed, from the populous grassroots of ordinary citizens to the apex of the state, politics is as common as salt. The nature and role of civil society is in critical ways moulded to the shape of the state, and as the reach of the state becomes more complex, its roots grow deeper into civil society. The state and civil society are therefore inextricably intertwined in a symbiotic relationship. Non-state actors thus find the scope and range of their rational choices bounded and channelled by the rules and resources which constitute the state (Cerny, 1990). This framework either protects or suppresses citizens' freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly (Mbogori & Chigudu, 1999) and determines the type of

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[31] See Keane, J. (1988) for a detailed account of the origins and historical development of the distinction between civil society and the state.

relationship between these two entities – collaborative or adversarial. Both civil and uncivil actions on the part of both entities are framed within this symbiotic relationship.

I post a caveat here. When the language of civil society takes centre stage in modern analyses of the state, the tendency has been to focus on the sources of its discontent with regards to a predatory monolithic state, thereby feeding an adversarial portrayal of the state/civil society nexus (Keane, 1988). It is worth noting that it is the essential character and pre-eminence of citizen politics viz. a viz. the structure of state power, which underscores the persistent antagonism between these entities both in scholarship and political reality. For example, it is the historical force of *people power* (see for e.g. Dalton, 1996) which tore down the blocks of the Berlin Wall; brought democracy to Eastern and Central Europe, the Philippines and Latin America; civil rights and political liberties to African-Americans; de-legitimized the Vietnam War; undermined South Africa's apartheid system; disrupted world trade talks of global economic corporations; and, in a less publicized example, resulted in the roll-back of government-imposed fuel taxes in Jamaica in 1999. All this is citizen politics in its most positive manifestation but in hostile opposition to the state.

While these events emphasize the changing nature of contemporary politics, their most apparent offshoot, popular protest, also signals the rupturing of the stability on which state power stood and the ushering in of a new, more aggressive approach to politicking by citizens in some contexts. These processes of structuration,[32] which both states and citizen politics are undergoing, are also in themselves radical developments (Cerny, 1990). This is because it is from citizen politics that state power derives its legitimacy and on which democracy calibrates its quality and survivability (Diamond, Linz & Lipset,

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[32] Structuration implies a process of continuing interaction between agent and structure, in which structures which are generally constraining can also change and be changed in certain conditions. For a more detailed account of this process, see the discussion in chapter 3.

1990) [33]. By the same token, the quality of public life and the performance of social institutions are powerfully influenced by longstanding traditions and networks of civic engagement or its absence (Putnam, 1993; 1995; Barber, 1998; Hall, 1995). The importance of an autonomous, vigorously organized civil society for stable democracy is thus well taken. A rich associational life, according to Diamond, Linz & Lipset (1990:21), can 'supplement the role of political parties in stimulating political participation, increase citizens' efficacy, recruit and train political leaders and enhance commitment to the democratic system'. In addition, much of the vast literature of international development agencies stresses the centrality of civil society to development and democratic governance (Rojas, 1999; United Nations Development Programme, 1997; cf. Girvan, 1997). Yet, it is the state rather than civil society that is accorded the greatest responsibility for maintaining social order and advancing development. Not unlike its counterpart in social sites, apparent decline in the performance of political institutions and political actors can and will necessarily impinge on the quality of public life, standards of living and upon the social and political values that collectivities of citizens uphold.

My own perspective is therefore biased towards a liberal democratic order in which there is a reasonable degree of equilibrium amongst the following entities: an effective government, a properly functioning market economy and an active civil society (that sufficiently balances the others). This means that civil society ought to 'complement rather than (seek to) replace the state' (UNDP Policy Document, 1997:5). Civil society is strategically positioned within the rubric of social governance to fill in where there is a vacuum in state governance under the rationale that 'governments cannot do everything, do not know best how to do everything and do not necessarily see priorities as citizens

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[33] Whereas most governments rest on a conjunction of coercion and consent, Diamond, Linz & Lipset (1990) argue that the stability of democracies, to a large degree, depends on the consent of a majority of those governed. Democratic legitimacy hinges on an 'intrinsic value commitment rooted in the political culture at all levels of the society' (Diamond et al 1990:9). Bear in mind that it is also shaped by the performance of the democratic regime, both economically and politically via promoting civil liberties, maintaining civil order, personal security, adjudicating and arbitrating conflicts. In other words, the more successful a regime is at providing what people want, the greater (and more deeply rooted) its legitimacy tends to be. For a more expansive discussion on this issue, see Diamond, Linz, & Lipset (1990).

do' (Buddan, *Jamaica Gleaner*, 2003). Indeed, in this new dispensation of power-sharing or co-governance, civil society is expected to play increasing roles in delivering services, helping to shape and implement programmes and mobilizing communities to gain access to basic human needs (Mbogori & Chigudu, 1999). Clearly, civil society and the state differ in the ends they seek. Civic networks in democratic societies are also entrusted with mitigating 'the dilemmas of collective action by institutionalizing social interaction; reducing opportunism, fostering trust and making economic and social collaboration and the public participation of civil society members easier' (Putnam, 1995:667). Civil society is thus obliged to mobilize groups to participate in economic, social and political activities, while attempting to regulate the state.

As my discussion in chapter 2 illustrates, developing and/or rebuilding these horizontal relationships and social norms are invaluable because they constitute a nation's social capital. Fforde & Porter (1995) argue that strong social capital is responsible for the extraordinary ability of the civil, economic and political institutions of some Asian countries (China, Japan and South Korea) to respond to economic opportunities. No doubt, in many instances, much of this social capital has been directed and driven institutionally by the state. It has, however, in other contexts, been responsible for the spontaneous reactions by citizens in the face of either incapable and/or overbearing state bureaucracies (ibid, 1995). This serves to reinforce the now prevailing view that the empowerment of citizens for strong, organized, effective and politically viable action can only take place if civil society is not weak, marginalized or uncivil (Held, 1996). The state, on the other hand, though kept in check, cannot become bereft of the power to provide the enabling circumstances of a well-ordered society – the rule of law, justice and security (Diamond, Linz & Lipset, 1990). It is unquestionable that in many societies, the achievement of goals in areas of health and education has depended on the existence of a strong and competent state (Fforfe and Porter, 1995).

It is therefore not an inflated postulation that a strong civil society can only flourish within the ambit of a strong state outfitted with legitimate and effective political

institutions. The reverse perspective is also poignant as a weak and contested state can be a major impediment to the development of a structured social project, unable to deliver the social and economic goods that citizens expect or to maintain order in the face of contradictory group demands (Diamond, Linz & Lipset, 1990; Held, 1996). As the experience of the Philippines since 1986 demonstrates, very often in the absence of a strong state, the organizations and individuals of civil society are unable to exert lasting influence on important issues (Forde & Porter, 1995)[34]. An enfeebled, vulnerable state may also hinder the formation or stunt the growth of an active, politically efficacious citizenry and, in some circumstances, may foster, as we will see in the Jamaican case, open spaces for uncivil social currents and actors. It therefore seems clear that the state and civil society condition each other's development (Held, 1996). The current challenges facing the state in the 21$^{st}$ century, in many ways, rupture this normative principle. In fact, the state's structural capacity to deal with social, political and economic development and fulfil its obligations to civil society, particularly in Third World contexts such as Jamaica, is no longer self-evident but problematic. It is to this subject that I turn in the next section.

## 5.2    THE STATE – AT THE CROSSROADS?

> The centrality of the state is unlikely to be undermined unless an alternative structure can not only challenge it but also replace it. And in a world where other structures have their own weaknesses, to replace the state would require not only the emergence of a potential 'challenger' but also the decay of state structures and their inability to cope with critical conjunctures. The list of alternative structures from markets to civil society seems unlikely to include one with a sufficient potential scope of structural power… to be successful (Cerny, 1990: 200-201).

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[34] Fforde & Porter (1995) argues that despite maintaining a vibrant and active civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), professional and workers' associations and rural people's organizations, which presented the incoming 1986 government of then Philippines President, Corazon Aquino, with a broadly supported mandate for structural change, little was achieved in important areas such as land reform. They attribute the then situation to the absence of strong, administratively disciplined government apparatus capable of implementing nationally mandated policy.

The foreboding image of an unravelling of the state apparent in current political economy approaches renders views such as Cerny's above as either romantic or out of touch with political reality. There is now general agreement among international relations scholars that although the state and the apparatus of government remain of central importance, it is no longer the sole actor in determining the direction of society (see Bull, 1977). Contemporary analyses of the state thus tend to focus on this apparent implosion of traditional notions of state authority, including the limits of politics and sovereignty, the failings of representative governments and political actors and, at times, question outright the future of the state (Mason, 2005; Ferguson, 2003; Dalton, 2000; Rotberg, 2002; Pharr and Putnam, 2000; Strange, 1996). Egged on by a wide range of global and local events and trends over the last decade such as the increasing power and noticeable ascendancy of a multiplicity of non-state actors – multinational and transnational corporations, criminal and terrorist organizations as well as social movements – it would appear that 'the state is at a crossroads' (Cerny, 1990:113).

This capitulation in the authority of contemporary states is reflected in a growing diffusion of authority to a varied mix of global and local institutions, bodies and associations[35]. That citizens identify even less with the state is represented by Strange as a severe limit on its power. The state, or at least the great majority of states, she argues, cannot 'claim a degree of loyalty from the citizen substantially greater than the loyalty given to family, to the firm, to the political party or even in some cases to the local

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[35] Of course, the argument here does not presuppose that a fading away of the state is underway or that there is a deliberate, sustained theoretical and political attempt to oust the modern state system and replace it with some other hegemon. In fact, to use the extreme examples of Somalia and Rwanda in the mid-1990s or the Solomon Islands or Iraq in 2003 as actual manifestations of the absence of a centralized state organization, it is clear that an overarching form of political authority within societies such as that provided by states is indispensable. This is regardless of whether that authority is legitimated coercively (as in Haiti in 2004) or by popular consent. Further, that there are nations/regions (Taiwan and Chechnya) struggling to acquire independent statehood coupled with the satisfaction of others (such as Georgia of the former Russian Federation) in acquiring this entitlement, underscores the increasing desire for the structural system of the state and for all that is invoked herein – the seductive promises of modernity embodied in notions of sovereignty, self-government, legitimacy and nationalism.

football team' (1996:72)[36]. The fact that citizens now exhibit and maintain multiple identities and overlapping loyalties is, however, not unusual. What is remarkable here is that retreat from the state is being occasioned by increasing public disaffection globally with the *performance* of representative democracy. Some of the more notable scholarly accounts (Diamond & Morlino, 2005; Pharr & Putnam, 2000; Norris, 1999; McAllister, 1999; Putnam, 1995, Diamond & Gunther, 2001 and Diamond et al 1990 for example) highlight widespread 'democratic malaise' manifested in anaemic levels of voter participation in elections, the widespread absence of accountability of elected officials, the exclusion or peripheralization of significant sectors of the population, economic underperformance, reflected in massive unemployment, impoverishment, high crime levels, poor living standards and restricted social and political rights. Norris (1999), for example, writes that at the end of the twentieth century, citizens in many established democracies give poor marks to how their political system functions, and in particular how core institutions of representative government such as political parties, parliaments, the legal system and the civil service work in practice. Whereas citizens adhere to democratic values and largely accept democracy as an ideal regime[37], Norris observes that in large part, citizens have become highly critical of the performance of political actors and the performance of political institutions.

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[36] An important question here is whether this retreat from the state by citizens in turn props up civil society. This division of loyalties that Strange (1996) writes about may instead represent what Banfield (1959) refers to as 'amoral familism' whereby citizens abandon their basic feelings of mutual trust and defensively retreat into the limits of their intimate circles. It must however be borne in mind that loyalties can be bought. Indeed, the whole notion of political patronage is grounded on the buying of loyalties. The compunction of materially deprived citizens, as we shall see in the case of Jamaica, to freely divide their loyalties between the state and local rogue leaders (called dons) immediately prejudices the state while doing nothing to improve civil society.

[37] Numerous recent examples of popular citizen uprising, including the pro-democracy and anti-corruption protests in Nepal and the Solomon Islands respectively in 2006, the Orange Revolution which forced fresh elections in Ukraine in 2004 and the Rose Revolution which culminated in the independence of the former Russian Federation state of Georgia in 2003, all confirm increasing public desire for the promise of democracy, including democratic freedoms and values.

Recent scholarship (Norris 1999; Inglehart, 1999) also draws attention to the emergence of 'critical citizens' who are more informed, educated and urban and, hence, more demanding of government to provide meaningful standards of living for its citizens. It is the capacity of the state to deliver this quality governance which most impinges on its contemporary power and authority. As citizen politics has as its starting point the performance (or lack thereof) of the state, it is compelled to account for and act in response to this new development. Despite retaining considerable utility, it is the phenomenon of a *besieged state* which holds strain in many political contexts around the world. The state's incapacity to perform its specific functional tasks adequately is clearly worrisome, a situation of particular relevance to the less-economically robust societies of the Third World. But what is it that determines state strength and state weakness (or failure) and what kinds of implications does the strength and character of a state hold for the nature of citizen politics and the quality of civil society?

Several contemporary scholars focus a great deal of attention on the subject of state strength and failure. The work of Skocpol (1985) and Sorenson (2004), for example, insist on '*bringing the state back in*' while that of Rotberg (2002), Gray (2004) and Meeks (1996) using Third World case studies, elucidate the causes, nature and consequences of state weakness and failure. Meeks (1996), using the Caribbean as his frame of reference, gauges 'strength of state' on the basis of its resilience to threats to its continued authority and dominance. Dominance is interpreted to mean the state's ability to exercise effective intellectual, moral and political leadership. A resilient state, Meeks (1996:90) argues, should therefore be able to 'absorb, incorporate, head off in advance, or if necessary, crush effectively, significant threats to its survival, integrity and coherence' (cf. Gray 2004, chapter 1). By this token, a fragile state is one sufficiently divested of its dominance and thus unable to respond adequately to challenges to its survival. Yet, a level of fragility cannot be conceptually construed as failure as one is not necessarily tantamount to the other, although they most definitely rest on the same continuum.

State failure, on the other hand, is not a phenomenon which occurs overnight. In his operationalization of state failure, Rotberg (2002) maintains that a state can be driven into failure by exhibiting over a period of time, chronic endemic weaknesses in its (representative) government – ineffectual institutions, corruption and poor political leadership. Although failure and weakness can also flow from a nation's geographical, physical, historical and political circumstances[38], Rotberg's contention is that state failure is not accidental but rather man-made. In other words, as Rotberg (2002:85) states, 'nation states fail when they can no longer deliver positive political goods to their people. Their governments lose legitimacy and in the eyes and hearts of a growing plurality of its citizens, the nation-state itself becomes illegitimate'. Using this very general definition as a singular interpretation of nation-state failure is however problematic. This is because all governments, at one point or another, experience varying periods of illegitimacy depending on the vicissitudes of their political and economic circumstances. For example, after the 1999 April riots in Jamaica, a poll conducted by the popular Stone Poll organization revealed that 54 percent of Jamaican citizens agreed with the view that the P.J. Patterson-led government had lost its moral authority to lead. However, within the space of four years, the same P.J. Patterson-led government was returned to power for a third consecutive term, the fourth in succession for the People's National Party (PNP). Prior to this, no administration or head of state had survived national riots to win a general election (*Jamaica Observer,* 1999, July 15*).* I will discuss the circumstances and implications of this protest event in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

Rotberg's (2002) analysis, however, reveals a credible theoretical continuum, which has as its starting point states classified as weak, failing, declining progressively to those experiencing total collapse. The illustration below outlines this continuum:

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[38] In the Caribbean, such socio-political, historical and economic circumstances include slavery, colonialism and, more recently, the imposition of neo-liberal economic reforms under the IMF/World Bank Structural Adjustment policy. I will explore the latter in more detail later in this chapter.

$$\text{Weak} \longrightarrow \text{Failing} \longrightarrow \text{Failed} \longrightarrow \text{Collapsed}$$

By Rotberg's categorisation, Zimbabwe and Haiti, for instance, are two clear examples of states displaying systemic weaknesses. Failed states would include Congo, Liberia, Afghanistan and Iraq (after 2003). This is while historical examples of collapsed states include Somalia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Tajikistan. State failure (in its most comprehensive form) therefore originates towards the furthest point of this continuum. Rotberg admits that although the list of weak states is long, only a few of those weak and badly governed states necessarily edge to full failure. The categorization of a state as failing thus need not doom it unquestionably into full failure. A state would have to present evidence of the deteriorating conditions outlined by Rotberg (2002) and demonstrate that it meets most of these explicit criteria in order to exemplify failure. It is to be noted that although Jamaica may, at times, exhibit some of the causative and descriptive features of failed or collapsed states (such as seemingly endemic violence), the country does not sit comfortably within any of these strict theoretical categories. My preoccupation here, however, is not so much with the theoretical assessments of whether states are failing or have in fact failed. My purpose here is to consider the extent to which it is the weaknesses and/or failings of the Jamaican State that predominantly underpin the proliferation of 'critical citizens' (Norris, 1999), who are demanding more of their government and elected representatives and who demonstrate a preference for unconventional styles of citizen politics. In order to do this, I am obliged to look at the existing characterizations of the Jamaican State. After all, as chapter 4 illustrates, it is first and foremost, the character of state power which determines the tone of citizen politics.

### 5.2.1   The Jamaican State – A Political Sketch

Of the state forms that have evolved in the contemporary Caribbean, Jamaica has been described as representing the 'strong state' (resilient) model (Meeks, 1996). This flattering characterization is based on the generally accepted view of Jamaica's post-colonial political order as a highly consolidated democracy and that this democratic framework rests on relative political stability. This is derived from having institutionalized a virtually

impermeable two-party political system since attaining Universal Suffrage in 1944, conducted relatively free and fair elections and installed and removed governments without resort to popular uprising, military coups or extra-constitutional means. Indeed, despite highly publicized incidents of electoral violence, party patronage and partisanship which may have blotted this lofty record somewhat, there is consensus that the political system is complemented by high levels of freedom, civil liberties and an extraordinary retention of elite consensus (Meeks, 1996; Munroe, 2002; 1999). At the same time, however, these scholars signal deep deficits in the processes of representative democracy in Jamaica. Popular discontent with democracy is not remarkable but common to both transitional and established or consolidated democracies (see Pharr & Putnam, 2000; Norris, 1999; Inglehart, 1999). Nevertheless, Munroe (1999:42) observes that popular dissatisfaction with Jamaican democracy has been at an all time high since the mid-1990s. He notes that remarkably for a consolidated democracy, no more than 35 percent of the Jamaican population was very or fairly satisfied with the system in 1996 while only 2 percent in 1995 designated their constitution and government as aspects of Jamaica of which they are most proud.

Munroe (1999) chalked this sense of inadequacy among the citizenry with the Jamaican democratic system then to special factors. One relates to the range of negative features with which the system is associated – political violence, party patronage and clientelism and elite dominated party organizations (cf. Gray, 2004; Stone, 1980; National Committee on Political Tribalism, 1997). It may be fair to say that there have been some changes in this regard since then. Certainly, in terms of the minimalist criteria of democracy – electoralism - the 1997 and 2002 general elections in Jamaica saw marked improvements in the freeness and fairness of the voting exercise and far less violence compared to previous polls (see Neuman, 2003; Munroe, 1999- refer to chapter 2). Another factor which would have heightened dissatisfaction with the political system, particularly amongst disadvantaged sectors, is the relative non-performance of governmental systems, reflected in economic indicators and the quality of life of the majority of the population.

This refers to 'stagnant or declining per capita income, a significant proportion of the citizens living below the poverty line, widening income inequality, rising levels of violent crime, high unemployment and low wage employment, deteriorating roads, inadequate water supply and sewerage systems' (Munroe, 1999:43; cf. Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica, 2003). It is, in part, the persistence of these negative features which leads to very few optimistic characterizations of state authority in Jamaica. Indeed, using the ongoing economic crisis of the mid-1990s, the collapse of the political project and the growing empowerment and psychological independence of subordinate classes as frames of reference, Meeks (2000; 1996) predicts as emerging in Jamaica what he calls 'hegemonic dissolution'. He uses hegemony here in the Gramscian sense to refer to effective leadership and control of the society by the state. On this basis, he maintains that 'the social bloc [embodied in the political elite] in charge of Jamaican society are no longer ruling over a people convinced of its social superiority and its inherent right to "run things" ' (1996:131).

Gray (2004:5), on the other hand, emphasises the state's parasitic, predatory, violent and extra-legal qualities and perceives political rule as a fluid transposition between democratic liberal-constitutionalism and violent parasitism depending on the exigencies of the political situation[39]. Its most outstanding feature is identified as a 'mutating,

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[39] Gray's thesis appears to reproduce a prevailing view, echoed by the lyrics of Jamaican reggae icon, Bob Marley in 1978. Here, Marley not only refers to the whole power structure as *Babylon* but insists that it is the embodiment of the mythical Dracula:

> *Babylon system is the vampire*
> *Sucking the children day by day*
> *Babylon system is the vampire*
> *Sucking the blood of the sufferahs [sufferers]*

The term Babylon is an ancient (Christian) biblical term which has developed a fascinating connotation in Jamaica. Ever since the rise of Rastafari in the 1930s, a religious movement indigenous to Jamaica, Rastafarians have held the belief that they, along with all Africans across the Diaspora, are exiles in Babylon, destined to be delivered out of captivity by a return to Zion, that is Africa, the land of their ancestors. In Jamaican parlance, Babylon symbolizes the 'oppressive order', meaning all the bureaucratic structures and official institutions of the state, particularly the police as well as the political ideology of the ruling elite. For a further elucidation of the Babylon philosophy and interpretation, see Chevannes (1995) and Cooper (1993).

opportunistic system that willy-nilly incorporates antagonistic norms and practices, several of which are hostile to the ones it publicly defends and selectively enforces' (ibid). Gray's thesis recognizes political leaders as demonstrating remarkable resourcefulness and flexibility in adapting to the changing moods and trends of the political community. For instance, Gray (2004:5) claims that rather than being purely prohibitive, repressive and fostering dependency, 'political rule in Jamaica cedes significant social space, limited political influence and a palpable cultural agency to clients and supplicants from the lower class'. It is this adaptive strategy which he assigns the designation 'parasitic rule'. It is worth noting however, that it is this very capacity to absorb, integrate, incorporate, pre-emptively eliminate or soften threats to its power that Meeks (1996) recognizes as part and parcel of a strong, resilient model of statecraft. Indeed, rather than suggesting failure or weakness on the part of the Jamaican political system, Gray (2004) admits that these 'extra-legal political border crossings' characterize the successful straddling of conflicting political values, which is an essential feature of Jamaican statecraft and a crucial strategy of political (crisis) management in peripheral states across the developing world(2004: 1-12).

That Jamaica maintains a highly consolidated democratic political system and is able to stave off crisis by adapting to new power-sharing arrangements with a variety of actors is not a guarantor of good governance. Indeed, as I argue, part of the definition of good governance is the ability of states to implement effective social policies, to efficiently manage public resources and to use them to achieve societal goals such as access to public goods – water, housing, employment (Mbogori & Chigudu, 1999). In this regard, much of old authority systems of Jamaican democratic governance are being undermined not only because there is 'hegemonic dissolution' but because of the declining capacity of the state bureaucracy to meet the expectations of citizens for a meaningful life. In fact, the term 'state failure' appears to have acquired a sort of notoriety in Third World contexts such as Jamaica, particularly among commentators who often subscribe to and/or become imprisoned in a fatalistic dialogue when gauging the performance of the Jamaican state. In the following sections, I suggest that this process of state decline is powerfully

exacerbated by the impact of economic globalization and the subsequent marginalization of small states, a phenomenon which is exposing the weaknesses of the Jamaican state or, at the very least, rendering it less dominant than it used to be. The claims that citizens make upon the state must therefore be gauged both within the context of the responsibilities of the state and the extent to which it is able to fulfil its functional tasks and honour its obligations to its citizens.

## 5.3    UNVEILING THE STATE'S JOB DESCRIPTION

The responsibilities attributed to the (democratic) state by social theorists are enormous and demanding. The modern state, organized into a coherent set of bureaucratic institutions, whether democratic or authoritarian, must perform if it is to remain stable and retain the legitimacy and confidence of its population. It is compelled, as a rule, to maintain the overall conditions of capitalist economic development and social order. Its functions hence run the gamut of monopolizing legitimate sources of coercion, giving it control over national security, taxation, currency stability, infrastructural development, environmental protection, education and health care (Ferguson 2003; Rotberg, 2002; Przeworski et al 1999; Strange, 1996; Cerny, 1990; Skocpol et al 1985). For the purposes of this study, I adopt here Rotberg's (2002:87) view of the ideal role of the state where, at minimum:

> Nation states exist to deliver political goods – security, education, health services, economic opportunity, environmental surveillance, a legal framework of order and a judicial system to administer it and fundamental infrastructural requirements such as roads and communication facilities – to their citizens.

By Rotberg's thesis, to operate in breach of these basic obligations renders a state weak, incompetent or, in extreme cases, a failure, perhaps leading to a state of collapse. I now look more closely at some of the responsibilities of the modern state and, within this discussion, attempt to gauge the performance of the Jamaican state in this regard. As it is the performance of the state in this area of service provision and (social) justice, as we shall see later, which has the most obvious impact on the tone of civilian politics and civil society in this context, it is these state responsibilities that I mainly focus on.

### 5.3.1   Economic Development

Of the extensive inventory of responsibilities assigned to the state, maintaining the economy is imperative. This is because a country's economic fortunes and its efficient use of public resources tend to have a defining impact on its capacity to secure the well-being of its citizens and consequently on political and social stability. Strange (1996) identifies as the state's essential economic functions the following: (1) maintaining the value of the currency, (2) choosing the appropriate form of economic development, (3) controlling market volatility, (4) imposing taxation 5) establishing authority over foreign trade, particularly imports, and (6) ensuring competitiveness within national markets. My summation of them here is not to undermine their individual purchase in larger state theory. Rather, given that these assumptions are all tied to the overall economic development strategy of capitalist-oriented states, they must be viewed as a whole if a fair assessment of state performance is to be achieved. To begin with, successful economic development depends on the close relationship between states and markets. States establish and administer rules and sustain the enabling environment for the market to function properly whereas 'market dynamics affect the state because the economic resources available to states and the concrete scope for state intervention [in the economy] are influenced by the way markets function' (Sorenson, 2004: 51). Contemporary political scholarship places economic activity as the locus of state power, a principal requisite for its survival. The integration of states into the global economy means both developed and developing countries are undertaking the gruelling task of properly positioning their economies to deal with the realities of international development. The reality of competition renders the success of states crucially dependent on commitment to the principles of the market.

It is however misleading to adopt a zero sum view of the relationship between states and markets. The prevailing hypothesis among many (Cerny, 1990; Evans, 1985; Ferguson, 2003; Strange, 1996; Willetts, 2001) is that the growth and significance of transnational actors, especially banks and other speculators, has managed to weaken the apparatuses of the state thereby according the market significant power over the society and economy, a

role previously reserved for, and which ultimately rested with, the state. Although some scholars attempt to dispel the 'myths' of a retreating state and have attempted to 'bring the state back in' (Sorenson, 2004; Skocpol et al. 1985), it is increasingly obvious that 'where states were once masters of markets, now it is the markets which on many crucial issues, are the masters over the governments of states' (Strange, 1996:4). The tremendous resources and extraordinary financial capital being claimed by non-state actors is the glaring contemporary political reality. In most open economies, this private sector has had far more total wealth at its disposal than governments (Ferguson, 2003:90), making them far more in control of the fortunes of states, the public policies it undertakes and thereby the well-being of citizens, and of critical purchase in this research, the values that they observe and perpetuate. Citizens engaging in aggressive demand politics with the state must become aware of this contending power of the market.

The fact that developing states are scarcely accruing significant benefits from their insertion into the international economy is also problematic. Capitalist economic development is an uneven process and the radical transformations to the state that attend this exercise have proven to be an uncomfortable option for many economies, particularly the weaker economies of the Third World. Here, economic globalization has perpetuated marginalization and dependency and placed limits on the functional power of developing states in managing their economic affairs (Sorensen, 2004), a situation which helps explain issues of social order, wider state governance and the nature of citizen politics. Caribbean countries such as Jamaica are textbook examples of this dilemma. The failure of the Jamaican state to deal with economic stagnation, including its inability to control inflation and grow its economy, cannot therefore be objectively examined without reference to the global context of Structural Adjustment (SA) and economic liberalization since the 1980s. Presaged by the world oil shock of 1973, manifested in the rapid surge in OPEC oil prices from 1974 onwards, a process of so-called 'stagflation' was promulgated in all market-oriented economies globally, forcing many countries to undertake a fundamental restructuring of their economy (Sorenson, 2004).

The experiment of Structural Adjustment, advanced by first world countries, particularly the United States through agencies such as the IMF/World Bank, was imposed on lesser developed countries, including Jamaica and required a deregulation of the economy including installing a competitive exchange rate, encouraging foreign direct investment flows, privatizing state–owned enterprises, massively reducing government expenditure and liberalizing trade by removing barriers and relying on market forces in line with global trends (Le Franc, 1994; Grant-Wisdom, 1994). The Structural Adjustment conditionalities imposed on the Jamaican economy, though aimed at reducing fiscal deficits and achieving greater competitiveness, proved to be the harsh experience of the 1980s. Structural Adjustment dealt a severe blow to an already enfeebled Jamaican economy, leaving social and economic sectors in a state of crisis. With regard to housing, the implementation of Structural Adjustment policies was associated with high mortgage interest rates, increasing rents, over-crowding and urban sprawl.  Where the supply of basic commodities such as food was concerned, the pursuit of SA meant the removal of price controls and subsidies, while in health it meant fee-for-service and escalating drug prices. In education, it meant over-crowding, deterioration of physical facilities, and declining performance (Gordon et al., 1997; Le Franc, 1994; Grant-Wisdom, 1994).

As the state contracted and reduced its role in the economy, production and employment levels and opportunities also dwindled while balance of payments deficits, impoverishment and inequality grew exponentially (Gordon et al., 1997; Dominguez et al., 1993; Le Franc, 1994; Grant-Wisdom, 1994). The existing (unstable) economic environment has manifested in exchange rate depreciation, increases in international commodity prices, massive jumps in inflation (despite modest growth) and the legacy of social and economic sectors in a state of crisis (Economic and Social Survey, Jamaica, 2003; Davies, 2000; Franklyn, 2001). This profound social and economic crisis is exacerbated as the government's priority over successive fiscal budgets has made a paradigmatic shift from service provision or employment generation to debt servicing (Munroe, 2000). The continued reliance on protected overseas markets have also placed the highly trade dependent economies of the Caribbean in an economically precarious

position. No longer shielded from the forces of world economic change, Caribbean nations such as Jamaica face unsecured markets and a further fracturing of their economies, thus increasing the powerlessness of the state to guarantee social, economic or political stability (Mandle, 2003; Girvan, 1996; Klak, 1999; Klak & Das, 1999; Thomas, 2000).

It would appear that the more drawn these states are into the global economy, the more difficult it often is for state managers to devise policies to promote economic growth. Like Jamaica, many Third World governments thus find it virtually impossible to boost their economies, create jobs, stem unemployment, improve standards of living and offer their poor any kind of meaningful life. Disease, poor housing, lack of water supply, electricity and poor sanitation thus characterize living conditions in many parts of the Third World – India, Nigeria, Mexico, Brazil and Jamaica. Indeed, the poor ultimately became the major casualties of global recession and austerity policies. For many, the situation is dire. With the majority unskilled/under-skilled and educationally disadvantaged, there are limited opportunities for paid, stable employment (Johnson, 2005; Johnson, forthcoming). At the same time, the overall ability of developing states to realize their individual economic goals, including proper control and distribution of economic resources, also redound to state manager's judicious execution of their functions and how well they are able to respond to the unpredictable changes and shifts in the international economy. The inability of political leaders to generate the kind of policies that are conducive to growth, low inflation and job creation is reflected in the penchant of Caribbean political science scholarship to allude to 'crises of leadership' and expressions of concern over the managerial skills of Caribbean politicians (see Mandle, 2003; Munroe, 1999; 2000; Klak, 1999).

It is however clear from the preceding discussion that the Jamaican State is presently confronting economic situations that impinge on its capacity to fulfil its functions in a market economy. Extraordinarily, all this is occurring at a time when there are pent-up popular expectations and increasing demands upon the state by an increasingly frustrated

populace ready to resort to violent means to have their needs addressed. Popular dissatisfaction among marginalized sectors has grown tremendously in recent years, which is increasingly expressed in aggressive street protests and demonstrations and an acute escalation in levels of crime. Indeed, there is general scholarly agreement that the emergence of popular uprising is a reflection of profound (structural) changes in the larger society. Piven & Cloward (1977), drawing on the work of Gurr (1968; 1970), and Parsons (1965) emphasise that economic change is a precondition for civil disorder. The rationale is that sharp economic change (on top of serious deprivation) disturbs the relationship between what men and women have been led to expect and what they actually experience. This experience of sudden hardship and disappointed expectations leads to anger and therefore precedes eruptions of mass turmoil. Walton (1997:12) confirms this explicit link between a state's economic performance and the levels of conflict within the civilian sphere. He argues that:

> During periods of economic growth and social mobility, conflict tends to be low, aimed at income maximization, and expressed in collective action focused chiefly on institutional channels of labour unions and political parties. Conversely, in periods of economic crisis and arrested mobility, conflict is high, aimed at collective goods and expressed in collective action by popular mobilization.

To the extent that Third World nations suffer economic dependency and chronic underdevelopment, Walton maintains that the latter pattern of conflict is more common. It is reasonable to argue that periods of rapid change, such as occurred under the Structural Adjustment programme, at the same time as they build frustration, tend also to weaken the structures of daily life and the regulatory capacities of those structures. Long standing unemployment therefore goes hand in glove with rising indices of crime, family-breakdown, vagrancy and vandalism – in short the disintegration of communities as people struggle to live within and without the rules. By Piven & Cloward's (1977:12) thesis, protest movements arise out of these traumas of daily life when people perceive the deprivation and disorganization they experience as both wrong and subject to redress. Indeed, they argue that the sheer scale of the economic dislocation brought on by the depression in the 1930s as well as in the post-war years (1950s and 1960s) in ghettoes in the United States, 'helped to mute the sense of self-blame, predisposing men and women

to view their plight as a collective one, and to blame their rulers for the destitution and disorganization they experienced' (1977: 12).

How the Jamaican state therefore navigates itself economically is thus crucial to political and social stability. This is because the responsibility of the state for economic development, although driven by and highly dependent on the external forces of the global market, means that civil society relies almost exclusively on the state for its economic well-being. Indeed, for most citizens, the ability of the state to shield the population from economic insecurity remains one of the hallmarks of good governance and they therefore expect their governments to be ultimately seized with this charge (Baker, 2003). Of course, the answer to bad governance is not simply good or better economic performance, albeit highly important. However, that the unemployment rate of countries like Jamaica is persistently over 15 percent means that the state is underperforming in this regard (see Social and Economic Survey, Jamaica, 2003). This development places severe pressure on the 'welfare'[40] function of states, and, even greater strain on weak economies whose national budgets permit only the most minimal welfare spending. Paradoxically, it is within the ambit of social services and economic security that states such as Jamaica are most open to scrutiny.  As I shall illustrate in the subsequent chapters, it is the inadequate provisions of collective goods such as water and proper roads, which often represent the deciding factor in national elections and the political sparkplug igniting aggressive street protests and demonstrations.

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[40] This reference to the 'welfare' obligations of states is not to suggest that Jamaica is a welfare state.  The best examples of welfare states are the Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Finland and Denmark) and indeed much of Western Europe. Here, significant proportions of national resources are spent on social security, including pension and unemployment benefits and a national health service. In the welfare state, the government, rather than retreating, plays an active role in the economy and society, both regulating and providing the framework for the market to operate. The Jamaican State, by contrast, can be referred to as a minimalist or free market state as the market is allowed space to develop the economy while the state primarily acts as facilitator of private enterprise and market activities.  In other words, the minimalist state limits its responsibilities to a bare minimum - maintaining law and order and providing such essential services as education and water supply. (These notes are taken from Munroe (2002). However, for a more extensive discussion of the 'welfare state', see Atkinson (1999), Keane (1984), Barrow (1993) and Esping-Andersen (2002).

It is clear from the preceding discussion that Structural Adjustment essentially encroached on the role and responsibility of the Third World state in development, handicapping its ability to choose the form of economic development that is most appropriate to its socio-economic needs. This development has enormous implications for developing countries such as Jamaica, where the dependence and demands on the state for the provision of public goods has reached peak levels. I take a closer look at this issue as I continue to look at the obligations of the contemporary state in the following discussion.

### 5.3.2   Social and Infrastructural Development.

The provision of effective education and health systems as well as investments in infrastructural development remains an important functional responsibility of the modern state and underscores the theoretical and political distance between strong and weak states. Indeed, for Rotberg (2002), deteriorating or destroyed infrastructure typify failed states. Metaphorically, therefore, for many Third World countries, 'the more potholes (or roads turned to rutted tracks or littered with holes), the more likely a state will [appear to] exemplify failure' (Rotberg, 2002: 88). It is worth noting however that the corporatization and/or privatization of a majority of government operations under the Structural Adjustment programme impacted negatively on the provision of services such as transportation, telephone and electricity (power) in Jamaica. Although prior to Structural Adjustment, the government had a dismal record of maintaining public infrastructure, the shift towards market-led ownership and management of public commodities had negative implications for the quality and efficiency of those operations (see Gordon et al, 1997) . For example, overcrowding, speeding, poorly maintained buses, unreliable service, perpetual increases in fares and bad road conditions are only some of the issues that Jamaican citizens faced within a 'vandalized' transport sector. Not surprisingly, this area accounted for the bulk of citizen mobilizations and demonstrations throughout the mid-1990s.

Likewise, a thirty-year monopoly by the multinational telecommunications firm, Cable & Wireless (C&W), had resulted in limited access to fixed line telephone service by significant segments of the Jamaican population and soaring calling rates. The divestment by the Jamaican government of the major shares in the country's electricity provider, Jamaica Public Service (JPS), to the United States, Mirant Corporation, has also generated similar problems of soaring power rates, which are seen by many citizens to be inconsistent with the quality of service provided. As I will illustrate in greater detail in subsequent chapters, the brunt of popular protests is, in part, a reaction to the absence or poor delivery of some of these public goods. This was continuing proof that the imposition and promise of corporatization, viz. a. viz. Structural Adjustment, had not, in the main, translated to improvements in the quality of public utilities provided to citizens in this context. In fact, rather than retreat, the Government of Jamaica recently successfully broke the monopoly of Cable & Wireless and completed a full liberalization of the telecommunication system since 2003. There has since been a gradual opening up of the industry and a resulting increase in telephone (landline) access to citizens as well as a competitive mobile telephone market (see Economic and Social Survey, Jamaica, 2003:14.3). It has also extended and improved the island's road network and revolutionized the country's transportation service, providing much needed and obvious improvements (ibid). This is while it increased access to electricity for most rural residents under a successful Rural Electrification Programme (ibid, 2003)[41]. However, that the debt servicing portfolio is given priority attention in successive national budgets of the Jamaican government (with some 70 percent of the expenditure dedicated to debt repayment in 2004/2005 alone)[42] suggests that all has not been well with regard to the performance of the state in this context.

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[41] See also 'Solid Achievements' www.pnpjamaica.com/solid_frame.htm and Franklyn, D (2004) (Ed). *The Challenges of Change: P.J. Patterson Budget Presentations 1992-2002* for a detailed outline of the programmes and policy agenda which the government has undertaken over a ten-year period in areas such as education, health, infrastructural development and national security.

[42] See www.mof.gov.jm/jabudget.shtml

Frustration over persistent lack of collective goods and a feeling of historical neglect based on poor management of public resources and public policy decisions provide sufficient basis for some citizens to harbour feelings of antipathy against the government. It is this kind of umbrage which drives some residents to undertake aggressive contestations with the state to force the provision of these public goods. It is worth noting also that aside from improper policy planning and inefficient use of public resources, natural disasters sometimes impinge on the government's capacity to adequately maintain the country's overall infrastructure or retard the gains already made.  The deadly category five Hurricane Ivan, for instance, which bore heavily into Jamaica on September 11, 2004, not only caused massive structural damage but also strained an already weak Jamaican economy.[43]

### 5.3.3    National Security and the Rule of Law

National security remains the most central of all political goods expected of the modern state. Defending the national territory against foreign invasion and the protection of citizens has been one of the pillars justifying the existence of the state, even though the risk of foreign invasion is minimal or declining in many societies (Strange, 1996)[44]. Concern in recent years with a wide assemblage of rogue actors – Mafias, terrorists, drug cartels, guerrillas and rebel groups as well as criminal gangs -- have generated global anxiety among states about their internal as well as external (border) security and put public safety atop citizens' concerns. Citizens everywhere therefore charge their

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[43] The damage and loss caused by Hurricane Ivan is estimated at J$36 billion or 8 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for 2003. A total of 369,685 persons or 14 percent of the population were directly affected by the Hurricane. The Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) break down the overall economic cost of the Hurricane as: Social Sectors – $12.7; Productive Sectors – $13.3b; Infrastructure – $6.9b; Environment - $2.5b and Emergency Expenditure - $277 m. See *Jamaica Gleaner*, 2004. November 4. www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner20041104/lead/lead4.html

[44] The invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1991 and the occupation of Iraq by the United States in 2003 represent two of the most highlighted cases where the protection of territorial sovereignty was compromised by external intervention. The United States on several occasions has also intervened in the domestic affairs of other states (Grenada- 1983, Panama – 1989) under the guise of humanitarianism and so-called 'threats to the safety of US citizens' (Hartlyn, Schoultz & Varas, 1992: 1).

governments to protect their person, safeguard their property and create and sustain a nationwide atmosphere free of fear. Keeping crime and violence levels in check is increasingly indispensable in successfully fulfilling this obligation. Rogue actors in civil society, however, evolve and become entrenched where and when the state is too weak to control the monopoly of violence and ensure good governance, safety and public order in everyday life (Rapley, 2006; Strange, 1996; Johnson, 2005; Soeters, 2005; Mason, 2005). Mushrooming homicide rates are a fundamental and immediate preoccupation for many governments across the developing world, not the least of which is Jamaica. The following table, which shows annual rates of homicides since the millennium, illustrates the dramatic nature of Jamaica's crime problem:

**Table 5.1 Annual Homicide Levels in Jamaica, 2001-2004**

| Year | Homicides |
|------|-----------|
| 2001 | 1138 |
| 2002 | 1045 |
| 2003 | 975 |
| 2004 | 1471 |
| 2005 | 1674 |

*Source:* Jamaica Constabulary Force Statistics Unit

In 2001, the number of homicides in this small island-nation of 2.6 million people stood at a record 1,138, a figure which represents 44 per 100,000 (population), the third highest in the world (Acosta, 2005). Merely five years into the new millennium, Jamaica's homicide rate stands at 1674 at the end of 2005[45]. These extraordinary homicide figures

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[45] It is to be noted that almost half of these cases were resolved by the police through arrests and prosecution. For example, of the 1045 reported homicides in 2002, 496 were cleared up. Of the 945 recorded for 2003, 564 were cleared and, of the 1471 reported homicides for 2004, 659 were cleared up. Source: Police Crime Statistics, Jamaica Constabulary Force.

must be understood within the context described by leading Jamaican criminologist, Anthony Harriot (2000), as the historical rootedness and multi-dimensionality of criminality in Jamaica, which features a perverse linkage between gangs, drugs and politics. Harriot (2000) links the emergence of criminal violence in Jamaica to the dramatic transformation in the structure of crime and the unique social organization of the criminal, to different periods: (1) the introduction of Structural Adjustment in the 1980s (2) the accelerated growth of the export trade in cannabis as drug traffickers sought to exploit the economic crisis facing the island, also in the 1980s and (3) the resort in the 1970s to highly intense political violence as the country closed ranks behind two ideologically distinct political parties. The crime situation post-1987 (to today), he argues, is occasioned by a shift in the position of Jamaican gangs in the international drug trade, their highly structured organization at home featuring empowering political connections and the extraordinary influence they wield within the informal economy and the wider urban communities (Harriot, 2000; cf. Rapley, 2006, 2003; Gray, 2004, 2003; Figueroa, 2003; Charles, 2002; Griffith, 2002; Munroe, 1999; Report of the National Committee on Political Tribalism, 1997; Gunst, 1995).

Whereas the growth of criminal violence in a country, as I will argue later, may contain liberatory elements and represent the collective resistance of the poor to impoverishment, political exclusion and marginalization (Gray, 2004; Bayat, 1997; Scott, 1985; 1990), it is also often powerfully identified with a beleaguered state and, in extreme cases, exemplifies state failure. I draw attention here to the extraordinary rate and enduring character of violent crime in Jamaica because it has severely weakened the state's monopoly on the use of violence, thereby rendering it particularly difficult for the state to advance one of its central duties of maintaining internal stability. Recent scholarship links the state's ineffectiveness in containing violent crime to a demoralized police force, which has been subject to widespread and credible allegations of excessive use of lethal force, corruption and politicization (Harriot, 2000; 2003). Indeed, the historical record on Jamaica illustrates a systematic practice of violence by members of the country's security forces. According to a United States-based Police Executive Research Forum (PERF),

Jamaican constables do not appear to be trained 'to employ a continuum of force that begins with an escalating range of non-lethal tactics before relying on firearms' (PERF Report, 2001). Although the reality is that armed criminals are more likely to shoot at the police than surrender, a sort of trigger-happiness in which constables fail to exercise muzzle control is prevalent. Police crime statistics reveal that an average of 140 people are shot and killed annually by the Jamaican police, one of the highest rates of lethal police killings in the world. Amnesty International in a damning report on Jamaica's human rights condition also argues that 'the manner in which deadly force is frequently employed and the absence of prompt, thorough and effective investigations are consistent in many instances with a pattern of extra-judicial killings' (Amnesty Report, Jamaica, 2001).

Although these developments may also suggest that the state is attempting to be strong and proactive in its management of the crime problem, it can also position the authority of the Jamaican State as weakening in the face of the continual upward movement of crime rates. In this sense, the state itself becomes criminal in its attempt to suppress incidents of crime and violence, in which case, criminality and lawlessness are normalized and civilized governance is at risk of retreat. Within the context of this study, the growth of criminal violence is manifestly problematic. This is because illegality and violence, as I suggest in Table 2.1 (chapter 2), is perhaps the most glaring indicator of the presence of incivility within civil society and the persistence of uncivil politics (cf. Keane, 1996; 1998). Routine, flagrant violations of the law by Jamaican citizens, at times, carried out in full view of the police and relevant policing authorities is also strongly indicative of severe weaknesses in the institutions of civil society geared to social control and civil politics. In fact, this seemingly laissez-faire attitude toward the rule of law and an increasing accommodation to and/or tolerance of criminality may also be tied to what some analysts see as popular withdrawal of citizen participation in policing (refusal to act as witnesses, give information to police etc) (Patterson, 2000; Harriot, 2003; Gray, 2004). These developments exacerbate the challenges for the Jamaican state, not least because it is within the context of the drive to uphold the rule of law that some of the most

contentious issues arise between civil society and the state. Indeed, one of the most controversial areas of civilian conflict with the Jamaican state, expressed in hostile citizen protests, is alleged police brutality and the perception that justice, especially through the court system, is elusive. This leads me to the state's obligation to provide a credible and transparent judicial process.

### 5.3.4   Justice (through the Courts).

Freedom from injustice, and developing and maintaining strong and transparent legislative and judicial institutions are among the most defining professional responsibilities of the modern state and ultimately tied to its security obligation (Rotberg, 2002; United Nations, 2000). In its most desirable context, the enactment of laws is designed to serve the needs of all actors comprising the public sphere. Its independence from the executive and its integrity must therefore be obvious. If it contravenes this desired principle to reflect instead, in rubber stamp fashion, the desires of the executive, then the needs of civil society are poorly served and the state is deemed to have failed in the execution of its responsibility.  Indeed, it is Rotberg's (2002:87) view that a state has failed if 'citizens know that they cannot rely on the court system for significant redress or remedy especially against the state'. In contexts such as Jamaica where criminal violence is pervasive and state-directed 'wars on crime' are seemingly at risk of becoming assaults on the poor, a reliable judicial system is mandatory. Munroe (2000:14) further writes that:

> The inadequacy of the available means of citizen redress and ineffective oversight of the police force undermine community confidence in the criminal justice system. On the other hand,  'vigilantism' and informal community justice is fuelled by slowness on the part of the system to identify, apprehend, prosecute, convict and adequately punish wrong doers. Complementing this generally negative aspect of the rule of law is deplorable prison conditions, inordinate delays in the court system and inconsistent, class-influenced sentencing practice.

It therefore seems clear that if the organs of the state created to dispense justice are to retain citizen confidence, they cannot be seen to exhibit chronic weaknesses such as those outlined here. Recent political scholarship suggests that there is a widespread perception of failure by the state to adequately address these fundamental problems in the

justice system (Gray, 2004; Harriot, 2000; 2003; Munroe, 1996; 1999; 2002). As I shall argue in subsequent chapters, citizen mobilizations for justice are in response to this prevailing perception of a flawed system by the mass of the population. In the same breath, the inclination to mount street-level protest as a first resort to seeking redress to injustice signals a widespread and continuous erosion of confidence in the conventional (available) means of citizen redress. It is also worth noting that in most societies access to justice is shaped by one's economic power (see United Nations, 2000).

Munroe (2002:16) highlights the implications of this situation for Jamaica. He argues that there is the perception among the public (and confirmed by international agencies such as Transparency International) of pervasive corruption at all levels of the Jamaican society in the award of public contracts, disposal of public assets and the allocation of 'scarce benefits'. He maintains that pervasive corruption and the allegations made against varying suspects – government and political party officials, members of the security forces, private sector functionaries – who are not followed up with prosecution, conviction or punishment not only alienates civil society but also increases its apathy and disenchantment with politics and political processes. This is a worrying development for many developing states. If those responsible for administering justice are violators of the law, this weakens the state's capacity for productive citizen engagement and, instead, engenders mistrust of state managers, encourages radicalized political negotiation tactics by citizens and sanctions extra-legal forms of community power. The Jamaican case, as we shall see, exemplifies this situation – a radical assault by extra-legal actors upon the legitimate authority of the state, the subversion of its monopoly on the use of violence and, as a result of uncompromising protestation models, a negation of civility and civil politics. As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, the state is no longer the exclusive authority it once was and is just one among several other power brokers. As empowered extra-legal actors currently expose the declining omnipotence of the state and are negatively influencing civilian politics globally, I look more closely at the power of these actors and the implications they hold for the way in which citizens in contexts such as Jamaica choose to make claims upon the state, and thus on the quality of civil society.

## 5.4    ROGUE ACTORS AMBUSH THE STATE

Criminal activity is nothing novel. Neither is the transnationalization of criminal actors particularly phenomenal. Then, why study them? The phenomenon of the outlaw is significant to this study for two reasons. (1) It impinges on the power and authority of the Jamaican state, rendering weak its capacity to stem crime and violence and maintain social order and stability. (2) It severely affects the tone and quality of civil society given their power and extraordinary influence over significant numbers of citizens and upon the values and norms at play in the wider society. Indeed, as I will argue in subsequent chapters, protests and demonstrations are sometimes strategically coordinated by these individuals to serve their own selfish ends. In such cases, residents of communities are forced to engage in causes they have little knowledge of and demonstrate on behalf of criminal elements which have hitherto terrorized them and against the state whether or not the issue in contention is a legitimate one.  It bears repeating here that the globalization of the world economy and the entrenchment of the processes of transnationalization have only exacerbated this problem. The criminal coalition of the Mafia has long extended its wings across continents, making contacts and business deals with like organizations such as the Chinese triads and the Colombian drug cartels (Johnson, 2005; Johnson & Soeters, forthcoming; Strange, 1996; UNDP, 1994).  Likewise, Jamaican 'yardie' gangs have internationalized their operations, establishing bases throughout the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States (Harriot, 2001; 2003; Rapley, 2003; Gunst, 1995).

Their increasing wealth, the expanding extent of their transnational operations and the degree to which their authority in world society and in world economy rivals and encroaches upon that of governments is a source of anxiety for many countries. This is especially true for the governments of states such as Jamaica where the challenges they pose are becoming much more obvious (Rapley, 2006, 2003; Harriot, 2003, 2000; Charles, 2002; Munroe, 1999). Criminal gangs traffic in illegal and prohibited activities – crime, violence and narcotics trafficking – and, based on my discussion in chapter 2, are not your most *civil* citizens. Yet criminal actors have, until recently, occupied almost negligible

attention in the academic theorizing on the state and on civil society. As I argued in chapter 2, as residents in communities, voters in electoral constituencies and holders of national passports, criminal actors are, in conceptual terms, legitimate members of the public sphere, an ingrained part of the local community and benefit from all the trappings of universal citizenship. As they are formed voluntarily (albeit non-institutionalized or informal) and maintain their autonomy from the state and market, criminal actors are, in theory, accorded membership in civil society (see Whitehead, 1997; Barber, 1984). This is notwithstanding that they reject being subjected to or constrained by the rules of either civil sociability and /or interaction which itself also defines civil society (see Table 2.1, chapter 2).

In this regard, criminal networks do not meet the normative obligations that constitute a *strong* civil society. This is because, as I discuss in chapter 2, they do not demonstrate civic values and democratic practices which include tolerance, inclusion, non-violence and a commitment to promoting the public good. In short, the fact they engage in extra-legal practices does not by itself exclude them from the theoretical boundaries of civil society but it renders them *uncivil* actors within the civil sphere. It is precisely this dichotomous yet colliding role played by criminal networks which makes them an aggravating, unavoidable menace to the authority of the state and in some cases, a direct threat to the stability of society. Criminality and illegality are today so pervasive and criminals operate with such wide latitudes of autonomy and high levels of impunity that citizens in some contexts seem to have developed a sort of familiarity with and accommodation to it and, in some instances, even empathize with the perpetrators of illegal activity (Harriot, 2000, 2003; cf. Collins, 2004; Price 2004). Indeed, a great deal of political theory seeks to understand and explain the structural conditions which drive people to commit unlawful acts. Often commiserating with the illegal actor, some of these theories sanction these actions as part of a (neo-Marxian) project of resistance to poverty and domination (see Scott, 1985, 1990; Gray, 2004).

It is certainly true that social structures and particular legislations can perpetuate unjust, inequitable systems. Resisting such systemic, structural oppression is therefore an important aspect of citizen action. Yet, this cannot be used to condone criminality. In other words, current hypotheses on citizen action cannot ignore the significance of human agency nor can it view uncritically the larger systemic forces which sometimes guide the behaviour of individuals (Giddens, 1979). There is, for example, a tendency towards economic reductionism in analyses of the causes of crime in Jamaica. While no direct causal link can be made between crime and poverty, this research recognizes that part of the problem faced by states such as Jamaica is the resort to anti-social activity by an increasing number of citizens in circumstances where there is an acute absence of a structure of social and economic opportunities (see Seaga, 2005; Franklyn, 2001).

Given that most theorists have focused on notions of resistance, it is important that we draw a distinction between legitimate resistance to oppression as a consequence of the absence of economic opportunities and criminal behaviour in the search for explanations of the presence and growth of illegality or uncivil behaviour. My concern in this research is therefore with the large criminal organizations and the smaller bands of 'urban terrorists' in the Jamaican context, the kind of politics that they engage in, the counter-society they construct, its impact on the values and politics of the civil community and the extent to which this impinges on the capacity of the state to maintain good governance and construct a truly *civil* society. It is worth restating that their presence and influence on civilian politics powerfully confirms the weakness of the state apparatus (Johnson, 2005; Johnson & Soeters, forthcoming). As I will show (see chapter 8), the failings of law enforcement agencies and the contradictory linkages of political actors with the criminal underworld in contexts such as Jamaica undermines the authority of the state and creates an immediate space for criminal actors to augment their power and control over the civil community. The conceptual invention of the term 'shadow government' or 'counter-government' (Strange, 1996; Charles, 2002) is an ominous recognition of the emergence and political significance of such groups in the civil community.

In fact, the political phenomenon of community dons in Jamaica, with their expanding contingent of urban terrorists and mercenaries, represents an emerging counter-government in Jamaica. Since community dons, unlike other non-state actors, are not bounded by the rules governing civil or legal behaviour, they, perhaps, have the greatest influence on the quality of civil society. As I shall argue later, at different historical junctures, the Jamaican State has succumbed to criminal power sharing, finds itself a contested, weakened authority, lacking legitimacy and is forced to become jealous of its power. Reasserting its authority over the spatial environment and its civil and uncivil publics is often marked by violent confrontations with its citizens. Strange (1996:117) argues that 'when national governments are weak and criminals are rich and the state zealously defends its power, something close to a civil war results' (cf. Rapley, 2006; Mason, 2005; Soeters, 2005).

In other words, criminal gangs, mini-Mafias and drug syndicates are not going to roll over and play dead while the state threatens their profits. At the same time, when the Jamaican State feels compelled to reply sternly to the viciousness of criminal networks, it faces a backlash from civil society which aggressively defends itself against the possibility of abuse of human rights. This research therefore attempts to balance its focus on this development with a parallel examination of the increasing demands of law-abiding citizens for economic, social and human rights. It is here that the potential for the opening of new democratic spaces for *real* civil society to act viz. a. viz. the state is most evident. At the same time, this theoretical insight gives space to further questions which holds relevance not only for Jamaica but for other political contexts. Firstly, to what extent do the colliding values and approaches to political engagement and negotiation of different groups within civil society impact on the nature of the state-civil society relationship and the quality of civil society? Secondly, how might we view the demands of oppressed groups for justice within a context of mushrooming criminality and generalized hostility against the police? Thirdly, is a state's failure to adequately respond to and/or negotiate these demands a sign of its declining power or has it become a victim of 'the people's will trying to substitute itself for the rule of law' (Barber, 1984:114)?

It is because of the theoretical purchase of these questions that rising levels of crime and violence as well as the empowerment of deviant actors, though extraordinarily worrisome, are not the only problematic in this study of civilian politics in Jamaica. As I will illustrate in the following section and more substantively in subsequent chapters, a theoretical focus on the very tenor of citizen protest, particularly where it intersects with criminality and/or extra-legality is essential, as it not only impacts on the quality of governance and the stability and legitimacy of the state but, powerfully on the building of a strong civil society – truly participatory, functional and democratic.


## 5.5    CONTENTIOUS CITIZEN POLITICS AND THE STATE

As a point of departure, the health of democracy does not depend on the passivity of citizens. In fact, by Barber's (1984:261) thesis, 'strong democracy [embodied in a strong state] requires unmediated self-government by an engaged citizenry. It requires institutions that will involve individuals at both the neighbourhood and the national level in common talk, common decision-making and political judgement, and common action'. Where this collective engagement and action becomes overly aggressive and violent, however, it may not serve the ends for which it was enacted. Certainly, in terms of the construction of a truly *civil* society and a *civil* politics, it would have lost sight of its purpose. At the same time, the extent to which citizens utilize their rights – to protest, assemble, march and of free speech – to influence or get involved in public activity amounts to acting or participating politically (Munroe, 2002). It is important to recall here that this political participation may exhibit both conventional and unconventional forms. The most established of the conventional forms is the act of voting in elections, with membership in political parties/ organizations, attending political meetings and signing petitions coming close behind. Although these conventional models are also the most passive forms of citizen political involvement and participation, they are a significant part of the democratic machinery and political culture of many countries. Occasionally, however, citizen participation bursts beyond the bounds of conventional politics to include demonstrations, protests and other forms of unconventional activity (Dalton 1996).

Although some protests and demonstrations assume *passive* forms (such as peaceful marches), the unconventional mode of political participation is usually aggressive, coercive, confrontational, and in extreme cases, falls outside the confines of lawful and civil behaviour. Where citizens pursue more direct and radical modes on a consistent, normalized basis, it may effectively render these unconventional modes of political action as conventional! Contemporary political scholarship has failed to make this significant distinction. Some scholars attached labels such as 'exuberant' and 'excessive' to the turbulent protests of the 1960s and rendered the agitation over civil rights during this period as incompatible with effective governability (Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki, 1975 quoted in Norris, 1999). In contrast, the widespread protests over environmental protection, unfair trade rules, gender discrimination and other infringements on human rights throughout the 1990s in advanced industrialized countries are now presented in the scholarship as mere smatterings of violence and unpleasant protest incidents by citizens of a global civil society who are struggling for social reform, political goods and the consolidation of democracy (Tarrow, 2000)[46].

A more sanguine approach to social activism is thus the current theoretical tendency (Jasper, 2003; Tarrow, 2000; Pharr & Putnam, 2000; Norris 1999; Foweraker, 1995; Tilly, 1978, Piven & Cloward, 1977). This approach renders flawed and exaggerated Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki's (1975) idea that widespread citizen mobilizations and direct citizen action represents a form of 'anomic democracy' and sees instead contentious politics as a normal part of the democratic system. Yet, it is important that contemporary political science scholarship is cautious about the romanticisation of protest. In other words, although this research recognises the validity of the mobilisations of particularly the marginalised as a useful, autonomous aspect of civil society, it maintains that such a collectivity, operating vicariously and with little attention to legality and tolerance,

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[46] It is worth noting that these latter protest campaigns carry significant theoretical purchase in helping to expose, as the earlier discussion reveals, the power of multinational and transnational corporations over the state and the consequent limits on the ability of the state to meet the demands placed upon it.

departs from the notion of *civil* activism. In this regard, the relationship between uncivil politics and good governance require serious intellectual contemplation rather than scholarly dismissal. Uncivil citizen politics, as I will argue in the following chapters, may rather prove to be less a boon and more an encumbrance to democratic dialogue and action and seriously impede the chances for mutually beneficial interaction between the state and civil society.

My intention in this research is not to cast protest politics as an enemy of the structural power of the state. I, however, seek to explore the politics of uncivil civilian engagement where protest interaction and discourse remains within the realm of belligerence and incivility. By Barber's (1984:222) thesis, 'such forms of politics are rightly feared by those who cherish liberty no less than community and who seek a form of public being that can preserve and enhance the autonomy of the participants [and the quality of civil society]. Depending on the historical and socio-political evolution of these vigorous collectivities of citizens, their personality, mandate and politics, civil society can be invested with significant, useful power. By the same token, however, depending on how they choose to express this power, they can distract from civil society's strength and usefulness and test the capacity and willingness of state authority to respond adequately to the (very often) legitimate demands from this body. It is this theoretical dilemma which confronts civilian politics in Jamaica. I discussed, for example, in chapter 4, the unique historical and socio-political contexts in which civil society, including citizen mobilization and popular protest, emerged in Jamaica. The implications these hold for radical and violent forms of protestation retaining sources of power in this context, especially within the arena of grievance politics, are evident. Even a cursory perusal of the literature on citizen politics (Pharr & Putnam, 2000; Putnam, 2000; Barber, 1984; Dalton, 1996; Norris 1999) will reveal that democracy and dissent are two sides of the same coin and hence popular protest and/or demonstrations have naturally emerged as unavoidable (and instrumental) forms of political action for citizen-watchdogs of government.

Although state theories almost always de-emphasize this functional element of civil society (and sometimes civil society theory itself!), popular protest remains a compelling political resource especially for minorities, repressed groups, the economically and socially disadvantaged and other groups structurally alienated from the established political order. The poor and oppressed retain an affinity for this form of political action because, as Dalton (1996:68) suggests, 'when citizens are blocked from exercising political influence through legitimate participation channels, protest politics stands as a (practical) option'. By this logic, the absence of adequate mechanisms of state representation or the failure of the institutional state channels for citizen redress compels citizens both inside and outside official civil society to install more insistent tactics, ushering in what Dalton (1996) sees as a new style of citizen politics.

It also stands to reason that the weaknesses of civil groups to adequately lobby and negotiate claims on behalf of their constituents also encourage support for the use of more direct forms of popular protestation. Historically, unconventional protest and collective action was an absolute last resort, a desperate public act, arising from feelings of acute frustration and deprivation (Tilly, 1978). It now appears to be the standard response not only for groups that lack access to politics and politicians through conventional channels but has broadened to include a wider spectrum of political groups. An important theoretical distinction is that in many advanced industrial societies, unconventional political action such as protests are employed by social activists as effective additional strategies to more institutional lobbying methods. It advances their cause by driving the emotional momentum of particular issues, keeping it fresh in the public's mind and on the agenda of the mass media (Jasper, 2003; Dalton, 1996). On the other hand, as I will argue in subsequent chapters, in countries such as Jamaica with many numbed, disengaged citizen groups, protest action, with very few exceptions, appears to arrive as an almost instinctive, solitary response where there are perceptions of injustice. Here, protest campaigns are more or less spontaneous, episodic, aggressive, dramatic and at times quite violent.

The high level of unconventional political activity in Jamaica, especially the current frequency with which the protest tool is employed, suggests its entrenchment as an instrumental part of the strategies of the poor. Of course, it may no longer be an extremist political tactic, signalling revolutionary ferment and directed at overthrowing the established political order as it did during the era of slavery and British colonial rule. Yet, it may be exemplifying an intense anti-state mentality based on widespread perceptions of government neglect and under-performance. Jamaican citizens, like citizens elsewhere, have become increasingly critical of the major institutions of representative government and the performance of elected politicians. This disaffection causes many to become deeply disengaged not only from state-level politics but also from community-level citizen initiatives and public activities. This is while others, angered and frustrated by persistent deprivation and the government's inability or unwillingness to come to their aid, are frighteningly ready to revolt.

Much of contemporary political science scholarship on citizen participation grapples with this kind of political cynicism, and the subsequent withdrawal of citizens from politics (see Norris, 1999; Inglehart, 1999l; Dalton, 1996; Munroe, 1999; Putnam, 1995) evidenced in declining voter turn but only few assess its impact on unconventional political participation. Confidence and trust in government and political leaders are, of course, not stable phenomena but fluctuate according to the performance of politicians, particularly in their handling of the economy. It is worth pointing to the examples of Japan and Italy, however, which experienced widespread cynicism and voter disenchantment in the post-war period in the face of rapid economic growth, to indicate that economic performance (and even economic non-performance) is a poor indicator of the pervasive levels of political cynicism (McCallister, 1999 in Norris, 1999; Munroe, 2002). I will not tackle those contextual issues here. It is worth noting, however, that while the proliferation of protest movements prove that we are not witnessing a flight from politics, the ubiquitous confrontational direct-action style of protest politics which abides in contexts like Jamaica may instead only result in very limited short-term gain for the participants, stunts civic dialogue and engagement, threatens the stability of the political system and

negates civil politics and civil society. It is for this reason that most theorists discussing citizen politics, including this researcher, accept the view that citizens want to demonstrate against the actions of the democratic political process and the actors driving that process, not destroy it (Dalton, 1996; Norris, 1999).

At the same time, as contemporary publics lose respect for authority and simultaneously display more political efficacy by utilizing their increasing influence to maximize their demands on the state, participation patterns are bound to change and impact directly on the functional capacity of the state. The attention-getting, direct action methods of contemporary citizen protests may not trouble the established state institutions or robust economies of many advanced industrialized countries but they are sure to place severe strain on overloaded political systems most likely to be found among the often more fragile states of the Third World. In other words, 'excessive' citizen politics may not overburden democracy per se but may invest civilian politics with a particular tone which may prove inimical rather than helpful to building civil society. It is a cyclical struggle as the inability of the state to honour its obligation to its citizens not only potentially alienates civil society but remains the very source of citizen mobilizations and popular protest.

## 5.6    SUMMARY

This chapter emphasized the changing architecture and mood of contemporary citizen politics within the context of the hollowing out of the state's authority and the empowerment of alternate powers. The discussion established that these contesting forces are rendering the state highly contingent, variable and subject to prevailing conditions. For example, as a result of the rise in power of the market (banks, multi-national corporations), the governments in developing countries today retain less control over their economic destinies and hence are unable to fulfil adequately their obligations to their citizenry. At the same time, it is now recognised that the adaptive capacity of a state to its existing circumstance is a strong determinant of its survivability, longevity and legitimacy. I, therefore, explored the performance of the state, particularly the extent to

which it is able to deliver political goods – security, education, health services, economic opportunity, environmental surveillance, a legal framework, a reliable judicial system as well as infrastructural requirements such as roads and communication facilities – to its citizens.

The performance of the Jamaican state carries critical theoretical purchase in this study since political distrust and disaffection in this context is increasingly linked to the use of more direct and aggressive forms of citizen politicking such as street protest, blockades and demonstrations as well as other forms of unconventional political action. Indeed, a sceptical global public comprised of 'critical citizens' is now more likely to question government policies and action (or inaction) as well as mount challenges to force alternate responses from states (Tarrow, 2000; Warren, 1999; Dalton, 1996; Norris, 1999). It therefore follows that as the nature of state authority shifts, so does the character of its relationship with and behaviour towards civil society and vice versa. As I highlighted in this chapter, it is this kind of dramatic contestation and dynamic process of 'structuration' between citizens and the state, embodied in popular civilian politics, which manifestly demonstrate the need for political science scholarship to begin to examine citizen politics as much through the conceptual lens of *civil* society as *uncivil* society.

Why this concern with uncivil politics? Firstly, as the preceding discussion suggests, it is from civil society, and the public sphere more broadly, that the state derives its legitimacy and calibrates its quality. Secondly, the declining power of the state and the calls for participatory governance exposes civil society to theoretical scrutiny, challenging its mandate and normative basis and significant to this study, the nature of its politics. Susan Strange (1996:14) outlines the rationale for the latter concern when she argues that 'the diffusion of authority away from national governments has left a yawning hole of non-authority, ungovernance it might be called within society'. It is, in part, this spatial environment of 'non-authority' or 'ungovernance' which breeds incivility and appears to be the nesting place for uncivil citizen politics. I now tackle more substantively the manifestations of uncivil civilian politics in Jamaica in the subsequent chapters.

# *Roadblocks* to Justice: Protest Politics in Practice

## 6.1    INTRODUCTION

The Jamaican experience of citizen politics presents a case of both peaceful and violent protests. I will argue that the latter predominates while, at times, the distinction between the two is not very clear-cut or easily observable. This is because even genuinely peaceful demonstrations can and do, sometimes, deteriorate into violence and aggression, making resort to boisterous displays, disruptive actions and intimidatory tactics the conventional routine. This resort to direct action approaches, such as those illustrated in Box 1.1, means that popular protest, is more often than not inconsistent with the law. Breaches of the Road Traffic, Anti-Litter, Public Order and Town and Communities Acts come readily to mind. But given the manner in which protest has evolved historically in this post-colonial society (see chapter 4), it is unsurprising that Jamaicans have always expressed themselves angrily in numbers. The intent, by and large, to use the Jamaican vernacular, has been to 'lick out' or 'bun a fire' (to lash out; show disapproval) against the established codes of order, whether manifested in the plantocracy, Crown Colony Government or self-rule.

Yet, the ubiquitousness of violent protests in Jamaica has taken a toll, and has consequences for the promise of establishing a truly civil society.  In chapter 2, I attempted to underscore the theoretical and political relevance of the *problem of incivility* within the domains of citizen politics and civil society. One of the underlying issues to emerge from this discussion is that this *problem of incivility*, although present in all known forms of society, is seemingly more acute, and hence problematic, in some than in others. Jamaica is one such context where the powerful proclivity for popular protest naturally leads to questions not only about its tenor but also the conduct of civilian

politics and the quality of civil society more broadly. Actively engaging these issues is now almost inescapable in the Jamaican experience because, as one political activist remarked during my field interviews, '*social protest is our way of doing things*' (PN27). This chapter explores the manifestations of popular protest in Jamaica within the contexts of survivalism, the ethic of justice, resistance to oppressive treatment by the state as well as anomic disorder. Much of this discussion is framed within a continuum of protests featuring the struggles of citizens for collective goods (water, power and proper roads), the resistance of street vendors and petty traders to government removal policy, on behalf of area leaders such as Donald 'Zeeks' Phipps, and against assumed police brutality.

## 6.2    THE VOCABULARY OF PROTEST IN JAMAICA

The following police report of protest events gives basis to concerns over the form and tone of contemporary social protests as well as provides useful glimpses into the dynamics and repertoire of popular protest in Jamaica:

**Box 6.1 Police Incident Report - Protest Events**

Between 4:45am and 1:15pm on October 12, 1998, citizens numbering about 200 from the communities of Mavis Bank, Content, Content Gap, Guava Ridge, Flamstead, Mount Charles, Violet Bank and other adjoining districts, staged roadblocks and demonstrations at several points along the Mavis Bank Main Road, protesting the lack of telephone, water and proper roads in the area. The demonstrators used freshly cut trees along with stones to block the road. They were addressed by Member of Parliament, Oliver Clue and Councillor, Edna Spaulding. The crowd was hostile toward Mr. Clue and stated that he was doing nothing to alleviate the situation. The road was cleared by 22 police officers with the help of a front end loader. (Event # 98000294280)

Between 7 am and 12:30 pm on September 21, 1998, about 200 persons consisting of taxi and mini-bus operators and bus conductors demonstrated along the Big Bridge, Bay Road, Little London and Retreat Main Roads in Westmoreland. They used logs, stones, broken bottles and other debris to block the road. Several fires were lit along the roadway, causing delay to vehicular traffic. They were protesting over bad road conditions from Savanna-la-mar to Negril. Ten persons were arrested and charged for breaches of the Anti-Litter Act. The blockage was cleared by the police who maintained a presence in the area. (Event # 98000270984)

Between the hours of 9:30am and 3:00 pm, on September 14, 1999, citizens of breadnut Valley blocked the main road leading to the JAMALCO (Bauxite) Mines using stones, old trees and other debris. They also blocked the railway line using similar methods. They were demanding that JAMALCO give them contract jobs in the area. Also, on June 22,

1999, about forty men from the Old Harbour Bay area of St. Catherine, seeking work at the Jamaica Public Service Company, Power Station, Old Harbour Bay. Stones were thrown and two vehicles damaged, one of which is owned by the company. On the arrival of the police, the blockage was cleared and seven men were taken into custody for breaches of the Anti-Litter Act and malicious destruction of property.

Source: Incidents Report for 1998, 1999, *National Police Control Centre*, Jamaica Constabulary Force. (Last box represent events # 99000237103 and # 99000161795).

The following portrayals of protest campaigns by the *Jamaica Gleaner* (2005a; 2005b) are also not uncommon:

> Fiery roadblocks, sporadic gunfire, closed business places and empty schools were all part of the mayhem which erupted across the island yesterday, as placard-bearing residents took over the streets to voice their frustration with recent price increases.

> Mayhem gripped Spanish Town, St. Catherine, in its deadly embrace yesterday as angry protests and running gun battles between armed thugs and the police forced the lockdown of most schools, shuttered businesses in the area and led to the shooting death of one woman

The appetite for hostile, radicalized forms of popular protest as the predominant means of conducting citizen politics illustrated in these examples is substantiated by these perspectives from a Jamaican anthropologist (PN12) and a journalist (PN24) with extensive experience covering demonstrations:

> PN12: Who cares when you picket peacefully? No protest like that is legitimate in the sense that if it were legitimate, it would not be much of a protest in the Jamaican experience. You have to [s]mash up the place. We have developed a culture, almost a way of protesting which is to bring everything to a halt – the lock down of the University campus by students, nobody can go to work and students should not be allowed to go to classes. Everybody must stay out so you either lock down or block the roads. You hold innocent people hostage in order to get attention, to get your demands – not literally, we have not reached that stage yet – thank God. But you inconvenience everybody in order to make your point – the good must suffer for the bad and the innocent for the guilty. No matter what as long as you are protesting.

PN24: We are fond of bearing placards. We are one for extremes. We are colourful and we are an emotional people and it doesn't take much for us to get overly emotional. We can become violent, we lose it quite easily and we tend to become even more violent if we perceive that there is opposition to our protest action. For example, if I am protesting and you come there and you object. You don't explicitly say anything and I perceive that you are opposed to the issue, you might be physically attacked.

The following perspectives from a former student activist (PN18*b*) and a senior police officer (PN16) not only corroborate the observations made above but appear to infer that peaceful or conventional forms of protest face diminishing impact and popularity in the Jamaican political setting:

PN18*b*: Peaceful protest is not as effective as a protest which involves overt action.

PN16: Even if it is peaceful protest, you have to accompany it with some form of intimidation. So if you are a lady who used to talk calmly, when it is peaceful protest, you have to talk loudly and strong and resort to the vernacular [expletives] in order to get listenership.

In order to come to terms, however, with the phenomenon of popular protest in Jamaica, as embodied in the *roadblock* or street demonstration, it is important to provide a brief sketch of its recent history. The roadblock, as a political weapon, had its beginning in Jamaica during the 1970s at the height of the bloody warfare which was being fought in the urban slums of the capital, Kingston between supporters of the main political parties – The People's National Party (PNP) and the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP). Citizens in war-ravaged communities would block a road or a lane to ensure that no one was allowed entry without legitimate cause or the expressed permission of those on the inside. The roadblock permitted residents to safeguard their property and person as well as retain control of their community. Mounting roadblocks consequently became a useful form of protest against such incidents as 'drive-by' shootings but quickly escalated into an instrument, not just to keep out partisan enemies but at times, used against the state itself. The following are images of typical roadblock-demonstrations:

This image is of one of the multiplicity of roadblocks mounted during three days of national protests in Jamaica in April, 1999 over a government-imposed increase in the tax on fuel. *Jamaica Gleaner* staff reporter, Glenroy Sinclair, writes that "law-abiding citizens woke up to debris in streets surrounding their neighbourhoods, with looters and gunmen involved …. Residents in Central Kingston attempted to set the Gold Street police station on fire…. 'Someone threw a Molotov cocktail inside the station but luckily for us, it did not explode, a lawman said" (see *The Jamaica Gleaner* (1999) "Police Stations Become Targets: Rioter turn ire on cops, businesses" April 21.



This image is one of the large numbers of roadblocks mounted by Jamaican citizens on September 6, 2005 during nationwide protests over inflation. Here, residents of Central Village in the parish of St. Catherine man roadblocks during the demonstrations. See *The Jamaica Gleaner* (2005) "LETTER OF THE DAY – Disappointed at old-style JLP demonstration". September 7.

Indeed, since 1986, when Jamaican citizens mounted nation-wide riots and strikes over the government-imposed increase in fuel prices, the country has witnessed an explosion of hostile citizen mobilizations and demonstrations. Table 6.1 below illustrates this dramatic rise in direct citizen action within the last twenty years:

**Table 6.1 – Roadblocks-Demonstrations in Jamaica**
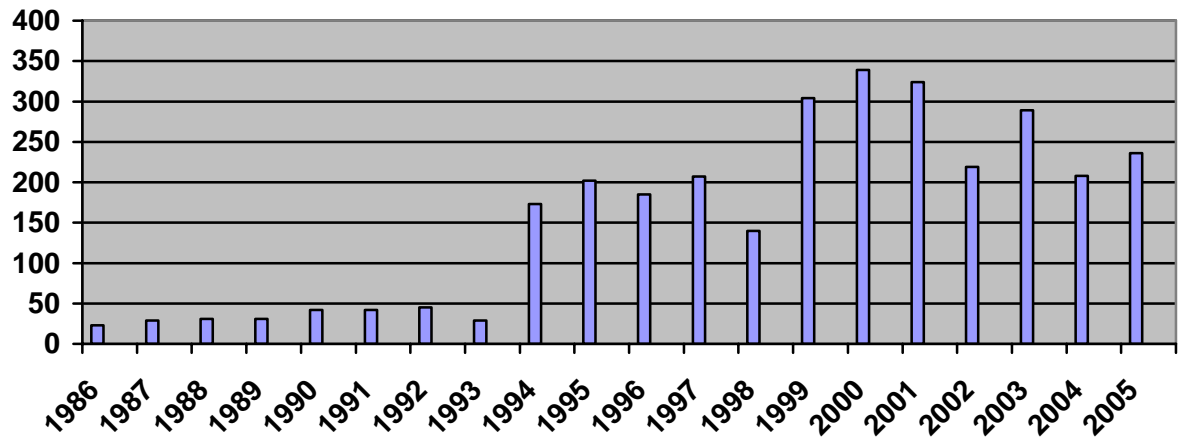


*Source*: Police Statistics Department, Jamaica Constabulary Force.

Based on the above statistical grid, the ten- year period stretching from 1986 to 1995, for example, saw the number of roadblocks mounted by Jamaican citizens per annum progress dramatically from a low of 23 in 1986 to a high of 202 in 1995. Within the last decade (1996-2005), the number of street protests and demonstrations staged has fluctuated between 150 and 339 annually. Today, the street demonstration, although predominantly taking a roadblock approach, in actuality, assumes several forms and operates at different levels of intensity. I delineate them here (see overleaf):

**Box 6.2 Models of Popular Protest in Jamaica**

> Peaceful marches, 'placarding', industrial action (strikes, go-slow).
> Lighting fires and burning debris on the streets (vehicle tyres, garbage, tree trunks/branches, unwanted furniture).
> Blocking minor roadways or major thoroughfares using assorted objects (huge boulders/stones, tree branches, abandoned cars and other debris as well as the protestors' physical bodies.
> Erecting barricades and fortifications and/or denying access (right of entry/right of use) to facilities, buildings or communities.
> Vandalism (destruction of public and private property – setting alight shops and stores, desecrating public monuments and attractions, destroying police vehicles etc).
> Looting, robbing, extorting from businesses, entrepreneurs and other individuals.
> Boisterous, aggressive displays of behaviours (shouting, screaming, bawling, issuing threats and insults, stripping/disrobing and clashing with security forces).

Interestingly, the above table showing the levels and types of protest in Jamaica closely resembles Smith's (1996) table (below) in which he delineates a typology of coercion in a political system. Based on this continuum of force, it is evident that Jamaican protests run the gamut from *non-violent coercion*, embodied in strikes, boycotts and the mediated propaganda promulgated through talk radio, *'minimal-injury coercion'* such as aggressive picketing, mounting obstructive roadblocks and boisterous displays – disrobing, shouting and issuing threats and insults, to *sub-lethal force* personified in rioting, clashing with the police, burning buildings and generalised vandalism and *lethal force* such as killing of police officers and general assault (See Smith, 1996).

**Table 6.2 – A Typology of Coercion in a Political System**

| Non-Violent Coercion | Minimal-Injury Coercion | Sub-lethal Force | Lethal Force |
|---|---|---|---|
| Non-compliance, strikes/boycotts, bribes, propaganda. | Obstructive picketing, occupation, breaches of the peace | Rioting, attacks on buildings & persons. | Assassinations. |

*Source:* Smith, R.C. (1996) *Violence, Politics and Morality: Ethical and Political Issues in War and Peace.* Hamilton: Hillcrest Books.

Many of these demonstrations have, of course, been directly related to the dramatic impact on people's lives of inflationary economic conditions, made unbearable by persistently low wages and inadequate social services and public goods – water, electricity, proper roads, sewerage and telephone. This is while others relate to human

rights, particularly police (mis)conduct and other perceived injustices meted out by the state such as the removal of squatters or vendors. Whereas these explosive protests and demonstrations often capture significant media headlines and grassroots interest, there has, unfortunately, been little corresponding scholarly curiosity. Save for the selective scholarly work on the emerging social power of Jamaica's poorer classes, embodied in the recent analyses of popular culture, the underground economy and informal commerce, criminal violence, garrisonization and donmanship (Gray, 2004; Rapley, 2003; Charles, 2002; Hope, 2001; Harriot, 2000; 2003; Figueroa & Sives, 2003; Figueroa, 1996), a comprehensive analytical look at the manifestations of and the ethos driving contemporary grassroots protest politics, is largely missing. I address these gaps in this chapter (and with greater specificity in subsequent chapters). I do so through an analysis of interviews with a wide cross-section of Jamaican citizens, including students, media practitioners, entertainers, politicians, police, academics, activists as well as the self-employed and unemployed. Before, I wish to look more closely at the protest population.

## 6.3    DECONSTRUCTING THE PROTEST POPULATION: WHO ARE THE PROTESTORS?

The protest population in Jamaica runs the gamut of the professional middle and upper (elite) classes, the working class, students, the self-employed and unemployed. These groups engage in a range of protest forms such as strikes, marches, religious crusades, public meetings, petitions, demonstrations, roadblocks, obstructive picketing, placarding, violent attacks (community on community/person on person), random violence, attack on property, theft, violent clashes with police, symbolic protest (boycott, protest music, political theatre), legal action as well as media action (letters to the Editor, political commentary and radio talkback). The choice of a protest strategy is not random but largely determined by level of education and literacy, social, communicative, experiential and perceptual worldview, position on the social pecking order and (perceived) level of influence on the political system. Piven & Cloward's (1977:14) thesis on poor people's movements confirm this view. In attempts to explain why political actors sometimes strike and at other times, boycott, loot or burn, they argue that forms of political protest

are governed by the institutional context in which people live and work. In other words, it is their view that political actors, whoever they may be, are constrained by their location in the social structure in deciding upon one political strategy or another. The Jamaican professional classes (e.g. civil servants and factory workers) who feel that they are treated unfairly will thus demonstrate discontent by way of sit-ins, go-slow, outright strikes as well as peaceful picketing or marches. This group may also instigate petitions, channel their dissatisfaction through the popular press, take legal action or operate as the 'unseen hand' which can mean a withdrawal of financial or other support from particular initiatives. That members of this middle and professional class perform protest in these ways has a great deal to do with their institutional context and advantageous location in the highly stratified Jamaican social structure. Significant here is the historical capacity of the educated and 'monied' classes to influence the political system through their contacts with or access to state power (such as with Members of Parliament), articulate their concerns effectively through media and, at times, procure the kinds of intellectual, financial and organizational resources needed to sustain and advance their protest action.

Human rights lobby group, Jamaicans for Justice (JFJ), for example, is symbolic of the power of resources as well as personal and political influence. JFJ is comprised mainly of professionals, a number of whom are members of Jamaica's white or brown-skinned middle class and is widely perceived to maintain strong allegiance to the country's political opposition, Jamaica Labour Party. The organization is recognized for its successful efforts at calling attention to human rights abuses by the Jamaican State, as manifested in the actions of the police force. This it does by maintaining a powerful presence and influence in the local press, utilising judicial procedures through the courts and making frequent submissions to parliament and international human rights bodies on conventions of which Jamaica is a signatory. On the other hand, the persons who form the focal point of this analysis – Jamaica's poor and economically-dispossessed – actively participate, in the main, in street–centred demonstrations (roadblocks, marches, picketing and riots) based on their peripheral location in the social strata.

Contemporary political science scholarship (Bayat, 1997; 2000; Portes, Castells & Benton, 1989; Castells, 1983; Scott, 1985) refers to members of the socially excluded and economically-dispossessed sectors variously as informals, urban poor, peasants or marginals. The informal sector anywhere is a complex, dynamic space and encompasses a wide range of inhabitants. Generally, it is a geo-political space of the urban poor – the self-employed, unemployed, partially employed, permanently or chronically unemployed or unemployable (Gray, 2004). In the case of Jamaica, the diverse cluster of informals includes the following:

(1) an expanding, self-employed and unregulated group of medium-scale entrepreneurs ('higglers', shopkeepers, retailers).

(2) casual labourers and petty traders such as handcart men, taxi-drivers as well as small-scale vendors selling miscellaneous items (cigarettes, pencils, box juice and bottled water, rags, lighters and other miscellaneous items).

(3) a low wage sector of the mostly unskilled – street subsistence workers, household helpers, street cleaners, garbage collectors, office cleaners and assistants.

(4) the so-called sufferahs (read as sufferers) - hustlers, panhandlers, squatters, street children, prostitutes, homeless. This subaltern sector also includes members of the criminal underworld - thugs, thieves, gangs and drug lords called dons[47].

Of course, this is by no means a precise or even exhaustive categorization as the urban marginals tend to assume overlapping roles according to need, thereby making definitive scholarly classification problematic. Characterizing this grouping is further complicated by Karl Marx's pejorative reference to its constituents as the *lumpenproletariat*. Roughly

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[47] As my discussion in chapter 8 will reveal, dons, although they reside and operate within the same informal domain as the marginalized cannot accurately be described as impoverished, non-productive and property-less, in short, marginalized. In other words, although theoretically categorized as sufferahs here, dons possess extraordinary wealth by engaging in large-scale illegal activities (drug trafficking, money–laundering, burglary and gun-smuggling) and by siphoning resources from the state and the petty commodity sector of the larger national economy. Indeed, some dons even operate legitimate businesses. At the same time, it is to be acknowledged that their engagement in all manner of extra-legal practices renders them outside *civil* society and among Marx's outcasts and degenerates.

translated, this term is synonymous with extreme impoverishment and hardship and identifies the class of outcast and degenerate elements of the population - beggars, gangsters, prostitutes, racketeers, petty thieves and tramps who exist mainly in and around commercial centres. In other words, whereas the *proletariat* were seen to be the class of wage earners in industrial society, the *lumpens* were, by and large, marginal and unemployable (*Communist Manifesto, 1848*). Given the nature of their circumstances, the people on the margins were deemed to be, in Marxian terms, 'social scum' or 'dangerous classes'. This is because the lumpenproletariat is a sort of 'catch-all [phrase or category] for those who fall out or drop out of the existing social structure so that they are no longer functionally an integral part of [mainstream] society [and where] the tendency towards illegality simply arises from the scarcity of choices' (Draper, 1972: 2309).

Although many among this group live solely by illegal activity, informals are obviously not a homogenous group and, hence, it is not surprising that a significant number within this rank are law-abiding citizens who seek creative ways to earn a living and uphold traditional values of civility, tolerance and non-violence. Scholarly re-assessments of this sector (Fanon, 1965; Scott, 1986; 1990; Bayat, 1997; 2000) tend, however, to cast these marginal groups in more constructive ways. Fanon (1965:104), for instance, recognises the latent miltancy of this lumpen sect and acknowledges their revolutionary potential, once they are organized by committed leadership:

> [They are] like a horde of rats; you may kick them and throw stones at them but despite your efforts, they will go on gnawing at the roots of the tree…The lumpenproletariat, once it is constituted, brings all its forces to endanger the 'security' of the town, and is the sign of irrevocable decay, the gangrene ever present at the heart of colonial domination. So the pimps, the hooligans, the unemployed and petty criminals, urged on from behind, throw themselves in the struggle for liberation like stout working men. These classless idlers will by militant and decisive action discover the path that leads to nationhood. They won't become reformed characters to please colonial society, fitting in with the morality of its rulers… they take for granted the impossibility of their entering the city save by hand grenades and revolvers.

It may be difficult to locate this revolutionary potential in a postcolonial context but, suffice it to say, as their levels mushroom and socio-economic circumstances remain

unchanged, the politics of the so-called lumpens have become consolidated, intense and obvious. It is this development and their presumed threat to political and social stability within particular contexts, which have catapulted them to the centre of contemporary academic analyses. The scholarship on the Jamaican *lumpenproletariat* (Gray, 2004; Price 2004; Harriot, 2003; Charles, 2002; cf. Hope, 2006) is an attempt to come to grips with the kind of politics the people on the margins espouse. Missing from these theoretical analyses, however, are responses to questions such as: how do the marginalised organize themselves to call attention to their concerns and wrest concessions from the state? What kinds of tactics do they employ? What is the character of these activities? How does the state respond and how does this response influence the way such citizen politics is managed and/or performed in this context?

## 6.4   WHY JAMAICANS PROTEST: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE GROUND

The perspectives arising from my interviews with a cross-section of Jamaica's civil society reveal several dominant themes which provide insight into the dynamics and quality of citizen politics in this context. These themes cover their notions of justice and injustice, the communion of feelings that feeds their struggle, and importantly, the impact and outcomes of the methods of protest employed in Jamaica and the political values, norms and attitudes being reinforced in this process. 'Why and how do Jamaicans protest'? This is one of the central questions I posed to each of my interviewees during fieldwork. Inherent in the responses was a presumption that coercive and provocative tactics are indispensable to citizen political negotiation in the Jamaican context. The interviewees responded in a way which confirms that aggression is, more often than not, the sole intended combat strategy of the Jamaican protestor. The following responses represent the views of a young Jamaican Rastafarian entertainer (PN4), a cabdriver (PN1), a self-styled cultural commentator (PN29) and a young professional (PN11) :

> PN4:   That is the only language which those in power understan'. This nation [Jamaica] is being ruled by people wid hardened hands and hearts man and de only means of compassion dem will show is when dem see flames and destruction.

PN1: We can do it [protest] in a subtle way, normal and nice but fe (for) certain people fe (to) listen, you have to protest rough. We block street because we feel say we naah get (not getting) justice and if we feel we naah get justice, we will bun dung (burn down) the place.

PN29: We protest because we never usually heard unless we do someting rash. Memba [remember] we emerge from a people who were once tings, people who were owned. But who has made the effort to show us that times change, that the state more conciliatory and accept participation. We siddung (sit down) and mek the anger build up and after it build up, then it spill over.

PN11: This is only way we can be heard because you are forced to see us and forced to hear us because we are in your face. If we go through the formal channels that are available, they are not fast enough and so when we protest and walk with the placards, you have to view us and usually the reality is that we get quicker action.

Protest, in this context, is viewed in purely functional, utilitarian terms. The protestors goals are deliberate – to create maximum disruption of the normal conduct of life in order to bring attention forcefully to their grievances. The consensus here is that unless the actions taken by citizens are emphatic and/or extremist, an immediate and positive response to whatever concern will not be forthcoming. As a consequence, protestors often feel that they are largely justified in mounting militant and, sometimes, openly violent forms of protestations. As these interviewees (female talk radio host – PN5; political activist – PN27) put it:

PN5: If I have a road that is not being fixed and I go to citizen association meetings, I speak to my political representatives and I call the talk shows and absolutely nothing happens and we go out there and we stage a demonstration and it is fixed, it must say to me well, this is the reaction you get, this is the kind of rewards that you get and this is the only way in which you get a response.

PN27: They [citizens] want something immediate. They want to bring a problem to attention and to them even if it is a 48-hour issue [does not last more than 2 days], they have protested and the powers that be know that they are angry.

Based on Piven & Cloward's (1977) thesis that institutional context and social status determine strategic opportunities for defiance, it follows that unemployed, lower-class political actors are more likely to employ more militant strategies of popular protestation (e.g. violence and vandalism) in seeking concessions and/or resolutions to their concerns. This is because the networks of unemployed poor or those who work in economically-marginal sectors represent groups in flux and largely operate outside institutional or structural settings and mechanisms such as factories, schools, associations and unions, through which they can express their grievance and enforce demands (Bayat, 2000:548; 1997). Organised workers therefore protest by striking because they are drawn together in a factory setting and their protests consist mainly in defying the rules and authorities associated with the workplace. Likewise, students protest by signing petitions or mounting blockades because they have the benefit of the institutional setting of Universities and their protest is often geared towards challenging decisions taken by campus administrations. Unlike organised workers and students, however, the unemployed do not and cannot strike. They are unable, in this sense, to apply what Piven & Cloward (1977:24-25) describe as:

> a negative sanction, the withdrawal of a crucial contribution on which others depend, and it is therefore a natural resource for exerting power over others… Indeed, some of the poor are sometimes so isolated from significant institutional participation that the only contribution that they can withhold is that of quiescence in civil life: they can riot.

It follows that the unemployed poor in the Jamaican context, as elsewhere, are therefore more likely to protest by bearing placards, mounting roadblocks and engaging in acts of vandalism or violence. Indeed, the poor seem to resort to hostile demonstrations as a means of compensating for their lack of real *bargaining power*. (see images below).

This image shows a lone protestor mounting a blockade in a rural Jamaican community during nationwide protests over rising consumer prices on September 6, 2005. See *The Jamaica Gleaner*. (2005) September 7.



This image shows the burning of tyres on the roadway in Spanish Town in protest over rising consumer prices on September 6, 2005. see *The Jamaica Gleaner* (2005) September 7.

The spontaneity and disruption which attends these kinds of protest tactics is designed to force immediate attention and a swift resolution. Radicalized protest events attract heavy media publicity empowering protestors as they are left with the firm impression that they have taken some action – they have vented their anger on some of the issues of concern to them. Belligerent protestation has therefore emerged as an essential condition in the process of making one's voice heard or to act against a situation that the protestor deems to be either inappropriate, unjust or contrary to an individual or general interest. Conversely, within this same context, peaceful protestation (writing letters, signing petitions and contacting MPs), on account of being less demonstrative and emotionally-charged, is seen as meaningless and futile. I now wish to draw attention to the substantive issues over which Jamaicans protest in the contemporary period. Table 6.3 below outlines the concentration of roadblocks in Jamaica over a seven-year period (1998-2005) according to the issues about which citizens protest. It is taken from the more expansive Police Incident Report (Statistics Unit, Jamaica Constabulary Force) which shows the number and type of protests per year, per parish for all 14 parishes in Jamaica.

Table 6.3 - Summary of Roadblocks per Grievance[48]

| Year | Lack of Water | Bad Road Conditions | Criminal Activities | Telephone | Industrial | Transportation | Others |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1998 | 21 | 20 | 10 | 7 | 15 | 10 | 31 |
| 1999 | 22 | 58 | 21 | 8 | 30 | 12 | 88 |
| 2000 | 27 | 71 | 11 | 5 | 26 | 9 | 125 |
| 2001 | 21 | 76 | 8 | 3 | 11 | 15 | 150 |
| 2002 | 16 | 54 | 20 | 1 | 6 | 6 | 85 |
| 2003 | 14 | 43 | 6 | 0 | 54 | 4 | 35 |
| 2004 | 27 | 25 | 7 | 0 | 21 | 0 | 66 |
| 2005 | 17 | 44 | 15 | 0 | 24 | 0 | 81 |

[48] Despite a parish by parish delineation, the police data does not exhaust the types of protests that are staged throughout the country in any given year. For example, whereas the 'others' column clearly shows the largest volume of protests, these are not classified under specific headings. This creates analytic problems as it inevitably gives importance to some protests while collapsing others in a vague category, thereby rendering them irrelevant. At the same time, the 'criminal activities' column is misleading as it can either be read as the number of roadblocks staged to prevent criminal activity in particular communities or to protest against the increase in criminal activity in some communities or as I shall discuss later, the problematic issue of protests staged to protect criminals from police action (arrest/prosecution) and to defend their extra-legal activity.

The above chart suggests it is essentially people's experience of declining social conditions and quality of life which provide the main rationale for protest in Jamaica. These figures provide insight into the performance of the Jamaican State. For example, that the country records as many as 76 demonstrations (see column 2 above) in a single year over *bad road conditions* alone suggests not only the demand of Jamaican citizens for access to public goods but the persistent failure on the part of the Jamaican State to provide or maintain the quality of these public goods. It is frustration with this state of affairs that signals the poor's petition for justice, resonating in the strong sentiments issued by PN1 above – 'if we feel say we nah get (not getting) '*justice*', we will bun dung (burn down) the place'. I call attention to the term *justice* because Jamaican popular protest has not only been conditioned by a widespread perception of *injustice* but has led to the institutionalization of what may be called a *pathology of justice*. To grasp fully the underpinnings of popular protest in Jamaica, I therefore look to citizen perception of justice and injustice.

## 6.5    TOWARDS AN ETHIC OF JUSTICE IN JAMAICA.

> 'There is a deep and persistent cry by the Jamaican people for what they call *'justice''*.
>> (Former Jamaican Prime Minister, P.J. Patterson, 1999, quoted in Franklyn, 2004: 285).

This desperate cry for justice is, at once, literal and figurative. It is instinctively manifest at the site of almost all demonstrations through the shouts and screams of protestors and/or their insistent waving of dilapidated, hurriedly-constructed cardboard box placards bearing the refrain *'we want justice'.* That the Jamaican people *want* justice raises questions about the quality of the bureaucratic channels established to dispense justice and reflects a perception among the citizenry of prevailing injustice. When questioned as to what *justice* might entail for the Jamaican protestor, however, the complexity of the value in this political context became obvious. The following responses from a lawyer (PN21) and journalist (PN24)[49] are instructive:

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[49] I wish to note that the perspective of PN24 here reflects both a standpoint of the journalist and that of an individual with personal knowledge and lived experience of inner city life in Jamaica.

PN21: We have a way in Jamaica to use words the way we want to use them and everybody understand what it means. Justice now means *what I want'.* I want *justice.* That means whatever I tell you is my problem, deal with it. If you don't give it to me, it is *unjust.* (My emphases).

PN24: Justice is, in the case of police shooting, whether the police is in his right [to use lethal force] or not, to be taken off duty, to be fired, to be dismissed, to be locked up. It is a generic term that they [protestors from the lower classes] hear people use and they use it too. For them, justice means that *they want what they want'* (my emphasis).

Consensus appears to exist around these perspectives. Whereas some interviewees stuck to the usual safe, textbook characterization of justice as equality, fairness, impartiality and even-handedness of treatment, the common inclination was concern with the 'unsophisticated' manner in which the concept is currently interpreted and applied by protestors. Indeed, some interviewees intimated that there may be a gratuitous deployment of the term justice and admit to becoming exhausted with its loose interpretation. This is the view of a Jamaican graduate student:

PN30: I think it is the frequency with which dem [them; they] say dem want justice that I have become cynical about the legitimacy of protest. It is at times just a matter of spectacle and there is nothing of substance behind some of these things. If ants bite somebody, dem a protest, dem want justice, as against something serious.

Admittedly, justice is a contested term, rarely lending itself to precise definitions. The concept varies in terms of meaning at particular historical moments and places, and depends on the persons involved. The kind of justice that is enjoyed in any society reproduces the political circumstances at work in that society and the power relations existing between different social actors. It also reflects how the society sees itself, individually and collectively, the values that it cultivates and the attitudes that form part of its way of life (Patterson, 2002; Harvey, 1996). Justice, then, to adopt Harvey's (1996:330) definition, is 'a socially constituted set of beliefs, discourses and institutionalizations expressive of social relations and contested configurations of power'. It would appear from the above discussion that Jamaican citizens have managed to adopt a workable understanding of justice that holds permanence in and is particular to this

society. This conception of justice, while acknowledging notions of rightness, fairness and evenhandedness of treatment, also subscribes to the view echoed by PN 21 above – 'justice means *what I want.* That means whatever I tell you is my problem, deal with it'. These notions of justice are so firmly entrenched within the Jamaican vocabulary and psyche that citizens often feel powerless to make political claims without an appeal to them. It is the latter conception of justice as *what I want*, however, as I will illustrate later, which supplies a potent mobilizing discourse for political action. In realistic terms, no society can operate by the tenets of such an arbitrary translation of justice, however varied and particular the concept. This is because it contains a strong potential for exploitation. At the same time, however defined, the access to justice, its timely, transparent and impartial dispensation and the protection of human rights are mandatory in any properly functioning democracy and crucial to an enlightened civil society (Munroe, 2002; Patterson, 2002; Rotberg, 2002).

It is evident that rather than being bounded by a restrictive definition of justice, Jamaican citizens subscribe to an undoubtedly expansive, broad-based and all-encompassing view of the notion. In this political context, social justice locates itself solidly in the foreground and it is this notion which comes readily to mind for the Jamaican citizen when he or she makes appeals to the state. Hence, the protestors' plea for justice is not purely about the administration of criminal or civil justice through the courts but it also crucially embraces the realization of very concrete and desirable goals to which they are entitled – drinking water, housing, proper roads, telephone service and electricity as well as civil treatment by the police. These travails that the Jamaican people experience are nothing new. In times of economic rupture and stress, however, such as in April 1999, they swell into vociferous demands for *justice* and collide with the state's inability to provide this public good. I wish to revisit this protest campaign, which became known as the 'Gas riots' because it represents a defining political moment in contemporary popular struggle and resistance in Jamaica. It warrants attention because its swift and unexpected outburst as well as the vision of *injustice* by which it was informed suggest that the continued divergence between the struggle of the Jamaican people to overcome material deprivation

and the performance of the Jamaican State had reached crisis point. The Gas riots also provide insights into the disjuncture between the democratic right to engage in *civil* protest and the desire for *civil* society in the Jamaican context.

### 6.5.1    Portrait of a Protest – The 1999 Gas Riots in Perspective

Gripped by a budget deficit of some J$160 billion, the Jamaican government in April 1999 announced a hike of over 30 percent in the tax on gasoline. Already burdened by inflationary costs of living, Jamaican citizens reacted with rage, forcing the Jamaican State to near 'collapse'[50].   The protests were led by motorists, particularly large transport operators and smaller taxi -drivers who, in the main, would bear the immediate brunt of increased taxes on fuel.   The protests, however, intensified as many of the country's unemployed as well as various citizen groups, the Church and students joined the ranks of this core protesting group to demand a roll back of the tax. It was, however, the government's firm stance on its new tax measures, particularly what some interviewees felt was the Finance Minister's callous disregard of initial public outcry that 'fuelled' the severest backlash - three days of riots. The country was shut down. Commerce, public transport and the education system were crippled as people across the island staged protests, joined marches and mounted roadblocks[51].

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[50] As my extensive discussion of the Jamaican State in chapter 5 reveals, in general terms, a collapsed state is an extreme version of a failed state. It has a total vacuum of authority where sub-state actors take over, controlling particular regions of the society. They then build their own local security apparatus, sanction markets or other trading arrangements and in some cases establish attenuated forms of international relations. By definition, they are illegitimate and unrecognized but some like Somaliland in Northern Somalia will acquire the trappings of a quasi state. Within the collapsed state, disorder, an anarchic mentality, anomic behaviour and entrepreneurial pursuits such as gun and drug running prevail. Recent examples are the Solomon Islands, Rwanda, Somalia, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and Liberia. The phrase 'near collapse' is not here being used in such strict terms but describes the state of anomic disorder and instability which confronted the Jamaican State over three days in April, 1999 (see Rotberg, 2002).

[51] Interestingly, this was the third time within a time span of 20 years (1979, 1985, 1999) that social protests, public riots and civil disobedience attended increases in fuel prices in Jamaica. See Gray (2004: 257-261) for a report on the 1979 riots.

In the words of one interviewee, 'we were locking down the country to see if we could get the government to listen to us' (PN25). In the urban centres of Montego Bay, Spanish Town and Kingston, these protests degenerated as the action became infiltrated either by criminal elements or political interests with a seemingly contradictory agenda. Widespread newspaper reportage of this event, my own lived experience of it and my interrogation of several hours of television footage appear to confirm pervasive criminal behaviour – the exchange of gunfire with the security forces and a rampage of arson, looting and vandalism. The destruction to private and public property was extensive. This included the setting ablaze of police stations, police and military vehicles, courthouses, banks, businesses, sugarcane plantations, tourist attractions and forest reserves (*Jamaica Gleaner*, 1999, April 19; 20). Overall, nine persons were shot and killed by the security forces and some 152 persons arrested. The cost was enormous. Domestic and international flights to and from Jamaica as well as tourism bookings were cancelled. Loss of production, revenue (measured in General Consumption, travel, profit and income taxes and user fees), employment, damage to state infrastructure – roads, bridges, public buildings – and private property (measured in compensation costs) as well as clean up (removal of debris, police and military overtime funds and fuel) and post-riot tourism promotion totalled over 14 billion Jamaican dollars, a figure which represented 5.25 percent of projected Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for 1998 (*Jamaica Gleaner*, 1999, April 30). See images of the 1999 Gas riots overleaf:

This image shows the burning of debris on Olympic Way in Kingston during day 1 of the Gas Riots in Jamaica. See *The Jamaica Gleaner* (1999), "COOL IT!" April 20.



This image shows participants in the Jamaica Labour Party's 'March of the Women' along Waterloo Road in Kingston during day 3 of the Gas Riot. *The Jamaica Gleaner* (1999) "Seven shot dead" April 22.

It is important to note that despite the violent manifestations and obvious criminality which characterized these April riots, 69 percent or more than two-thirds of the voting population supported the protests (Stone Poll findings, quoted in *The Jamaica Observer*, 1999). Whereas 54 percent agreed with the view that the P.J. Patterson-led government had lost its moral authority to lead, six percent of the respondents said they actively assisted in blocking roads while another four percent said they marched or took part in

rallies (ibid)[52]. In their analysis of these findings, the Stone Poll organization argues that 'given an estimated voting age population of approximately 1.5 million, about 90,000 people would have helped with the roadblocks and 60,000 would have marched. This is while twelve percent or 180,000 people (Jamaicans of voting age), stood-by in support'. A significant twenty-five percent of those polled were, however, against the demonstrations (Stone Poll findings, quoted in *The Jamaica Observer*, 1999, August 15). That a considerable portion of the Jamaican population gave material and/or symbolic support to the demonstrations exposes two interconnected themes, which are indicative of what many perceive to be the poor quality of governance in this political context:

Firstly, the government-imposed hike in gasoline prices triggered a 'panic button' for the Jamaican people. This was not novel but historically linked to the customary impact of an increase in fuel taxes on the cost of a range of basic commodities such as food and clothing as well as critical services such as transportation and power supply, and consequently on inflation. Secondly, there was (and continues to be) a perception of failure on the part of the Jamaican State to:

- sufficiently empower the local government system as a first point of expression, through which the system can be alerted to problems at the grassroots level,

- keep an effective monitor on public opinion and remain sensitive to the economic pressures that the poor, low wage sectors confront, and

- provide adequate shock absorbers to cushion the effects on the most vulnerable (see Dunn, 1999; Miller, 1999)

In short, from the point of view of the many interviewees, the people were 'simmering and simmering' (PN7) and the government sensors failed to pick this up. The state's imposition of sudden hardship, in this case, through added taxes, on top of already serious

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[52] These figures are based on a survey conducted by the Jamaican Stone Polling organization and published in the *Jamaica Observer* newspaper of July 15, 1999. A total of 1200 people aged 18 years and over, in 40 communities across Jamaica were polled. The poll had a margin of error of plus or minus three percent.

deprivations (inadequate water and power supply, proper roads, low wages, unemployment) can therefore be regarded as not only a failure to meet social needs but a radical departure from a genuine commitment to social justice. On this basis, the implication for a deeper understanding of the symbolic meaning of what drives protest in this context is virtually self-evident. 'To protest' in the Jamaican context goes beyond a mere demonstration of dissatisfaction with social conditions (though it most certainly remains that). The overwhelming goal of the Jamaican protestor is to *call attention* – 'look at me', 'hear me', 'feel my plight', 'help me'. The primary reason generating increasing community-level social protest in Jamaica is, in other words, a widespread feeling of injustice among the population, based on the neglect of the community and the unresponsiveness of social and political leaders to community plight. Whether this appeal for justice is therefore measured in terms of the need for collective commodities (water, roads and power supply) or as an expression against unfair taxation, joblessness, unfair wages and police misconduct, popular protest in Jamaica appears to be a fundamental expression of people asking to be seen, heard and affirmed. As Jamaican Minister of Justice, Hon. A.J. Nicholson acknowledges:

> [Citizens] want a better way of life. The situation has gone beyond the immediate subject that they are protesting about. *'We want justice'* has become a sort of calling card for look – I need you, Mr. Big Man, to pay attention to what is happening to our lives (PN8).

The Jamaican citizenry also retain a deep and abiding feeling of neglect in terms of conversations with their political representatives – an abandonment of contact and dealings with a political class no longer alive to their problems. It is important to note here that although the Gas demonstrations had reached their peak by day four, it was the formation by Jamaican Prime Minister P.J. Patterson of a committee of private citizens (called the Moses Committee), to re-examine the increased taxes and to derive alternatives to close the gap in the national budget, leading to the eventual announcement of a 45 percent reduction in the new gasolene tax, that ultimately resulted in the containment of the riots. The Moses Committee, in its report (1999), also gave

emphasis to an estrangement of Jamaican citizens from the corridors of power as part of the inadequacies of state governance in this context:

> Citizens are cut off from or subordinate to the authorities which make critical decisions affecting their daily lives; the available means of redress are distant and often ineffective. Taken together, this means that the government is a power over the people rather than a means through which people exercise their sovereign authority (Report of the Special Committee, 1999: 11).

Jamaican citizens therefore see aggressive direct-action demonstrations as the chief and most viable option to raise the visibility of their demands. Indeed, to the extent that citizens believe that they are confronting issues that are unjust and in resistance to a distant and arrogant state bureaucracy, forceful protest tactics and actions are seen to be justified, if not permissible. It would appear that the more fervent the protest, the more comprehensive the response from the state bureaucracy, political representatives and the media. The Jamaican State in fact, finds itself in a sort of catch-22 situation where, on the one hand, some sectors of the community do not believe their voices can be heard any other way except through violence thereby forcing the government to responding affirmatively to violent demands. On the other hand, it is now a reality that some of its constituents do not even attempt to access or to use the appropriate procedures or avenues open to facilitate redress because they assume, at the outset, that it is easier to get attention by protesting.

## 6.6 SURVIVALISM AND ANOMIC DISORDER: A RESPONSE TO MARGINALITY IN JAMAICA.

The goal of this section is to explore issues concerning the moral economy of the poor to provide insights into the judgements they develop about their (socio-economic) circumstances and where to apportion blame. To begin, since the quietening of the protests and demonstrations that dominated the world in the 1960s and 1970s, political science scholarship has been preoccupied with the more unobtrusive realm of political struggle inhabited by subaltern groups (Bayat, 2000; 1997; Castells, 1983; Scott 1990; 1985; 1976). The focus of this scholarly work has largely been to situate the *subsistence*

*ethic* at the centre of analyses on so-called peasant politics and outline the moral economy and the politics by which the poor organize and govern their lives. Indeed, theories of subsistence, including the 'culture of poverty', 'everyday peasant resistance'[53] and/or 'hidden transcripts' are useful because they provide a rational basis for both the low-profile or off-stage modes of struggle and the more aggressive, dangerous and open forms of resistance that the socially excluded often employ to confront exploitation and poverty.

As in many parts of the Third World, a culture of informality, networking and hustling is acknowledged and supported in Jamaica as an important element in the individual and collective strategies employed by people on the margins to survive poverty and better their lives. Under conditions of arrested economic development (see chapter 5), and historically hampered by class, racial and residential discrimination, the urban poor resort to different forms of 'self-help' in their quest for livelihood, within or without the rules (Johnson, 2005; Gray 2004; Le Franc, 1994; Portes et al 1997; Piven & Cloward, 1977). Further, with the majority educationally-disadvantaged and unskilled, there are limited opportunities for paid, stable employment. For most, making a good, honest living is therefore a tough proposition. Informalization has, consequently, been an almost organic response to chronic joblessness, growing destitution and, possibly, a way out of misery for those in the urban slums who are driven to rely on their own devices to eke out an existence. It is in the informal economic sphere in Jamaica, as elsewhere in the Third

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[53] 'Everyday forms of peasant resistance' is used by Scott (1985;1990) to refer to the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups who participate in a prosaic and constant struggle with dominant groups who seek to extract labour, food, taxes, rents and interests from them. These weapons include foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage etc. Scott (1985:35) refers to this development as 'a social movement with no formal organization, no formal leaders, no manifestos, no dues, no names and no banner'. Recent scholarship such as Bayat's (1997; 2000) 'quiet encroachment' theory extends this analysis to take account of other deinstitutionalized modes of struggle and resistance (squatting, illegal vending, stealing) that the urban poor in particular engage in, to survive and improve their lives. See Scott, (1985), Bayat, (2000; 1997).

World, where the poor deploy creative strategies[54] (both legal and extra-legal) to struggle against political and economic peripheralisation that the extraordinary tension between the quest to survivalism, resistance and anomic disorder becomes exposed.  For close to fifteen years, armies of small-scale vendors, hustlers  and higglers along with the unemployed, have acted in defiance of efforts of the Jamaican State to remove them from the streets, sidewalks, intersections and storefronts to what many believe to be unsafe, decrepit, un-lucrative selling arcades. Using everyday, low-profile, silent and concealed protestation narratives and practices, as well as open collective disturbances, a powerful network of informal traders have united in popular resistance to defend their way of life against the encroachments of super-ordinate groups, including the Jamaican State.

By employing inventive and effective tools of 'anancyism'[55], and/or cat and mouse games, street vendors have managed to outwit and outmanoeuvre the state authorities – the police and Metropolitan Parks and Markets (MPM) – marshalled to drive them off the streets. For example, determined to cash in on the lucrative market of the street but wanting to feign compliance by appearing to act upon removal orders, vendors obediently clear off the streets and abandon trading on piazzas and store fronts, in accordance with instructions from the local political body, Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation (KSAC) but return the next day to peddle their goods and continue with business as usual. Rather than compete with each other, sellers also network with each other to devise even more clever ways of deceiving the authorities. Many itinerant traders, for instance, artfully store their goods in the passageways that run between large retail stores and buildings and peddle them in small portions on the streets.

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[54]I undertake elsewhere an extensive exploration of the various techniques employed by the Jamaican poor to confront material deprivation, maintain a livelihood and improve their lives. See Johnson, H. '(Defiant) Rituals of Resistance: Situating Higgler Women in the Protest Performance of the Jamaican Poor'. Forthcoming, Bhavnani, K.K, Foran, J. Munshi, D., and Kurian, P. (Eds.) *On the Edges of Development: Cultural Interventions.* New York: Routledge.

[55] Anancy is a colourful and imposing character in Jamaican mythology and folklore. Caricatured as an insect identical to the spider, Anancy symbolizes trickery and is celebrated for his gimmicks, cunning and ingenuity in finding loopholes in or 'beating' (dodge, skirt, elude) the system.

It is worth noting that consumers, particularly keen shoppers and bargain hunters, also understand the language and politics of illegal vending and are themselves unwittingly absorbed as active participants and facilitators in these counter-hegemonic practices of resistance. A news report published in the *Jamaica Gleaner* in 2001 reveals that:

> Customers of shoe and belt vendors who are willing, lounge beside the more expensive stores, while their correct sizes are quickly sought by eager sellers in an alley a few metres away. [In order to avoid being caught], watchmen are employed to shout when the authorities, usually clad in blue approach. Cries of 'MPM, MPM' [Metropolitan Parks and Markets] elicit swift movement and the crowded streets are cleared in minutes (*Jamaica Gleaner*, 2001, December 6).

These resistance strategies of false compliance and/or passive non-compliance (Scott, 1985) means that Jamaican male and female vendors have developed the empowering capacity to 'call the bluff' of the authorities and escape penalty. Through this collective resistance-response tactic, they thereby reinforce their dominance of the street and underline their customary rights and usage of this public space while weakening the ability of the state to enforce its removal policy and invoke civil order and the rule of law (see Johnson, forthcoming). Indeed, despite government efforts to refurbish vending arcades in the market district, including the installation of improved sanitary facilities and ready-made stalls, many street and pavement vendors are reluctant to reposition their businesses due, in part, to declining security in the commercial district and a genuine fear of predatory criminality in the trading areas to which they are being relocated. Despite their majority status, women traders are especially susceptible to crime – physical violence, extortion, robbery and the upheavals of gang warfare which tend play out in the Downtown Kingston market district (see *Jamaica Gleaner*, 2000, September 1). The following quotations by female vendors expose the gravity of their vulnerability and explain, in part, their resistance to relocation:

> 'we nah go 'shooting valley' [referring to the Oxford Mall]' (*Jamaica Gleaner*, 2001, November 20).

> 'If police are running from Oxford Mall, why should we go there?' (Ibid, 2001)

> 'When we sell round there, dem [thieves] take up wi [our] goods and we can't do nothing bout it. When we sell here so [referring to the street], we more safer. We

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can't go round so go sell, dem will kill we off' (*Jamaica Gleaner,* 2002, November 5).

The predominant factor conditioning their defiance, however, is that most of the nearly 15,000 vendors, who ply their wares in Downtown Kingston, simply prefer to sell on the sidewalks and streets on account of these being lucrative economic trading spaces. Higglers especially rely heavily on maximising profits at specific times such as weekends (Fridays, Saturdays), 'Back to School' (July, August) and at peak shopping periods such as Christmas and (although less so) New Year's, Valentine's Day and Easter (*Jamaica Gleaner*, 2001, December 6). While shoppers *do* patronize the arcades to which they are to be resettled, many small-scale vendors and hustlers fear the intense competition from big businesses and, in instances, even from their arcade-based counterparts – the more established Informal Commercial Importers (ICIs). Given that, at present, the streets and sidewalks prove to be the most lucrative spaces to earn their livelihood and 'move up in a life' (better their lives; become socially mobile), vendors are more willing to become involved in more militant resistance campaigns, explicitly combative and violent.

These include mounting hostile street demonstrations and administering a succession of 'shut downs' of the Downtown Kingston commercial district. For example, in 1999, vendors (both male and female) collectively defied the police and officers from Metropolitan Parks and Markets (MPM) who were enforcing the government's 'Vendor Removal Action Plan' by physically hauling down the shutters of some competitor stores in the business district. *'If we cyaan [cannot] sell, then no body will sell'* was their rallying cry (*Jamaica Gleaner*, 1999, December 22). Again in 2001, following the refusal of authorities to allow vendors to off-load their goods for sale in prohibited areas, hundreds of angry street vendors, led by mostly female traders, prompted the closure of several businesses through aggressive demonstrations, which effectively ground to a halt all commercial activity in the city. Spurred on by a powerful network of higglers, these empowered informals bore placards and chanted *'no seller, no store'.* In symbolic and physical assertion of their right to justice and, in recognition of their moral economy viz.

a. viz. these very streets on which they earn their food, they marched in procession on Beckford Street, strutting past members of the security forces in a ritualized challenge to their authority (see *Jamaica Gleaner*, 2001, November 20; cf. Johnson, forthcoming).

This capitulation of traditional norms expresses itself not only in the pervasive criminality but, significantly, in the use of the tool of popular protest to serve extra-legal ends. Indeed, dons and assorted criminal gangs, as I will argue in chapter 8 when I examine more closely the politics of rogue leadership and outlaw governance in civil society, trespass on the informal sphere in a way which secures for them socio-cultural, political and economic power while becoming an anathema to civil society. The dominance of these rogue actors inside Jamaica's urban communities, the fear they engender across the entire civil sphere and the manner in which they use their overarching power to manipulate and buy the alliance of many of the marginalized makes the poor's quest to survive poverty and acquire justice a much more complex phenomenon in Jamaica than it is in other contexts espousing a culture of informality. It is to this extraordinary development, as was blatantly illustrated during the now infamous 'Zeek's' protest in September, 1998, among others, that I now turn.

### 6.6.1 'We Want Justice' - Justice for Whom? Zeeks Uprising and Other Incidents

In order to locate the Zeeks uprising within the larger theoretical frame of survivalism, resistance and the quest for civil politics and civil society in Jamaica, it is important to revisit the incident here. In September 1998, hundreds of irate inner city residents citizens mounted roadblocks, formed human barricades and slashed and punctured the tyres of passing motorists to protest against the arrest of Donald 'Zeeks' Phipps, a prominent area leader (also known as don) of the People's National Party garrison community of Mathew's Lane in Western Kingston. Phipps had been detained for questioning and later charged with attempted murder, illegal possession of a firearm and unlawful wounding. Bearing placards *'No Zeeks, No Peace; No Zeeks, No Business Downtown*, the protestors, mostly vendors and hustlers, in strategic alliance with 'shottas'

(criminals) armed with AK-47 and M-16 rifles, barricaded the Central Police Station and demanded his release.

When this demand was not met (and reportedly fearing his potential ill-treatment in detention), a rampaging mob took to the streets in droves, mounting numerous roadblocks, burning market stalls and debris in the streets and openly exchanging gunfire with the Security Forces. In the ensuing melee, four people, including one soldier, were shot and killed and several military vehicles set ablaze[56]. Despite numerous appeals by the police and political representatives to contain the situation, normalcy was only restored to the business district and the incensed mob quieted and disbursed when the prisoner was allowed onto the station balcony to appeal to his riotous supporters for calm. Zeek's plea for calm from an overhead lookout tower remains, according to one media commentary, 'a memorable tableau of law and order gone awry in Jamaica' (*The Jamaica Gleaner*, 1998, December 22) (see image below):

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[56] For a more exhaustive account, including news reports and commentary of this incident, see *The Jamaica Gleaner*, September 24-27. See also the following scholarly analyses: Charles (2002) and Price (2004). Here, Price (2004:76) offers a personal account, part of which I quote here: 'Prior to leaving Lawrence Tavern, we heard a radio announcement warning motorists not to go into Downtown Kingston because of a disturbance in the Mathew's Lane section. Upon reaching Kingston, we found ourselves in the midst of a war zone… we pushed forward and by the time we reached the area of Central Kingston known as Parade, I heard gunfire exchanges involving large calibre weapons; soon heavily armed soldiers and police were swarming in and around the area. The entire square surrounding the park was littered with rubble, burning trash bins and debris piles, while small but growing groups of angry onlookers were busy erecting roadblocks (to hinder army and police vehicles), setting fires, and throwing bottles and rocks at the police and soldiers. I shortly found that much of Downtown had been blockaded by the citizenry'.
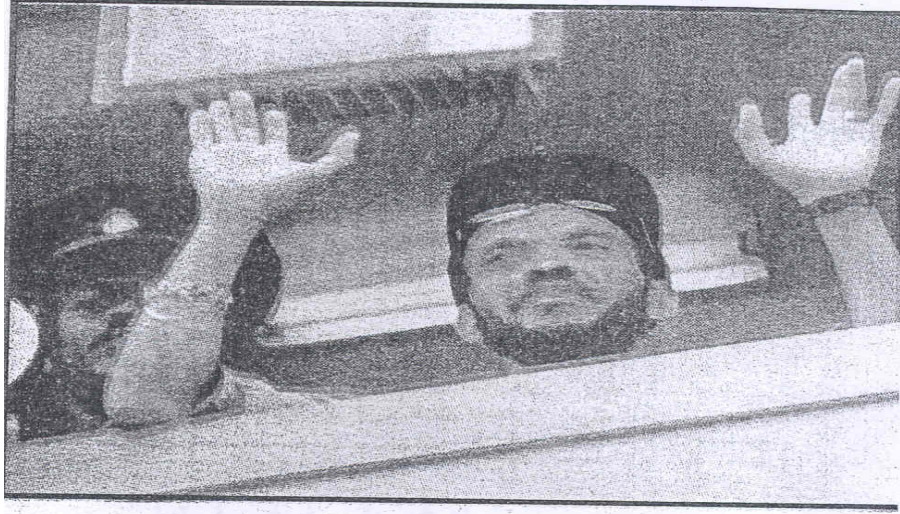
Several observations are instructive here. Firstly, these dramatic moments in Jamaican (democratic) 'governmentality' appear to represent triumph for protestors and for a significant section of the subaltern in Kingston's ghettoes who have officially declared their ascending autonomy. Indeed, they appear to give basis to Meek's (2000; 1996) notion of 'hegemonic dissolution' (see chapter 5) as a critical fissure in the (legitimate) authority of the Jamaican State embodied in the police force was exposed. By Meek's (2000:2) words, its 'constitutional right to rule and the (presumed) overwhelming control of force' had been capitulated in the presence of remarkably violent citizen mobilizations and the emerging power of a mafia-style subaltern leadership. Meeks also captures the paradox inherent in this political phenomenon when he writes that 'the cardinal rule of post-war Jamaica had been shattered in that the supporters of the ruling party – the clients of the overarching patron had risen in revolt, biting as it were the hand that had fed them' (ibid, 2000: 2). I discuss this curious intersection between rogue actors and the Jamaican state within the context of patron politics more closely in chapter 8.

Secondly, the mobilization of citizens in support of extra-legal actors reveals a fundamental aspect of the working of the moral economy of the urban poor which is sometimes overlooked. For example, in examining the Zeek's uprising within the context of development issues, moral economy and the urban lumpenproletariat in Jamaica, Price (2004) writes that:

the people who took to the streets in support of Zeeks were fed up with police brutality, feckless politicians and a dearth of basic resources. They framed their grievances in terms of injustice, acting as if a widely understood norm has been violated through threatening a mainspring of community resources, security and favours [as embedded in this area leader].

This observation is, however, only partly true. Without doubt, as I will argue in chapter 8, the people on the margins, particularly in the urban slums, are caught up in a web of economic dependency viz. a. viz. the patronage and client politics of drug dons and/or area leaders. The arrest and subsequent prosecution of Zeeks would significantly cut off this means of livelihood and threaten the subsistence of a large number of marginals. Price, however, says nothing of the values and implications inherent in the commandeering of the streets by criminal gangs (in both voluntary and forced alliance with other members of the informal sphere) and their engagement in direct, confrontation with the legitimate authority of the state. By Scott's (1976) argument, the values that the poor hold are also crucial aspects of their moral economy. Therefore, if we are to objectively assess the character and quality of citizen politicking in this context, then we must also give due consideration to the values guiding political behaviour and implications of such political norms and practices. In other words, whereas, there may be a genuine concern over the potential maltreatment of Zeeks in detention, such protest tactics do not help in the construction of a functioning, participatory civil society and a civil form of citizen politics. Subsequent incidents bolster my observations here, suggesting that scenarios such as that described above require complex explanatory theories rather than uni-dimensional analyses.

### 6.6.2   "I Shot the Sheriff": Anti-Police or Anti-Policing?

In July 2001, extra-legal actors made manifest their rejection of the legitimate authority of the Jamaican state by responding to a search and cordon operation in a way which suggests that any act of standard policing is hostile encroachment on their lives. I provide a summary of the incident here based on newspaper reports, a personal interview with

the senior officer in charge of the operation and a report of a state-commissioned inquiry into the incident[57]:

> Between 7-10 July 2001, the Jamaican State mounted a challenge to the authority of dons and criminal gangs when it sanctioned a joint police-military search and cordon operation in the politically-charged enclaves of Western Kingston, including the often volatile Jamaica Labour Party stronghold of Tivoli Gardens. Gunmen clashed with the Security forces. In the mutual gun battle that ensued, twenty-five persons (civilians) were shot and killed. State vehicles, including police cars and Jamaica Defence Force armoured carriers, some of which were engaged in extracting personnel from danger zones and those conveying the injured to hospitals, were destroyed. Criminal gangs were able to attack and elude the security forces because of a bizarre accord with contingents of the marginalized which saw women and children allowing their bodies to be used as shields, thereby protecting criminals from the law or aiding their escape. Citizen-supporters later mounted numerous roadblocks in strategic locations across the country to protest against the police search operation, arguing that the Tivoli Gardens community was specifically targeted by the police because of its historical political allegiance to the opposition, Jamaica Labour Party.

The proliferation of this kind of paramilitary situation in both these cases confirms that there is an 'extremely high level of rage against the security forces and a clear attack on the hegemony of the Jamaican State' (West Kingston Commission of Enquiry, 2001:12) by lesser illegitimate authorities. Furthermore, the orchestration of roadblocks and other forms of protestation, against not so much human rights violations but, seemingly, the very idea of a police operation suggests defiance against the rule of law by some citizens and a calculated manipulation of the protest tool to serve problematic ends. This combination of criminal war and aggressive protestation, in the words of one political activist, served 'to draw the police out' of the community:

> PN27: It was a logical, tactical move by the JLP supporters. It was to take the pressure off Tivoli since the police had to attend to protests elsewhere such as in the Mountain View, Olympic Gardens and Stony Hill areas.

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[57] For a full report of this incident, see West Kingston Commission of Enquiry; 2001; See also *The Jamaica Gleaner.* (2001). July, 8, 9 & 10.  Available at http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20010708/lead/lead2.html ; http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20010709/lead/lead1.html ; http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20010710/lead/lead5.html

The senior officer in charge of the police operation on July 7 confirmed this state of affairs:

> We were offered safe passage out [of Tivoli] by the Leader of the Opposition [Edward Seaga]. Safe passage in the sense that we should not be operating there, in other words, what he [Edward Seaga] was saying is 'leave here, you shouldn't be here, go away – you shouldn't be here whether criminals were here, yes or no'. It is a way of getting you [the police] out of the area[58] (PN16).

The clear 'anti-police' mentality evident among significant clusters of the urban poor has to be pitted analytically against the historical view among the marginalized, of the police as being 'anti-them'. The consistently poor human rights record of the Jamaican security forces has, in other words, helped to promulgate a deep and abiding distrust of the law (and law enforcers) among the Jamaican citizenry (Headley, 2001; cf. Gray, 2004). This mistrust of the law resounds loudest, particularly within the heartlands of ghetto communities, where, due to its often rash dealings with residents, the police (and police action) is held in extreme disfavour. Indeed, protests against police misconduct in these urban slums seem also to be a resistance against policing itself (see Box 6.3 below).

**Box 6.3 Protests Against Policing**

On March 9, 2004, a police constable who attempted to apprehend a gunman in Olympic Gardens, St. Andrew, was set upon by members of an angry mob who not only beat him but also reclaimed a gun he confiscated and turned the suspect loose… Allegations are that the suspect grabbed the officer and both got involved in a fight. Scores of residents intervened; some attacked the officer with stones, while others hit him with pieces of stick… The law man and his partner had to beat hasty retreat[59]

Between 6:00 pm and 7:00 pm, July 13, 1998, about forty residents of Aenon Town, Clarendon, blocked a section of the Aenon Town main road, protesting against the arrest of three men by the Cave Valley Police. A group of men were playing football on the road, when the ball smashed the glass window of [a resident's] (name withheld) house and he seized the ball. As a result, the men stoned the house and beat [the resident] severely. Three of the men involved were arrested and charged with wounding with intent and

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[58]See also *The Jamaica Gleaner*. (2001) 'Seaga wants Adams out of West Kingston'. July 9. Available at http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20010709/lead/lead4.html

[59] *The Jamaica Gleaner*. (2004). 'Lawman Mobbed by Angry Crowd'. March 10. http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20040310/lead/lead3.html

malicious destruction of property. The residents subsequently blocked a section of the road, which was later cleared by the police. The men were granted bail and normality was restored. (Police Incident Report, event # 98000203617)

About 10 am on April 20, 1998, citizens of Grant's Pen Road blocked the Grant's Pen, Waterloo and Shortwood roads, in protest against the arrest of man charged with possession of ganja. While escorting the accused man, the police party was attacked by a group of about 50 persons, including relatives of the accused, who attempted to take the prisoner from the police…Two females held unto one of the constables and relieved him of service M16 rifle loaded with thirty rounds. One of the two used a blunt instrument to strike an officer in the back, tearing his shirt… Following the transportation of the two females, citizens blocked the roads, threw debris on the roads and stones at the police. (PI report, event # 98000117274)

Sources: *Incident Report*, Police Control Centre, 01/01/1998 – 31/12/98; *The Jamaica Gleaner*, 2004, March 10

Also, on Friday, 13 February 2004, sections of one of Jamaica's most volatile and feared urban slums, Western Kingston, erupted in rage when a 14 year-old student of the Denham Town High School had been shot by the police. Throngs of residents from the Denham Town community poured into the streets, clashing violently with members of the Jamaica Constabulary and Defence Forces. Word had spread across West Kingston that the student had died. The now programmed, almost automated gut reaction of inner city residents to questionable police action was set in motion. Led by students (still clad in their school uniforms), an incensed mob hurled missiles at the Denham Town Police Station, mounted roadblocks with burning tyres and other debris. With the help of home-made firebombs and in full view of television cameras and media personnel, they torched vehicles belonging to the security forces to the cheerful approval of the crowd (see image below). A two-hour gun battle later ensued between the security forces and armed criminals in which a protestor was killed and a soldier injured. Although the police used tear gas in attempts to disperse the crowd, calm was only fully restored after a prominent area leader and  former Member of Parliament and Leader of the Opposition, Edward Seaga made a plea to residents to 'cool it' (see *The Jamaica Observer*, 2004, February 14).

In order to grasp the multi-faceted nature of this dilemma, it is important that I locate this discussion in its proper context. Jamaica is, at present, wedged in the midst of a profound crisis of public safety. This deteriorating security situation is definitively tied to a consolidated drug trade, including weapons smuggling, historically entrenched gang warfare between politically-divided communities and the fall-outs of unemployment and intense material deprivation and poverty among significant segments of the population (Harriot, 2003; Harriot, 2000; Figueroa & Sives, 2003; Gunst, 1995; cf. Gray, 2004). The extraordinary rate of violent crime (refer to table 5.1, chapter 5) severely undermines the rule of law, its seemingly wanton nature elevates citizen vulnerability and leaves the impression of a country on the brink of anarchic disorder. Such a state of affairs does not bode well for Jamaican society, an almost exclusively tourism-dependent Jamaican economy and it severely impacts the investment climate. It also, significantly, speaks volumes about the ability of the Jamaican State to maintain monopoly control of violence and ultimately its legitimacy. As a consequence of this tarnished image, the Jamaican State, by tradition, feels compelled to reply sternly to criminal activity, which often results in what Gray (2003:12) describes as 'a mutual war of terror between 'most wanted' criminals and the security forces'. The 7-10 July police operation in which twenty-five civilians were shot and killed is a case in point. The situation is also exacerbated by highly

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publicized cases of police killings such as the Braeton, Crawle and Michael Gayle incidents, where citizens were killed by the police in suspicious circumstances.[60] Allegations of police brutality and excessive use of force therefore plague the security forces. The remarkable levels of grievance are embodied in the aggressive protests which trail many police actions. Jamaican citizens, for example, mount up to sixty roadblock-demonstrations per annum in response-resistance to police (mis)conduct (see table 6.4 overleaf for a glimpse of the levels and tenor of such protests):

**Table 6.4 Citizen Demonstrations Against Police Misconduct**

| Year | Number of Protests |
|------|--------------------|
| 1998 | 26 |
| 1999 | 60 |
| 2000 | 66 |
| 2001 | 40 |
| 2002 | 31 |
| 2003 | 62 |
| 2004 | 42 |
| 2005 | 45 |

*Source*: Police National Computer Centre, Jamaica Constabulary Force, 2005

It is clear that citizen protests over human rights are inextricably tied to the repertoires of repression used by the state in policing. They are also linked to perceived absence of justice through the judicial system or appropriate political action that will hold the offending police officer or public official accountable.  That there is not even the 'self-critical assumption of that responsibility' (Henke, 2004:118) by the Jamaican state lead scholars such as Henke to insist that:

> it is not enough in such instances [of police brutality] for the 'responsible' minister to simply call for an enquiry, investigation, and/or the removal of subordinates. If qualitative progress is to be achieved, then those who claim responsibility have to set the example and remove themselves from office, as well as those immediately involved with it (2004:118).

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[60] For a detailed account of some of incidents referred to here, see 'Jamaica: Killings and Violence by the Police: How Many More Victims'. *Amnesty Country Report, Jamaica*. http://www.amnesty-caribbean.org/Jamaica/AMR3800101/bericht.htm. See also *Commission of Enquiry Into and Report on Recent Incidents at the St. Catherine Adult Correctional Centre on May 21 through to May 25, 2000*

As I indicated earlier in this chapter when I discussed the conception of justice held by many Jamaican citizens, the achievement of *justice* for the poor in the case of police shootings tends to translate into 'whether the police is in his right or not [to deploy force] to be taken off duty, to be fired, to be locked up' (PN24). The truth however is that police investigations and commissions of enquiry into human rights violations do not often result in convictions or actions that illustrate political accountability. These developments therefore exacerbate already existing hostility against the police. At the same time, within the context of this study, if the pleas for *justice* and against police brutality are to be reconciled with the political and theoretical desire for *civil* society and *civil* politics in Jamaica, then we are compelled, of necessity, to take account of the following theoretical suggestions.

Despite the obvious capacity of urban marginals to act collectively – a recognizable characteristic of a functioning civil society - the brand of citizen activism being espoused in this context represents everything that *civility* and *civil* politics' is not. It is not likely to generate the type of social capital (positive networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit) into which Jamaican citizens may tap to constructively confront and redress the apparently vexed issues of human rights abuses in this political setting. Indeed, these forms of unconventional citizen mobilizations, albeit powerful *weapons of the weak,* run the risk of making a mockery of calls for justice and potentially undermine the conceptual and political force of the subsistence ethic. This is because while the practices of the economically-dispossessed represent rational ways to survive poverty and improve their lives, the simultaneous staging of various modes of struggle and resistance to preserve their livelihood and also to seek freedom for persons detained by the state for criminal action can hardly be defined as 'peasant resistance' in the strictest usage of the term.  This phenomenon is further complicated by the powerful role of rogue authorities—community dons or area leaders – and the extraordinary influence they wield over significant collectivities of marginals in the civil sphere. As I will discuss in chapter 8, dons have evolved into almost 'a law unto themselves' and, in instances, the sole source of justice for the communities over which

they preside. Their bizarre influence thus cannot be discounted in any serious analysis of citizen mobilization in Jamaica. I refer here to their role as chief determinants of the types of action/inaction taken by citizens to express their discontent and resolve their dilemmas. In other words, the tension between the genuine desire for human rights among clusters of the urban poor in Jamaica, the illicit (patron-client) ties that bind whole communities to the rule of dons and the state's obligation to ensure public safety calls into question the legitimacy of some citizen-fomented resistance against the police and the demands for justice. At the same time, in realistic terms, within a context of mushrooming criminality and a Jamaican state desperate to contain it, human rights abuses are real possibilities. Therefore, in the absence of established and effective judicial and social recourse, citizens will, inescapably, continue to view social protests as the most viable counter-hegemonic response to their circumstances.

## 6.7    SUMMARY

This chapter reveals the paroxysms, dynamics, complexities and contradictions of civilian politics, as embodied in the practice and sheer mundanity of popular protest in the Jamaican context. My fundamental goal was to expose the contemporary manifestation of protest in Jamaica, the socio-economic and political factors which engender it, the ethos (moral economy) and values which together energise and steer it as well as the vocabulary of emotions, arguments and attitudes that sustain it. I was, in other words, obliged, as Tarrow (1994:3) advises, 'to relate collective action to people's social networks, to their ideological discourses and to their political struggles'. The following statements summarize the overarching problematic which was central to the foregoing analysis:

(1)  The Jamaican proletariat is frustrated and angry over the condition of their lives. This dissatisfaction is powerfully linked to (a) the declining quality of the (bureaucratic) mechanisms of political representation and redress, particularly the disappointment by certain groups in the performance of political actors and (b) the inadequacies of the institutional structures of civil society.

(2)  The Jamaican underclass sees resort to disruptive, and at times, violent demonstrations, among other forms of popular protest, as the most viable and constructive response to their political condition.

(3) While intended to elicit attention for the protestor and secure short-range and even longer term goals such as a more equitable society, these aggressive direct-action do not seem to offer long-term gains in terms of the building of a truly civil society, outfitted with organized social movements, civil values and civil politics.

Based on the preceding discussion, it is clear that Jamaicans are fully cognizant of the power of the protest tool and use it to maximum effect. Usually, it is to expose a condition that does not serve their interest, to lodge a complaint, criticism or grievance or simply demonstrate that a situation does not meet with their satisfaction. In specific terms, Jamaican citizens are usually responding to the many faces of poverty – unemployment, low-income, poor education, crime, police brutality, dilapidated social amenities and the absence or substandard quality of public goods and services such as transportation, roads, power supply, water and sewerage. Admittedly, compared to lofty issues of human rights etc, these issues may not seem particularly extraordinary. However, together they are fundamental to basic survival and quality of life, hence their significance as the main driving forces behind contentious citizen politics in settings such as Jamaica. The consensus among a wide cross-section of the Jamaican citizenry, as reflected in the perspectives of the interviewees, is that the Jamaican State is doing a botched job in this regard, thanks, in part to bureaucratic negligence and the indifference of political representatives in responding to people's needs.

Indeed, it would appear that Jamaican citizens have come to demand and expect more from a 'fourth term' (People's National Party) government. The natural result of widespread perception of failure to adequately meet those expectations is popular disenchantment and high doses of rancour among the citizenry, expressed in hostile mobilizations and protest. The de-institutionalised context, marginal social status, poor education, in other words, lack of bargaining power exacerbates the situation of the poor, many of whom engage in openly violent social protest and confrontations as well as blatant criminality as an inevitable counteraction to their dilemma and as a means of raising the visibility of their demands. The ubiquitous nature of protests chronicled in this chapter suggests that the Jamaican citizen has found a voice and an outlet for public

expression. But, the hijacking of genuine citizen mobilizations by persons with contradictory or outright criminal intentions presents a grave problematic for citizen politics in Jamaica. This unsettling (albeit seemingly effective) socio-political weapon, expressed variously through open police-citizen confrontations and mob activity (looting and vandalism), has the potential to arm legitimate forces of activism (community groups, student groups; youth movements) with destructive mobilization and political negotiation tactics. This is because these groups may also come to feel that their voices may not be heard unless it arrives through disruptive and/or violent protests.

Of course, the consequence of assuming this brand of citizen politics is that it may compel and legitimate repressive tactics by the state intent on maintaining social stability and the rule of law. Indeed, this type of direct action may instead perpetuate the further marginalization of the urban marginals and undermine the cause and purpose for which they protest. It is on this basis that I argue that the Jamaican case appears to present with a peculiar form of grassroots activism containing multiple elements, both legal and extra-legal. This kind of protest politics and the causes its constituents defend are hence not always guided by the rules that generally inform *civil* discourse and *civil* action. These, as I outlined in Table 2.1 (chapter 2) include the active participation of citizens in public affairs, respect and tolerance for the rights of others, regard for the authority of the state and adherence to the rule of law. The forms of activism displayed in the Jamaican context is, nevertheless, linked to the same moral economy – survival, subsistence, a desire for justice and, in some instances, autonomy. As such, in a context of social instability, intense material deprivation and donmanship, popular citizen politics will unsurprisingly exhibit elements of extra-legality and violence, ranging from vandalism and banditry to intimidation and murder (see Table 6.2 showing the continuum of coercion in a political system). These elements are given high priority in the Jamaican context. Indeed, aggressive negotiation seems to represent a workable and proven model in the process of wresting from the state '*what they want'* - justice, collective consumption, the right to subsist and, in instances, freedom from official (police) surveillance and modern social control.

To fully account for the implications of this approach to political negotiation and problem solving requires a more explicit look at the character and performative aspects of protest in Jamaica, particularly the ways in which its tenor is both driven by and dependent upon powerful institutional organs such as the media. My overarching objective here is to determine whether or not a new paradigm of citizen protestation and politicking would be more beneficial to the protestor and, significantly, more amenable to the building of a truly civil politics and civil society. It is therefore to the uses to which media is put and conversely, the media's treatment and coverage of protest and protestors that I now turn in chapter 7.

# Performing Protest:  The Mass Media[61] as Stage.

## 7.1    INTRODUCTION

*'...a poor people press conference'.*   This is how a former media colleague described street demonstrations in Jamaica. The remark was a reference to the frequency of protest action (see table 6.1, chapter 6) and the regularity with which the news media lend it coverage. The description is an intriguing one because, as my colleague continued, 'the media is where a forum is established which allows poor people to speak and be heard'. Given the powerlessness of the disadvantaged classes and their historical exclusion from the (bourgeois) public sphere, there are few opportunities for announcing grievances or making demands on the system. Direct popular citizen action, including roadblocks and placard-bearing street protests, often come into contact with the power of the media. And popular protest, as broadcast by the news media, is often the only means through which political representatives and other bureaucrats are alerted to the concerns of their constituents. The quest to influence the authorities has resulted in the mass media gaining prominence within the context of newer and more dynamic modes of action and self-expression (Munroe, 2002).

Downing (2001:26) maintains though, that, although the media play a huge role in social movement trajectories, the scholarship on collective action or civil society rarely preoccupies itself with the protestor-media nexus. It is, however, becoming decidedly impossible to analyze and make sense of the dynamics of popular protest without systematic attention to its utilization of and relationship with media. Whereas citizens

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[61] I use the terms *mass media* and *news media* interchangeably to encompass the various media – newspaper, radio and television – that by their coverage of protest events, become participants in protest politics in Jamaica. I however privilege the television medium due to the accent and popularization given to television coverage in protest politics in Jamaica. I also recognize the importance of radio in my analysis within the context of the proliferation and increasing significance of the radio talk show as an avenue of 'protest' – debate, criticism and complaint.

often build on existing networks and traditional communities to mount their protests, it is also upon the external resources of the media, above all else, on which they depend to mobilize a following and encourage support (Tarrow, 1994). Furthermore, the attendance of media at protest sites also exerts a powerful influence on the overall functioning and management of protest action and, significantly, on the performance of protestors. In order to come to terms with Jamaican protest and the problematic collision between *uncivil* protest and *civil* society, the analysis of the politics of protest has to take account of this acute interdependence between *popular protest* and the *popular press*.

Protest in Jamaica cannot be uncoupled from the presence, operation and political economy of the media. It is within this mutually constituted arena that I analyse the varied and multiple uses to which media, particularly television, are put during protest. I examine how protestors perform and manoeuvre themselves to secure their interests and, crucially, the media's treatment of protest and protestors. Treatment here suggests both coverage and impact. In light of the increasing popularity of talk radio as an avenue of public complaint, I also focus on the role and dynamic functioning of the radio talk show in Jamaica as an additional dimension of citizen engagement. I draw attention first to the *politics of performance* by arguing that popular citizen protestat is, first and foremost, a kind of political performance, which is later reproduced, re-presented and amplified by the media with enormous implications for the tone and quality of citizen politics. I look in depth at the performance of protest in Jamaica within the framework of popular media. This includes the politics of media attention in social protest, the increasing tension between spectacle and genuine grievance, as well as issues of gender and identity politics. I examine how the media chronicles protest and the extent to which talk radio fosters avenues of civic engagement and civil discourse. I begin by introducing my rationale for the emphasis on 'performance' and its relationship with media treatment and coverage.

### 7.1.1    The Politics of Performance.

'All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players'.

-    William Shakespeare.

By Shakespeare's maxim, the world is constituted by performance. Theatre studies scholar, Ben Kershaw (1996:6), has argued that the increasing 'mediatisation of societies disperses the theatrical by inserting performance into everyday life'.  He maintains that performance extends beyond the institutionalized arena of the theatre to find place within socio-political domains and that the *performative* quality of power is becoming more evident. Kershaw extends this theory to account for what he calls the sources of radicalism in performance in crucial features of contemporary social processes. Here he identifies protest events as not only expressions of civil society but also spaces where oppression is most acute and thus where performance exposes its radical potential (ibid, 1995:19). In a broader vein that offers a particular rethinking of political action, Hannah Arendt declares that politics itself is an art. The political art to which she refers is not just any kind of art but 'a performing art' (1965:153). In this theatrical rendering of politics, the accomplishment lies in the performance itself, as it is in drama, dance or music. In other words, the value of performance is prized for its own sake, as something intrinsic to political action itself, not as something extrinsic and thus dependent on outcomes (Torgerson, 2005:510). Arendt's view of *politics as performance* is an attractive and persuasive one. Theatre is, after all, fundamentally about entertainment. Its purpose (and power) is to get a strong reaction from the audience (Cole, 1983). Is political performance the same? In other words, to what extent is the political performance embedded in a protest event purely concerned intrinsically with entertainment and not concerned with political outcomes?

The question over the intrinsic or extrinsic nature of performance is not peripheral to this study because, as I shall show, there is a view among some members of Jamaican civil society that Jamaican citizens perform protest purely for dramatic, symbolic or cathartic effect (PN18*b*; PN3). Of course, whether it is for the latter or to genuinely make claims upon the state, the protest performance has enormous implications for the tone of civilian

politics in this context. This is because, in this sense, theatre is the strongest of weapons but like all weapons, it works both ways – it can produce great benefits as well as become the nesting place for malevolence (Cole, 1983). If the end result of theatre then may be either good or bad, then performance (of any kind) in reality has consequences and outcomes and therefore cannot, as Arendt suggests, be merely intrinsic. Arendt's argument, however, has value. She argues that 'performing artistes need an audience to show their virtuosity and acting men need the presence of others before whom they can appear; both need a publicly organized space for their work and both depend upon others for the performance itself' (1965:154). Following this logic, just as performance depends on a cultural space of institutions and identities, politics (of any kind) also requires a public space of institutions and identities that allows for political action.

If popular protest is a *performing art*, then it is the street which represents a public stage upon which it is performed. The street is, however, not the only platform when there is access to an even more powerful political stage – the mass media. It is from this powerful communications arena that protest performers reach and address their mass audience, which, more often than not, comprises state actors and various anonymous publics. Indeed, it is the media which often confronts us with this performative world and gives weight to the assumptions informing radical citizen politics. In studying this performance, we can explore the relationship between the real and representations of the real viz. a. viz. the mass media and the implications it holds for social change. Here, I focus on uses, potential and limitations of media within the theoretical context that the media industry represents a key dimension of the public sphere. Further, scholars such as Dahlgren (1995) write about the inescapable integratedness of journalism and political culture where media is, in many ways, shaped by the political traditions of our societies, while the day-to-day processes of politics are adapted to the logic of media. The capacity of the media to reproduce and 're-present' protest performances raises the potential for citizen protest to collide with the normative agenda of civil society and expose its *uncivil* characteristics.

Indeed, it is at the political site of protest performance and media representations that the existing tensions between the Jamaican citizenry and the source of its discontent, the Jamaican state, often play out and become intensified. In fact, successful protest events must confront the voracious gaze of media whose power oftentimes imprisons protest performance within its own need for exposure. Within the context of the declining quality of representations of mediatised political performance, that is, the inherent power of the media to (positively or negatively) shape perceptions, I focus on how protestors, especially those from the disadvantaged classes, exploit this media opportunity to air their concerns. Are protestors, in other words, obliged to concern themselves with how they are portrayed and similarly with how they represent themselves within media? How do they direct and manage their protest performance to attract maximum media coverage? What kinds of discursive resources and political techniques are used to disseminate their political message and to what extent do they live up to the notion of *civil* discourse and/or *civil* protest? How do media practitioners produce and reproduce these discourses and performances and to what extent might the media's role as the 'fourth estate' be compromised in this process? In short, within the protestor–media nexus, whose ends are being served and how? These are vital questions, the responses to which depend, firstly, on looking more closely at the actions of protestors as they engage in the performance of protest and, secondly, on the extent to which the mass media plays into and becomes subsumed and assimilated in this process. In the first section, I examine how protestors navigate themselves within the media spotlight and manipulate them to serve their own ends. The second section confronts the flip side of this scenario – how do the media cover and treat protest and to what extent do journalistic values, editorial policy and the political economy of media impact on the way protests are represented in Jamaica?

## 7.2    Performing Protest in Jamaica

In order to gain insights into the ways in which Jamaican citizens perform protest based on their own *lived experiences*, I asked the interviewees, 'how would you describe protests in Jamaica?' and 'do protestors behave differently when the media is present at the site of a demonstration'? Note that the following responses from former student

activists advance only the theatrical, performative and melodramatic aspects of protestation in their own representation and interpretation of citizen politics in Jamaica:

> PN25: It's like a stage show. I buck up [encountered] a woman one day Downtown, [Kingston] and she say 'roadblock a keep [is being staged], roadblock a keep, she a go dung deh' [she is going to the 'venue']. Me say 'roadblock a *keep*'? And she say, 'you don't know roadblock is something like you a go party and me a go come pon TV too'? [I will be on TV as well]. So, it's like a stage show and they [protestors] know that. I mean, turn on the TV 7 o clock or 8 o clock news on whichever channel, they more than likely will see themselves represented on television. And most poor people in Jamaica don't see themselves on TV.

> PN18*a*: It is a *spectacle* and the people themselves are actors in the pieces so every protest is then an opportunity to *act*. We are a very status-oriented society and so we are very much into the hype. We love the excitement – so it is an opportunity for you to conduct yourself with a certain amount of *drama*. The media only serves to magnify the whole process. We have become superstars overnight. I don't know that some of these people are necessarily protesting for any other reason but to get on TV. [The emphases are the speaker's]

> PN3: Oh Lord, it's like Kapo Reynolds, Pocomania and Revival.[62] You know that ecstasy, that moment of ecstasy and convulsion is when they [the Revivalists] taste the blood from the chicken. Seeing the media is like you get a rush, it's like you tasting the blood. It is that moment – that crescendo, it is orgasmic for the people because that is the motive. That is the objective because tonight you watch Prime Time News or News

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[62] Revivalism is an Afro-Christian religious movement which developed in Jamaica throughout the 18th and 19th centuries and is divided into Zion and Pocomania branches. Revivalist churches, of which Pocomania carried a more African leaning, exuberantly fused African and Protestant performance styles, images and traditions. Its Pentecostal style services is said to owe an obvious debt to African possession ceremonies. Here, worshippers would dance counter-clockwise to powerful drums while breathing very heavily. This repetitive pulsation and dancing would ultimately invite possession by the spirit world. Some commentators credit the term 'pocomania' to Spanish origins, hence the popular translation 'little madness'. Others attribute the term to an alternative genesis, more akin to the African tribal language of Twi, in which 'po' is taken to mean 'small' whereas 'comania' is seen as a corruption of the term 'Kumina', which itself means 'dance of ancestral possession'. Kumina is today a popular traditional dance form in Jamaica and represents one of the entrenched aspects of the African retention in Jamaican culture. Indeed, its followers engage in and perform very intense religious dance rituals. Part of this ritual involves chopping the head off chickens and sprinkling the blood, a precursor to becoming possessed with the spirit world.   The interviewee's reference to Kapo Reynolds is in recognition of one of the late Jamaican icons of the revivalist tradition.

> Watch and you are seeing yourself on television or you are seeing the community on television and you feel proud. It is that moment. The media coming, that is the crowning moment. Matters not what happens after that.

Nothing advances a more theatrical, performative and melodramatic image of politics than the representation of protest activity portrayed above. It powerfully falls in line with Hannah Arendt's (1965) view of politics as a *performing art*, where the value is not in the lasting result but in the performance itself. That protests in this context seemingly metamorphose into a 'spectacle' (PN18*a*) or 'stage show' (PN25) and are even likened to a spirit-possession ritual (PN3), especially in anticipation of the presence of media, is a powerful and overt illustration of its intrinsic drama and excitement. Emotional and spectacular forms of action strategies are a significant part of the conventional repertoire of protest in the Jamaican setting, as elsewhere.

Jasper (2003), however, maintains that emotions are disappearing from models of protest. He argues that when crowds and collective behaviour, as opposed to social movements and collective action, were the lens for studying protest, emotions were central. To that extent, the motivations and explanations for protest were posited under the ambit of theories of frustration, anger, alienation and anomie. Over the last thirty years, however, emotions have taken a back seat to rational calculations and purposive formal organizations as the analytic model by which to study protest. Jasper (2003) contends that concepts such as *identity* and *injustice* (see discussion of injustice in chapter 6) by which rational protests are now framed are not entirely cognitive but possess highly charged emotional dimensions. Emotion, he contends, is the glue which generates feelings of solidarity among protestors and serves to activate and mobilize conflict. In Jasper's words, 'not only are emotions part of our responses to events, but they also – in the form of deep affective attachments – shape the goals of our actions and without them, there might be no social action at all' (2003:153). Evidence of this dramatic emotionalism even within rational motivations for action is not hard to locate in the following description of Jamaican protest by a former student activist:

PN25: When we are protesting, we are jumping up and screaming. We are lighting fires, cutting down and burning trees and old cars. When the policemen clear the roadblocks, as soon as they are cleared, you see ten or twenty strong black men who should be at work running across the street dragging an old car from some car cemetery to block the roads again, lying in the streets, shouting, daring the police to shoot them. Women exposing their naked bodies as happened in Tivoli, women and children lifting up their clothes and exposing their rear ends and daring the police to hit them. Inciting the police to violence and hurling abuse – police bwoy, dutty police bwoy, yuh tink yuh gwine shoot me like how yuh shoot Mack Ten. [Police boy, dirty police boy, do you think you can shoot me in the same way that you shot 'Mack Ten' (fictional person)].

The action described here is undeniably dramatic and pregnant with sentiment – anger, violence, anxiety, excitement, amusement and vulgarity. This mix of ludicrous, festive and unpredictable behaviour is an important component of collective action. It symbolizes a significant aspect of what Hannah Arendt (1965:176-177) sees as the *actual content of political life,* that is, 'the joy and gratification that arise out of being in company with our peers, out of acting together and appearing in public'. For protestors, there is, then, an intrinsic pleasure and gratification which derives from marching and bearing placards together, desacralizing power, embarrassing political representatives or the police and watching their panic and perplexity, as well as the sensation of triumph when they force concessions from the state.

Two observations are however essential here: (1) This brand of protest performance may be intrinsically theatrical but it is also fundamentally concerned with directing attention to social conditions (as discussed in chapter 6) and thus, highly dependent on achieving (positive) outcomes. (2) Given that protest performance in this political context is concerned with (quality) outcomes, its existing representation must not expose signals which are inconsistent with a desire for social change. In other words, while the enjoyment and gratification that comes from 'acting together' at protest are components of this exercise in some political contexts, the production of spectacle, for its own sake, may not be a sufficient element of political action to induce the change in circumstances that protestors seek.

The crucial point here is that if popular protest is to live up to its nomenclature as *civil* action, we are obliged, as political science scholars, to pay more than passing attention to the type and quality of the political action undertaken and its potential impact, whether positive or negative, on the character of civil society and the tone of citizen politics. Indeed, by Arendt's (1965:179) thesis, 'acting is conduct that is meaningful and inventive [and] through it human beings come to reveal themselves and acknowledge each other'. While 'actions' will have different meanings in different contexts, it is important to underscore the point that, however justified, violence cannot be construed as part of the theoretical construction of civil protest or welcomed within a normative agenda of civil society which demands attention to civility, legality and tolerance. It is for this very reason that Arendt's argument, which prizes political performance for its own sake (as opposed to extrinsic outcomes) is unsustainable when applied to the phenomenon of violent protests in Jamaica. A study of the character of citizen politics therefore demands a theoretical framework which concerns itself not only with the intrinsic performance of protest but significantly, with its impact and outcomes. It is here, in this search for *civil* action and *civil* discourse, that the media becomes implicated within protest performance. How protestors *perform* on account of media presence and how the media themselves *perform* when covering protest and in debating the issues and concerns about which citizen's protest, have a great deal to do with the character of citizen politics and the quality of the civil society of which they are a part. I now look closer at this symbiotic relationship between protestors and the media and the extent to which it hinders or advances the agenda of civil protest and ultimately of civil society.

## 7.3    'MEDIA' TING PLACARDS & PERFORMANCE: PROTESTORS & THE PRESS

As a point of departure, I wish to use the following quotations to illustrate the complexity of the relationship between popular protest and popular media in Jamaica. The first (PN13) is a recollection of an incident, which took place at the Palace Theatre in Downtown Kingston in the mid 1990s, as revealed during my discussion with a former Member of Parliament. The second set of quotations (PN23, PN24, PN29) from media

practitioners, confirm the pervasiveness of the situation and the extent to which the Jamaican media becomes incorporated in protest performances:

PN13: There was an overflowing sewerage main and the people of the area were rightfully distressed and so they blocked the road [in protest] and we came out there and got the Water Commission on spot and pumped out the thing and when we were nearly finished pumping out now, feeling quite satisfied that we had done something, a couple of the large ladies who were leading the protest came forward and said 'no, no, stop, don't do that anymore, can't done it 'til CVM [Television] come'. Despite the fact that very fine relationships had been restored, everything was understood, when CVM came, there was massive 'we want justice', 'we can't deal with de nastiness'. We had various 'gynigogues' (sp.) from the Water Commission and various Ministries calling right after the newscast to ask what is happening there. They could hardly believe it – pure pretence – because the thing had already been fixed.

PN23: People will call you out and tell lies and they will roll on the ground and it is drama. A man will come to you, ready to speak on the mike (microphone) or on tape to give you his eyewitness report [of an incident] and eight times out of ten, he is *not* the witness. He does not know what is going on or he is protesting exuberantly and he does not know what the people are protesting about.

PN24: A politician told me that he was watching a news item about a police killing and he saw a woman wailing [presumably the victim's wife], weeping so hard she had to be supported. He said he was so moved by it, he felt he had to pursue the matter and when he saw the woman a couple days later, she said 'no no, a [it's a] bad man, but you know a TV camera'. This is an opposition politician and he says he was most taken aback and now he is most hesitant, reluctant to assist, to respond to these matters. There is an issue of believability here.

PN29: The [protest] performance is for the media. I see a case where a man get shot, is lying on the ground and the demonstrators from the community is telling the undertaker or the coroner people don't move it til CVM come – that happen live on ya [here] while de people dem de a grung a bleed to death [the person is on the ground dying]. We are an upfront people, I call it the 'African Peacock Syndrome', where everybody is a star and if we ago 'keep' [stage; put on] demonstrations today, then you must haffe [have to] star*. So is like some a dem are music videos despite they are

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* The word 'star' here suggests that this person intends to become the leading personality or performer in the protest, as in the lead role in a film.

> genuine causes deep down, so there is a level of manipulation too and the individuals a come out, come star.

These accounts of the dramatic nature of popular protest episodes reveal several important and interconnected themes:

(1) The repertoire of actions taken by Jamaican protestors includes a sharp attention to the effect of their struggle on the mass media.

(2) There is a unique blend of genuine concern and pure exhibitionism within protest politics in Jamaica.

(3) It is at this intersection (of legitimate disquiet and sheer spectacle) that Jamaica's media are located and within which they operate.

(4) There is a direct correlation between uncivil protestation and media coverage/treatment of protest in Jamaica.

I will explore each of these themes in greater detail in the following discussion.

### 7.3.1    The Politics of Media Attention in Social Protest

It is clear from the above quotations that the very language of protest assumed by Jamaican citizens reveals an explicit resolve to attract maximum attention from the popular press, particularly television (and on a lesser, though not unimportant scale, to generate a stir of public opinion through the radio talk shows). It is evident from the quotations that the presence of the media incites a sense of sustaining the protest performance until 'the press' departs. In fact, as a consequence of the protest tool's deployment, the Jamaican media, particularly television and radio, is fast emerging as identifiable and active arbitrators in conflict between protestors and the state. The increasing importance of the media is based on the idea that the issue in protest will naturally claim prominence on the public's agenda, and thus, more likely provoke a swift political response from the state. For many of my interviewees, the presence of the media is transliterated as a *call to action*. Note, for example, the change in the attitude of the protestor in the following perspectives from a former student/political activist (PN3) and news journalist (PN5):

PN3: When the [television] camera comes, everybody is an expert at everything. Nobody is loitering or sitting idly by anymore, everybody is in a concentrated area following the camera, pointing out all the ills – if it is a road, they say 'look at the craters', everybody is active.

PN5: I don't do TV reporting but when I reach a scene, almost immediately, they [protestors] decide say 'where is the camera?' and I say 'this is radio' and you can see the disappointment but they will still get excited because they want to hear the issue on radio. Police personnel have told me that they have gone to demonstrations and have asked people to clear the roads and they say 'hold on, we waiting on TV fe come'.

It is apparent that protestors clearly want to make a good showing. Accordingly, dramatizing their case is of the highest priority. For example, an agitator, who may or may not be the instigator or leader of the protest, usually secures full control of the (reporter's) microphone and continuously shouts out the cause or nature of the problem and/or makes demands. These demands often include calls for the intervention of the Member of Parliament or simply to announce that *'we want justice'*. As a rule, throngs of fellow demonstrators are also typically located firmly in place behind the speaker. As if this was a predetermined task, they customarily nod in angry agreement to what is being said or scream demands themselves. As they struggle to outdo each other, it is the speaker who shouts the loudest whose voice the listener (in this case, viewing/listening audience) automatically hears. Media coverage is thus the high point in Jamaican popular protest. The presence of media at the site of a demonstration allows the protestor the opportunity to let off steam and offers a vent to their issues beyond the narrow confines of their immediate communities. The view among some interviewees is that this *is* the role of media in these scenarios – to give attention to the concerns of the members of the political community and solicit a response from the political or bureaucratic power base on behalf of the community. How the media undertakes this process of *mediation* (between protestors and the state), even while they strive to fulfil their own editorial agenda and commercial imperatives, is of critical concern in this study. This is because media everywhere, without doubt, crucially affects the tone of politics and the quality of the prevailing social order (Dahlgren, 1995). Indeed, it is clear from the above quotations

that civilian politics in Jamaica, particularly with regard to popular protest, are powerfully adapted to the logic of media (cf. Dahlgren, 1995). It is within this framework that I look at the increasing tension between mediated representations of protest and demand politics in Jamaica.

### 7.3.2   Between Spectacle and Genuine Grievance

While the media provide clear advantages for the protestors, it may also place them at some disadvantage. This is because the conflict and uncertainty of popular protest are points of high drama and make for fascinating television. But increasingly, the credibility of the emotions portrayed by protestors is being challenged by both the public and policy makers.  As indicative from the perspectives outlined above (see section 7.3), the absence of believability frustrates attempts at ameliorating the conditions about which citizens protest. It diminishes the integrity of the protest, makes a mockery of the protestor (albeit self-inflicted), dilutes the potency and authority of the political message being communicated and renders the democratic exercise seemingly trivial and unconstructive. However, in order to make sense of the politics of theatricality and deception that has come to permeate the domain of popular citizen protest in Jamaica, I attempt to give analytic purchase here to the motivations driving protestors to act in dramatic ways. At the outset, it is important to ask the following questions: Is the protestor's overall goal merely to attract media attention or is it to seek to ameliorate the circumstances that initially made protest compulsory? There is a strongly held view that there may be an almost myopic emphasis by Jamaican protestors on attracting media attention. (See for example the perspectives of PN 25 & PN18*a* in section 7.2 above).

The coverage of street demonstrations is very important to the Jamaican protestor. However, aside from the natural curiosity of onlookers, I advance several reasons for this extreme fidelity to media presence. In the first place, the politics of protest in Jamaica appears to cultivate, over time, what appears to be a rather restricted idea and/or inadequate definition of what it is to protest. For example, in response to the question, 'what is it to protest'?, my interviewees largely view '*attracting attention*' as crucial to the

characterization of protest. Here are some of the responses from members of a young professional group (PN11*a*, PN11*b*), former student activist (PN18*b*), a communications consultant (PN7) and human rights lobbyist (PN22):

> PN11*a*: A protest in the Jamaican context is persons trying *to express themselves.*

> PN11*b*: A protest is where persons who have strong objections to certain things decide that they are going to take very decisive action which *draws attention* to them. In the Jamaican context, this is by blocking roads, screaming 'we want justice' or some other objectionable behaviour to civil society. It is always something, to my mind, a little extreme, it sometimes veers to the extreme *to get the necessary attention.*

> PN18*b*: A protest is '*to call attention* to an ill'

> PN7:   To protest is 'to express disagreement or dissatisfaction in a *visible or noticeable manner*'.

> PN22:   'Jamaican protests are fundamental expressions of people asking to be *seen and heard* on an issue' (emphases are mine).

It is important to lodge a caveat here. There are many instances when Jamaican citizens 'call attention to an ill' (PN18*b*) by attempting to making petitions to their local member of parliament through person to person contact, letters of complaint or telephone calls. Some prefer mediated forums such as calling talk back radio programme and/or penning 'Letters to the Editor' of national newspapers. At the same time, there is a very apparent absence of a focus on the *ameliorative* aspects of protesting in the above comments. Instead, there is a seeming partiality to securing *attention* and *pacification* in the rational calculations about protest in this context. As one interviewee (PN21) sarcastically puts it: 'I am upset and my objective is to let you know that I am upset and to the extent that everyone knows that I am upset, we [protestors] have achieved something'. If to draw attention to their plight, by whatever means necessary, in order to achieve maximum media coverage is the principal goal of the protestor, then it follows that dramatic, violent and extremist tactics are instrumental components of what Jamaican citizens view as effective, attention-getting protest. It is therefore my argument that it is, in part, the restrictive definition, which significant segments of the Jamaican citizenry harbour about

what it is to protest, and their awareness of the significant ability of media to emphasise and expand their concerns beyond the limited spatial and political limits of the protest site, which forcefully explain the affinity for animation and hyperbole as well as the inclination to violent protestation in this context. This, of course, is not to say that the politics of theatricality (and deception) operative in this domain of political protestation is purely for its own sake and bereft of acumen. Instead, they are powerful weapons reflecting rational explanations. I offer some theoretical suggestions in the following section, which may further explain the inclination for theatre in the performance of Jamaican protest.

### 7.3.3   Mediated Theatricality as Identity?

The attention to drama and spectacle in Jamaican popular protest is not divorced from the politics of identity and gender and the way these are played out in the media. For one thing, the presence and attention the media affords street demonstrations and invest protestors with tremendous political voice, the power of collective self-expression and identity. This latter politics of identity, embodied in the seeming craving of protestors to hear or see themselves (and their communities) on the evening news or to see their issues and concerns represented in the newspapers, is significant in the search for explanations for the foregrounding of spectacular forms of action at protests. But it represents more. Within the context of this highly stratified post-colonial society where the poorer classes are often socio-politically and economically marginalized and thereby rendered invisible (Stone, 1980), citizens often feel compelled to announce and/or validate their presence in varying ways.

Recent scholarship (Hope, 2006; 2003; Gray, 2004) on this subject examines the inventive ways in which the Jamaican underclasses navigate, negotiate and project their identities within the context of a powerful and entrenched colour, class, race, status and gender-coded society. Hope (2006; 2003), for example, uses the context of Jamaican dancehall music culture viz. a. viz. the media to show how the poorer classes are reclaiming cultural dominance in an otherwise restricted socio-economic environment. This is while Gray

(2004) illustrates how economically-deprived contingents of the urban poor use banditry and what he calls 'badness-honour' to secure political influence and authority in domains otherwise under the exclusive control of the state. These phenomena may not be exclusive to Jamaica but there is, first and foremost, a very strong desire in the Jamaican context to be 'smadditized' – to become somebody (from the Jamaican word 'smaddy', meaning 'somebody'). This desire is itself theoretically accepted as having its basis in the country's long history of slavery, racialism, and oppression, and as I allude to above, the unequal advantage (consciously or unconsciously) accorded to particular groups on the basis of colour, race and social class (cf. Manley, 1974). This craving by some citizens to be 'smadditized' within the context of popular protest, oftentimes results in a struggle to be documented by media and therefore for camera and microphone space – for the 'video light' – to use the Jamaican vernacular[63].

This perspective is also framed within the context of Jamaica's male-oriented, patriarchal society, where there is a psychological, egoistic desire of men to 'prove' and to 'show' – to effectively demonstrate that they can do *'something about it',* that is, in this case, to take a stand against whatever is the perceived injustice. While my overall study does not offer an analysis of the gender discourses of protest, I acknowledge, albeit briefly here, the significance of the differentiated roles (theoretical and 'choreographic') between men and women in social protest and their distinctive impact. Given the negative impact of inferior road conditions on transportation generally, as well as on the economic livelihood of significant groupings of men (taxi-drivers and other transport operators), men tend to have a greater input in protests over this issue. In fact, it is worth noting that most of the physical erection of roadblocks – felling trees, hauling logs and abandoned

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[63] Underlying the histrionics of protestors in this scenario is therefore a genuine need to be acknowledged, to be noticed, not necessarily in a sterilized sense, but, as I discussed in chapter 6, in a way which suggests the need to be affirmed as a citizen who is important and who possesses rights that deserve to be recognized. As such, there is an eagerness of protestors to tell their story, dramatize it, to get various anonymous publics, particularly state officials, to see, hear and feel their emotions and to understand their plight. The argument can also be made that demanding and claiming *attention* from the mass media supplies protestors, especially those from poor urban communities, with a keen sense of individual and community empowerment.

vehicles into the streets, piling tyres and setting them alight on the asphalt – are done by the men. The physical clashes with the police, including exchanging gunfire, forcibly shutting businesses, students locking gates to Universities and the barricading of communities also fall under the purview of males (see PN25, section 7.2 for a comment on the genderized role differentiation evident in the description of Jamaican protest by a former student activist.[64] However, the differentiation of roles is only one part of the politics of gender taking place at the site of popular protest in Jamaica.

That protestors are able, through radical direct actions, to compel politicians to come (to the protest site) and negotiate with them, translates into 'stripes'[65] (recognition, fame) for some men in particular communities. It elevates them in the eyes of community members and enhances their own feelings of esteem and importance. Some of the 'ring leaders' later become referred to as the 'don'. As a former student activist and political party youth leader puts it:

> PN3: You are the big man, politician haffe [have to] come and talk to you – and sometimes this establishes or concretizes their donmanship over that community because when the politician comes, he is going to look for the leader of the demonstration and therefore he is going to come to you and therefore next time, when [United States] farm and hotel worker application forms ready, they come to you because you are the don in the community, you are the leader or maybe the don will have you as his second [in command]. So this type of protest benefits them in the sense that people feel this importance, it is this whole feeling of self, that they are worth something.

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[64] I examine the politics of gender in protest in greater detail, including a focus on the differential roles performed by men and women in Jamaican protest. *See* '(Defiant) Rituals of Resistance: Situating Higgler Women in the Protest Performance of the Jamaican Poor'. Forthcoming. Bhavnani, et al. *On the Edges of Development: Cultural Interventions. London: Routledge.*

[65] This achievement of 'stripes', embodied in recognition and celebrity status is not always or necessarily interpreted as a positive acclaim. Instead, it may be more accurately viewed as the realization of notoriety. This is as a result of the otherwise unsavoury reputation and illicit activities sometimes already tied to the men acquiring approbation in instances of protest. For a more explicit examination of this unique combination of 'civic-ness' and criminal conduct, see my later discussion on rogue leadership and outlaw community governance in chapter 8.

This perspective essentially reinforces the strong masculinist ideals and values rooted in this political culture. The political economy of women in Jamaican popular protest is also especially significant here because it is in the performance of women, more so than that of men, that the nexus between protestors and the media is fully realized. It is also here that the problematic boundaries between civil and uncivil citizen politics sometimes become exposed. As a context, many of the issues about which Jamaican citizens protest and demand action – inadequate provision of public goods (water, 'light' [electricity], roads, telephone service) as well as police brutality – are typically categorized as *domestic* concerns. When there is a deficiency in the supply of domestic goods, it is women who are usually most affected in their ability to carry out their domestic responsibilities. It should be no wonder then that it is women who feel especially obliged to place these issues onto the agenda of the media. In fact, so constant and imposing has been the historical presence of women in the public actions taken by Jamaican citizens that the prevailing view is that while men may instigate and lead protest in its initial stages, without the committed, sustaining work of women, who keep the issues alive and carry them forward, protest would be an exercise in redundancy[66]. From the singing of the chants at demonstrations and rallies, walking and praying at church-led marches and crusades, to bearing placards written in the most colourful language, it is women who invest protest action with emotion and meaning.

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[66] There is a growing body of scholarship which focuses on historical role of women in popular citizen action in Jamaica. See, for example, Sheller, M. (1997) 'Quasheba, Mother, Queen: Black Women's Public Leadership and Political Protest in Postemancipation Jamaica'. Lancaster University: Department of Sociology. Available at:
http://www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/sociology/soc049ms.html; See also Shepherd, V., Brereton, B. & Bailey, B. (Eds.) (1995) *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspectives.* London: James Curry; French, J. (1995) 'Women and Colonial Policy in Jamaica'. In Wieringa, S. (Ed.) *Subversive Women: Women's Movements in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.* London and New Jersey: Zed Books.

They are often the most vocal and spirited at protest. It has therefore become politically strategic to position women at the forefront of the protest action, especially when it involves issues of victimization such as police abuse. This is because it is here that females, particularly mothers, exert extraordinary power. Through their seemingly natural ability to express deep emotional anguish, Jamaican women are historically effortless champions at soliciting public empathy (see Wilmot, 1995; cf. Sheller, 1997). The media are incorporated, wittingly or unwittingly, into this kind of protest performance, and can hence be viewed as part and parcel of the constitution of feminine power in this political domain. The following perspectives of two senior journalists – the first, male and the second, female forcefully captures the power plays which some female protestors deploy in their quest to attract maximum media visibility and public attention and secure their goals, illustrating how the media becomes subsumed in this performance:

PN24: I have been on several of these protest assignments and trust me, women know how to tug at the heart strings of the public. You will see a woman, a mother wailing over the killing of her son or spouse by the police or an old woman, perhaps a grandmother bawling over the lack of water or over some other type of neglect and this instinctively attracts a reporter's attention. Women also strip themselves and gwaan bad [behave badly], tek off dem blouse (remove their clothing) and that kind of lewd behaviour.

PN5: People, especially women, get more loud and boisterous when media is there. You see a lot more screaming and the hysteria and they work themselves up into a state because they have this impression- rightly or wrongly- that media like this emotion and this screaming.

It is, however, within the dynamics of this remarkable media- citizen encounter that protestors may exercise some monopoly over the rules of the political game. They are able to use media to purvey their message but also to embarrass their political representatives, portray opponents in an unfavourable light and influence state decisions (Goodwin & Jasper, 2003). The foregrounding of the media in the latter quote by PN5, as an explanation for the 'loud and boisterous' performance of women at protest, led me to ask the interviewee this follow- up question, 'Do media like these dramatic and emotive

displays'? Note the powerful role of subjective media representation in the response of this news reporter:

> PN5: Well, you certainly want a human element to your story so [interviewee laughs loudly], you want to hear some kind of emotion coming out and you do see people working up themselves and they talking to you and they start getting hyper and screaming and this over the top displays of emotion and they carry you to show you this
> or that – they want to tell a story.

The theoretical complexity embedded in the protest cycle described here lies not only in the evident capacity of women to raise the visibility of their concerns in the media but in their apparent persuasion that 'inappropriate' and 'uncivil' displays are fundamental to what the media is searching for in their own quest for news. Certainly, the reporter's response tells us that an element of emotionalism and drama is a necessary driving force in what is considered to be newsworthy here. At the same time, it is evident that the way a story is recorded and 're-presented' to the public in the Jamaican context appears to be linked to the way protestors are driven to perform them. In other words, citizens who take to the streets in protest largely model the protest behaviours they see in the mass media. For example, one of the dangers of media coverage, as evidenced in the perspectives outlined above, is the manufacture of 'personalities' or 'stars' from among protest campaigners. These are not always the only organizational or intellectual leaders of the protest but usually people who are flamboyant, loud or disruptive, in other words, with the talent for attracting media attention. The coverage of such performances serve to establish and expose the more negative aspects of protest action, has the capacity to distort a protest event's message and will greatly affect a protest campaign's ability to meet its goals and change its society (Goodwin & Jasper, 2003). The following quotation by a former student activist (now young professional – attorney at law) articulates this:

> PN18*b*: It is essentially offensive because you see people carrying on. It is, as my colleague says, the spectacle that it has become. Any kind of protest now, whether it is for light [power] or roads or water, a mother for a son, a community for water, has become subsumed under the umbrella of a spectacle and so when I watch it, I am utterly turned off and I know that people may have a valid reason for coming out [to protest] and really and truly, there should be in 2004 no place where there is no water or light

but the spectacle that it has become offends. You feel as if 'oh my God, what kind of person is that?'

I wish to reiterate here that the recourse to more subversive strategies of popular protestation is a significant element of the political armoury of the less educated, less-politically connected and less-influential groups of citizens, who have not yet acquired the skills to manipulate the media more effectively. This view powerfully echoes Piven & Cloward's (1977) theory that disruptive, 'inappropriate', attention-generating techniques often represent the poor's only resource in the quest for attention and redress. The persistence of the overly negative protest forms is, nonetheless, becoming increasingly problematic. Indeed, it would appear that despite their seeming effectiveness as a way to attract attention, overly-dramatic displays of protest are losing favour with some citizens and reducing their effectiveness as a means of winning sympathy for particular issues.

It is perhaps fair to ask, then, whether this perspective is indicative of an emerging resistance to uncivil forms of protest performance in Jamaica. If so, how widespread is it? Does it represent the attitude of elites or generalised public opinion? These questions are important; the answers lie in examining the official political responses to protestation and ascertaining what types of protest action, over time, elicit what types of responses from the Jamaican state and the extent to which these official responses impact on the way protestors elect to perform protest. Indeed, official response may be one part of the answer. This is the subject of my discussion in chapter 9. For the purposes of this discussion, however, I wish to emphasize that the interviewee's (PN18*b* above) disinclination to extract the nature of the protest performance from the media's representation of it implicates the Jamaican media in the perpetuation of uncivil political conduct and renders this civil institution potentially inimical to the functioning of a real civil society. The interviewee's perspective therefore necessitated clarification as to the extent to which people watching protest in their capacity as members of the mass media audience focus on the individual temperament and/or behavioural norms of the persons protesting as opposed to the issues over which they are protesting. This is the response:

PN18*b*: You are forced to [watch] because the media has fed you this diet of spectacle upon spectacle, of fanfare, of jumping up and tearing off your brassiere.

Theoretically, this takes us into media representation and effects theory (the extent to which the media influences behaviour) versus audience needs and perceptions of mass media content. It also exposes the theoretical and political collision between what Halloran, Elliot & Murdock (1970) see as *restricted access* (to the media by some sectors) and *unrestricted coverage* (injudicious treatment of the disadvantaged classes by the media). In other words, the less-educated, less-affluent and less-influential citizens, who have limited access to the media, are forced to compensate (or perhaps, overcompensate) for this restricted access through uncivil forms of political behaviour. Meanwhile, unrestricted coverage assures protestors of attention and guarantees that the full breadth of their protest performance will be aired on the mass media. In short, the concerns and grievances of citizens are wide open to superficial handling and for representation in a way that is designed to extract maximum entertainment value. The role of media, themselves organized components of civil society and forceful players in popular protest, thus bears tremendously upon the character of citizen politics and the quality of civil society. The nature of demonstrations and the tone of civilian politics more broadly in contexts such as Jamaica is, in part, as one journalist admits (PN5), 'a matter of treatment and how we tell the story'. It is to this subject that I now turn.


### 7.4    How the Media Chronicles Protest: Narrative & Treatment

We read the newspaper and watch your TV
You want us believe that it is pure sufferation [suffering] we would see
Now our eyes behold, the story is told
Sufferation, starvation, Part of your manipulation.
Now we rise …

Mutabaruka & Tony Rebel, *Mama Land*, 1994


Jamaican entertainers, Mutabaraka and Tony Rebel, in this powerful piece of dub poetry, cast an indictment on global media practice. Their poetry reproduces the current public disaffection in Jamaica, as elsewhere, about the performance of the mass media and the

practice of journalism. In specific terms, we are directed to the problematic nature of media representation and output, that is, what is selected for portrayal and how it is presented (Dahlgren, 1995). Television, for instance, has been the subject of ongoing and widespread criticism for contributing to deterioration in aesthetic tastes and general cultural standards. Indeed, there is growing concern in some quarters that the emotional and entertainment predisposition in television is so acute that even the most serious issues of public concern are inevitably trivialized (Street, 2001:90 quoting Entman, 1997:78; Putnam, 1995; Postman, 1992; 1987; cf. Halloran, Elliot & Murdock, 1970).

Robert Putnam, for example, while extolling the virtues of newspaper reading and elevating the medium as an agent of civic responsibility, indicts television for being an agent of social disengagement, responsible for a catastrophic decline in social capital, gauged in terms of the networks, norms and trust that allow people to act collectively. He blames television for privatizing people's leisure time and therefore their civic activity. In short, his contention is that television deadens people's capacity to operate as citizens, thereby causing civic disengagement (Putnam, 1995:678; 2000:229). This is while other scholars (Curran, 2002; McGregor & Comrie, 2002) argue that public confidence in the news as a source of information and education, and faith in its integrity is plummeting. Such criticisms essentially reproduce Habermas' (1989) concern over the demise of the media as an effective political public sphere and a space for rational debate and discussion of political issues. Although seen to be largely justified, this type of commentary is troubling. This is because the institution of media is positioned as one of the important pillars enabling the development of a functioning, participatory civil society. Indeed, the media is generally thought of as supplying information in a context where information is a key political resource which determines people's capacity to act. In other words, without this information, citizens are powerless (Street, 2001).

Putnam's formulation, however, largely rejects the idea that atomized individuals consuming media in their homes comprise a public or are contributors to the discursive and social interactional processes indispensable to civil society. While Putnam's argument

is well-taken, his thesis is predominantly grounded in the United States context and thus may not have the same relevance elsewhere. For example, rather than an impediment to civil society and deadening people's capacity to act together, television (and radio) in Jamaica are fast transforming into active outlets and spaces for civic interaction and participation. As my preceding discussion firmly establishes, the mass media, particularly television (and as I will show later, the ubiquitous radio talk show) have become crucial players in protest activity in Jamaica, in terms of providing a public vent for issues beyond the narrow confines of communities and mediating between these communities and the Jamaican state to which citizens direct their protest. My theoretical concern in the remainder of this chapter is therefore with how the media itself have dealt with this 'civic' role even while it inescapably operates as an economic (cultural) industry.

The scholarship on the political economy of media suggests that we concern ourselves with the institutional logics of media ownership, financing and control, organizational imperatives and dynamics as well as the professional frameworks operative among people who work within the industry, all of which impact on the way journalism (and journalists) functions (Bardoel & d'Haenens, 2004; Curran, 2002; 1991; Dahlgren, 1995; Fairclough, 1995). I draw heavily on the perspectives of Jamaican citizens and, importantly, media practitioners in order to make sense of media treatment of protest action in this context. My objective here is not to necessarily critique or condemn their positions or the values implicit in them but to throw light on some of the implications of the existing approach to media coverage for the tone of citizen politics and the quality of civil society. To begin with, there is a view among some members of the Jamaican citizenry that the media has played a negative role in civilian politics as far as their coverage and treatment of popular protests are concerned. For example, the following perspectives from an attorney at law (PN18*b*), two University undergraduate students (PN20*a* & PN20*b*) and a local commentator (PN29) convey a view of media coverage of protest events as largely emphasizing triviality, sensationalism and superficiality:

PN18*b*:The way they [the media] cover it is like fanfare – citizens in Riverton come out and they zoom in and they show this woman in her bra and her underwear saying 'me want justice', 'yuh kill me pickney' [you killed my child]. I have no experience in media but I am sure the thing can be edited in such a way that the real issues come out – not so much the fanfare but of what people are protesting about. They [the media] want to sensitize you to the problems but the way in which it [protest] is covered is exaggerated sometimes and it is as if it is deliberately portrayed in a negative manner. I think media houses can do better in terms of how they put across the message.

PN20*a*: A video coverage of protest will focus far more on the people who are holding their heads and crying than the people who are solidly saying this is the issue. Instead, they [the media] bring to the home audience the agony but without the words to explain what the agony is about.

PN20*b*: I think sometimes a lot of messages of protest get lost in trying to get a catchy cover story so that your paper will sell. Instead of saying that the people are genuinely hurt by fire or whatever, it is 'man chopped in the head at protest' or 'women strip naked, breasts flying' because they want to sell paper so they sensationalize it and the people come across like they are not protesting for any reason because the focus is more 'on their actions' than 'why' they are protesting.

PN29: I think media exploit people's grief. Our people, when dem in a grief, dem hold up dem belly bottom, dem roll pon de grung and a carry on and the camera boy a gwaan [going on] like say him want to show de woman drawers and me phone de [television] station and dress dem down [quarrel with them] because we have to start objecting to this kind of media coverage.

These perspectives are a candid articulation of dissatisfaction from a cross-section of the Jamaican citizenry with the way the news media has covered and treated popular citizen protest. The quotations suggest that the news reportage of demonstrations is an area where the distinction between hard news and entertainment is blurred. The interviewees all indicate that there is less of a focus on the motivations, purpose and rationale for citizen action and more concentrated attention to the dramatic aspects of the protest performance. My own observation of actual protest and my interrogation of television footage of recent demonstrations confirm this impression of media coverage. A news broadcast of popular citizen action does not always or inevitably leave the audience with

a very clear understanding of what citizens are protesting about. The consequence is that it becomes virtually impossible to locate the concerns or grievances of protestors within a wider political context and/or identify the expressed objectives of the citizen action. As a broadcasting regulator puts it:

> PN21: you are put in a state of anxiety. Something is going on and a lot of people are there and they [are] blocking up the place. What are the issues, who are the potential spokespersons, who you choose to put in your news clip may have little to do with trying to have people have a full grasp of what is going on but probably who is the most animated so it has the greatest impact audio-visually.

These perspectives on news coverage of protest all appear to derive from a collective notion of how the news ought to be covered and presented, that is, what elements of a story should be given salience and prioritization and what ought to be ignored or considered peripheral. The emphasis on the dramatic and spectacular in news reports of political events, whether at the citizen or state level, is not unusual. Instead, it represents an established global approach to news production and presentation. John Street (2001) in a very persuasive discussion in *Mass Media, Politics and Democracy* describes the reporting of politics as the metaphorical equivalent of 'telling tales'. The mass media, he argues, do not simply cover observable events and report facts but animate them by turning them into narratives with plots and actors. He writes: 'Movies use the artifice of cinema to tell a story, to create characters in a believable world; news does a similar job for the events that are its concern' (2001:36). It is Street's contention, then, that news is in this sense an art. It follows that just as politics can be seen as a performing art (Arendt, 1965), the coverage of politics by the news media is also an art.

The nature of the television medium, for instance, favours dynamic and attention-grabbing visual images. A typical newscast, essentially communicating in a language of pictures, is therefore a symbolic event, a form of theatre in which the day's events are dramatized (Postman, 1992). This leads to questions of the role of a journalist at the site of a demonstration. Aren't journalists, in this sense, implicated in the production of political art? To the extent that the media, particularly television, have become so mired within

the political dynamic of Jamaican protest, they are no longer seen as mere spectators at the site of demonstrations but incredibly influential in setting the tone of the protest campaign, informing the political behaviour of protestors, and, at times, determining the outcome. Iyengar (1994), in effect, confirms this view when he argues that the way television frames an issue influences the allocation of responsibility: who is to be blamed or praised. In the Jamaican context, the issues at play, such as inadequate water supply, poor road conditions or police brutality, are framed in terms of the (declining) performance of the state and political representatives. The television medium often positions the protestors in an adversarial relationship to the state and locates itself as an intermediary. In this sense, 'television influences attributions of responsibility both for the creation of problems or situations (causal responsibility) and for the resolution of these problems or situations (treatment responsibility) (Iyengar, 1994:3). In turn, both protestors and the media audience are influenced by how the media frame issues and allocate responsibility.

The argument can thus be made that there is indeed a social and professional obligation upon the journalist to go beyond superficial coverage. The function of news is thus not only to signal an event but to bring light to hidden facts, to set them in relation with each other, and make a picture of reality on which people may act (Lipmann,1922). News should thus provide people with the sort of information that can assist them to participate in comprehensive discussions about their society and take informed decisions about their lives. Given that the politics of media treatment of news and its potential negative impact on citizen behaviour is already a point of debate within media and political circles, I posed this question to media managers and senior news reporters: 'are you satisfied with how the media has covered protests in Jamaica'? The responses dramatically coincide with the concerns of members of the mass media audience (attorney at law and university students- PN18*b*, PN20*a*; 20*b*) outlined before:

> PN4: I have a problem with how we have covered it. I think there is too much emphasis on the superficiality, on the immediate screaming and the immediate emotion and not enough digging of the underlying issues. So, you get a story on a demonstration without the fact that it has been an

issue for 10 or 15 years and the type of impact the problem may have had on people. It is 'fast food' journalism. You go in, you grab some quick sound bites, you do a story and then you go home. So, in terms of the underlying issues and the underlying frustrations, I think maybe we pay too little attention to it.

PN9:    I am never satisfied. I think we have added fuel to the fire to some degree. If these are people [protestors] who have been trying to get their voices heard, we have a responsibility to bring their issues but we also have a responsibility to bring them reasonably and sensibly. It is how we do it. We have too often gone for the person who is jumping up and carrying on rather than the person who is standing on the side who wants their voice heard but may not necessarily be the one to jump up, to get on bad and maybe those are the ones with the reasoned response and the reasoned arguments that we would want to put forward.

These perspectives represent a powerful admission by some sections of media management that there is a detriment (to civil politics and civil society) in the way that protest performances are currently reported and represented in Jamaica. One of the dangers with this myopic approach to media coverage of protest is that citizens have clearly begun to hold a particular view as to how popular protests ought to be carried out. In other words, there is an emerging cyclical relationship between media coverage and the tone of protests where protestors are led to believe that if they desire to draw attention to a plight, then they have to conduct their protest performance in a particular way. The consequence is that an acute attention to animation and hyperbole, including violence, has become part of a combination of direct action strategies that the Jamaican underclass views as effective protest[67].

Any analysis of the craft of journalism and nature of news production and coverage cannot, however, discount the enormous impact of media ownership and the imperative of the market, which often demands compliance to ratings, profits and entertainment as well as the management and editorial imperatives which impact on the operations of the news and the work of journalists. Using the Netherlands as a case study, Bardoel and

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[67] Refer to my earlier claim that there is a shift in protest behaviour when the media is present at the site of a protest event as well as my extensive discussion on the performance of violent protest in Jamaica in chapter 6.

d'Haenens (2004) maintain, for example, that modern entrepreneurship and shareholder interests ushered into that country a new style of broadcasting which was no longer oriented towards *citizens* but instead towards *consumers* of television and radio programmes. Programmes and programming, they argue, were therefore increasingly tailored to preferences discovered through market research. Every editor or editorial office works within a philosophical frame set by the commercial owners and interprets that philosophy in their everyday production of news. The news we receive is thus the product of organizational processes, shaped by public relations management, the methods and sources used by the journalists in gathering the news, and the organizational requirements, resources and institutions they work for (Curran, 2002). It therefore follows that a newspaper will present its broad philosophical frame and although individual perspectives impinge on what journalists write, the philosophical frame, including its commercial imperatives inescapably come through. This, however, does not mean that editors do not hold a view of what they consider 'news' or 'newsworthy'. Visualness, emotion and conflict are usually some of the more important news imperatives. The news must not only capture the audience imagination through visual story-telling but arouse the feelings or emotions of the audience as well as satisfy the criterion of conflict – competing views, competing actors (Street, 2002; Postman, 1992).

In their research into how the British media (two television services and most of the national newspapers) selected and presented the news of the anti-Vietnam War demonstrations in 1968, Halloran, Elliot & Murdoch (1970:91) argue that in order to retain the interest of readers, press coverage will be directed towards atypical aspects, which then becomes the main news angles around which the coverage crystallizes. These atypical aspects are generally the negative and personality aspects of the event. In such a scenario, they argue, ethics and professionalism are likely casualties in the production of news – important subjects are skimped and critical discussions telescoped while conflicts are artificially sharpened. It is clear from the preceding discussion that the more spectacular the citizen action, the more likely it is to get coverage in the media. Of course, it is undeniable that the public responds avidly to such coverage, hence the

popularity of tabloid journalism. It was therefore without doubt that violent, disruptive protest action carries tremendous news value in the Jamaican context. I therefore found it prudent to ascertain what factors are used by Jamaican news editors in determining what gets covered. Here are two responses from senior editors:

PN23: Before its gets to the violent stages, press coverage will be determined by the national significance of what the issue is. If it is a very localized issue, it is not likely to receive as quick a response from the media. There is that bias in the media to say well, is this going to play well nationally and if it is not a main road that is being blocked, it is less likely to receive the sort of attention that the people may think it deserves.

PN9: Several factors, not the least of which is the resources that we have on the day. We are seeking to become a little more discriminating as it relates to what we go to because we have a responsibility not just to cover what happens but also to shape the nation that we want. We look at things like, is the protest peaceful, is it impeding traffic. In other words, is it getting in the way of other people going about their business, is their cry for *justice* 'unjust' in the sense that it is impeding others from doing what it is that they need to do. You are less likely to see us running –especially because resources are an issue – if it is a different kind of cry, not just about water, road, light, those are not always the things that would have us running in that direction.

Based on the above perspectives, the constraints of time, resources and professional ethics clearly impact on the nature and quality of media coverage of protest events. The first quotation tells us that the Jamaican media is largely urban-centric and thus revolves around the events which occur around urban centres. It therefore follows, as the interviewee claims that protest events surrounding localized issues (such as lack of electricity in rural communities) are less likely to attract media coverage than those of national significance (such as industrial action by transport workers). The implication inherent in this admission is that if localized protests are to attract media attention, they ought to embody other news values such as conflict, emotionalism and unusualness, that is, be as disruptive and violent as possible. The editor in the latter quotation (PN9) takes a more discriminating approach to the coverage of demonstrations, where a number of criteria have to be met. Not all media organizations follow this editorial policy.

In fact, such is the pre-eminence of violence and open confrontation (between protestors and the police) as elements of newsworthiness that some media outlets, particularly television, actively compete with each other to broadcast these events. For example, Jamaican television network CVM TV, launched in 1994, immediately established itself as a station keen on providing coverage for, among other things, sundry citizen demonstrations. The station even went as far as to launch a 'protest hotline' whereby citizens were able to call the station to notify the news journalists of their demonstration. CVM's radical news- gathering policy was motivated by its desire to gain competitive edge in terms of audience share and advertising revenue over its main rival, Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation - JBC (now called Television Jamaica). This practice however became problematic as it, in a sense, pre-notified people in social problems of the arrival of the camera. It also had the effect of not only fomenting protests but encouraging *staged* protest performances and expressions in the media. Instances of conflict are played up for dramatic effect. Drama is, of course, the stuff of which stories are told, within a context where telling stories is not just an art but a business. Television news globally has therefore tended to focus on concrete acts, breaking events and on-the-scene coverage of hard news. These are usually episodic reports which are visually compelling but do not offer a sense of coherence or meaning (Iyengar, 1994; Postman, 1992)[68]. It is this absence of coherence, background detail and meaning which my interviewees identify as missing in the way protests are covered and hence responsible for the mushrooming of uncivil brands of protestation and the negative tone to civilian politics.

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[68] The dominance of episodic frames in television news is grounded in a number of documented cases. Iyengar (1994) draws reference to the television news coverage of mass protest movements such as the Vietnam War and the developments over nuclear energy. Here, the focus was on the specific acts of protest than on the issues that gave rise to protest. This type of episodic framing is also replicated in television news coverage of labour management disputes, where scenes of picketing workers received more airtime than discussions of the economic and political grievances at stake. Event-oriented stories also account for most news coverage of international terrorism where, she says, information about specific terrorist acts is not accompanied by information about their underlying historical, economic and social antecedents. For a more detailed discussion of this kind of television framing, see Iyengar, S. (1994) *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Refer to chapter 2.

At the same time, it is worth reiterating that because the pressures of a commercial structure increasingly require that the news media (whether television, radio or print) hold its audience and maintain its ratings, thematic coverage presenting the related and/or background material is virtually impossible. It would take a longer time to prepare and there simply is not airtime available in (commercial) television to present background information or lengthy coherent explanations of events on all issues deemed newsworthy (Iyengar, 1994; Postman, 1992). The crucial question to be answered, then, is how far the media's role as an economic cultural industry impinges on the normative obligations cast upon it to operate as an important civic actor in the public sphere. Clearly, the role of the media is to offer a judicious, balanced, non-partisan approach to news gathering and presentation. In line with the tenets of fair and objective journalism, the media are therefore obligated to carry all sides of the story – the antecedents, the outcomes as well as multiple and varied perspectives. In other words, even if the protestors represent the overwhelming majority of the actors in the drama, the view of the persons/agencies charged with neglect must also be accommodated and represented.

Although there is some evidence of a shift away from the heavy coverage and foregrounding of 'disruptive' protests by particular media houses, it is apparent from the interviewees' perspectives that Jamaican citizens demand that the media see themselves more in line with quality service. While some media outlets such as the newspapers allow people greater access through their publications to rigorous intellectual discussions from the academic community, there is, in the main, an absence of 'good' stories, carefully written with attention to analytical or *investigative* as opposed to *sensational* journalism. In other words, while the state is the object of protests, whether civil or uncivil, the media's role, as an actor in the public sphere and an institution of civil society, is to assist protestors in rousing the state from its complacency and alerting it to their concerns. In the view of a former Member of Parliament (PN13), the media should not be seen to demoralize the citizenry by representing them and their concerns in ways that are negative or merely spectacular. The media, he maintains, are therefore obliged to provide information that can cause citizens to act more responsibly rather than become catalysts

for disorder and incivility. On the basis of the characteristics which render a society uncivil (see Table 2.1, chapter 2), PN13's view is well taken. The overarching goal of the protestor-media encounter is to reduce the level of misunderstanding between government and citizens, empower the disadvantaged classes and draft them into a politics of participation. Given the limitations of television in this regard, it may therefore be in the role of the radio talk show that this can potentially be accomplished. It is to that discussion I now turn.

## 7.5 TALK RADIO AS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

In the following sections, I explore the role and functioning of talk radio in Jamaica as an additional dimension of citizen engagement and the extent to which it can bridge the communicative gap between the citizenry and the state. In a fascinating discussion in *The Argument for Citizenship*, Benjamin Barber (1984:173) argues that 'at the heart of strong democracy is talk' (Barber, 1984:174). Of course, 'strong democratic talk entails listening no less than speaking; it's affective as well as cognitive and its intentionalism draws it out of the domain of pure reflection into the world of action' (ibid, 1984). Talk, in this instance, therefore reflects its potential within notions of citizenship and participation. Of course, not all social interaction involving talk can be treated as manifestations of a well-functioning public sphere. In Dahlgren's (1995:20) view, 'there must be a focus on politics and current affairs – a quality of publicness attained by people interacting in their roles as citizens'. In this sense, talk is constructive, aiding in social construction and meaning making through conversation. In terms of the public sphere, Dahlgren argues for the centrality of social interaction through talk in order to permit and foster the processes of political sense-making.

It is for this reason that I am interested in the nature of the talk which circulates between citizens (the discursive element), the sites and settings (the spatial element) where this social interaction takes place and what meanings these hold for the tone and quality of civilian politics and civil society. To begin with, this notion of talk as communication involving the interactive process of *receiving* information and *expressing* (opinions,

beliefs) as well as participating in (civic) *action* is vigorously reproduced within the spatial setting of talk radio in Jamaica. To say that an enormous amount of media airtime is devoted to talk is to understate the embeddedness of orality in the Jamaican culture and the consequent popularity of talk radio in Jamaica. Up to June 2002, there were twenty-two talk shows on the Jamaican airwaves. This means that Jamaican citizens are being treated to 'a daily diet of a minimum of thirty-nine and a maximum of forty-four hours of talk radio!' (Clarke, 2002). This proliferation of radio talk shows[69] is itself linked to the explosion of radio in Jamaica in the mid 1980s. Thanks to globalization and the ensuing liberalization of the country's telecommunications industry, Jamaica's media landscape expanded exponentially from a mere two radio stations, which had been the standard for over twenty years, to fourteen which exist today.

Next to popular music, talk shows are the main focus of the daily prime time programming for six of these stations, accounting for approximately forty hours of talk per day. Forty-five years after the birth of radio in Jamaica, the radio talk show remains incredibly popular with audiences upwards of 100,000 listeners daily (Jamaica All Media Survey, 2002 in Clarke, 2002). This popularity is linked to the marketing and positioning of the radio talk show as an open forum for discussion of both public and personal issues

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[69] Since the mid-1960s, radio talk shows have been one of the most imposing aspects of Jamaica's predominantly oral and aural culture. Through a series of in-depth interviews with media historians and some prominent hosts, who worked during the early years of the inception of the genre, Simone Clarke (2002) traces the genealogy of the talk show to the five-minute commentary pieces – political reviews of topical issues on the national agenda – done by veteran journalists, Peter Abrahams and Morris Cargill in the 1960s. Clarke notes that this format evolved over time into one hour forums dedicated to listener feedback and political commentary. This format produced programmes such as '*What's Your Grouse?*', '*Palava*', '*Can We Help You?*', '*In the Public Interest*', '*An Open Mind*' which aired between 1968 and the mid-1970s. The genre later developed into multiple-hour shows where a significant portion is devoted to interactive talk, facilitated by call ins through the telephone. This new, interactive format produced the extremely popular '*Public Eye*' and '*Hotline*', which both dominated talk radio throughout the 1980s. *Hotline* still airs on Jamaican radio after more than 20 years, even retaining much of its popularity, peaking at 180,000 listeners per day in 2000. See Clarke, S. (2002) *Uncensored: Tearing Away at Traditional Talk Show taboos? A Case Study of Radio Talk Show 'Uncensored'*. Master of Arts Thesis. Kingston: University of the West Indies.

and a ready pressure point on government. A discussion of its role as a mode of civic action and expression is salient. Although recent scholarly work has recognized the importance of talk radio to democratic participation (Barber, 1984, 1998), limited critical research into the genre's popularity, dynamics and political economy has been carried out in the Jamaican setting. Hence, I rely heavily on Clarke (2002) for the data used in this section. Of all the mass media, radio has been credited as the most utilitarian. This is because it is inexpensive, technologically-uncomplicated and portable, a fact which invests it with reach. It is utilitarian in function, which underscores radio's pervasiveness throughout developing countries as a tool to enable development, empower citizens, foster education among less literate populations and promote social change.

The radio talk show in Jamaica is the corollary to this development. The argument can therefore be made that talk radio is the product of superimposing a simple piece of technology – the radio – between people and their governments. The recognition of radio's physical and political reach and citizens' ongoing quest for the protection of their rights effectively imposes a compact between talk radio/mass media and Jamaican citizens. In other words, citizens allow the media unrestricted access to their lives in exchange for their capacity to act as 'political watchdog' and reach the corridors of power to protect and secure their interests. Citizens enter into this contract with the media in order to 'speak to power in a voice rich with affect and commonality, a voice coloured by its origins in autonomous wills, seeking imaginative self-expression and by the public medium [mass media] through which it is conveyed' (Barber, 1984:166-167). Talk radio and its listening audience clearly need each other. However, the evolution of the genre and the existing dynamics by which it operates means that this co-dependent relationship is fraught with problems, which are impacting on the genre's potential to fulfil its role as a civic actor. The following discussion illustrates my point.

Prior to the explosion of Jamaican media in the mid-1990s, radio talk shows were, for the most part, sedate. They fulfilled a role of debating issues in the public domain, and, in instances, the radio talk show hosts served as a sort of 'social ombudsman' and advocates

of action from the bureaucracy. The genre was also an outlet for the public to 'let off steam' but overall the predominant aim of the talk show was to 'inform' and 'educate' (Clarke, 2002:12). Over time, as people became disenchanted with an inadequate local government infrastructure, talk radio has witnessed an increasing and manifest expansion of its role. In other words, talk radio has managed to embed within its traditional functions of information, opinion and entertainment the additional roles of interest-articulation, representation, advocacy and the facilitation of participation for significant segments of the population (Munroe, 2002:18). In fact, Munroe contends that 'the Jamaican talk show has, in substantial measure, become the means through which the voice and concerns of the disadvantaged are brought to public attention and to the authorities, which might otherwise remain distant and unreachable' (ibid 2002:18).

That the talk show, as a medium of public discourse, is undertaking such an expanded role as buffer between the poor and the powerful is not lost on the talk show hosts themselves. During in-depth interviews with Simone Clarke (2002), Ronald Thwaites, a thirty-year veteran talk show host, credits the talk show for giving people 'a chance to express their own views and gives ordinary people access to those whom they would otherwise not have access'. This is while Barbara Gloudon, perhaps the most dominant woman on Jamaican talk radio, particularly, *Hotline* for over twenty years, underscores the significance of the radio talk show in Jamaica:

> A man or woman with a small transistor radio and a telephone can talk to the highest man in the land. He can *be somebody* – no degree or qualifications necessary. That man or woman, by virtue of owning the transistor radio, has a window to the world. He or she has the opportunity to *talk back*.

The extraordinary impact of 'call-in' radio is confirmed by Surlin & Sonderland's (1995:40) media survey, which reveals that its attractiveness lies with the ability of people to 'set the agenda for themselves, the media and decision-makers in their society', and in so doing 'enhance the democratic process' (quoted in Clarke, 2002). In other words, unlike the case in many developed societies (United States, New Zealand, Australia) where the topics covered on talk-back radio are set by the producers and presenters, the

Jamaican citizen determines the discussion topic by simply calling in and introducing a subject matter. In a predominantly oral and gregarious society such as Jamaica, this kind of citizen-led interaction is crucial to the fulfilment of the normative project of civil society. This is because, where there are apparent weaknesses in governance, citizens tend to use all the avenues at their disposal to get redress. Like the demonstration, the radio talk show has emerged as one such tool. In terms of civic engagement, it allows the social world to be linguistically constructed by ordinary citizens rather than those in positions of power where the imposition of power discourses are more likely. In this sense, talk embodies and manifests a shared sense of commonality in the (mediated) political community by fostering social bonds between citizens and promotes democratic discussion and political negotiation (Dahlgren, 1995; Barber, 1984).

For example, a significant segment of the disadvantaged classes in Jamaica have come to rely on the talk show as a reliable medium to announce their grievances, seek advice, give their opinions, debate the topical issues of the day, as well as serve as an outlet for their frustrations. From my own extended listening of talkback in Jamaica, particularly over the course of fieldwork and as a former producer of a talk programme, the issues most raised by callers range from government neglect of particular communities, reflected in complaints about bad road conditions, inadequate water or unreliable power supply, individual concerns over joblessness, education (high school fees, uniform, book and transportation costs) to domestic or relationship problems (cf. Clarke, 2002). Although, it is difficult to establish the instances where people's circumstances have changed and things have been done for both individual citizens and communities as a result of the exposure, intervention and advocacy of talk radio, there is a strong view among ordinary citizens as well as talk show hosts and producers with whom I spoke that a (more rapid) response from the authorities is more likely to be forthcoming when the complaints or criticisms of citizens are channelled through the medium of the talk show. My own experience in talk radio production and my empirical observation of the daily operations of talk shows bears this out.

As far as possible, talk show hosts will attempt to make telephone contact with the bureaucratic agencies or Members of Parliament and solicit official responses to the grievance of a particular community or network of citizens. The production staff (producers, researchers) have emerged as important brokers in this process as they largely assume the responsibility to alert the political representatives of the specific concerns of citizens, ascertain what progress is being made on resolving the problem, solicit a timetable for possible redress or, at the very least, elicit an explanation or apology to take back to the citizenry. This strategy of arbitration and intervention is established as a reliable and accepted technique to access the state. It is seen to work because the political leadership has tended, over time, to pay increased attention to radio call in programmes, especially at periods (such as elections) when citizens tend to channel their complaints more aggressively through this medium. This view is confirmed by a former political party youth leader:

> PN3: I know from a political perspective that political parties monitor the media, so when people call the media and they complain about something, especially if it is close to an election or leading up to an election period which I know that is the pet peeve. They are monitored, parties have 'war rooms' where people write down these complaints that come over the air and try to respond to them quickly. The word gets out to the MP if it is in his area or region or if it is a Parish Council (local body) election, he/she addresses the concern of the people so the media in that sense works.

In this sense, the radio talk show assumes a civic role – interest-articulation, representation and advocacy. Effectively eclipsing signing petitions or writing a letter to the MP or Parish councillor, it has really become a form of 'people government' for the Jamaican citizenry, appropriating unto itself the avenue of citizen oversight and redress, a means of popular participation and as a ready check on government (Munroe, 2002). That up to 100,000 people tune in everyday to listen to or to participate in a multiplicity of discussions, the majority of which are not ideological or 'big' subjects but specific issues and problems in their community, with the aim of building pressure on the state bureaucracy for action, suggests that radio is used very creatively and imaginatively in Jamaica. In fact, the very emotive and controversial nature of many of these discussions,

including the sheer venom which emanates from some callers, leads some persons to view talk radio as a necessary, allied element in protest. For example, the following perspectives from a political activist (PN27) and social commentator (PN29) indicate that the radio talk show serves as a sort of safety valve in that it counteracts the more vociferous, outward and direct forms of protest action:

> PN27: I am happy about the talk show phenomenon. Sometimes, I hear some people talk some nonsense on radio but I think it is a good safety valve. I think a number of people will go on the radio and cuss [curse] the government without any recrimination and the government is very tolerant in this area so they don't feel like they have to go to any extreme. So, a number of people, if that channel was not open to them, would be using that energy perhaps in a more negative way.

> PN29: One of the roles that I think the talk shows play is a vent, a steam vent for the society and in some ways their role is soporific [act as a tranquilizer] because they vent all this steam. At least a boy can call and cuss out [curse] the Prime Minister and cuss out the Minister and cuss out the police – if dem doan get a chance fe do that, dem we block road or lick dung dem pickney [if they don't get that chance to vent, they will stage roadblocks or abuse their children].

Henke (2004:121), although critical of Caribbean media's ability to challenge what he calls 'the hegemony of the ruling elites' legitimacy claims', confirms that:

> acrid radio call-in programmes highly critical of the government actually serve as pressure valves that allow the venting and releasing of psychological stress resulting from oppressive political and economic policies. In other words, at least in the medium term, the apparent criticism ultimately stabilises the very structures and societal forces it purports to undermine.

Based on talk radio's apparent cathartic role, it would appear that talk radio in Jamaica is emerging, at the very least, as a *potential* alternative to the roadblock. I say potential because talk radio remains, for all intents and purposes, a *complaining* option rather than an *enforcement* mechanism, although the two action strategies often tend to interact. Indeed, it is true that the political leadership pays close attention to the talk shows and is alerted to the grievances of their constituents but not with the same level of immediacy and its response is not with the same level of urgency. It therefore follows that if members of a community call the talk shows to discuss the problems they are facing and

no effort is made to resolve their issues, that call can and often does galvanize sufficient opinion within that community for the residents to take a more direct and drastic action. This is often mounting a roadblock or staging a street demonstration. The news media may then be alerted to this additional action. In this sense, the street protest provides fodder for the media while the media feed the protestors' concerns into the public domain and to the eyes/ears of the state bureaucracy. In other words, there is a symbiotic interaction between the different forms of accessing political attention. At the same time, while the radio talk show is being used inventively by Jamaican citizens to serve their needs and is proving to be a workable check on government within a context of declining political performance, its own inherent weakness as a civic conduit is becoming increasingly apparent. It is to the limitations of this medium within civilian politics that I now turn my attention.

### 7.5.1  The Limits of Talk Radio (as Civic Conduit).

The previous section revealed that Jamaican talk radio has emerged as a reliable conduit which bridges the gap between citizens and the state, allowed them ready space to engage with local and national issues and to vent their feelings about issues of concern to them. In this section, I argue for the limitations of this medium. To begin with, it is no longer true, as implied by the arguments of Jamaican talk show veterans, Barbara Gloudon and Ronald Thwaites (quoted in Clarke 2002) that *'the man or woman with a small transistor radio and a telephone'* can boast of ready access to the political authority. This is because a large majority of the people who are affected by the issues being discussed on talk radio and who are avid listeners to this medium cannot afford to call in to participate in the on-air discussions. Whereas a liberalized telecommunications sector has ensured that more Jamaicans have access to telephone service, the fact is that there are still many communities that do not have telephones as an accessible tool to call radio talk programmes to voice their opinions about the matters that are of concern to them. Of course, the cellular phone is available in a more widespread way and many Jamaicans now own a 'cellie' (some several).

Mobile phones are, however, largely confined to low-cost, (pre-paid) limited personal use and are not, in the main, a mass media tool for heavy interaction. In other words, the pre-paid user-caller to a talk show would have to ensure that he/she has adequate funding to talk at length about a problem and listen for appropriate responses. Without doubt, the cost of waiting in the 'on-air queue' to communicate with a radio talk host is prohibitive for many people, particularly those from disadvantaged inner city and 'deep-rural' communities. Given the extraordinary expense to the poor to participate in this public dialogue, it is therefore the members of the upper and lower middle classes who possess the economic means to call these programmes and who in reality possess monopoly control over political talk in this context. In fact, in the view of communications consultant and scholar, Dr. Hopeton Dunn:

> We have a lot of talk but a lot of people participate in that talk as listeners and the people who do the calling are sometimes people with either the means or the access to do so and they are sometimes participating in multiple inputs. So the same person may be calling two or three of the shows or the same person from a community with a phone may be doing all the calling for the community (PN7).

My research as a participant observer of conversations between citizens and the popular press reveals that the poor classes of citizens, particularly the less-literate from both rural and urban areas, disclose either an unwillingness or trepidation at communicating one-on-one with the media. This is because there is a widespread perception, real or imagined, among this sector that they do not possess the requisite eloquence, articulateness and intelligence to convey the nature of their concerns or to sustain the discussion with the talk show host[70]. The comment of this interviewee confirms this emerging problematic:

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[70] Given this otherwise oral and gregarious culture, this may seem paradoxical but the inclination for self-expression by significant segments of the Jamaican citizenry is (consciously) limited to unrecorded group story-telling. In other words, whereas citizens will boldly and self-assuredly express their opinions as a collective in a crowd, speaking individually, especially 'on the air' is still taboo for many Jamaicans. In short, the superimposition of a piece of (modern) technology (a recorder or television camera) upon an historical cultural retention (story-telling) not only creates a stilted conversation but, in a sense, robs ordinary citizens of the opportunity to speak candidly and unencumbered by perceived hegemonic linguistic and discursive rules.

PN5: I do a talk show and we are always looking for guests, always, but I don't necessarily want somebody on for more than two minutes who is screaming at me and not able to articulate the concerns very well. Now if you find a group, I don't care what it is called – Citizens for Justice, Citizens for Better Roads – and you have representatives who can articulate your concerns very well, I can tell you, as a talk show host, one who hosts and produces, almost certainly, I will be jumping with you. And if you have any kind of demonstrations, a peaceful protest but to highlight the issues further, that makes it more topical and therefore makes it more news.

There is a clear privileging here of and/or a preference for a certain kind of caller-citizen – those who are well-organized, intelligent, educated and clearly able to articulate the issues which concern them. It is also worth noting that some talk shows such as *The Breakfast Club*, hosted by former Jamaican first lady, Beverley Anderson-Manley, and former (Jamaica Labour Party) Government Minister, Anthony Abrahams, cater almost exclusively to a middle class audience. This is although they do make solid attempts to give voice to the concerns of inner city residents and sometimes actively assume the function of mediation in conflict situations[71]. Together, these developments suggest that any *'man with a transistor and a telephone'* is not, in fact, a real participant in the political talk or civic engagement being facilitated in this instance by talk radio. This is because his participation, as Dunn suggests above, is principally by listening. Talk radio, in this sense, is limited and under-utilized as a means of giving alternative voice to those who most require it. It is therefore my argument that although many citizens perceive and select talk radio as a viable channel for their protestations (if only by argument, debate and discussion), its monopolization by the more educated and affluent citizens,

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[71] A live discussion on the radio talk show, *The Breakfast Club,* on 16, April 2004, was interrupted by a female resident of the inner city who walked onto the set to complain about the personal threat to her life from ongoing war between criminal gangs from Arnett Gardens and Tivoli Gardens. The hosts immediately allowed the woman to detail her story, accepted telephone calls from other residents from the community who gave their versions of the events or refute the claims of the resident. Interestingly, the Member of Parliament for the South St. Andrew constituency in which the conflict was taking place, Dr. Omar Davies, who was in the studio on a separate matter, was also drafted into the discussion as a means of easing tensions and the emotions of the residents and, importantly, to allow the community an immediate response from their political representative. See *Breakfast Club* Archives, HOT 102 FM, April 16, 2004.

individually or through organized civic groups, renders the medium ineffectual as an avenue to serve the needs of the disadvantaged classes who most depend on its mediated facilities of interest-articulation, advocacy and participation. This development calls for critical theoretical stock-taking as to the real role and obligation of talk radio. If it cannot fully act as social advocate, can it then within its limited role to 'inform' and 'educate' (Clarke, 2002) serve to truly empower citizens, promote a civil discourse and improve the tone of civilian politics and the quality of civil society in contexts such as Jamaica? I seek to answer this question in the following section.

## 7.6    HATE RADIO? – TALK RADIO AS CIVILIZING DISCOURSE.

Whereas the roles of interest articulation, mediation, debate and advocacy assumed by talk radio in Jamaica have been incredibly helpful in bridging the gap between citizens and their government, my research reveals that there is a clear dissatisfaction among citizens about what they view as a preponderance of negativism, political partisanship and superficiality within the domain of political talk, as embodied in talk radio. The following perspectives sum up the prevailing view. The first is from an anthropologist (PN12), the second, a media manager (PN9):

> PN12: To be honest, I have stopped listening to talk shows because I want to maintain my sense of balance. I feel that talk shows de-spiritualize you. The talk shows respond to moments and by responding to moments, they trivialize life and issues and things. Very few of them seek to get deep down into the issues and they become self-serving. There is a way that many of them try to outdo the other and to promote their image, so they are not in it for truth or for service. I am turned off. I stopped listening, even to the good ones.

> PN9: I don't know if we could kid ourselves into thinking that they [talk shows] are advocates. Many times their role is to make money for whatever the station is. I think what some stations and some broadcasters go for – they don't want balance because balance is too ordinary, too basic, what they want is who will take a stick and pierce and pierce, you must be an agitator, go to the edge and irritate people and annoy the life out of people. And at the end of the day, people are listening because they are saying 'what is he gonna say today'. It [the talk show] is not for any other value other than the entertainment value. It is not really to inform. It is to entertain.

It is the perceived normalization and/or accommodation of an unconstructive brand of political engagement that renders talk radio, as a medium of popular participation and a platform for the reproduction and promotion of a civilizing discourse in Jamaica contentious. This expressed uncertainty and disaffection with Jamaican talk shows is linked to the imperative of global market capitalism and the consequent structural changes within the media industry, including commercialization, which has effected fierce competition among radio stations, thereby heightening the need to derive programming in line with the profit motive. The working of the profit motive in the hunt for audiences and/or advertising evidently holds huge consequences for media practice and media content, throwing into sharp focus the nature of mediatised talk and the quality of that talk in many political contexts (Bardoel & Haenens, 2004; Curran, 2002; Street, 2001; McGregor, 1996; Barber, 1984). In the case of Jamaica, Simone Clarke reproduces this political dilemma when she argues that:

> Money must be made to keep a radio station alive. The more stations that are born, the smaller the audience share becomes and the more drastic a [radio] station's means of trying to keep the audience that it already has. Programming figures highly in the bid to gain and keep audiences. Therefore, a station will air programmes, which it believes will ultimately translate to profit. Talk shows have the potential to gain revenue for [radio] stations, hence the bid for ratings, and the apparent emphasis on personalities that can out do each other in whatever way (2002:7).

Competition is indeed rife among Jamaica's 14 radio stations and the bottom line (profit) is what carries critical purchase for the elite owners and managers of the broadcast stations. Talk shows have been seized for their entertainment value, that is, profit potential, and as a result tend to occupy prime time programming on Jamaican radio. Although it is clear from the preceding discussion that talk radio remains a fundamental aspect of the broadcasting needs of Jamaicans, the dependence on profit quickly transforms talk radio into media events where the focal point is less about the quality of the political talk and the civic service on offer (advocacy, representation, participation) and more about the talk radio host. In other words, the success (commercial value) of a talk show, embodied in ratings and listenership, is largely pinned to the host's personality

and his/her capacity to hook an audience and sustain their interest. This increasing emphasis on the personality behind the microphone itself created a range of 'celebrity' hosts in Jamaica – Wilmot Perkins, Barbara Gloudon, Ronnie Thwaites, Winston 'Babatunde' Witter, Cliff Hughes, Antoinette Haughton-Cardenas, Christine Hewitt and Tony Laing – and the construction of a contemporary talk show genre predominantly characterized by the identifiable behavioural or character traits of its hosts - cheekiness, hilarity, cantankerousness, ill-temper, grouchiness, boisterousness or somberness.

Clarke (2002:13) uses the classic example of former talk radio host, Winston 'Babatunde' Witter to demonstrate the pervasiveness of the emphasis on the entertainment value of talk radio and the appeal of the host in Jamaica. She writes:

> He made the programme extremely popular with his almost dramatic presentation, and controversial nature, his seeming disregard for the government and his unpredictable behaviour. He was almost guaranteed to offend someone (whether a man in the street or a government official) with his outspoken style. However, his show was a huge success, perhaps in part because it was entertaining.

This appeal to the entertainment value of the talk show host makes it difficult to assess the genre as a collective but instead compels citizens to absorb and rate talk radio depending on the host and not according to the extent to which the medium opens the avenue for people to participate actively and fully in public discussions on the issues affecting their lives. This is not to say that it is the host which sets the agenda for discussion but he/she, by sheer personality, determines and controls the tenor of the discussion and quality of the political dialogue. It is therefore my argument that a civilizing discourse is hard to promulgate in a context of celebrity hosts, profit dependency and entertainment. That there has been a wholesale retreat from 'civic talk' is, however, difficult to argue. Not all talk show hosts are comics. Some have brought intellectual astuteness, depth and high levels of professionalism to their craft. Other programmes play it safe and stick to what they argue is media's overarching obligation – 'to inform and educate' (Clarke, 2002).

Whereas this is an obligation more akin to public service broadcasting rather than commercial operators, Radio Jamaica's twenty-year old talk back programme, *Hotline*, in keeping with their theme '*we are not just talk, we are substance*', essentially retains their original role as social watch dog and advocate for the disadvantaged (Clarke, 2002). Yet, admittedly, this is not the global norm for talkback. Talkback radio is not known for its civil discourse. For example, Barber (1998:115) argues that:

> Talk radio is loudly public without being in the least civil, though it is seductively entertaining. Unfortunately, its divisive rant is a perfect model of everything that civility is not: people talking without listening, confirming dogmas, not questioning them, convicting rather than convincing adversaries, passing along responsibility to others for everything that has gone wrong.

The overwhelming departure from healthy political debate and responsible civic dialogue on a significant number of talk shows is thus an emergent concern among significant pockets of the Jamaican citizenry and interestingly within the media community itself. Observe these perspectives from some radio talk show hosts:

> PN13: The people who host talk shows are dangerous people. They have too much power. You talk to more people than a Prime Minister ever does. By your tone, content, you sway lots of people. I am not saying people govern their lives by what they hear on the radio. I regret the intemperance but although I don't think any purpose is served by suffering fools gladly, the freedom and personal liberation that a person gets from being listened to is important and I am told of others [talk show hosts] who delight in scorning people and making them feel small. I really don't think that is the right way to approach it.

> PN23: First of all, they [talk show hosts] need to be informed, properly informed because too many people become talk show hosts without having the kind of background to take on the issues or to do the kind of continued reading and research to be current on the issues. I think that one of the biggest privileges you can have is an open microphone to an audience of so many thousands of your fellow citizens. It is an awesome responsibility which must be taken seriously and right now, I can't say that is being treated seriously.

These perspectives reveal an increasing discontent with the quality of the discussions engaged in by talk show practitioners. For instance, that some hosts are not seen to be

sufficiently informed about the issues suggest the working of imbalanced and distorted journalism in this domain. If inadequate or prejudiced information is what is available to citizens, then talk radio is unable to fulfil its utilitarian function of satisfying the needs of less-literate populations by supplying the kinds of informational resources which fosters civic participation and engagement and strengthens citizens' capacity to act collectively in constructive ways (Bardoel & Haenens, 2004; Street, 2001; McGregor, 1996; Dahlgren, 1995). That there is also an acute discursive (power) imbalance between the talk show host and callers, as evidenced by the following perspectives from a media manager, also impacts qualitatively on the political conversation.

> PN9: A call-in show is supposed to be about people raising their issues and the talk show host helping them to reason them through and helping them to seek solutions and providing the ears. But I think talk shows are too much about providing the 'mouth' and not the 'ears'. So you get more of the host's opinion. Sometimes it is not even a debate because if you listen to how some of the talk show hosts conduct themselves, they are not really open to others' opinions than their own and when they bring people in, it is either to ridicule them or to make them see things in their own way.

Indeed, one of the main points of appeal about the talk show genre has been its capacity to allow ordinary people to set the agenda, express their own views and gain access to the corridors of state power – a facility manifestly absent and confirmed as one of the causes for disruptive, violent protests in this context (see chapter 6). In other words, given that policy agenda-setting is generally the province of elites, this (Harbermasian) public space furnished here by talk radio is solidly important to the construction of real, participatory civil society in Jamaica. This is because it potentially permits the empowerment of ordinary and otherwise disenfranchised and powerless citizens, welcomes their public participation in governance and encourages them to collectively engage with others in the political community via this form of communication technology rather than hostile street protests and confrontations with the police. Indeed, talk radio, in this instance, demonstrates the potential to act as a sort of counter-hegemonic force capable of fostering Benjamin Barber's (1984) ideal conception of 'strong democratic talk'. In this ideal, talk is the principal institutional mechanism in which citizens can retest and repossess their

convictions; it 'immunizes values from ossification and protects the political process from rigidity, orthodoxy and the yoke of a dead past' (Barber, 1984:190).

This is not to say that there are not numerous examples of where this has been accomplished in Jamaica. Some talk shows do allow callers who are eloquent, well-prepared and attention-grabbing to dominate the airwaves, albeit briefly. Their point is carefully listened to and the host may even engage in a healthy debate or light political banter. Others even 'suffer fools gladly'. Predominantly, however, it is the opposite which is true. It is the host who largely determines the agenda and thereby control the act of political communication and civic dialogue. Consciously or unconsciously, by the sheer control of the public microphone, it is the talk show host who ultimately determines what is to be discussed, steers the tone and spirit of the conversation and retains the power to terminate the conversation at any time. My research reveals that some talk show hosts may, sometimes, elect not to engage in a conversation with a caller, choosing instead to merely acknowledge that there is a voice of a speaker on the other end of the line and then forfeits the call. Others may terminate a discussion as soon as the caller departs from sharing the perspective of the host. According to Barber's (1984:175) thesis:

> listening is a mutualistic art that by its very practice enhances equality. The empathetic listener then becomes more like his interlocutor as the two bridge the [power] differences between them by conversation and mutual understanding. Indeed, one measure of healthy political talk is the amount of silence it permits and encourages, for silence is the precious medium in which reflection is nurtured and empathy can grow.

By virtue of this reasoning, although it is the caller who raises the issues in the Jamaican context simply by calling in, it is the talk radio holds who wields power and exercises his/her judgment on what is said and how much. It is therefore how this power is exercised – autocratically or in a more consensual way – that is cause for concern. Whereas talk radio in the Jamaican context offers citizens some space for democratic participation, the scope and potential for reasoned discussion and meaningful exploration of social issues is sacrificed. This dilemma leads me to an equally problematic situation.

The historical political alignment of the Jamaican society into opposing political camps (Jamaica Labour Party and the People's National Party) appears to replicate itself within the talk show medium and reproduces dissonance rather than cohesion among civil society. Wittingly or unwittingly, talk radio has come to somewhat diminish the capacity of political talk to foster trust and horizontal civic engagement (see Table, 2.1, chapter 2) by engaging in political partisanship [72]. Note the powerful admission of this development by a social commentator:

> PN29: We live total politicized. We don't wait on elections to campaign. We campaign every striking day of every year, in or out of election. So we are a politically-charged people and we operate in that charge with all the passion you can attribute to a people. So dem [talk shows] also have a slant. [Wilmot]Perkins is tear dung [iconoclastic] and you don't expect him to ease up because him making millions annually tearing dung. How we gwine be passionate if we nah tek sides? That is why de people dem who call up pon issues so passionate because we are polarized. I have to race up [quarrel with] some a dem because the people align themselves behind them. Me no have no manners – me say 'buy air time, nuh campaign ya so' [don't campaign here]. Me even refer to them as talk show hacker and talk show virus.

That talk show hosts are seen to be partisan is problematic, especially in a context where there exists strong elements of political factionalism and violent political conflicts. My

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[72] An argument can be made that there is an apparent predominance of 'political personalities' (former Ministers of Government, Members of Parliament and/or political party leaders) as opposed to trained journalists on the Jamaican talk show circuit. For example, the reverend Ronald Thwaites, the host of '*Independent Talk*', was a Government Senator and Member of Parliament for Central Kingston. In fact, he carried on as a talk show host even while he was a member of the government. Jamaican Opposition Leader, Bruce Golding, was, up until mid-2004, the host of the radio talk show '*Disclosure*'. Antoinette Haughton-Cardenas, the former head of the United Progressive Party (UPP), is a former host of '*Hotline*' and '*Disclosure*'. This is while former Jamaican first lady, Beverley Anderson-Manley and former Jamaica Labour Party Minister, Anthony Abrahams, are the current hosts of the radio talk show, '*The Breakfast Club*'. It is this privileging of political personalities over and above journalists as talk show hosts, which underscores my description of the genre as 'media events' (events staged by and played out on the platform of media). This is although some talk show hosts are trained journalists. I make clear however that the analytic link I make here between the presence of former politicians within the domain of talk radio is merely a scientific observation and not meant as an indictment on the integrity of these politicians-turned-talk radio hosts, many of whom carry out their duties with unquestioned professionalism. However, the theoretical impact of their presence on the nature and quality of political talk is an interesting subject which perhaps warrants further research.

argument is that talk radio is unable to reproduce a civilizing discourse, aid in the resolution of social problems, foster horizontal networking among citizens and become a viable alternative to violent street demonstrations if it is seen to exploit the social and political divisions that exist within the wider society. Some interviewees, such as the following human rights lobbyist (PN22), put down the tendency to subjectivity and political bias within the talk radio domain to an intellectual lacuna and a tendency to bipolar thinking which translates very easily into the political sphere:

> PN22: There is a feeling that is developed in Jamaica where if you criticize the government, then you must be a JLP activist and if you criticize the police, then you must be anti-police. If you are defending people that the police kill, then you must be criminals. I think that that's a failure of intellect. That's the failure of logic and reasoning and that is a way we have fallen into thinking.

That this particular situation of political prejudice and subjective reasoning begins and ends as a failure of intellect is moot. Overt bias in public political talk is not novel. Nor is it a phenomenon exclusive to Jamaica (see Barber, 1998). In a world where *everything is political*, political bias is an almost inescapable reality. Even a cursory reading of Barber's (1984) thesis on political talk, including television and radio talk back programmes, will reveal that both television and talk radio hosts in many political contexts, including the United States, hold a very myopic view of the political issues and frame incidents principally in 'black and white' terms. It however becomes problematic in political contexts such as Jamaica, where there is a strong feeling that:

> PN9: we don't read, we don't listen, we don't fully log on to what is going on in the country and depend far too much on second-hand information such as that provided by talk shows to form our opinions and perspectives on political issues.

Given, as I argue before, the historically strong element of political factionalism and political party conflicts, the partisanization of (democratic) talk thus holds consequences which may progress well beyond the boundaries of mere discussion. For example, it has the potential to confuse political talk and set citizens against each other. In short, rather than bridge the sharp political and social divisions among the citizenry, talk radio, in this

context, may instead consolidate them. In this scenario, prejudiced political talk, whether premised on a failure of intellect or not, may thus incite open hostility towards the institutions of the state, as this example suggests:

> P23: I know of one instance where a talk show host actively encouraged the people to protest violently against the police. A particular characterization of the police was made. When a particular protest was taking place, the people were going after the police in exactly the same way the talk show host suggested and were using the same references that the talk show host had used to the police. I don't know if there can be any justification for the media encouraging a culture of violence or promoting deviant behaviour.

The artificial fomentation of civil actions against the state is clearly in radical opposition to the definition of a civilizing discourse (see Table 2.1, chapter 2) and, significantly, it is against the law. It is this kind of uncivil dialogue which reproduces a sort of Hobbesian disharmony within civil society. Indeed, Barber (1984:175) contends that 'speech in adversary systems is a form of aggression, simply one more variety of power. It is the war of all against all carried out by other means'. In a highly-charged political culture such as Jamaica, however, words can have what Barber calls a 'limited but potent magic to divide or to unite; and silence too has a magic, if only to soothe too-often iterated passions' (1998:186). Although some talk show hosts, by refusing to give air to hysteria and boisterous behaviours, are privileging a more structured, 'civilized' manner of channelling discontent, in the main, the genre has not yet itself developed a framework for the nurturing of a less provocative language than the one illustrated in the above example. What Barber (1998; 1984) is talking about when he discusses the power of the 'word' is the art of conversation, of finding a language that is broad, meaning in my view, not *overtly* partisan and inclusive enough to bridge conflicting perceptions of the world. These are the conversational skills which are needed in this context, not only by citizens who wish to be self-governing and participate actively in public discussions about the issues which affect their lives but by talk show hosts and media practitioners who subscribe to the view that the media is a commercial product as much as it is a public

trustee and thus support a role for the media in the construction and/or transformation of *civil* politics and a *civil* society.

## 7.7    SUMMARY

With the theoretical notion that politics is, for all intents and purposes, a *performing art* (Arendt, 1965), this chapter looked more closely at the performative aspects of popular protest, particularly through the lens of the Jamaican mass media. Based on the empirical evidence presented in this chapter, I draw the following summary conclusions. Popular protest and the popular media in Jamaica are mutually constitutive – each impacting on the power and functioning of the other in dramatic ways. For example, there is a mix of genuine grievance and pure histrionics within the domain of popular protest in Jamaica, and the news media (television, radio and to a lesser extent, newspapers) represents the platform upon which all of these performances (both civil and uncivil) are played out. It is evident that the strategies employed by the news media in furnishing coverage for popular protest and treating citizen' grievances have a direct causative impact on the nature of protest and the tone of civilian politics in this setting. Although the less educated and affluent protestors rely on and need the reach and clout of the television and radio media more to access their political representatives and to hold them to account, it is this disadvantaged group which suffers from *restricted access* to and unconstructive utilization of this domain. It is this inescapable interaction between citizen politics and media practice in this context which implicates the media in the collision between *civil* protests and the normative demands of *civil* society.

As I illustrated in Table 1.2 (see chapter 2), these are demands for legality as opposed extra-legality, 'strong democratic talk', embodied in democratic negotiation and political bargaining rather than malicious political banter and political partisanship. The attributes of a civil society also encompasses a certain degree of cohesion and trust among citizens, active interest and participation in public affairs as well as citizens who are kind, respectful, trustful and tolerant. Given the media's unique position in relation to citizens, its institutions cannot be merely detached bystanders but central actors in the

constitution of civil society. For example, both television and talk radio are undeniably potentially powerful mouthpieces of disadvantaged groups in Jamaica. Yet, it is clear from the preceding discussion that rather than oriented towards *citizens* and *citizenship*, the structural changes in the media world, such as commercialization and competition, have ensured that the style of broadcasting in which they engage is, at present, oriented towards *consumers* of television and radio programmes (Bardoel & d'Haenens, 2004).

This development, along with the absence of public service broadcasting in Jamaica, has made relevant the increasing demands for the social responsibility of the press. Using the Netherlands as their case study, Bardoel & d'Haenens (2004:170) use concepts of 'social responsibility' and 'media accountability' to refer to media's responsibility with regard to society, and 'responsiveness' to indicate the manner in which the media listen to and consider the public. Whereas media accountability also refers to the obligations and expectations that society has regarding the media, it is theoretically important to accept that a civil society cannot live by 'the press' alone. In other words, the many challenges to the building up of a truly participatory and functioning civil society cannot lie at the feet of the mass media alone. Walter Lippmann is correct when he declares that:

> The press is no substitute for institutions… Men cannot do the work of the world by this light alone. They cannot govern society by episodes, incidents and eruptions…The trouble lies deeper than the press and so does the remedy (1922:229).

There are several reasons for this. Firstly, as the preceding discussion tells us, the mass media are products of the societies and the cultures in which they operate. The media express the values and beliefs that most people hold in common, give voice to those differences of opinion and behaviour that characterize the particular society and draw upon the ideas, images and assumptions that are embedded in this cultural tradition (Curran, 2002). In this sense, the media are thus, inevitably, limited by the particularities of the political context and culture. Secondly, the economic imperative operative in the global media industry means that the public interests of the target audience are often sidelined while popular content takes precedence over quality programming. As my

preceding discussion illustrates, the Jamaican news media largely represent popular protest action in a way which makes it mostly dramatic for the viewer and while the drama intensifies, the issues of genuine concern to the actors become, in a sense, de-legitimized because greater room is given to the spectacle and less to channelling a community's discontent. Thirdly, journalists, though acting as the 'eyes and ears' of the citizens, do not necessarily boast a more pronounced sense of values than the average citizen (Bardoel & d'Haenens, 2004).

While this does not absolve media of their public responsibility or releases them from liability where the quality of coverage and treatment (of political events) is concerned, we are obliged to look elsewhere for explanations for the character of citizen politics in Jamaica. These alternate avenues of inquiry include the presence and influence of 'alternate sovereignties' (Mason, 2005) which are giving social basis to political order (and disorder) in some local Jamaican communities. Since it is within the context of the local community that the habits of civic engagement and civil society must begin, I wish to look at the existing nature and complexities of citizen governance here and the extent to which it proves to be a hindrance to the production of civil norms, and instead render the building and transformation of civil society potentially problematic.

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# Dons and Donmanship – Outlaw Governance in Civil Society

## 8.1    INTRODUCTION

> Where citizens will not act, bureaucrats and finally thugs rush in….
> When citizens are dispossessed of their power, or offer it up willingly, who will be left to rule but savants or thugs? And who can be surprised if the savants quickly come to act like thugs, or if the thugs claim they are wise men?
>
> <div align="right">(Barber, 1984:111)</div>

In this classic quotation, noted civil society theorist Benjamin Barber declares that where a vacuum exists within the arena of civic engagement, that is, when citizens decline to participate in real ways in the governance and conduct of their lives and communities, dubious actors with problematic goals will assume responsibility for governance. In this case, positive social capital formation will take a backseat to negative social and cultural norms while *uncivil* society will take precedence over *civil* society. This is the situation that Jamaica presently confronts. Although there are vast numbers of civic groups and community organizations in Jamaica (see chapter 1), structured civic groups engaged in organised political participation have, by and large, taken leave of this role, thereby giving way to loose episodic mobilisations of citizens violently demanding justice. This widespread withdrawal of official civic groups from popular participation means that Jamaican citizens are not only dispossessed of their power but, in Barber's most fitting expression, 'thugs claim they are wise men'.  Indeed, for close to fifty years, cunning figures called dons have positioned themselves as civic leaders, gaining both acceptance among Jamaica's poor urban communities and political recognition in the wider society. These dons have promulgated a systematic, coercive organization of the inner city community and installed a counter-hegemonic, executive-style bureaucracy and culture,

eclipsing any notion of *civil* community, *civil* politics, *civil* discourse or *civil* society in this spatial domain.

In this vein, social science scholars in Jamaica have been increasingly preoccupied with the emergence of dons and their significance for the public safety and security dilemma confronting the Jamaican State (Price, 2004; Harriot, 2003; Harriot, 2000; Rapley, 2003; Charles, 2002). Jamaica's dons are considered to be a prime example of 'rogue leadership' in the civil sphere. Rogue leaders in civil society evolve where and when the state is too weak, or too involved with other priorities to control the monopoly of violence and ensure good governance, safety and public order in everyday life (Johnson & Soeters, forthcoming). Within the global context, Jamaican dons are therefore not unique. In fact, powerful 'alternate authorities' exist within subcultures with their own norms and systems of governance in which they use illegitimate violence to gain power and exercise control of the everyday life and politics in their communities worldwide (see Mason, 2005; Soeters, 2005, Collins, 2004; Kaplan 2000; Strange 1996). These networks of outlaws are also naturally affecting aspects of statehood such as authority and legitimacy. However, the growing threat of the dons to the creation of a truly participatory, functioning civil society has, until now, been given negligible scholarly attention. In this chapter, I elaborate on the culture and political significance of dons and argue that the character of the social organization over which they preside handicaps *civil* leadership at the local community level, foregrounds *rogue* leadership and frustrates the development of *civil* norms and *civil* politics.

## 8.2    DEFINING A DON. CHARACTERIZING DONMANSHIP.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, several Jamaican artistes, including 'Tiger' (Norman Jackson), 'NinjaMan' (Desmond Ballentyne) and 'Supercat' (Wayne Maragh) released songs carrying catch phrase references to dons. Tiger, in *'Don is Don',* paid homage to egocentric Jamaican males, embellishing them as uncontested leaders in their individual circles and masters of various calling. In characteristic hubris, Supercat proclaimed himself a *'Don Dada',* a direct response-challenge to NinjaMan who had earlier declared

himself *'the original gold-teeth, front-teeth Don Gorgon'*. Culturally embedded in the everyday Jamaican vernacular, the term don became a comedic reference point among citizen-patrons of the Jamaican dancehall helped along by its widespread usage and constant citation in the popular press. Like many other slang coined by Jamaican deejays, the terms 'don' and 'donmanship' quickly crept into the national political lexicon. It is now widely established that the term 'don' was immortalized by Edward Seaga, former leader of Jamaica's main opposition, the Jamaica Labour Party. After reports of mutinous disaffection among some members of his party in the mid-1980s and paranoid about internal challenges to his leadership, Seaga publicly proclaimed himself the 'one don' of the Labour Party[73].

Today, however, the word 'don' is no longer the verbal narcissistic sparring of lyrical gladiators of the Jamaican dancehall. Instead, its current linguistic hegemony derives from its intersection with Jamaican politics and the shadowy figures prominent in the local urban community. Drawing explicitly on the idea of the Italian Mafia don or mob boss (affectionately called 'the godfather'), the concept 'don' in local Jamaican parlance is synonymous with masculine designations such as 'big man' or 'fada' (father). (In other parts of the Third World, the term used is 'dada' or 'bhai' such as in the Indian underworld and popularized in Bollywood films). These endearing titles are used to refer to individuals possessed of material wealth, popularity and influence such as entertainers, politicians, and drug lords. Although denoting affluence, rank and authority, a don is, however, not merely *'a person in charge'*. According to Price (2004:79):

> He is a self-styled, politically connected local leader who wields power, status and prestige derived from multiple sources and activities, legal and illegal and who

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[73] This paranoia about internal challenges to the leadership of the Jamaica Labour Party created an infamous rift between prominent party officials and the JLP's top hierarchy in the 1980s. The members who were deemed to have been disloyal to party leader Edward Seaga were later classified as the 'Gang of Five'. It is to be noted that the People's National Party also faced internal problems in the 1950s when party leader, Norman Manley expelled four of its members. For a detailed discussion, see Stone, C. (1992) *The Jamaican Party System and Political Culture*. Paper presented at Jamaica's 30th anniversary Conference. University of the West Indies, October 6-7.

assumes leadership over specific geographical areas called garrisons hence the current popularity of the title 'area leader'.

It is worthy of note that the appellations 'area leader' and 'don' are used interchangeably by Jamaican intellectuals, media pundits and citizens alike. Although the roles of each often collapse and become blurred, it is conceptually inaccurate to classify all area leaders as dons. It can neither be presupposed that all dons perform or even possess the capabilities to perform all the functions of an area leader. Indeed, some communities retain both an area leader' and a don, separate individuals who share governor-ship over the same area. Using the analogy of a Republic, the don, in such a case, is the 'President' while the area leader assumes a 'Prime Ministerial' role and is essentially charged with running the area's day to day political and 'diplomatic' agenda. A generally loose deployment of the nomenclature 'area leader' also presents both definitional and political problems.

Unmasking these analytic distinctions is significant in coming to terms with the nature of governance at this level. This is because *area leaders* were typically charismatic community residents with organizational capability and political savvy (Price, 2004). My research (interviewees) confirms that historically, area leaders were central participants and leaders in a wider structure of power within the urban area comprising a gamut of community-based organizations – youth groups, sport clubs, church groups, school and youth initiatives, neighbourhood watches, citizen associations and a multiplicity of informal networks and relationships.  Their leadership was hands-on and voluntary. For example, my interviewees identified as 'community leaders' individuals (such as school principals, pastors, policemen, elders, teachers, outstanding youths) who busied themselves helping to organize community activities, facilitate development projects, resolve citizen matters by giving advice, write letters to MPs, and complete application forms for government-assisted initiatives and, viz. a. viz. party officials and/or the Member of Parliament, make representations on behalf of the community to the state bureaucracy.

In other words, the emergence and prominence of an area leader required active participation in the community. On this account, these individuals engendered the respect of members of their community and, at times, wider recognition among civil society. Take, for example, this characterization of an area leader by this police officer:

> PN16: When I was growing up, there was a little man called 'Corpie' [alias for Corporal] who was the man in charge of the local police station. In fact, he was in charge of the whole area. What I observed was that the parson, the head teacher, the Mayor, the MP, the nurse, the teachers, all the prominent persons, including ordinary people, were respectful to this man and whatever he said, people accepted his recommendations. He was the type of man people would have gone to for advise in a particular area, whether they were going to get married, if they wanted to buy a car, if they had problems with selling their farm produce, they would have asked the policeman. I also observed he was well-spoken, his IQ was high, he was well-associated and so people sought him out.

Some of these traditional area leaders remain locally recognized and continue to play vital roles in citizen activities and initiatives. Their previous political influence and capacity to engage with and impact on the community have, however, diminished substantially, having been outstripped by a new kind of leader who is equally legitimate in the eyes of many in the community. It is this new area leader who is called 'don'. According to Charles (2002: 41):

> He is extremely wealthy and has a welfare system, is politically connected and protected, has the organized support of a large section of the community and a security structure, comprising gangsters, robbers and shottas (shooters) to defend his turf and power.

At work, then, at the citizen level, particularly in urban Jamaica, there appears to be a pair of competing community-based political systems. The first of these governance systems is headed by traditional community leaders and may be classified as a 'government of the civil community' (GCC). The second system of community governance, by virtue of being run by dons and outfitted by gangsters and robbers, can be regarded as an 'uncivil community government' (UCG). I look first at the GCC (See Figure 8.1 below):

**Figure 8.1. Government of the Civil Community**(GCC)
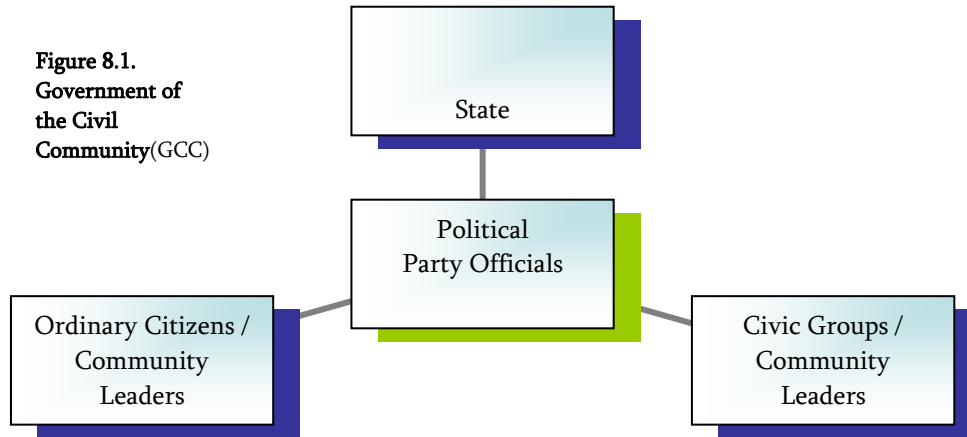
This governance structure, which I label '*Government of the Civil Community*', is characterized by a fairly horizontal distribution of citizen groups and loose networks of citizens. A quick survey of this type of community will reveal large networks of citizens involved in sports associations such as football, basketball and netball clubs, religious groups, charitable organizations, cultural groups, vendors and consumer groups as well as a range of civic organisations. Indeed, research confirms a density of some 5,700 such community-based organizations, most of which are located in rural communities (See Box 1.1, chapter 1). It is important to note that it is among these horizontal groupings that the politically efficacious and civic-minded individuals that people view as the area leaders usually emerge and within which their civic activities are most visible. It is also crucial to note that in the GCC, political representatives and political party officials are positioned at the centre, indicating its (mediating) link between the community and the state bureaucracy. The state is located hierarchically to citizens in this figure in order to demonstrate what Orr (2004) calls the top-down approach to governance (see chapter 5, section, 5.1). However, eclipsing this political system, particularly within the urban slums, is an *'Uncivil Community Government'* (UCG) headed by dons. Figure 8.2 below illustrates the pecking order here.

**Figure 8.2.**
**Uncivil Community Government (UCG)**
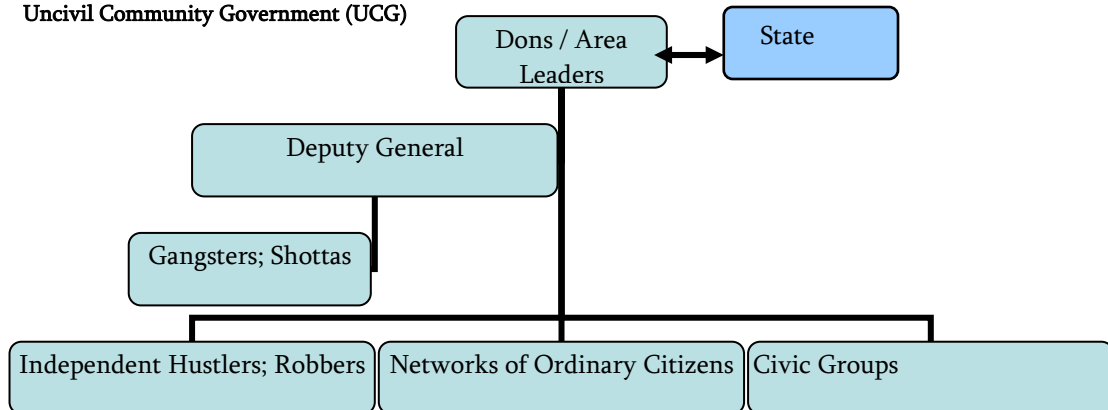


In this '*Uncivil Community Government*', it is outlaws and rogues which dominate the structure of power. It is to be noted, however, that gangsters, robbers and 'shottas' (shooters), although crucial members of the don's vast governing network, fall at the lower end of a rigid hierarchical chain of command. Recent estimates suggest that there are some 85 active criminal gangs operating in inner city communities across Jamaica, a considerable climb up from 35 in 1994 (*The Jamaica Gleaner*, 2004, October 20). These shottas and gangsters are also not to be misconstrued as dons because they engage solely in acts of urban crime and generally do not possess the enormous wealth, political clout and other trappings of the don. Many ambitious shottas, however, aspire to occupy the envied role of don or area leader, leading at times to infighting and power struggles within the zones under their control. In the case of the death of a don and vacancy in the leadership structure, a new command structure displaying fundamental changes is likely to occur[74]. The state, rather than hierarchically positioned above this power structure, is located alongside dons. As I will illustrate in the following sections, the Jamaican state is both a contending and intersecting force viz. a. viz. the dons. Indeed, it is the symbiotic relationship which the Jamaican state has historically fostered with outlaw authorities which has informed the development of donmanship and ensures its persistence.

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[74] See Mills, C. (2001) 'Death of a Don'. In *The Jamaica Gleaner,* May 20. Available at: http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20010520/news/news2.html See also Charles, 2002; *Radio Interview, HOT 102 FM,* 2004, April 16.

It is this latter structure of leadership, the UGC, which has commanding influence and control of many slum communities in urban Jamaica. The analytical distinction between these contending citizen-type political systems is therefore significant because it demonstrates the radical transmogrification that has taken place in the structure of civil leadership at the community level, particularly in urban Jamaica. The spirit of this dilemma is captured here by a social commentator who grew up and still resides in the inner city:

> PN29: You always have somebody [in the community] where if you have problem, a dem you go to, country, town, everywhere and is usually with the backing of the people because that person usually deal with justice. Now we giving people title that they neither earn nor qualify for. Is not every little hurry come up fellow who bad up some old ooman or some jubby in a community is don, how don reach deh so? So is foolishness that we unto now where we say don fe every likkle bway who run up dem mouth. So you have man who a don and him control one light post pon a corner. Rubbish! Talk bout a likkle #@@@!!!* bwoy who go jail two time and talk bout don, don what? This caption of the don is fraudulent. It is put out there to abuse genuine community leaders.

> (*There is always some one in the community in the event that if you have a problem, you consult them, whether it is in a rural area or the city and it is usually with the support of the people because that person will treat all situations fairly. Now we are giving people title that they neither earn nor are qualified for. It is not every immature man who bully or assault elders or females in a community are dons. How did donmanship become like that? So it is foolishness that we are unto when we call every little boy who displays intimidation and toughness a don. So there are now men who are dons who only control an electricity pole on a corner. That is rubbish. You are talking about a boy who have gone to jail two times and he calls himself don, don what?*).

The angst of this resident is accordingly over the waning importance and recognition of the original and bona fide area leader as well as dismay at the foregrounding and growing appeal of petty bullies in the local community. While, as I will argue in this chapter, there is an unmistakable distaste for dons and their reign among significant sections of the Jamaican citizenry, this tacit acknowledgement and acceptance of them, especially among poorer groups, illustrates the extent to which outlaw modes of governance and uncivil politics have been institutionalized in the urban slum. This development itself

signals a fundamental departure from the contemporary normative notions of the role of community in governance. This nature of community is crucial because it is, after all, the starting point of any *polis*. Stone (2002) argues that a community must have a membership and some way of defining who is a member of the community and who is not. In this sense, membership definitions and rules determine who is allowed to participate in community and who is governed by community rules and authority (cf. Hay, 2003; Whitehead, 1997).

Stone maintains that since neighbourhoods have no formal rules limiting who may become a member, the determination rests with the extent of mutual aid among members, that is, whether they share bounty and pool resources. She also establishes a model of the *polis* in which communities have 'some stake in preserving its own sense of order and fair play' and 'a general interest in having some governing processes and some means of resolving disputes without violence' (2002:21). Although Stone here is properly referring to the larger political community, these characterisations can also easily apply to the politics of the more localised districts and neighbourhoods where citizens reside. Stone's (2002) thesis appreciates the importance of citizen governance as embodied in the local community. However, in order to understand the nature and enormous political significance of this new community leadership installed in Jamaica, which I have labelled 'rogue', and how it has come to occupy such a central place within civilian politics, it is important to examine its earliest trajectory.

### 8.3     JAMAICAN DONMANSHIP – EARLY BEGINNINGS.

Prevailing political scholarship (Price 2004; Rapley 2003; Figueroa, 1996; Charles, 2002; Stone, 1980) links the advent of a culture of donmanship to Jamaica's volatile 1980 General Elections, thereby assigning it a life span of some twenty-five years. However, long before the watershed national elections of 1980 catapulted members of Jamaica's criminal underworld into political significance, cunning figures were already building political alliances, positioning themselves as civic leaders and cementing their place among the structure of leadership of local urban communities. Obika Gray (2003), in an

intriguing historical account of the careers of some of Jamaica's most notorious gang leaders, identifies Claude Massop, George 'Feathermop' Spence, Winston 'Burry Boy' Blake and Dennis 'Copper' Barth as among many professional criminals who rose to prominence in the slums in the early 1960s. On the basis of their individual pursuit of social honour, material betterment, and attainment of political clout, heroic status and folk following among the so-called lumpens in the slums, these extra-legal actors are the most evident precursors to the present cohort of dons and the entrenchment of a new kind of leadership and organization in urban Jamaica.

It is worthy of note that all this was happening within the context of international developments such as the American civil rights movement and the rise of 'Black Power', intense student protests and other social movements. The era also coincided with nationalist movements at home and across the Afro-Caribbean diaspora, which culminated with Jamaica's independence in 1962 as well as the increasing popularity of Rastafarian culture and religion as well as reggae. Reggae itself was disseminating a message of hope and resistance to oppression as embodied in the institutions of 'Babylon' (Chevannes, 1995). Independence in 1962 symbolized a significant break from a colonial past and prompted the search for political identity and self-actualization. It was also a time when new economic expectations clashed with political reality. Despite sustained economic growth between 1962-1972 unemployment, poor housing and extreme poverty characterized the life of the majority at the bottom end of the Jamaican society (Kaufman, 1985; Stone, 1980; Manley, 1974). Crime thus became instrumental to the survival of the poorest. Indeed, the term 'rude bwoy' (boy) came to characterize members of the Jamaican lower class who were totally disenchanted with the ruling system and who resorted to criminality for economic survival. Brandishing ratchet knives, machetes and later guns and explosives, the rude bwoys created large and small gang networks and participated in extreme acts of violence and banditry.

Their deprived social status not only justified their bitterness and fury against the social system but elevated them as (extra-legal) symbols of emerging subaltern power throughout Kingston's ghettoes in the 1960s (Gray, 2003)[75]. The immortalization of a 'rudie culture' throughout the 1960s and 1970s, however, saw violence also being employed as an instrument of political protest. In this sense, criminality jelled with politics as thugs became political enforcers and contractors and in the process gave new shape and definition to post-independence political organization in Jamaica's poor urban communities. For example, slum dwellers closed ranks around either poles of the Jamaica's political divide – the socialist-oriented People's National Party (PNP) or the right wing Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) and behind politically-recruited rebel leaders (Gray, 2004; 2003; Rapley, 2003; Charles, 2002; Figueroa, 1996).

This 'tribal' politics encouraged in the slums a sort of 'top ranking' leadership comprising those who were able to gain promotion to the ranks of political enforcer and acquire the requisite political clout and protection. Gray (2003; 2004) argues that popular gunmen such as Claudie Massop and Winston Blake became distributors of state largess, hold contracts on state construction projects while remaining brutal partisans in political wars and staunch defenders of clearly delineated sections of the urban landscape. While they were clearly tied to the political party structure, these political mercenaries did not belong to a centralized community leadership structure. Indeed, the absence of a centralized community structure within Jamaican slums for 20 years (1960-1980) promulgated a sort of 'clan-based' structure of power run by different gang leaders as discussed below.

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[75] The 'rude bwoy' networks of this era included gangs such as Vikings, Culbert, Spanglers and Salt City. The 'rudie' culture was however entrenched and popularised through the lyrics of Jamaican musicians. For example, Prince Busta's '*Al Capone*', 1967, Derrick Morgan's *'Rudies Doan (Don't) Fear*', 1967, Desmond Decker's, *'Shanty Town 007',* 1967 and Supercat's *'Ghetto Red Hot'*, released as recently as 1992, reflected an explicit awareness of the rude bowy reign and, in instances, a celebration of rude bwoy justice (murder, banditry). For a detailed commentary on 'rudie culture', see White, Garth (1967) 'Rudie Oh Rudie'. In *Caribbean Quarterly* 13 (3).

In a fascinating discussion on the logic of clan politics, Collins (2004:226) maintains that as informal social organizations, clans usually affect social conflict and order in developing societies because they 'vie for power to set rules'. Although there are distinctive and fundamental theoretical and political differences between clans and criminal networks (such as Mafias), they both foster dynamic interdependent relationship with the political system which allows them access to institutional channels of survival and political clout. They also assume patron-client relationships within their sphere of influence which legitimizes and consolidates their power. It is this sort of arrangement which confer Jamaican dons with much credibility and power within the local urban community. Of course, the gangs' capacity for murderous brutality and enduring reputation as (political) mercenaries also cemented their authority within the social space of the ghetto and their hold on civil society. It is this metamorphosis in the socio-political dynamic of local community governance which paved the way for the consolidation of a notorious dynasty of dons, markedly altered the notion of civil leadership and ruptured the basis for the contemporary proposition of 'governing through community'. I now look more closely at the current existing manifestations of rogue rule in urban Jamaica.

## 8.4    THE 'PRESIDENTIAL'[76] RULE OF GARRISONS

> Willie[77] [Haggart] was a *Godfather* to the youths in the area. He helped to send a lot of kids to school, he had businesses, him employ youths from the area, and he was involved in contract work which helped nuff (a lot of) unemployed man get jobs [my emphasis].
>
> (Mills*, The Jamaica Gleaner,* 2001, May 20 ).

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[76] I use the term 'Presidential' here to make reference to the style of leadership installed by rogue actors within the Jamaican slums, the level of political clout which they possess and the nature of the authority they wield in this domain. I also use it here as a pun to play on the designation used to refer to the current don of Tivoli Gardens in Western Kingston.

[77] Willie is in reference to William 'Willie Haggart' Moore, the deceased area leader of Lincoln Crescent, a community located in the political constituency of South St. Andrew. Haggart was attached to an inner city clique called 'Black Roses Crew'. He was murdered on April 18, 2001, reputedly by members of rival gangs.

> A don really and truly is the government around here. Take for example Tivoli [referring to a West Kingston community] and Dudus [reputed don of Tivoli] – rape, no, we don't work with that around here; robbery, no, we don't work with that, those kinds of things. Everybody just meet under *one order* and those who come to upset that *order* – well, you have to make up your mind. The sheriff [referring to Dudus] is in town (emphases are mine) (PN31).

Not unlike the *Godfather* of Mafia culture, Willie Haggart (alongside his counterparts Zeeks and Dudus – a.k.a. 'The President') exemplifies the cadre of prominent citizens who emerged after 1980 with menacing authority in several Jamaican inner city communities, some of which have acquired the notorious label 'garrisons'. To fully comprehend the new style of community governance they enacted in the context of Jamaica's highly charged political culture, one must first come to grips with the emergence of alternate sovereign spaces or autocratic sites of socio-political action as embedded in the whole garrison phenomenon:

> A garrison is a political stronghold, a veritable fortress completely controlled by the dominant [political] party. Any significant social, political, economic or cultural development within the garrison can only take place with the tacit approval of the leadership (local or national) of the dominant party. The garrison is therefore in its extreme form a totalitarian social space in which the lives of those who live within its boundaries are effectively controlled. Indeed, the core garrisons exhibit an element of extra-territoriality, they are states within a state (Figueroa, 1996:05)[78].

According to Gray (2003:13), these rigidly defined geographical zones, popular among them Jungle, Tivoli Gardens, Rema, Payne Land, Jones Town, Grants Pen and Backbush, had their fateful beginnings as early as the 1940s when Jamaica's two principal political parties, the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) and the People's National Party (PNP) 'recruited ruffians, worthies and other notables from the ghetto as partisans for their [electoral]

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[78] Figueroa (1996; 2003) makes a useful analytic distinction between communities which are becoming increasingly 'garrisoned' and constituencies which have become less 'garrisoned'. Here, he highlights the distinction between a garrison community and a garrison constituency, where the objective is to control electoral outcomes and not so much the social space. For a more detailed explication of these distinctions, see Figueroa (1996) 'Garrison Communities in Jamaica 1962-1993: Their Growth and Impact on Political Culture'. Paper Presented at the symposium, *Democracy and Democratization in Jamaica: Fifty Years of Adult Suffrage*. University of the West Indies. 1994, December 6-7.

cause'. The presence of dons and the impact of garrisons on Jamaica's political culture, however, intensified (and was 'officially' acknowledged) nearly 50 years later, after the volatile 1980 general elections left 800 Jamaican citizens dead during the campaign period alone. Current scholarship (Gray, 2004; Price, 2004; Rapley, 2003; Charles, 2002; cf. National Committee on Political Tribalism, 1997) openly links the formation and institutionalization of garrison communities to the drive by politicians assigned to these belts to win elections and guarantee the continued electoral loyalty of voters. According to the dynamics of the politics of patron-clientelism (Stone, 1980), the construction of large scale housing solutions was the irresistible offer to inner city residents as barter for their electoral and political support. This vote-seeking through resource distributions became an ingrained aspect of Jamaica's political culture, driven by the systematic and strategic dispersal of state-sponsored largesse (money, contracts, land and jobs) in a discriminatory and politically partisan fashion within the inner city.

This political strategy, usually employed by the Member of Parliament to augment his or her party's support base and mass appeal, was designed to keep party supporters faithful and/or entice rival supporters to switch allegiances. Of course, it was to area leaders (dons), who had, by this time, formed themselves into the core political leadership and organization at the community level (and hence the civic liaison between citizens and the state) that Jamaican politicians delegated the functions of encouraging voter loyalty and unseating opponents. In explicating how the system works, Price (2004) and Charles (2002) argue that state funds are often discharged to dons under the guise of initiating development projects such as house building, restoring derelict state properties, school repairs, renovating sidewalks, drainage and gully cleaning and sometimes the staging of 'community' events such as dances. In other words, to ensure that their respective parties 'hold the cash cow over the next few years' (Rapley, 2003:26), dons enforce territorial, electoral and political allegiance on those domiciled within garrisons by employing violence, intimidation and fraud.

In return for constructing communities and constituencies which are essentially homogenous in their overt political behaviour, a don secures for himself legitimacy, prestige, status, wealth, and assurance from his political patron of protection from the law (cf. National Committee on Political Tribalism, 1997; Stone, 1980; Figueroa, 1996). Indeed, so intertwined within the fabric of Jamaican politics and society had rogue actors become that, in recent years, high-ranking Ministers and political officials were to be seen in attendance at the funerals of prominent dons, some of whose memorial services received official state authorization to be held at the National Arena, a recognized venue ordinarily reserved for public events (Ritch, 2001).

Many scholars today fasten the garrison phenomenon to political factionalism, radical changes in the nature of electoral contestation and, in recent years, to the transformation of the structure of crime in Jamaica. In the latter case, the local police are reputed to be in collusion with dons and thus turn a blind eye to banditry and narcotics trafficking (Rapley, 2003; Figueroa & Sives, 2003; Harriot, 2001; Figueroa, 1996). Donmanship and garrisonization, however, hold a more far-reaching consequence. They have ushered in a new quality of local governance and an entirely new character to citizen engagement and interaction at the community level. This is because while access to state power and social recognition conferred dons with enormous influence in the ghetto community, it was their financial independence, brought about by global capitalism, which heightened their hegemony over the social space, allowed them room and resources to posture as 'civic' leaders and the power to impact on the tenor and conduct of civilian politics and consequently on the possibility of civil society. In other words, the story of the ascendancy of rogue actors to the ranks of political and economic elites must necessarily begin with global economic liberalization and the economic policies of Structural Adjustment imposed on Third World governments. As I argued in chapter 5, these policies, which demanded strict fiscal discipline, led to a severe contraction of the Jamaican State, particularly after 1980, drying up the funds used as purchasing power by political patrons (see Rapley 2003; Charles, 2002).

Criminal exploits, particularly within the context of an emerging 'informal or hustle economy'[79] became a viable option for many area leaders. By also employing similar economic organization and effectively replicating the criminal tactics of the globalised Mafia, Jamaican dons are today multi-millionaires, accumulating significant wealth from three broad streams of organized crime: a) illicit trafficking in narcotics, guns and contraband, b) money laundering, fraud and reinvestment of illicit profits into the formal economy, and c) extortion, especially the skimming of public works contracts, illegal gambling and burglary (see Johnson, 2005; Johnson & Soeters, forthcoming). Like the Mafia, extortion is big business for Jamaican dons. It is a critical mainstay of their capital base, pulling in an estimated yearly income of up to J$400 million [4,787,175.23 EUR; 6,066,580.72 USD], and it provides steady employment and income for the generals and shottas (shooters) in the structure of command (Mills, 2000; Henry, 2000; cf. Johnson & Soeters, forthcoming).

The politics of extortion is analytically significant as it provides a window to the dons' economic power and makes clear the fundamental role it plays in their control of the social space. The highly organized and flourishing extortion scheme in urban Jamaica is most acute in the Red Hills Road and business district areas of Downtown Kingston. Extortion is often disguised as a form of civic enterprise, a 'charity' or 'community development effort' where monies are demanded 'to assist the youths in the area' or youths who are in prison, but ultimately it involves the collection of 'taxes' (cash or merchandise) from merchants, market higglers and street vendors. Street vendors are forced to pay up to J$500 [6 EUR; 8 USD] weekly while larger retailers can be charged as much J$40,000 - $50,000 [479 – 598.23 EUR; 607- 758.23 USD] monthly (Mills, 2000,

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[79] My discussion in chapter 6 explores the informal economy at work in Jamaica. In conceptual terms, the 'informal economy' represents the whole complex of income-generating activities that are under-regulated/ unregulated by the institutions of society in a legal and social framework in which similar activities are regulated. (cf. Portes, A. et al., (Eds.) (1989) *The Urban Caribbean: Transition to a New Global Economy*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press).

*Jamaica Gleaner*, September 1). It is also masked as an 'unofficial' security industry, whereby money is paid for the protection of municipal buildings and private businesses by higglers wishing to lessen the propensity of being robbed. The depredations of the dons within some sections of the urban landscape is directly connected to the viability of such extra-legal enterprises as extortion and drug trafficking. Conversely, extortion remains lucrative as a result of an amalgam of political realities.

In a fascinating exploratory piece on business ethics and the problem of extortion in Jamaica, Charles (2003) argues that the extortion industry has the tacit support of Jamaican State and business persons, from whom monies are being solicited. His research shows that the Jamaican government, through the established municipal authority, Kingston and St Andrew Corporation (KSAC), often disbursed hefty sums of up to J$3.1m [35,912.78 EUR; 45,499.36 USD] to dons in 2001, to undertake the refurbishing of markets in the Downtown business district. In other instances, they are contracted to arrange the security detail for the markets, construction sites of development projects and/or assist with the relocation of vendors in the Kingston Metropolitan Area (KMA) at a bi-weekly cost of half a million dollars. Local council revenue such as that accrued from the 'rent' paid by motorists for public parking spaces also rests in the pockets of dons (see, Charles, 2003). These illicit practices have become entrenched because the dons ensure compliance by vandalizing, burglaring or killing those unwilling to abide by the rules of this extra-legal economic system. A total of ten business men were killed between 1993 and 2003 for refusing to comply with the demands of extortionists (see Charles, 2003; Mills, 2000, *Jamaica Gleaner,* September 1; Henry, 2000, *Jamaica Gleaner,* 2000 January 31)[80]. That some business owners therefore see 'paying protection fee' as a minor sacrifice to secure their livelihood and life underscores the stranglehold that dons have over the local economy and an implicit acceptance of the rule of the don (see Henry, 2000, *The Jamaica Gleaner,* January 31).

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[80] For detailed analysis on the politics of extortion and its impact on the business community in Kingston, see Charles, C. (2003) 'Business Ethics in Jamaica and the Problem of Extortion by Counter-Societies'. Unpublished Paper. City University of New York.

These developments are crucial because they represent the circumstances upon which dons capitalized to consolidate their fortune and form a critical watershed in their rise to the ranks of the 'landed gentry' in the ghetto and uncontested power holders within the civil sphere. In other words, with extortion and narcotics trafficking reaping billions of dollars for dons and state resources and patronage experiencing severe decline, Jamaica has, over time, witnessed the progressive rise of dons and a corresponding shrinking of the relevance of the state and the rule of law within the balkanised innercity (see Rapley 2006; 2003; Gray, 2004; Munroe, 1999). Within the context of this kind of garrisonization of the urban neighbourhood, one is in effect, a prisoner, a hostage to the don.  I look briefly at how this system of (outlaw) governance works in the following section.

## 8.5    IN THE COURTYARD OF DONS

Having established that the hierarchical structure of governance installed in garrison communities mirror the highly centralized nature of state power, I now go further to argue that the sketch of the patron leader under the Jamaican state/party system also goes a long way in understanding the type of leadership being unmasked by Mafia dons. In an elaboration of Stone's (1980) thesis on patron-style leadership Meeks (2000:108) asserts that:

> The party boss or maximum leader is like a feudal monarch surrounded by a nobility who grow or diminish on a scale of elite power depending on how he chooses to bestow favour. The maximum leader is able to keep the party together only if he exerts personal authority over the party. The effective maximum leader can never be openly challenged, has the final word on the most critical decisions (unless he chooses not to exercise that power), and is entrusted with the power to determine policy and the overall direction in the party. Maximum leaders who show signs of indecisiveness, weaknesses and lack of control invite challenges and lose credibility because the role of maximum leader is defined in the political culture as demanding strength, appearances of personal domination and decisiveness.

Community donmanship represents the ghetto's version of a feudal monarchy. Here, the maximum leader (monarch) is the don who is surrounded by a handpicked band of elite generals and shottas (see figure 8.2 above). The exception, which carries significant

purchase in the conceptualization of 'rogue leadership', is that unlike the party boss, the don is neither bounded by legality, human rights or the rules of democratic participation. He may instead traverse between the realms of legality and extra-legality according to his own whim. Like the global mafia boss or Meek's (2000) party boss or maximum leader, it is the don who takes critical decisions concerning the running of the community. These include its guiding principles, laws and rules and the penalties for breach of those rules; the staging of events and implementation of development projects. Retaining control over ready militias and large criminal organizations, dons usually have a personal stake in successfully defending the community from rival political or criminal gangs and protecting its members from the police and punishment from legitimate state authority (Rapley, 2003; Charles, 2002; cf. Johnson & Soeters, forthcoming).

By recycling some of the proceeds of their criminal work, dons have also effectively delegated to themselves the state functions of 'welfare' within garrison communities. From organizing 'bashment' bus rides and beach trips, dancehall sessions and kids' treats to paying tuition fees, buying school uniforms and books as well as providing employment to youths, the civic-charity of the Jamaican don is undeniable. The benefits of living under the rule of don are not necessarily manifested individually. One gains simply by being a member of a particular community, participating in its activities and accepting its norms. These benefits include living in a government house rent/mortgage free or without a registered title to the premises and never having to pay electricity or water bills (Price, 2004; Rapley, 2003; Charles, 2002; cf. Johnson & Soeters, forthcoming). The dons' legitimacy also derives from constructing and maintaining strong community bonds and affective ties among the membership of this sphere. Indeed, the violent protests staged on behalf of Mathew's Lane area leader, Donald Phipps (a.k.a. 'Zeeks') in September 2001 were motivated, in part, by the strong emotional attachments and sentiment that residents felt towards him. This was expressed in genuine fear of his potential mistreatment in detention by the police (see chapter 6, section 6.6.1).

The strong affinity and support for dons is depicted in the following image, which shows two inner city women at the post-riot preliminary hearing trial of Zeeks wearing T-shirts carrying the phrase *'Zeeks Experience Makes the Difference, Father of the Inner city'*:
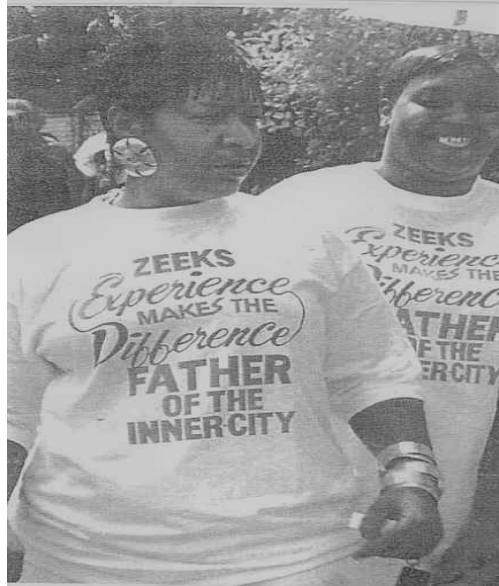


Source: *The Jamaica Observer*, 1999, October 7, p. 3

Undoubtedly, a part of this affinity stems from the don's personal affluence and his capacity to extend welfare to members of his community. It is to be noted that conditions of squalor, unemployment and profound material deprivation characterize garrison communities, thus intensifying the needs of residents for protection and economic security. An awareness that these benefits may only be derived from their patron-client contract with dons forces some slum dwellers to exclusively depend on handouts and to become fiercely loyal to the proverbial hand that feeds them (Charles, 2002; Johnson, 2005; cf. Gray 2004). Undeniably, the dons' establishment of a social safety net within garrison communities has widespread support among poor and dependent marginals as well as within some section of the wider civil community. This remark from a popular player in Jamaica's music industry, in fact, extols the social welfarism of dons:

> PN14:  There is a place for them [dons]. I am not condoning illegal activity but if a man finds himself with some money through whatever means and is prepared to help the less fortunate, I would encourage that. There is a lot of poverty around and when one lends a hand, we should say thank you to them.

I maintain, however, that an account which focuses on a sort of 'Robinhood'-style dispersal of largess by dons within the inner city is analytically lopsided. This is because the don's wealth is largely for his own material betterment and is a powerful tool for buying loyalty and support (cf. Charles, 2002). The impoverishment of the garrison resident in this sense counter-poses with the wealth of the don, creating a political friction where the capacity to provide some form of welfare is employed as a powerful strategy of keeping the marginalised in check. Since this wealth is accrued through illegal means, a don also has a personal stake in defending the community from rival political and criminal gangs. They also place a high premium on protecting their members from capture and punishment from the police as well as from the inquisitive rummaging of journalists and researchers. Indeed, even the *attempt* to interview garrison residents for this study came with a forewarning to seek the approval of the leadership. Through this remarkable coalescing of circumstances, dons inevitably assume a more comprehensive and all-encompassing role in the spaces they inhabit. The state is seen as an enemy encroacher whereas justice, security of person and property and the preservation of order, (central elements of a strong state), have become crucial obligations of the garrison leadership. Foremost on the political roster of this alternative government is social arbitration and/or dispute settlement. Rather than to the legitimate state authority, embodied in the police, crimes are reported directly to the don. Disputes over social interactions, financial transactions and domestic relationships are mediated and settled personally and according to the entrenched norms and rules of the community. For example, as one insider of the inner city told me:

> PN24: If you check Jones Town, Tivoli Gardens, Arnett Gardens, Hannah Town, you find that if a resident dies, then there might be some sort of a raffle held to determine who should get the house which is left behind. There are times when the dons arbitrate in this matter. If there is a family member living in the community and he has children, naturally the house will be given to the children but if he alone lives there, the house will be handed down, whether you like it or not, to anyone who need it more. So sometimes there is a jostling for tenancy. The community often respects the decision and the decision is final (cf. Rapley, 2003; Charles, 2002).

Unlike the slowness of law enforcement and the elusiveness of justice in mainstream society, justice in the garrison is swift. My findings coincide with those of Rapley (2003) and Charles (2002), which suggest that a sort of 'street corner court' (otherwise called a kangaroo court) is usually established in which dons assume twin roles of judge and jury. In this fabricated judicial system, a chicken coop is used as a holding cell where the accused is detained while the don adopts the police function of investigator. The individual is then tried and invariably found guilty. Punishment is the task of the lower command of shottas. Severe infractions such as theft, rape and disobeying or 'dissing' (disrespecting) the don often attract a severe beating or the death penalty. Although manifestly tasteless and extra-legal, it may be ill-advised to proclaim that this kind of vigilantism does not offer some form of justice to the community. Indeed, for some residents, community dons are instrumental people in engendering 'civility' (PN15) amongst the people. The self-styled gangsters I interviewed for instance maintain that:

> PN31: Everybody just meet under *one order* and those who come to upset that *order* – well, you have to make up your mind. The sheriff [referring to the don] is in town (emphases are mine).

It is this kind of recognition of the rule of law as implemented by dons, a ready acceptance of their extra-judicial rulings and the widespread perception among subaltern groups of the effectiveness of dons at maintaining order and dispensing justice that some scholars draw on to make debatable claims that 'garrisons are among the safest communities in the country' and that 'life for most garrison residents are refreshingly crime free' (Rapley 2003:28). Inner city women undeniably champion this alternate judicial system because they tend to the most vulnerable to criminals and rapists and are often spared the lengthy investigations and trauma that attends the formal legal system (cf. Rapley, 2003; Charles 2002; *Radio Interview, HOT 102 FM, 2004, April 16*). It is worth reiterating here that high levels of corruption within the Jamaica Constabulary Force as well as persistent reports of police brutality and excessive use of force has not only sullied the credibility of the police in the eyes of the Jamaican public but consolidated the rule of dons.

For example, some constables have become major players in the international drug trafficking industry while an implicit, sinister covenant appears to have developed in some urban communities between the police and dons (Johnson, 2005; cf. Harriot, 2000). Former Senior Superintendent of Police, Reneto Adams, acknowledged this extraordinary situation when he argued that 'every police station has a don in close proximity as if they are a contending force. Some have control over the particular stations and its members and I have problems executing my job consistent with the law in these in these circumstances' (Henry, 2002, *Jamaica Gleaner*, January 31). Indeed, it is now established that 'provided the dons preserve order within the community, the police will turn a blind eye to the drug trade' (Rapley, 2003, p. 28).

This brand of community leadership, however, disguises a more ambivalent and menacing reality. Although it retains the confidence of some constituents, this type of 'jungle justice' is not always equitably distributed or executed. For example, it does not apply to the dons or his generals. Our research reveals that although the dons, in the main, protect women from rapists, they can and do arbitrarily select women for sexual relations and, in some cases, oblige mothers to tacitly barter their daughters during negotiations of economic assistance. Further, communities such as Tivoli Gardens, headed by self-styled don, 'Duddus' (a.k.a. 'the President'), may therefore appear crime-free only because it is run under a contrived style of community bureaucracy which the shottas I interviewed label *'one order'*. I say contrived because the term 'one order' or 'oneness' is customarily used by the Jamaican Rastafarian sect to refer to an atmosphere of 'peace, love and unity'. *One order* is, however, transliterated in the context of the garrison to suggest the military-like imposition upon the community of a similar kind of pact. According to the unwritten, non-verbalized rules of this 'peace pact', acts of deviance are perceived to be an affront to the don and his governorship and are hence avoided. In this sense, the reverence in which community members hold the don serves as a ready deterrent to crime and maintains order. Residents, in other words, respect the don and largely display a willingness to abide by the community's rules because behaviour is regulated through force and the threat of force (see Johnson & Soeters, forthcoming).

Additionally, the long-standing phenomenon which I describe as *Informer Phobia* (IP) ensures that the community remains hostage to the rule of the don. Operating in like fashion to the Italian Mafia's '*omerta*' (silence), IP is a less visible but a most potent governing tool in the arsenal of the Jamaican don. Informer-phobia is a fear of providing or being perceived as providing information to state authority, particularly the police and increasingly to journalists. Extra-legal activities often go unreported because there is a real fear of reprisals against persons who provide information to the police. Being murdered or 'burnt out' through acts of arson are the manifest consequences of choosing to 'inform'. Abetted by the cultural censure of the act of 'informing', embodied in the lyrical output of many Jamaican entertainers[81], informer-phobia covers conversing (personally or via telephone) with a police or visiting a police station as well as the very act of getting involved in the legal system. This can range from being a witness to a crime, giving statements to the police, pressing charges, assuming jury duty or attending court to give testimony (Johnson & Soeters, forthcoming; cf. Phillips, 2004). Given the deep and abiding mistrust of the police by poorer groups within the innercity, the refusal to provide crucial information to the police may also be viewed as a powerful weapon of resistance by the poor and disadvantaged sectors against an oppressive state order, embodied in the security forces.

Of course, informer-phobia can equally be viewed as a collective resistance by a significant segment of the Jamaican society to the institution of law and order as well as a defiance of civil society. That some citizens are finding covert and creative ways of giving information to legitimate authorities and sometimes openly demonstrate an opposition to extra-legality suggests that informer-phobia may not find enduring roots in this context. This passive and/or everyday form of resistance being undertaken by some garrison

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[81] Jamaican artistes have helped to sustain the negative connotation attached to the act of 'informing'. Lyrical refrains such as *'through (because) you chatty chatty, me cyaan (I cannot) live in peace, every little thing you run gone to police'*, '*All who no like informer, put up oonu (your) hand, all a (of) de gunman dem'* and *'Man fe dead, we nah save no lead, gunshot fe buss up in a informer head'* [A man should die, we are not sparing any bullets; gunshots must burst an informer's head] reflect the cultural distaste for and hostility towards 'informers'.

dwellers suggests that not all residents subscribe to or are committed to the so-called 'one-order' theme and some admit that it does not extend to all communities. My own visit to a garrison community during fieldwork and my informal (unrecorded) conversations with garrison residents confirm that the principle of *'one order'* is installed and adhered to selectively. For example, in order to alleviate my misgivings about my safety in the area, garrison members offered me firm assurances of personal safety and the security of my property. However, when I inquired as to the safety of property and persons of citizen-residents of rival communities, no similarly explicit assurances or pledges were forthcoming. It seemed clear that the local leadership forbade deviant acts in the community but tacitly allowed its perpetration in rival communities. My interviewees, including those who verbally champion the strength of the *'one order'* rule, suggest that there is clear evidence of duplicity and contradiction in the modalities of community government installed by rogue actors in Jamaican urban communities. These perspectives are embodied in the remark of this University student:

> PN20: From my view, its [donmanship] kind of two-way. One, you hear bout a don man and you think say boy him is de one anyhow a community shot up another community, he has got to be the one instrumental in that incident. That is what you think because he is supposed to be running the area. At the same time, if there is peace and civility, then you also think that he is the one responsible fe all a dat. Me don't know how to separate them.

In well-publicized instances of upsurges in criminal activity, deviant actions are perpetrated by guardians of the (imposed) *'one order'* system in rival communities and by those mounting strong resistance to it within their own communities (PN31). Many gangsters and shottas operate independently (carrying out small acts of robbery, pick-pocketing etc). Their non-alignment to particular camps or their fluid movement between different gangs therefore predispose these communities to intense conflict. In these instances, gang warfare between rival communities can become so intense that it destabilises the area and so dons are called upon to broker peace and ensure political stability. For example, in 2002, after outbreaks of violence, PNP-allied Mathew's Lane area leader, Donald Phipps ('Zeeks') along with his counterpart from the JLP-aligned

Tivoli Garden's, Justin O'Gilvie, ('Dudus') jointly declared a cessation of violence and offered guarantees that 'nothing more would disrupt commercial activities in Downtown Kingston for the rest of the year'[82].

Together, these circumstances suggest that the 'refreshingly crime-free' social climate that scholars such as Rapley (2003; 2006) speak so highly of is, in reality, engineered, precarious and for all intents and purposes, transient. Governance, as well as civil society, presupposes and requires the activity and freedom of the governed (see Table 2.1, chapter 2). With the extraordinary power of these alternate (lesser) authorities and the quotient of fear (of the don) at molten levels within the garrison, one gets the sense of a community in which behaviour is managed, directed and conducted in such a way that the 'governed' effectively becomes 'passive objects of a physical determination' (Burchell, Gordon & Miller, 1991:119). How does this level of control and manipulation of large segments of the urban community by rogue actors intersect with the otherwise expressive and dynamic nature of citizen mobilisations and protest? I answer this question in the following section.

## 8.6    ROGUE INFLUENCE IN POPULAR PROTEST

The problematic presence and encroachment of dons within the informal sphere, particularly their menacing authority and totalitarian governance of many urban communities, hints at the powerful hand that they also wield in the management and performance of civilian politics in this context. Indeed, the argument has been made throughout this chapter of the powerful influence of dons in the electoral process – their long-standing capacity, through fraud, intimidation and violence, to construct politically homogenous communities where residents vote en bloc for (and remain loyal for life to) the same political party. The role of rogue actors in popular grassroots mobilisations and protest is no different. In fact, one of the central threads running through grievance

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[82] For a full report on this peace agreement, see *Jamaica Gleaner* (2002) 'Dons vow to maintain peace'. November 19. Available at http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20021119/lead/lead2.html

politics in Jamaica is the uncompromising deployment of violence and other extremist tactics, which in many instances, (though not always) are associated with the troubling participation of rogue actors – gangsters, robbers and shottas. I highlighted in chapters 6 and 7 the highly publicised instances in which these extra-legal orders, as a part of their contributions to everyday protest and resistance campaigns, engage in open clashes and warfare with the security forces. The 1999 Gas riots and the 2005 nationwide consumer price protests, for example, featured extensive incidents in which criminal actors exchanged gunfire with the police, set ablaze police stations as well as military and police vehicles.  Likewise, during protests in 2004 (February 14) over an alleged 'police killing', a two- hour gun battle ensued between the security forces and armed criminals. The presence of rogues in *civil* protest in these circumstances is problematic because of their deleterious impact on the temper and tone of popular citizen action. The following quotation is a recollection from a journalist covering this February 14, 2004 protest event:

> PN24: The situation was extremely frightening to say the least. I covered that demonstration and the police had to stay 200 feet away and watched, effectively allowing the people to torch police vehicles, destroy the [Denham Town] police station and to vent. How did that demonstration end? Two persons came – the Member of Parliament for West Kingston and the don for Tivoli Gardens – Dudus. This is known, this is public, within minutes of being spoken to by Dudus first and then Mr. Seaga, the crowd disappeared. Scores of students were out, practically the entire school. The Ministry of Education was silent on the matter and no student was made accountable for the actions that day.

It is the intense manipulation of citizen-residents of the slums by dons, particularly the strategic use of this incredible sway to 'buy' alliances and support for contradictory causes as well as coerce aggressive citizen mobilisations which is my focus here. In order to come to terms with the politics of donmanship, specifically as it relates to the abuse of the democratic tools of citizen mobilisation and protest in Jamaica, it is important to reiterate that dons preside over whole communities which effectively live beyond the state and the law and, as such, participate in a range of extra-legal and clandestine activities that require community complicity, consent, cooperation and cover. Popular protest has emerged as an important apparatus in this regard.

How do dons influence popular protest in these contexts? My interviewees (reporters and gangsters) confirm the working of what I will refer to as the *'buy a crowd'* phenomenon in social protest. This is where dons orchestrate or contrive a protest action with the assistance of a 'rented' crowd. Their overall objective in citizen mobilisations is often to shield themselves against state (police-military) incursions on their turf, to mount resistance against rival gangs or political adversaries and to defend persons who run afoul of the law. Paradoxically, far from what the term 'buy' or 'rent' suggests, potential protestors are not in actuality paid. They are instead rounded up and ordered to come onto the streets in protest. In many of these cases, protestors are forced to display manufactured hostility against police on behalf of fellow generals or shottas who may have been detained, shot or killed. According to one interviewee with inside knowledge of the workings of garrisons:

> PN24: These people who are shot are no angels. The truth is that they are known gunmen and known criminals in their areas but they are members of their areas and usually the persons who round up the people to go out and protest are usually cronies of the gunmen and these are the persons who are feared in the communities. Residents therefore have no choice but to go out and protest. A lot of times, they are not in support of the gunmen but they are doing it out of fear.

The dons in these instances become invisible but coordinate the action through a deputy or a hireling on the lower rung of the command structure. By his absence, the don not only escapes the public spotlight and eludes punishment but the impression is given that the protest is a legitimate disquiet by residents over, for example, controversial police action. It would also appear that the protests are operating without organization or leadership when, in actuality, it possesses a distinct leadership with an unmistakable agenda. The dons, through their generals and hirelings, in other words, know when the protest will start, how it will proceed and when it will end. The violent street protests often carried out by slum residents over police brutality and by informal traders in resistance to the state's vendor relocation exercises (see chapter 6) contained instances where citizens are driven to act in defiance of the state and to contribute to non-purposive and uncivil collective action (see Johnson, 2006; 2005). Such is the powerful

impact of dons in determining the tenor of popular citizen action that members of the state, in April 1999, reputedly called upon the dons allegiant to the ruling government (People's National Party) to ensure that the nationwide demonstrations over fuel taxes did not engulf the garrisons of Downtown Kingston. They did not. The dons had apparently offered the state that guarantee. They kept their word (see *Jamaica Gleaner*, 1999, April 27).

This is not to say that everyone protests reluctantly. My interviewees suggest that while many residents are coerced, there are instances where it would appear that the citizen-residents of garrison communities are willing participants in hostile mobilisations and protest. These residents, according to one journalist with extensive experience covering incidents within the inner city, 'do not have to be forced as strongly' given the distinct contempt for the police in this context and because 'they are willing to live with the fear [of the don] once they become a beneficiary of the don' (PN 24). The September 1998 protest over the arrest of Mathew's Lane don, 'Zeeks', is one instance which saw citizen-protestors of the ghetto in ostensible and calculated alliance with shottas armed with AK 47 and M-16 rifles. Likewise, during the July 7-10 police operation in West Kingston, shottas were reportedly able to both attack and elude the security forces thanks to the cooperation of these urban marginals, a strategic coalition which saw women and children using their bodies as shields, to protect rogue actors from the law and aiding their escape (West Kingston Commission of Enquiry, 2001; cf. Johnson, 2005; Charles, 2002). Similarly, the citizen protests over police brutality which followed this joint police-military operation were largely seen to be orchestrated by dons with the seeming complicity of citizen-supporters of the Jamaica Labour Party, who felt that the state, through its police force, had singled out for attack a JLP-aligned constituency (see chapter 6 for the details and perspectives on this incident). Nonetheless, it is worth noting that there is a significant cluster of persons who live within the spatial milieu of dons and criminal gangs who are genuinely and strenuously opposed to any form of criminality and are generally not supportive of dons or donmanship.

These persons come out in protest, in part, out of fear for their lives. Significantly, viz. a. viz. this set of citizens, Jamaica may be witnessing the emergence of a new dimension to this kind of protest politics, perhaps a new style of resistance. This is embodied in the ingenious ways in which certain groups are taking tiny steps to resist and confront the hegemonic order of fear imposed by dons. My discussion with the police (PN16) and some senior journalists (PN24) reveals that, like everyone else, some residents come out to protest when ordered and behave as emotional as the next person but often discretely beckon to the police that the person on whose behalf they protest is in fact a criminal. Protest in such instances becomes a foil, a unique technique of combating informer-phobia and to assist lawful slum residents to reclaim dominance over their collective body. But such cases are rare and cannot stack up against the mountain of hostility that still abides for the police among large contingents of the disadvantaged class. Indeed, as I noted above, very few people are still prepared to give official statements to the police in the capacity as eyewitnesses to crimes and, in the cases that they do, going to court and delivering evidence formally is incredibly problematic.

Of course significant elements of the wider Jamaican working and disadvantaged classes are huge supporters of efforts to rid their communities of extra-legal actors. Whether embodied in civic initiatives such as marches, prayer vigils and crusades organized by the Church, covert attempts to provide information to the police or the lyrical output of reggae and dancehall entertainers, there are always people who try to escape the don's reach and power. Moreover, Jamaican women (especially within the context of the historically-significant accession of Jamaica's first female Prime Minister, Portia Simpson-Miller) are becoming a force in themselves, raising their voices, also against criminality and injustice, and gaining power in popular street mobilizations as well as in the political arena (see Myers, *The Jamaica Gleaner,* 2004; Johnson, 2006; Johnson & Soeters, forthcoming). While impoverishment and fear keep some women trapped in the situation of being economic clients of patron-dons and filial bonds prevent others from assuming the much desired *anti-don* stance, the evident courage of women in the face of real danger may contribute to real changes in the status and authority of dons in the country.

## 8.7 'TO BE OR NOT TO BE'? – A PLACE FOR DONS IN CIVIL SOCIETY

Based on the evidence presented so far on the power and influence of dons within the local community, it is fair to argue that an approach to community governance which de-emphasizes freedom and which runs counter to the rule of law negates the real meaning of civil politics and does not advance civil society. At the same time, dons are no ordinary citizens. That masses of people, including Ministers of Government, popular entertainers and other celebrities turn up at National venues for their funerals when they die and that they are able to provide welfare, broker peace and control citizen mobilisations speaks volumes about their standing and status. But whereas a considerable segment of the Jamaican citizenry acknowledge (albeit reluctantly) that on this basis, Jamaican dons have become active participants in civic and community life, they also concur that these alternative authorities are not legitimate civic actors and therefore cannot retain real membership in civil society. The following represents the observations from a female entertainer (PN28), Jamaican Minister of Justice (PN8); a male radio deejay (PN 14) and a police officer (PN16) on the issue:

> PN28: Community dons need to stop believe the hype that dem get. Me nuh rate no don because my idea of a don or an area leader is one who supposed to set an example in him community where youths a pick up a gun, him tell them to put it down, where youths a follow him because him a set an example, not an example to say him is a thug and you can kill and rape a Mandeville but you don't do it in Spanish Town because Spanish Town is your turf. So if an area don a go tell me say his idea of being a don is to cause no war to go on in his area but war [going on] around a next man area, him can go way [bugger off] as far as me is concerned. Him not contributing positively.

> PN8: No, they [dons] are not a part of civil society, no, no. They are part of the citizenry. No, no. If they are dealing with criminal activity, they are abhorrent to the very spirit of togetherness in the society. Of course, it may very well be that in community development, they can play a part in the sense that, if they are willing to use the community process to get away from what they are doing, then I can support it. But if they are going to be out there on the other side of the law dealing in gangs and drugs and pushing protest, I cannot agree.

PN14: There are involved in extreme cases of wrongdoing and that cannot be encouraged. A don to me is not a person who kills people but that definition has changed.

PN16: No sir, there is no place in civil society for them. The only place for them as far as I am concerned is in jail.

Civil society scholarship must therefore confront the following questions: Can dons really belong in a classification of civil society which demands attention to legality, non-violence and positive social capital? Are rogue actors to be accepted as legitimate purveyors of civil leadership as few of my interviewees suggest (PN14 in previous section; PN15 and PN31)? Part of the challenge with reconciling the politics of donmanship and the desire for civil society in Jamaica (which is reproduced in the perspectives above) is that dons have assumed a dual role in the society. In many cases, they demonstrate important leadership qualities and engage in a variety of useful civic ventures (sports, cultural activities and community development projects) which, ostensibly, foster community cohesion, spirit and improvement. Since they also live among fellow citizens in communities and are, at times, equally affected by the problems plaguing the inhabitants, dons may be inclined to take on the same causes and concerns. However, rather than influence the grievance process and lobby for causes that are in the interests of the wider society and community, they more often than not give voice and action to protect their own narrow self-interests and largely in a manner which assumes violence as a natural route and remedy to the community's concerns.

At the same time, most dons engage in and/or undertake activities (extortion, drug trafficking, murder-for-hire) which are categorically criminal, the proceeds of which are used to extend benevolent activities as social welfare to the community. They also indulge in dubious politicking and employ crude mechanisms in order to enforce the rules of the community over which they preside. In this sense, dons attempt to traverse the boundaries between legality and extra-legality even while they interweave within civic spaces and install superficial elements of responsible leadership. In so doing, they contribute to the building of both positive and negative social capital. As I argue in

chapter 2, the positive attributes of social capital are those elements that strengthen community ties, facilitate collective action and civic engagement and promote social values of trust and norms of reciprocity. On the other hand, the negative attributes of social capital refer to social problems such as crime and anti-social behaviour (Paldam & Svensden, 1999). This renders the assumption of a (civic) role by rogue actors inconsistent and hence suspect. In this regard, they must be considered peripheral to civil society. In short, to be *civic* actors and to proclaim *civil* leadership, there must be a perception or affectation of legitimacy and no intersection with crime.

## 8.8    SUMMARY

This chapter underscored the point I first made in chapter 5 that the very presence of rogue actors in society poses severe challenges to the authority of contemporary (developed and developing) states. The nature of their activities underscores the present national security and personal safety dilemma many now confront. Based on the preceding discussion, it is also apparent that the encroachment of these actors on communities, their capacity to interweave themselves within social spaces and traverse easily between the boundaries of legality and extra-legality is also now a fundamental anxiety for civil society. In the case of Jamaica, local community governance structures and authority systems remain crucial to bolstering civil society and providing a ready base from which civic interaction, engagement and negotiation at the grassroots level can be encouraged. Indeed, a tight communal solidarity and inter-community cohesion is already evident in many of this country's urban areas, a boon for the building of a truly functional and participatory civil society (see table 2.1, chapter 2). At present, however, this communal solidarity appears to be highly strategic and situation-dependent. For example, whereas it offers the opportunity for the poor to act collectively in situations that they seem unjust, inter-community cohesion also serves, at times, to rally support for defiant dons and area leaders and to provide shotta commanders safe havens against the police. Residents also live in circumstances where it is impossible to have a neighbour with a different political affiliation, stage social events without the consent of dons and interact normally with the police, therefore mocking the real meaning of solidarity.

Since the presence of civil liberties (freedom of assembly, expression and movement) as well as citizens being respectful, trustful and tolerant is fundamental attributes of a civil context (see Table 2.1, chapter 2), the feudal submissiveness and fear which is engendered in the domain of dons betrays the very meaning of civil governance. The kind of authority encouraged within civil societies and in support of grassroots democracy is not imposed top-down which consenting behaviour then ratifies. It is a socio-political relationship based on shared interests, norms, identities and ideas, continually being produced and modified through the everyday actions, shared expectations and causal logics of individuals and communities (Mason, 2005:48). Based on the empirical evidence presented, the political atmosphere in which dons reign does not allow for this. Instead, it attracts hostility, fosters extremism and nullifies genuine attempts at collective deliberation, negotiation and the autonomous engagement of citizens for common, non-partisan action.

It is important to reiterate that this does not to ignore or undermine relevant phenomena such as renegade popular action undertaken by residents to express alienation, anger and frustration with the condition of their lives (Gray, 2004). But by virtue of the often 'manufactured' emotion of some ghetto protest and its execution on a foundation of fear (of the don), it makes for fraudulent civic action. It is for this reason that despite possessing an obvious leader/negotiator (dons) and a political agenda (daily survival, employment, proper housing), residents of the militarized garrison communities lack the opportunity for genuine civic engagement through which to collectively and legitimately voice and resolve their dilemmas at a political level. By retreating from (and in many cases forcibly denied) the values, norms and authority systems of the wider state structure and trading them for those of lesser authorities, a large contingent of garrison dwellers have shelved their political rights and misused their civic power. The result has been a widespread normalizing and acceptance of a range of negative attitudes, values and behaviour norms, including the gamut of extra-legal activities, aggression and a belief in the right to live free of accountability to laws and norms and other trappings of modern social control. These developments therefore give justification to Benjamin Barber's

(1984:111) powerful observation quoted at the beginning of this chapter. In Jamaica, the vacuum left by a retreating state, which often wilfully and short-sightedly courted 'thugs', has resulted in the entrenchment of extra-legal authorities in the form of dons. These dons exemplify the failure of civil society in Jamaica. Left unchecked, donmanship will ultimately de-legitimise the institutions of the state, thereby leading to anarchy and collapse. The response of the state to this spectre of chaos is crucial[83].

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[83] Of significance in recent times has been the arrest, imprisonment and successful conviction of some of Jamaica's most notorious 'mob bosses' and warlords. For example, in 2005, leader of the infamous Gideon Warriors Gang, Joel Andem, who held prominent status on the police's 'most wanted' list for over a decade for numerous crimes, including murder, was sentenced to thirty years in prison. This is while his co-leader, Kevin Tyndale was condemned to 90 years imprisonment. Likewise, in 2006, Donald 'Zeeks' Phipps - don of the Mathew's Lane community and a high-flying henchman of the ruling People's National Party – was tried for murder, found guilty and sentenced to thirty years in jail. At the time of writing, extradition proceedings were also underway for two other Jamaican crime lords, named by the US Government as major 'drug trafficking kingpins'. Also noteworthy is that of a total of twelve criminal organizations targeted by crime fighting organ, 'Operation Kingfish', seven have been completely dismantled – the Klansman and Mathew's Lane gangs, traditionally allied to the People's National Party; the One Order Gang associated with the main opposition, the Jamaica Labour Party as well as the One Ten, Top Road, Ryan Richards and the Steve 'Mop Head' Halliman gangs based in Kingston. Other gangs have experienced severe disruptions in their operations due to successful policing (*Jamaica Observer*, 2005, November 13). These are positive developments, giving new fillip to the desire to reduce the hold of donmanship in the Jamaican society. For a detailed analysis of these recent developments, see Johnson, H. & Soeters, J. 'Jamaican Dons, Italian Godfathers and the chances of a 'reversible destiny'. Forthcoming, *Political Studies.*

# Protest Politics: Assessing Response, Impact and Outcomes

## 9.1 INTRODUCTION

Are belligerent protests, embodied in the Jamaican roadblock-demonstration effective? This question is a fundamental one which must inevitably be posed and answered because it collides with what we learned (seemingly conclusively) in chapters 6 and 7 – that Jamaican citizens protest in largely hostile ways or are likely to favour extremist tactics on account of their perceived effectiveness in eliciting the attention of an otherwise unresponsive, aloof and neglectful state. The answer depends fundamentally on what constitutes an effective protest action. In the context of this study, it would appear that to be considered effective, popular protest action is obliged to successfully solicit attention, provoke the desired interventions and/or wrest concessions from the state. Do antagonistic protests elicit desired outcomes for the protesting groups? Is a protest action necessarily effective once it achieves these positive outcomes? Put another way, ought citizen' protest that is deemed effective hold benefits only for the protesting group and not be concerned with the implications for civil politics and civil society more broadly?

Questions concerning the efficacy of the existing model and the social, economic and political costs it exacts must be raised and answered if citizen action is not to be discounted as merely anomic disorder requiring suppression. This chapter thus aims to examine the possibilities and limits of the existing model of protest politics in Jamaica. This will include an examination of the existing response of the state to popular protest using specific case examples, the role and impact of politicians and political activists on the tenor of popular protest as well as the worth of the existing approach to citizen protest and political negotiation. Since protest here cannot be uncoupled from the performance of the Jamaican state, it is important to briefly reiterate the intersection between the state and collective action, including popular protest.

## 9.2    THE STATE AND POPULAR PROTEST: TARGET (AND ALLY).

In chapter 5, I discussed the interdependency between the state and civil society. The centrality of the state in popular citizen protest and resistance campaigns is nothing new but historically linked to the process of state building. Tarrow (1994:72) explains that 'as the activities of national states expanded and penetrated society, they also caused the targets of collective action to shift from private and local actors to national centres of decision-making'. The national state, in other words, not only centralized the targets of collective action, it involuntarily provided a fulcrum for pressure on the state. Hence, through petitions, public meetings and demonstrations aimed at the state, disaffected groups with claims against others had an alternative to attacking their enemies directly. They could use the state to mediate conflicts with those they opposed. In both developed societies and especially in little known places in the periphery, it is, however, the state which remains the predominant target for citizens' claims. This is because it is the state, through its legal, fiscal and regulatory environment, which establishes the broad parameters in which civil society and can exist and operate. It is the state which lays down the rules of the game within which protestors manoeuvre, so much so that if they choose to break those rules they are likely to encounter punitive action from the police or the armed forces (Jasper & Goodwin, 2003:257; Mbogori & Chigudu, 1999). It is also through elected representatives that some citizens organise their protests, filter grievances and make demands upon the state. That the state, in this sense, is both a target and an 'ally' of collective action has enormous implications with regard to the possibilities and limits of collective protests. For Piven & Cloward (1977:27):

> It is not the impact of disruptions on particular institutions that finally tests the power of the poor; it is the political impact of these disruptions. At this level, however, a new set of structuring mechanisms intervenes, for the political impact of institutional disruptions is mediated by the electoral-representative system.

This raises questions about the extent to which the character of popular protest is defined by the responses offered by the electoral representative and with how far a shift in response by the state may alter the existing nature of and approach to citizen politics. It may be in the quality of such responses that we may find the mechanisms for the creation

of more civil protest and/or a more civil engagement of citizens within a structured, functioning and participatory civil society. It is with this in mind that I now focus more closely on the official responses to popular protest in Jamaica.

## 9.3    POPULAR PROTEST IN JAMAICA: THE POLITICS OF RESPONSE

To get a sense of the nature of state response to protest activity in Jamaica, I asked interviewees to *rate* the state's response to citizen protest. For the purposes of not influencing or distorting their views, I allowed the interviewees to interpret the concept *response* in their own terms and to generalize or be specific in reference to incidents of protest activity in Jamaica. The following are some of the observations:

> PN11:   I don't think it [protest] necessarily garners a response from them [the state] all the time. Like the Prime Minister, he is very stubborn, you can't force his hand. If he does not believe in what you are protesting about, it is dead.

> PN3:    In terms of just responding, I rate the government highly because they respond but whether or not they *should* respond in terms of the character of that response, I think I would give them a low grade because I think they encourage demonstration [my emphasis].

> PN7:    Inadequate is one word I would say, reactive, heavy-handed for example in Western Kingston and in other instances, appropriate.

> PN27:   Very humane in most instances. I know the instructions [from the state to the police] have been, don't go into confrontation [with protestors]. I know the most the police does is fire tear gas and tear gas increases people's anger because nobody likes being tear gassed even though they are participating in an illegal operation. Because social protest is our way of doing things, you have to make sure that you are not becoming a police state but, in most instances, there has not been the heavy-hand, even when they [protestors] are embarrassing the government.

The contrasting viewpoints suggest that the Jamaican state responds to popular protest in a variety of ways depending on the particular situation. The empirical evidence suggests the response of the Jamaican State to popular protest runs the entire political gamut from positive to negative reactions. Positive here suggests that the state responds affirmatively. Political representatives arrive at the site of the demonstrations, give ear to protestors'

concerns and/or protestors get their demands met on the basis of ameliorative action taken by the state. The state's response to citizen protest is seen as 'fair', 'humane' and 'adequate' (PN27). The negative end of the continuum connotes a state response that is 'unsatisfactory', 'inadequate' or 'repressive' (PN11; PN7). Protestors do not get their demands met, political representatives fail to appear on the scene; the state neglects to acknowledge their concerns and/or offers a response. In short, protestors do not get attention, are not able to wrest concessions from the state and therefore their problems remain unresolved. Negative here also implies that the state responds in a coercive manner meant to suppress popular protest. Of course, in between these two points are perceptions that the state's response is 'uneven' or 'confused' (PN3).

These perspectives suggest that the response of the Jamaican State to protest activity is inconsistent and variable, depending on the demands of the particular situation. Whereas this implies a failing, an important question to answer in this study is whether this variability is an indication of a flexible state that responds, perhaps according to the merit of the issues. What are the kinds of responses open to states when they are confronted by forceful protest campaigns from their citizenry? In their seminal work entitled *'Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed and How They Fail'*, Piven & Cloward (1977:28) attempt to answer this question. They argue that while responses to disruption vary according to electoral conditions, during periods of stability, governmental leaders have three obvious options:

> They may ignore it; they may employ punitive measures against the disruptors; or they may attempt to conciliate them. If the disruptive group has little political leverage in its own right, as is true of lower class groups, it will be ignored or repressed. It is more likely to be ignored when the disrupted institution is not central to the society as a whole or other more important groups. Thus if men and women run amok, disrupting the fabric of their own communities … the spectacle may be frightening but it can be contained within the slums; it will not necessarily have much impact on the society as a whole or for important groups. Repression is more likely to be employed when central institutions are affected. Either way, to be ignored or punished is what the poor ordinarily expect from their government because these are the responses they ordinarily evoke.

This is a very persuasive argument. Since subaltern groups are often isolated from institutional mechanisms and constrained by the imperatives of their social class, the strategy of protest that they deploy is to withhold what Piven & Cloward (1977:25) call the 'quiescence in civil life: they can riot'. State response to popular mobilizations of the poor runs on a continuum of response from disregard and repression to basic appeasement. It is important to acknowledge, however, that in some political contexts, the politics of response/non-response is a much more complex and imprecise phenomenon as the above perspectives (PN3; PN27; PN7; PN11) elucidate. The quality of state response is, in fact, linked to a multiplicity of issues, not the least of which is the manner and context in which protest demands are put forward by protest campaigners[84]. In the Jamaican context, there have been moments when quick, aggressive action on the part of citizens has had a big effect and garnered positive responses from the state. These kinds of 'political opportunities' come in different forms. The media, for example, may suddenly notice a cause on account of a crisis or an accident or because the event was organized (Goodwin & Jasper, 2003). In such cases, as I illustrate in chapter 7, the pressure generated by popular protest is so inescapable as to galvanize the state into action and compel a swift and positive response. It is this combination of crisis, media attention and (mostly spontaneous) citizen action which often compel responses from the Jamaican State. The point here is that the character of protest behaviour and/or the strategies employed by citizens to achieve protest demands are important determinants of the kinds of responses the state will offer.

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[84] Goodwin & Jasper (2003:257-259), for example, give explanatory importance to the working of three kinds of opportunities. The first is structural in which they posit that large changes occur in the conduct of peoples' lives and in society without much intervention by social movements or protest campaigns. The second kind of opportunity occurs where social movements are looking for openings ('opportunity windows') in the state as well as for sympathetic politicians. Of course, in the authors' view, 'many of these windows of opportunity can hurt as well as help to reshape, curtail or channel movement demands' (2003:258). In this sense 'opportunities' are also 'constraints'. The third way that they envision opportunity is as relatively permanent features of a country's political landscape such as the administrative structures, legal systems, electoral rules and even constitutions which all constrain what social movements can achieve. These are however seen as 'horizons' of opportunity, since they define what is possible within that system, in contrast to 'windows of opportunity' that open and shut quickly.

It is also important to acknowledge that the capacity and willingness of the state to acknowledge and accept the demands made upon it are also crucial to the success of protest campaigns. By Tarrow's (1994:89-90) thesis:

> Strong states have the capacity to implement the policies they choose to support; when these policies are favourable to the claims of movements, the latter will gravitate to conventional forms of protest; but when they are negative, violence or confrontation ensues.

At the same time, the generalized weaknesses tied to many Third World states suggests that it is the interaction between opportunities and constraints which conditions the political response to protest campaigns. For instance, although a state's economic capability is rarely accounted for in the characterization of 'opportunity' (or constraint), it is unquestionable that availability of resources weighs heavily on the kinds of responses the state bureaucracy is able to offer. The ability of states, in other words, to respond to social protests over the inadequate provision of public commodities – water, electricity and roads - depends, in part, on the structural capability of the state to do so. Piven & Cloward are correct in suggesting that 'at times of rapid economic and social change [when protests tend to increase in frequency], political leaders are far less free either to ignore disturbances or to employ punitive measures because the relationship of political leaders to their constituents is likely to become uncertain' (1977:28).

But the point is that the quality of those responses is still likely to depend on the (economic and political/institutional) strength or weakness of a state. Indeed, the roots of much of the social protest which occurs in Jamaica are to be found in the generalized climate of economic decline, rising inflation, unemployment and an indebted state. These economic circumstances, as I argue in chapter 5, are not divorced from the overarching global project of economic liberalization and marketization which incapacitated many Third World governments and robbed them of their ability to properly service the needs of their poorer classes. The rapid rise in roadblocks and demonstrations in Jamaica (see Table 6.1) is the most blatant citizen response to this situation. The system's unresponsiveness is linked to a chronic inadequacy of capital resources, even while it is

also associated with the improper management of these resources (Franklyn, 2001; Munroe, 1999). This can be observed by considering the state's response to popular protest over the inadequate supply of essential public utilities. Protest about inadequate public utilities has focussed on the longstanding unreliability of water supply (the trigger of the 1997 Hopewell demonstration), the absence of a home-based telephone service, poor road conditions and a dilapidated public transport service, and an irregular and unreliable supply of electricity. The character of this protest activity is similar to that described earlier, that is, it has typically involved roadblocks, violent clashes with the police, and aggressively stated demands for change. The focus here is on the state's response to those demands.

The state's response has been mixed and inconsistent, at some times repressive, negative and unconstructive, and at other times positive and ameliorative. For instance, in response to the 1997 Hopewell demonstrations, the state initially sent in the police to forcefully clear the roadblocks, an action that at the time was seen as inflammatory and excessive[85], but later followed this with administrative reform through the establishment of the Ministry of Water and the granting of additional funds ($3.1m) to augment the supply of potable water, these being actions widely perceived as positive. Government restructuring of the telecommunications sector has, in part, been in response to pressure by the citizenry demanding improved coverage and service, and improvements in this sector have, by and large, been successful in silencing protest over telephones. There was a majority opinion among my interviewees that, despite years of delay, the Jamaican state has offered a strong and positive response to the public transport sector, and it is addressing the poor state of many roads, although poor road conditions continue to be a

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[85] See for example, news reports, articles, commentaries and 'Letters to the Editor' of the main newspapers on the days following the water protests. Worthy of note are: Walsh, J. (1997) 'A Counter-Productive Course'. In *Daily Gleaner*, April 11. p. 4A; *Jamaica Gleaner*. (1997) 'Damn Asses, Stupid' April 10, p. 1A; *Jamaica Gleaner*. (1997) 'Parties Criticise Government's Handling of Hopewell'. April 10, p. 3; *Jamaica Gleaner*. (1997) 'Parties in Blame Game'. April 9. p. 1A; *Jamaica Gleaner*. (1997) 'Police Activity in Hopewell Demonstration Sharply Criticised'. April 23, p. C3; Smith, A. (1997) 'Protest, Courage, Morality, Change' in *Jamaica Gleaner*. April 19. p. 7B.

trigger of roadblock demonstrations[86]. The state response to the poor road conditions, though, is widely perceived to favor middle class communities at the expense of poor and rural communities. Finally, there was a similar perception that the state's response to inadequate electricity supply is, at times, characterised by partiality and inequitable treatment of different communities. One political party official explains the politics behind the operation and (potential) institutionalization of this (covert) complaint-response policy:

> Water Commission, when they see that water bill has not been paid, they not in any rush to fix a pump or whatever wrong. If they know they are losing revenue, they will deal with it. But JPS [Jamaica Public Service Company] will say them not rushing to fix street light in a particular community because when they have war, dem shoot dem out [when there is gang warfare, the street lights are destroyed] and nobody not paying no light bill in that community. They [utility providers] don't say it officially or publicly but that is what in effect happens. If it was in another community that the transformer lick out and dem revenue secure, they fix it immediately because everybody pay dem light bill but elsewhere when dem don't put it [faulty transformer] up for three days, dem save three days of electricity (PN27).

The profound social and economic crisis facing the country cannot be discounted in any analysis of citizen action and the official responses to it here. Indeed, because income levels, which have remained low or stationary, have not matched rapidly rising standards of living, an increasing number of Jamaican citizens, including middle-income groups are finding it difficult to pay the high costs attached to some public commodities. It should therefore come as no surprise then that the controversial increases in the cost of public commodities (water, electricity, transportation and telephone rates) in mid 2005, as well as the inflationary prices of basic consumer goods, created ample trigger for another round of nationwide protests in Jamaica. These September protests hold important theoretical purchase since they not only highlight some of the emerging issues in the

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[86] It is noteworthy that the number of citizen roadblock-demonstrations in Jamaica over 'bad road conditions' doubled in a one-year period, making a massive jump from 25 (of a total 208) in 2004 to 44 (of a total 236) in 2005. This may be explained, in part, by the extensive damage caused to the island's road network during the destructive hurricane season of 2004.

politics of response but potentially represent a watershed in the culture and practice of oppositional protest in Jamaica.

## 9.4     THE CONSUMER PRICE PROTESTS AND THE POLITICS OF RESPONSE

On 6 September 2005, following weeks of complaints about rising consumer prices through the newspapers and radio talk back programmes, the country's main political opposition, the Jamaica Labour Party, led the people to the streets in protest about high living costs. Although billed as 'peaceful protests', the demonstrations were anything but peaceful. The blocking of major roadways with old cars, tree trunks, burning tyres and other debris was the predominant feature of the demonstrations. This had the desired effect – a severe disruption of traffic flow, nationwide cessation of public transportation, which itself resulted in the closure of schools and businesses. While there were elements of peaceful protest such as marches and placard-bearing - the ritual of violent clashes between protestors and the police was the dominant charge in some areas (*Jamaica Gleaner*, 2005, September 7). Despite the combination of concerns brought to the table, 'the straw that broke the camel's back' for the protestors was the government's backing of a massive rise in electricity rates by the power providers, Jamaica Public Service Company, and by extension other utility providers – Cable & Wireless and The National Water Commission. At issue was that increased public utility costs were at variance with the quality of service provided, in this case the local power company, JPS[87], 80 percent of

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[87] The Jamaica Public Service Company (JPS), for example, faces heavy criticism for its failure to adequately meet the needs of citizens for reliable power supply. The complaints are mainly linked to the company's street light installation programme. For example, based on (verbal) indications from the local government leadership of the parish of St. Elizabeth, (both JLP and PNP Parish Councillors), poor maintenance and neglect by the JPS has left several divisions effectively in darkness. For example, it is reported that some fifty percent of the street lights installed in the Myersville, Division is faulty. Councilors for the divisions of Malvern, Balaclava, Southfield, Mountainside, Siloah and Brompton also express similar sentiments. The Balaclava Division reports that seven of twenty-three street lights installed there have been defective for periods up to two months without repairs. The poor quality service of the JPS – inadequate maintenance of street lights, power outages - is replicated in other parishes, as confirmed by Councillors in the Bensonton, Borobridge and Alexandria divisions of the parish of St. Ann. *Source*: *Jamaica Gleaner* (2005), September 12 'Street Light Woes Irk St. Elizabeth Councillors'. Available at http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20050912/news/news6.html; 'St. Ann PC Lashes JPS'. Available at http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20050912/news/news4.html

which is, paradoxically, owned by the United States-based transnational firm, Mirant Corporation. Jamaican citizens directed their protest not only against the government but powerfully against 'big business'.



This image shows Jamaican protestors bearing placards in protest against rising cost of consumer products on September 6, 2005. Some of the placards read 'PNP MUST GO', 'PNP GOVT PUT THEMSELVES FIRST', EMERGENCY, WI A SUFFA ROUN HERE', 'P.J., GO AWAY' and 'PIT TOILET GOVERNMENT'. Source: *The Jamaica Gleaner and The Jamaica Observer,* 2005, September 7.



This image is of a female protestor during the September 2005 consumer price protests.

The image above shows a lone female protestor during the September 2005 consumer price protest bearing a placard which reads '*JPS sold to former slave owners; PJ sold us back into slavery*'. The placard implies that the divestment of the power supply company, Jamaica Public Service Company, to a foreign corporation, had reduced the population to a state of enslavement. In the context of a difficult state-society intercourse, embodied during these protests in a battle between citizen-consumers and the Jamaican state, it depicts the government as conniving with large foreign corporations and failing to protect its citizens from their profit hunt. In this case, the privatisation of public utilities was interpreted as seriously undermining the level and quality of the services provided (while securing high profit margins for foreign investors).[88] Rising commodity prices coupled with inflationary costs are problematic for the disadvantaged sectors. The majority of the consumers who participated in these protests saw it as a continuation of a larger project of opposition to a negligent and inept government which persistently failed to address these concerns.

Globalization has as one of its consequences, the vulnerability of (especially small Third World) states to volatility or disruption on the international economic scene. International economic developments such as the 2005 oil shocks, which provoked rapid spikes in world energy prices, have resulted in a massive jump in domestic energy costs in both developed and developing countries. For Jamaica, this meant large increases in the prices for fuel, electricity (power), public transportation and basic consumer goods. The impact of this development on the standard of living and quality of life for the poor was enormous. Similarly, in 1999, the government's deliberate decision to add a substantial tax to the price of gasoline, a move which inevitably inflated commodity and energy costs, leading to large numbers picketing, mounting  roadblocks and causing a halt to

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[88] This situation is not exclusive to Jamaica but increasingly a concern across developing countries. For example, the boycott of Nigerian mobile phone operators in September 2003 was directed primarily at the international and national phone providers who were criticised for inefficient and overpriced services. The protests were also directed at the state which was seen as partly culpable and weak for not keeping the (foreign) corporations in check. For details, see Obadare, E. (2006) 'Playing Politics with the Mobile Phone in Nigeria: Civil Society, Big Business and the State'. In *Review of African Political Economy.* No. 107. pp. 93-111.

economic activity in critical sections of the country. Although the organizers of the 2005 consumer price protests, the Jamaica Labour Party, claimed success, the demonstrations were strongly condemned by large segments of the Jamaican public. This was reflected in the torrent of commentary and letters to the newspapers in the aftermath of the protests. The following is an excerpt from a letter to the *The Jamaica Gleaner,* (2005, September 7):

> I do not understand what the Jamaica Labour Party wants to accomplish from this protest. I understand that the People's National Party is not listening to the cries of the people. But does that warrant a protest? I agree that the price increases will severely affect the poor. However, will the poor benefit from this protest after the protest is over? In addition, how long after the protest will they be able to reap the benefits from the protest?

Also writing in *The Jamaica Gleaner*, (2005, September 18), noted Jamaican political commentator, Robert Buddan argues against the rationale for protest on the basis that they were not only economically-damaging and insensitive but driven by partisan political imperatives on the part of the opposition, Jamaica Labour Party:

> The irony of the JLP's protest is that it has never directed one on behalf of the thousands of sugar and banana workers subject to WTO decisions that threaten their industries, livelihoods, and parish economies. The JLP prefers to narrowly and conveniently blame national institutions like the Sugar Corporation of Jamaica, the Jamaica Public Service, and the Government of Jamaica, and its solution is to 'fire them'. How would that change oil prices and global trading rules? The JLP's protest, deliberately planned on the occasion of the PetroCaribe Summit, was, therefore, insensitive, to say the least. The JLP could spend its time joining lobbies to get the oil marketing multinationals that are making whirlwind profits to reduce their margins like the French are doing. It could support the British government's call for OPEC countries to step up oil production so that prices can go down. The JLP could join Cuba and the Dominican Republic, countries that have been plagued by frequent blackouts to produce energy saving plans…Organizing a protest on the eve of the People's National Party's (PNP) annual conference and on the occasion of the PetroCaribe Summit was clearly political. To have disrupted the start of the new school year and national life shows how far the JLP will go.

Significant segments of the Jamaican citizenry also took affront to the extraordinary violence and extra-legality that attended the protests, particularly as they occurred under the patronage of the government-in-waiting. News Editor Byron Buckley, writing in the September 11, 2005 edition of *The Jamaica Gleaner* remarked:

The last thing we expected was to prevent our children from going to school…but apparently nobody in the JLP War Room was sensitive to these concerns. The strategy according to JLP spokesman Dwight Nelson was to send the government a message no matter the collateral damage to the education system. Couldn't the JLP war cabinet organise rolling demonstrations across the country at Jamaica Public Service Offices or the relevant government ministries. Couldn't the party organise marches in main town? What about mass meetings at Emancipation Park and Sam Sharpe Square? And why isn't the JLP advocating the mass boycotting of paying light bills? These are forms of protests that lift us out of the realm of gutter politics. These are the ways rational leaders and people protest across the world.

That there was widespread censure of the September 2005 consumer price protests from an otherwise angry and disenchanted population points to the possibility of new expressions of popular dissent in Jamaica. Indeed, this activism, which may be seen as *dissenting to (the act of) dissent*. This is revealed in the following perspectives from several interviewees – politician (PN13), former student activist (PN25), broadcasting regulator/attorney (PN21) and young Rastafarian entertainer (PN4):

PN13: It [protest] is abused and the threat of it even more so. It comes from the inadequacy of the channels but it also comes from all sort of selfish impulses like impatience. We have come to overdo it I think.

PN25: You cannot have a society ruled by civil disorder. People cannot feel like they have a right to engage in civil disorder because they are frustrated by something. They wake up on the wrong side of the bed and decide that they are going to have a roadblock. This is the 21$^{st}$ century. We cannot have our society ruled by civil disorder.

PN21: I do not support blocking roads, cutting down trees and vandalising public and private property. I think in a democratic society especially of you say you are *civil* and it is *civil* protest, you should also appreciate that it is civil not to protest in the manner we do [emphasis are the speaker's].

PN4: Protest is to make your voice be hear if you are disgruntled about a situation or you coming together to vent your feelings on a certain issue. To me, that is protest because I truly don't believe in this roadblock and placard thing. That is well organised [read as manipulated] and can only have one result – media frenzy and no future %*@%@#!!!%@ outcome.

These perspectives reveal: (a)  A growing exhaustion and disillusionment with uncivil brands of citizen activism, particularly as a first and only resort to contentious public issues from significant segments of the Jamaican population. (b) An increasing disdain among the Jamaican public for overtly partisan political party involvement in citizen politics, tied to a current resistance to partisan politics and partisan-motivated violence. The watershed Gas Riots of April 1999 further illuminate the importance of these developments and illustrate the extent to which state response, especially during intense moments of conflict with its citizenry, carries critical purchase in appraising the quality of state response and the nature of governance in the Jamaican context. They allow the examination of the extent to which the actions (and/or inaction) of political actors (Members of Parliament, political party officials, agents and activists) have a causative impact on the tone and style of citizen politics and civil society and install impediments to the opening of new, more civil vistas of citizen protestation, negotiation and political settlement.

## 9.5    RESPONDING TO VIOLENT PROTEST: PITFALLS AND LESSONS FOR THE JAMAICAN STATE.

It is clear from the preceding discussion that official response to popular protestation in Jamaica depends considerably on the specific matter in contention, the array of issues and concerns surrounding the subject, and how it is put forward by protestors. Eliciting affirmative state responses also appear to depend heavily on the overall impact of a protest action on the government at a particular juncture. Whereas direct citizen action such as the September 2005 protests did not result in either a reduction of people's power bills or any appreciable change in their economic circumstances or quality of life, popular discontent may create disorder in a society in such a fundamental way that it is difficult for a government to ignore (see Piven & Cloward, 1977). The nationwide Gas Riots in Jamaica from 19-21 April 1999 represent a powerful instance of such a scenario. Indeed, it is this dramatic three-day long protest that many of my interviewees drew upon to assess the performance and response of the Jamaican State during popular protest cycles.

The Gas protests represented a catalytic moment in Jamaican citizen politics and political governance where, for perhaps the first time in Jamaica's contemporary political history, protestors by the sheer mass of their numbers acquired power over the state for three consecutive days[89]. This power forced the government to concede to large-scale demands (against its preference) seemingly just to keep the peace such as a full-scale rollback of the tax on fuel. In order to fully make sense of the response of the Jamaican State to these protests, it is critical to acknowledge that the temperament of the Gas protests (featuring intense physical violence, open warfare between police and armed citizens and widespread vandalism) was such that it had managed to promulgate an unusually intense and generalized feeling of dread both within the government and throughout the entire Jamaican society. The Jamaican State was taken by surprise and it was unprepared and perhaps unaware of how to react effectively, at least without resort to repressive force. The Jamaican State, in other words, was seemingly trapped in a state of momentary paralysis, confused as to how to respond. The leaders of the state released conflicting official messages and appeared to be unable to act. One interviewee, who participated as a student protest leader in the 1999 Gas demonstrations, puts it well with the following remark:

> PN25: I find that the state has this kind of reflex, this panic reflex to huge riots and to most protests and I think between the media and the hype, they feel in a sense that they must make some response but many times, they don't follow through on what they say.

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[89] I do not here discount the significance of the 1979 nationwide Gas protests, in which citizens held reign on the government by participating in intensely hostile demonstrations, which resulted in the virtual lock down of the country or the all-island strike of 1985 in which public sector workers participated in a large scale work stoppage. The point is that although the People's National Party–led government was forced to make some concessions in 1979, it is difficult to argue that the state buckled under 'people power'. Indeed, in the all-island strikes of 1985, the Jamaica Labour Party government, led by then Prime Minister Edward Seaga refused to budge, effectively ignored concerns of the protestors and is reputed to have activated a project to terminate the employment of workers who walked off the job. The state, on both occasions, effectively retained its hegemony but compromised its legitimacy and right to rule, resulting in their comprehensive defeat at the polls. (It maybe worth noting that following the 1979 protests, the PNP lost the 1980 General Elections. Likewise, subsequent to the 1985 all-island strikes, the JLP was defeated at the polls in 1989).

The view that the government often panics in the face of violent demonstrations and fails to respond adequately helps to explain, in part, the quality of state response to direct citizen action and the persistence of hostile protest politics in Jamaica. In the case of the 1999 Gas protests, the political authority in Jamaica was caught between a sense of an obligation to respond and its unwillingness to lose legitimacy and electoral support by responding coercively. Nevertheless, from my own observation and personal experience of these protests as well as the perspectives of my interviewees, for at least two full days, the state had lost total command, effectively ceding control of the governance of the country to a lesser, illegitimate authority. This was composed of loosely organized bands of protestors, some of whom controlled access to communities (such as Duhaney Park in St. Andrew where I lived at the time) and used their newly-acquired power to dictate the movement of traffic and people. In some areas, the standoff between rioters and the government was only resolved by the placating efforts of the state, manifested in some instances through the negotiated intervention of powerful extra-legal actors with controlling influence in some communities (*The Jamaica Gleaner,* 1999, April 27).

Repression was clearly an unlikely option for the Jamaican state since the protests had aroused the sympathy of groups that were supporters of the government. It attracted the physical and the symbolic support of middle class citizens, who are normally less affected by increases in consumer prices, as well as of the unemployed, including armed criminal gangs. Piven & Cloward's (1977:29) remark here is apt:

> Unless insurgent groups are virtually of outcast status, permitting leaders of the regime to mobilise popular hatred against them, politically unstable conditions make the use of force risky, since the reactions of the aroused groups cannot safely be predicted. When government is either unable to ignore insurgents and is unwilling to risk the uncertain repercussions of the use of force, it will make efforts to conciliate and disarm the protestors.

That the state, in some instances, is seemingly uncertain, hesitant, or worse, unable to act, may lead it to (re)act in ways which are unconstructive and which serves to further alienate an already disaffected citizenry. It is, therefore, this moment of political complexity which underscores citizen pessimism about the quality of the state response to

popular citizen protests in Jamaica. This is embodied in observations such as the following by a Jamaican university communications student:

PN30:  I was very annoyed at the Prime Minister's lack of response. I was disgusted by his delayed response because I felt that as the leader of the state, he should have made a more public presence. I felt he was hiding behind his spokespersons. He sent them out as a buffer and it did not appear that he wanted to take any responsibility. I found it very condescending that he didn't come to dialogue with the people. I thought it was being reduced to partisan politics. I felt he was just being a 'politician' rather than a leader of a state. I felt he wanted to make his party come out looking good.

Despite the delay and inadequacy of the government's response, which angered citizens, the overwhelming consensus of the interviewees was that the government's response to Gas protests was ultimately 'appropriate' (PN27) and 'reasonable' (PN21). As Dr. Hopeton Dunn (PN7), a communications expert commented:

> I feel, in the main, that the present leader of the PNP [People's National Party], Mr. Patterson, is someone who responds to negotiation and is conciliatory in his personal style. He is not confrontational and even how he responded in the Gas Riots by asking the President of the Private Sector Organization of Jamaica [Peter Moses] to conduct an investigation was an appropriate response which sought to get a broad public view to bear on what actions or decisions to flow from these things. He took a while but he did eventually respond in an appropriate way in the end by setting up an enquiry and respond to it by pulling back on the tax on gasoline (PN7).

In the words of Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Most Hon. A.J. Nicholson:

> The response of the government was not only borne of the idea that we want the riot to stop. It was also seeking a way of bringing another answer to the problem that was there. What that taught the government was that when you are considering your [budgetary] options, don't think in a blinkered or one-sided way but pull all your options together because in those circumstances another way was found [besides raising the tax on gasoline]. Since then you would have noticed that the government does not wait on time to respond. They are more proactive (PN8).

The *response* to which the Minister refers was the hastily constructed and temporarily outfitted civic group known as the Moses Committee to which the government turned to find an alternate means of filling the budget deficit caused by its rescinding of the tax on fuel. Beyond economic calculations, the Moses Committee also focused on what they

deemed as the fundamental problem of the political authority's disconnection between from the economic and social plight of the Jamaican people (see chapter 6, Section 6.4.1). The 1999 Gas demonstrations appeared to represent a timely wake up call for the Jamaican State. According to then Prime Minister, PJ Patterson, 'there can be no return to business as usual' (Patterson, 2004). Today, some seven years after the Gas protests, it is instructive to review the extent to which the state has altered its approach to governance.

Respondents suggested that following the devastating consequences of its fiscal taxation policy in 1999, the Jamaican State has learned to be a lot more prudent, particularly on revenue matters. It has been more careful about the potential effects (and consequences) of its policy decisions. In the presentation of successive budgets, post 1999, it has declined to impose a tax on fuel in recent years (although the prices of fuel have nevertheless increased progressively due to fluctuations in the world oil market). It has also activated its local 'feeler' systems (local body officials and activists) to determine the mood of the citizenry (explosive or sombre) in relation to its fiscal tax plans. In the words of a senior journalist:

> PN23: I think that to a certain extent the government has evolved and is more aware of its responsibility to citizens. At the same time, when faced with a number of choices, I think they will try to get away with certain things because if they slip it by the people, then they will do so because it makes life less difficult for them.

On account of the inventive (and peaceful) interventions, negotiation and protest utilised by formal civil society groups, such as the noted Jamaicans for Justice (JFJ) to challenge the state on behalf of the poor as well as violent protests, the Jamaican State is increasingly recognising that it cannot govern in isolation. As a result, as part of a broader international trend which began in the 1990s, the Jamaican state has been allowing more space for the participation of these bodies. This is being reflected in the deliberations of the Committees of Parliament, in which civil society now plays a critical role. Indeed, in the view of one senior parliamentary reporter and talkback host (PN23), there is scarcely any piece of legislation that is tabled in the House of Representatives that does not have

the critical input of civil society[90]. Notwithstanding this, these reforms, which promise more participation and communication between political representatives and their constituents, continues to be perceived as inadequate (PN23). This continues to present a threat to the Jamaican state, as indicated in the following perspective from communications specialist and academic, Dr. Hopeton Dunn:

> PN7: The people have learned that they can lock down the country at strategic points in time and they can get concessions [from the state] so they have learned their lesson. In my view, if the set of circumstances converge again providing sufficient pressure, the people will do it again.

In other words, the circumstances of poor quality services, rising consumer prices and state neglect, which precipitated the September 2005 protests and many other citizen mobilisations, powerfully indicate that despite some (minor) concessions from and shift in the state's approach to governance, the triggers for violent demonstrations are still present in the Jamaican society.

## 9.6    POLITICIANS AND POPULAR PROTEST: A PROBLEMATIC ALLIANCE?

> What right does the Jamaica Labour Party think it can have to so disrupt the lives of the [Jamaican] people and put them at risk? If the people spontaneously demonstrate that is one thing; if a political party demonstrates, it is quite another matter and it is inevitable that it will ignite opposition and open an opportunity for criminal elements to get involved. As the alternative government, the JLP does not appear to understand the greater good. As a parliamentary party, it should use Parliament to oppose the government and raise there the issues it is now taking to the streets (*The Jamaica Gleaner*, 2005, September 7).

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[90] The human rights lobby group, Jamaicans for Justice (JFJ), perhaps more than any other groups has made full use of this opportunity for political negotiation, lobby and debate. Their forceful contributions to public debate as well as the deliberations of the Jamaican Parliament on various proposed legislations are well-known. Some of the legislative measures that it has considered (balanced the provisions and their implications against the interests of the society and bringing them forcefully to public attention) include the 'Terrorism Prevention Bill', 'The Charter of Rights', 'The Corruption Prevention Bill', 'The Proposed Caribbean Court of Justice' and 'The Access to Information Bill'. For a more expansive account of the work and achievements of the JFJ, see http://www.jamaicansforjustice.org/archives/achievements.htm

This above remark by a frustrated Jamaican citizen, in a letter to *The Jamaica Gleaner*, in the aftermath of the September 2005 consumer protests, underscores the political importance of exploring the intersection between politicians and popular protest. Any assessment of the performance of the Jamaican State and its response to popular protest (whether attitudinally or in practice) though must take into account the following historically-evolved reality: The Jamaican State resides and functions at the centre of a heavily factionalized and highly-charged political culture involving intense political violence and patron-client politics (see Gray 2004 for an explicit discussion of this phenomenon). That this political milieu is so polarized and often violent means that (1) citizen politics, including popular protest, also operate with an intense emotional and often partisan charge and (2) the state itself, through its political actors may, in instances, become implicated (and ultimately indicted) in the production of uncivil protest. Locating an appropriate role for political representatives at the site of demonstrations may also be a pre-condition for the construction of civil protest and civil society in Jamaica.

This discussion seeks to clarify a number of related issues. First, are politicians and political parties to be included in the scheme of associations that constitute civil society? Second, as Foley & Edwards (1996:39) ask, 'if civil society's chief virtue is its ability to act as an organized counterweight to the state, to what extent can this happen without the help of political parties and other political orders'? Third, do political actors, by their action/inaction, thwart or aid the performance of *civil* protest and the construction of *civil* society? Surprisingly, the vast scholarly literature on civil society pays only microscopic attention to political parties. Rosenblum (2000:813) remarks that 'we might expect that civil society theory, concerned as it is with associations that mediate between the individual or family and the state, would focus on parties [and politicians]. The fact that they are rarely mentioned is therefore a remarkable lacuna'. Whereas recent scholarly writings explore the concentrated involvement of Jamaican political parties and politicians within the domain of citizen politics (Gray, 2004, Rapley, 2003; Charles, 2002; cf. Stone, 1980), the role of political parties and politicians within civil society and their impact on the character of protest is yet to be comprehensively addressed.

So, in response to the first question, are politicians and political parties to be included in the scheme of associations that constitute civil society, I draw on the work of Rosenblum (2000) who makes a case for 'political parties as membership groups'[91] and hence as part and parcel of civil society. She defines political parties as essentially voluntary associations principally committed to making democracy work:

> Parties raise and define public issues, engage in political education, choose officers, enact rules for process and representation, and decide on their purposes and policies as well as their strategies. They are distinctive sources of information and of experience in forming political judgments. They are forums for reasonably deliberative collective decision-making about public life. Potentially, they are the most important agenda-setting institution for the public interests of society as a whole (2000:283).

It is the fact that political parties perform these civic roles and operate in such a largely public way in the name of society, which render them crucial, mobilizing elements of a functioning civil society. This is because the job of a party or representative includes providing a bridge between citizens and the state by taking on board community concerns and making representations to central government on behalf of the citizenry, with a view to addressing those concerns. In response to the second question posed by Foley & Edwards (1996) above – 'can civil society act as an effective counterweight to the state without the assistance of political parties?' The answer is, in the Jamaican context, a

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[91] Rosenblum identifies several defining characteristics of political parties, which confirm these observations. For one thing, she observes that political parties, in the main, can claim (historical) *continuity*. This means that they are permanent, enduring organizations with deep connections of identity and linkages with the community. She uses the example of the Republican and Democratic Parties in the United States, which have confronted each other since the 1860s. (In the Jamaican context, the People's National Party (PNP) and the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) have been challenging each other and establishing broad-based linkages with an array of social groups since their formation in the late 1930s and early 1940s). Second, because political parties can pull together a large and diverse segment of a population, they are seen to embody the democratic norms of '*integrativeness* and *inclusiveness'*. She also attributes to political parties the quality of '*comprehensiveness'* (emphases in the original). This means that unlike interest and advocacy groups whose agendas are often restricted to a single principle or policy, or candidate-centred campaign organizations attuned to immediate issues that promise short-term political benefits, political parties can identify and attend to longer-term problems. In other words, the rationale is that interest groups cannot do what parties can do in a diverse society – bring together the claims of groups and formulate issues in a comprehensive and comprehensible way. For a more explicit discussion of the unique democracy-building role of political parties, see Rosenblum, N. L. (2000) 'Political Parties as Membership Groups'. In *Colombia Law Review*, 100 (3) pp. 813-844.

definitive no. Although many developing and developed societies (United States, India, Mexico and Peru) boast a gamut of well-organized civic groups, including advocacy, lobby and interest networks, with enormous influence, 'only parties routinely, pervasively and legitimately exercise influence from within government' (Rosenblum, 2000:815). What I am implying here is that the interest-mediation often undertaken by lobby, advocacy and interest groups can only go so far. In contrast, political parties, as agenda-setters and negotiators, are able, more often than not, to yield rewards and/or ensure more positive outcomes. In political contexts such as Jamaica where formal civil society associations, including advocacy and lobby groups, are much more sedate and there is a historical dependence and pressure on the state for the resolution of problems, more demands are placed on political parties and individual political representatives to access and wrest concessions from the state on behalf of citizens. The presence of political activists and political representatives at the site of citizen protest and street demonstrations is therefore unsurprising.

Of course, one of the difficulties of locating political parties within the ambit of civil society is that parties are essentially trapped between their obligations as a constitutive element of the state and their roles as facilitators and/or mediators between citizens and the state. In short political parties and politicians retain a function both within the ambit of the state and within civil society. The competing pressures of these two functions are problematic because the fundamental goal of political parties is to capture state power. According to Rosenblum (2000:823):

> [Political] parties are principally concerned with candidates and elections. The goal of parties is not to maximize the number of people who express an attitudinal preference for it but to contest elections effectively.

Unlike other political groupings, only political parties are solidly engaged in recruiting and nominating candidates as well as canvassing votes as a means to ensure electoral success. Conversely, although civil society *relates to the state* (my emphasis) in some way, [it] does not aim to win formal power or office in the state (Diamond, 1994). This observation has enormous implications for the role and impact of politicians in popular

protest, particularly in contexts such as Jamaica with highly violent and partisan political cultures. The fact that political parties retain a fundamental electoral objective, it effectively muddles their role as civic facilitators, interest-mediators and political negotiators. It is the potential negative impact of political parties and politicians on the tenor and quality of citizen politics which is my focus here.

### 9.6.1 How Politicians Impact Civil Protest

> PN5: Every time I see people protesting, there is a politician running to the scene in a reactive way to appease and promise.

> PN24: They [politicians] are always trying to appease the voting element. They realize that demonstrating is a line they can take. Any protest you see out there, some opposition politician is going to come and attach themselves to it - every demonstration, blocking roads and whatever else.

Political parties and political representatives respond to and influence protest campaigns in a variety of ways. They offer official structural assistance and resources as well as political support to citizen action. Political representatives may, as was the case of the September 2005 consumer protests, actively participate in protest campaigns through planning, organizing and facilitating the action, as well as negotiating and mediating on behalf of citizens during and after demonstrations. Politicians also affect popular protest via their influence on the mass media. This is because politicians are a form of celebrity. When they call a press conference, reporters come and so protestors are able to use that power to promote their cause (Goodwin & Jasper, 2003). It is my argument, however, that the participation of parties and elected representatives in protest campaigns is a far more complex phenomenon than stated here. Within the context of Jamaica's intensely charged political culture, featuring partisan alignment to either of the two main political parties – the Jamaica Labour Party and the People's National Party – the participation of politicians in popular protest requires analysis.

There is a widely held view that protests in Jamaica are 'politicized'. The term 'politicized' is not employed here in the Foucauldian sense of *'everything is political'* but more in line with the notion of 'partisanship' – a political party intervention in citizen action in a manner which consolidates partisan divisiveness and conflict among the citizenry. In short, Is there is a *problematic* degree of 'politicization' of protest activity in Jamaica? Due to its catalytic nature, the 1999 Gas protests became the pointer around which many of the interviewees framed their responses to this issue. The following quotations represent the views of a former Member of Parliament (PN8) and a University student (PN30):

> PN8: I know for a fact that the 1999 Gas protest was pushed. It was not only politicized [read as partisan]. It was conceptualized in [party] politics so it was a political exercise through and through. As far as I am concerned, the NDM [National Democratic Movement, political party] pushed it more than the Jamaica Labour Party and I know this for a fact.

> PN30: The people who started the [Gas] protest did not start it as a political [read as partisan] action but then the politicians quickly saw to it that they did because immediately the opposition [Jamaica Labour Party] came out and used the opportunity to start demonizing the PNP and to definitely give it a political tone. It did not start like that but it was manipulated to seem as if it was. I was very annoyed and very disgusted with Mr. Seaga [then opposition Leader] and the Labour Party because they were using the Jamaican people. At a time like that when people were really crying out, crying out to the state, I don't think it would have mattered which government – JLP or PNP – it made no difference. They were crying out. I thought it was so callous. They [politicians] were using this very obvious distress to gain some political mileage and at that point I tell you – you ask me how I feel – I lost total faith in politics. I just saw there was no governance. There was no opposition to put anything in any reasonable perspective and the government was 'playing politics' [colloquial expression suggesting the use of diversion tactics].

These responses reflect a collective misgiving at not so much the involvement of political actors but a distinct mistrust of such interventions. Given that the nature of political communities presupposes a struggle between different groups and political parties, the contestations described above is not extraordinary. Should theorists of civil society then be overly concerned with it? Posner (2004), drawing on the Chilean case, argues that whether parties merely facilitate popular sector access and participation depends entirely

on the kind of linkage they assume with networks in civil society. He identifies the different approaches that parties take in their relationship with civil society:

> Parties that adopt a participatory form of linkage attempt to serve as an agency through which citizens can themselves participate in government, and tend to be closely linked with organizations in civil society; they have strong grassroots organizations and are internally democratic. In contrast, electoralist parties are primarily concerned with mobilizing an electoral constituency rather than organizing and mobilizing groups in civil society. Their primary objective is to develop the broadest possible base of support, which requires attracting unorganized and often independent voters and developing a multi-class constituency. To the extent that grassroots party structures exist, party leaders typically control them and mobilize party activists only for electoral purposes such as canvassing, getting out the vote, registering new voters (Posner, 2004:58)[92].

For more than half a century, Jamaican political parties have interacted with loosely organized networks of civil society in a way which has served to expand popular participation in governance and establish important linkages with civil society (see Gray, 2004; Munroe, 1999; Manley, 1991). Both the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) and the People's National Party (PNP) have, at different periods, organized, mobilized and encouraged segments of the poor and the marginalized to demand greater responsiveness and resources from the state. From the violent Labour Riots over substandard working conditions and poor wages in the 1930s and 1940s to the Gas protests of 1979, all-island strikes of 1985, the 1999 Gas demonstrations and the 2005 consumer protest, political party activism has been central to citizen protest in Jamaica. In short, acting as facilitators, organizers and/or catalysts, the participation of the JLP and PNP in popular struggles has been vital to citizen politics and civil society in Jamaica. Partisan violence has, however, been an important feature of some of these events (see Gray, 2004:258, 285).

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[92] Other writers maintain that while political parties are only one of the many vehicles for the representation of interests and have become weak and discredited, they remain essential for recruiting leaders, structuring electoral choice and organizing government. For a more extensive and critical discussion of the contemporary role and impact of political parties in democracies, see Diamond, L & Gunther, R. (2001) *Political Parties and Democracy*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press

The Gas protests of 1979, for example, occurred within the context of a period of global oil shocks, worsening economic conditions at home and intense political and ideological rivalry between the ruling PNP and the opposition JLP. General elections were set for the following year, 1980. By this juncture, the PNP and JLP were in campaign mode and factions loyal to either side had already begun to filter onto the streets of urban Kingston to engage in what Jamaican scholars later describe as bloody political party 'civil wars' (see Gray, 2004). It was also within this context that other social actors, including massive numbers of unemployed took to the streets in violent protest (see Gary, 2004:256-259). Many of my interviewees, some of whom were activists, journalists or spectators during these events, however, saw the 1979 protests as merely one more salvo by the opposition, Jamaica Labour Party, on a People's National Party government already beleaguered by the pressures of the IMF-imposed Structural Adjustment and swirling rumours of the 'Communist threat' posed to the country by the imposition of the Democratic Socialist ideas of then PNP leader and Prime Minister, Michael Manley (PN12; PN24; PN23; PN29).

It is noteworthy that a curious silence still veils this period of Jamaica's political history and the details are rarely discussed openly or recorded objectively. However, writing in *The Jamaica Gleaner* (2005), former Government Minister and PNP activist, Arnold Bertram, states that it was the combination of pending General Elections and a fear of the economic implications of communism by the merchant class which created the context for the now infamous warning issued by former Jamaican Opposition Leader, Edward Seaga, that he would 'lock down the country tighter than a sardine tin' by instigating nationwide social protests. It was a bonafide warning. According to Bertram (2005):

> [Edward]Seaga was able to bring into the streets a broad-based alliance of social classes with the clear objective of forcing [Prime Michael] Manley to call an election, which in their estimation, he could win (*The Jamaica Gleaner,* 2005, September 11).

In short, the social protests were designed to have a powerful negative effect on the government in power, thereby enhancing the prospects of the opposition coming to

power. Indeed, according to Gray (2004:260) 'the Prime Minister not only condemned the protest as an instance of JLP manipulation, but denounced it as an expression of "raw-naked fascism" that sought the PNP's ouster'. Edward Seaga and the Jamaica Labour Party did, in fact, comprehensively win the General Elections of 1980. Such was the intensity of this political contestation that an unprecedented 800 Jamaican citizens were killed in election campaign violence alone (see National Committee on Political Tribalism, 1997). Bertram (2005) links this historical memory with the failure of the 2005 protests to generate popular citizen support. Indeed, despite the real economic hardships generated by rising costs of transportation, electricity and transportation in 2005, many citizens, by their unwillingness to participate, seemed to concur with Bertram's view that the consumer protests, led by Opposition Leader, Bruce Golding was intended 'to promote disruptions similar to the lockdown of 1979 and the Gas riots of 1999 with the aim of reviving his lagging political fortunes and reasserting his leadership within the JLP' (Bertram, *The Jamaica Gleaner,* 2005, September 11) (see image of politicians at protest sites below).



This image shows Opposition Leader (second left), Bruce Golding and Mayor of Kingston, Desmond McKenzie addressing crowds of protestors during the consumer price protests on 6 September, 2005. See *The Jamaica Gleaner* (2005) 'We'll do it again – GOLDING PROMISES MORE PROTESTS'. September 7. p. A1

Evidently, the historical deployment of crude political tactics (reflected in damaging street protests and illegal roadblocks) by political parties to win electoral support is losing favour with some segments of the Jamaican population. The wariness and cynicism which attends the presence and involvement of politicians in citizen protest is linked to the historical participation of Jamaican political parties in the assumption, consolidation and institutionalization of violence as a tool in electoral contest (see Gray, 2004). Based on the evidence presented thus far in this study, popular citizen protest is laden with and constantly reproduces the remnants of this historical use of violence. Jamaican political parties have, in instances, helped to distort citizen action either by assuming violence as a tool or by failing to engender the type of civil discourse and political action in which violence and uncivil behaviour has no place. Hence, when there is any kind of social mobilisation, that residual relationship of violence and political hostility spills into the action to such an extent that the protest campaign takes on a partisan hue, and as on automatic pilot, drives itself. The consequence, sometimes, is that very legitimate and genuine protests become tainted by partisanship[93].

The rejection (if not of the intent but the execution) of the September 2005 protests suggest that significant groups in the Jamaican society wish to migrate beyond old style political leadership and action that do not solve their central problems. Indeed, rather than old style opportunistic protests, some commentators called on the country's opposition 'to articulate an alternative economic policy and show that it is responsible

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[93] The protests over human rights abuses following the 7-10 July, 2001 police operation in Western Kingston (details in chapter 6) was one instance where citizen action had become enmeshed in political party hostility and assumed such a violent, partisan tinge that the genuine and critical issues of human rights abuses were misplaced. Although twenty-seven civilians had died at the hands of the police in this incident, many of my interviewees (PN24; PN12; PN11 and PN27) dismissed the protests as little more than political party 'one-upmanship'. Further, the opportunity for civil discourse and engagement, embodied in the West Kingston Commission of Enquiry, established by the government to investigate the incident (or perhaps more accurately to appease human rights lobby groups), was also subordinated to political party hostility. Some members of the citizenry who were called upon to testify, including political actors, not only boycotted the proceedings but were seen to engage with the inquiry according to political party allegiance (see *The Jamaica Gleaner*, 2002, January 6).

enough to govern' (see Buddan, 2005; Buckley, 2005). This situation exposes but still does not resolve the tremendous theoretical lacuna in discussions regarding the appropriate role for political parties and politicians at protest sites. Within a context of historic political factionalism and violence, can Jamaican political parties and politicians effectively execute this role? I answer this question in the following way.

The very nature of citizen politics, particularly protests and demonstrations, invites the participation of the politician. Indeed, some citizens even tend to gauge the success of their protest, in part, based on their ability to attract the attention of politicians. Much more than that, liberal democratic and civil society theories require political parties and politicians to represent people's interest and so we expect that they have (or ought to have) a legitimate interest in people's concerns. Following this line of reasoning, politicians do have an obligation to be present at protest and have a legitimate role to play during and/or after protest. One of the central tasks of the politician at the scene of the protest, especially if he/she is the elected representative, is to assist with the articulation of the issues. This role is a critical requirement of citizen action in some developing contexts as the attempt by particularly poor and marginalized constituencies to articulate their concerns are sometimes stifled by poor eloquence, education and literacy levels.

My own observation of protest performance in Jamaica reveals that high doses of anger and frustration also impinge on the capacity of some citizens to effectively articulate their concerns especially via the media. The political party representatives should, in other words, be able to clearly and objectively express the concerns of those citizens on behalf of whom they speak. Politicians, particularly those of opposition parties, are also obliged to organize, facilitate and/or guide the actions of protestors both on the streets and at the negotiation table. In this case, they are required to channel the anger and grievance of protestors into more legitimate and less disruptive and illegal ways. The view of some observers is that the Jamaican political opposition has failed wholesale in this regard and has lost sight of its real role within popular protest politics (see Buddan, 2005; Buckley, 2005). There is also a perception among some interviewees that when the Jamaican

people are protesting about injustice or are demanding justice, rarely are political leaders 'there with them' (PN21), responding empathetically to their concerns as distinct from merely operating in a manipulative way to the protest. These observations clearly have less to do with who occupies the corridors of power but more about how people's concerns are addressed and within what time frame.

To say, however, that there will not be elements of political opportunism at protest is to misunderstand the nature of politics and the power of the protest tool. Conversely, to argue that Jamaican politicians are only present at popular protest action in order to capitalize on people's pain for self-interested pursuits is perhaps to be overly cynical. The following quotations from two former Jamaican Members of Parliament capture the essence of the political dilemma present in the Jamaican context:

> PN13: There is politicization [read as 'partisanization'] of protest, absolutely. There is no doubt about that. I am under no illusions whatsoever. Politicians can be highly opportunistic but they look at it in reverse. The political representative has to be there. I mean there is no way that the people in my constituency could be protesting about something, and especially in a forceful manner, and I am not there. It is extremely important to be a part of something like that, both in solidarity with a cause when the cause is right and to try and explain, mollify in instances where, whether right or wrong, the protest is getting beyond any useful purpose.

> PN8: It could impact the spirit of the protest when politicians attach themselves to it in a purely partisan way. Given how our political arrangements have evolved over time, partisan political arrangements – because people doubt the sincerity of politicians in that context, it is not a good thing for politicians or political parties to try to embrace or 'buy out' the protest. Sometimes, it is better that we leave it to the communities.

It is evident from the preceding discussion that, under particular circumstances, political parties and politicians at a protest site automatically give it a character and can unquestionably alter the existing mood of a protest in particular situations. It is however difficult to argue that their overarching presence at the site of a demonstration impinges on the authenticity of the claims being made. In fact, only when politicians misrepresent

the nature of the protest or neglect to use their influence to present its uncivil manifestations such as violence that political actors can affect the character and tenor of a protest action. I end this section by reiterating that although the majority of the protests which occur in Jamaica are not driven by party politics, the Jamaican political culture, nonetheless, continues to express remnants of political party hostilities and factionalism. Inevitably, this sometimes filters into popular citizen action. Since the character of protest politics has a great deal to do with the quality of civil society, the adoption by political parties and politicians of a more participatory form of linkage with civil society and citizen action (as opposed to electoralist, clientelist forms) may be a constructive move. This means facilitating the concerns of grassroots constituents through organized civil society groups and community networks. This would, in turn, make localized protests, particularly in slum areas, less susceptible to partisan divisiveness and offer the poorer classes more viable opportunities to make demands about collective concerns.

## 9.7    SUMMARY

It is evident from chapters 6 and 7 that there has sometimes been a disproportionate attention given to obtaining *attention* and *appeasement* (to pacify) as opposed to *amelioration* (to make better) in the practice of protest by Jamaican citizens as well as in the politics of response engaged in by the Jamaican state. As a result, part of what citizens view as effective protest involves an identifiable cycle from built-up frustration and rage to violent venting through roadblocks, demonstration and police-citizen clashes, and then to appeasement and pacification from official (state) sources with some minor concessions. In other words, missing from the political discourse and practice of grievance politics in Jamaica is the ameliorative aspects of citizen action – how to comprehensively make better the conditions that have caused an upset. In this chapter, I explored the politics of state response, including the impact and outcomes as well as the worth of the existing modalities of protest. I also looked at the effectiveness of hostile demonstrations by critically examining the response of the Jamaican State to specific protest campaigns and the potential impact of such interventions on civil protest and civil society. Based on these findings, I draw the following conclusions.

Overall, the empirical data indicates a trend towards a decline in the levels of protest over inadequate public utilities in Jamaica. This is linked, in part, to positive steps taken by the Jamaican state to increase the availability and access to public goods to more of its citizens. There is now greater telephone coverage thanks to the introduction of mobile competitors in the telecommunications market. The work of the Rural Electrification Programme in extending the access to power supply to all parishes has also proved to be a definite disincentive to protest and the continuing efforts of the National Water Commission to bring potable water to more communities through its 'Rapid Response and 'Black Tank' programmes appear to have lessened the number of protests in this regard. On this basis of this, it would appear that citizen protest, though largely violent, have been effectual in as far as it draws attention to otherwise neglected problem areas.

Given, however, that there is an enormous disparity between the number of social protests recorded per year in Jamaica and the number of cases that result in adequate and systematic amelioration, it is doubtful whether citizen protests in this context, compel the sort of comprehensive responses required from the state to address the wide range of social ills that plague the Jamaican citizenry. In other words, on balance, of the under 300 social protests recorded annually in Jamaica over bad road conditions, lack of water and police misconduct, only very few (selected cases) have resulted in the amelioration of the grievance to the satisfaction of citizens. This is even while the state may have responded to many protests, albeit by paying lip service to the concern. Indeed, based on the evidence of this chapter, I suggest that poor quality responses, embodied in either non-response, delayed response, sham response or partial response has come to represent the main official response to popular protest in this context. That the annual number of protests over 'lack of water' nearly doubled in the space of a year – from a low of 14 in 2003 to a high of 27 in 2004 (Police National Computer Centre, 2005) and there is increasing concerns over the cost of public utilities suggests that comprehensive, meaningful state responses to citizens needs are still not available from the Jamaican state.

Giving attention to the tenor of civilian politics and the desire to build a truly *civil* society, the outcomes of popular protest must also account for the levels of violence engaged in by citizen-protestors and whether the project of civil society, including social capital formation, civic participation and civil discourse, is advanced by these models of activism. Certainly, my research reveals a distinct rejection for the existing paradigm of popular protest on account of its deleterious consequences on the economy, political order and civil society. That the state almost always responds affirmatively to violent protest, embodied in illegal roadblocks and vandalism, forcefully suggests that uncivil protest has been given credence in the Jamaican context. Based on the empirical evidence uncovered in this study, it would appear that the Jamaican state has managed to sustain the impression in the minds of a huge section of the public that it responds slowly and less willingly to civil forms of negotiation and more readily when forced to by violent confrontation and disruption. In fact, the more violent a protest, the more comprehensive the state response appears. The Jamaican State thus finds itself in a vicious circle – a no-win situation where, on the one hand, some sectors of the political community act in the firm belief that they cannot be heard any other way except through violent negotiation, and on the other, where political representatives respond positively or affirmatively to violent demands or attach themselves (sometimes opportunistically) to unconstructive protests, thereby feeding into and effectively normalizing negative expressions and modalities of citizen activism.

Poor quality state response exposes two interconnected (albeit unfortunate) developments, which condition the character of popular citizen politics in this context. Primarily, it illustrates the fundamental and problematic divorce between popular aspirations and state policy in Jamaica. This dilemma rests with a failure on the part of the Jamaican State to address in a comprehensive and meaningful way localized problems and, on a more structural level, to strengthen the complaint mechanisms and communicative structures to correspond better with citizens about their problems. It is therefore this sustained neglect of conversation, communication and connection by Jamaican political representatives with their constituents and the wider citizenry and the

failure to resolve their concerns in meaningful ways which trigger violent disruptive protests and ensure its persistence (and possible institutionalization) as an accepted model of citizen negotiation. A paradigmatic shift in state responses may therefore compel alternative approaches to citizen mobilization and action, and wrest open spaces for the organized engagement and participation by networks of citizens, more in line with the civil discourse and action and the normative agenda of civil society.

There is, however, something to be said about the weight of state non-response. Although a non-response under specific circumstances may be read as contempt for citizens, not responding sometimes is likely to have the effect of discouraging the sort of protestation which is illegal, excessive and disruptive. Jamaica has begun to witness some examples of this where some political representatives are refusing to respond to protestors who engage in violent protest or who deploy browbeating tactics in their efforts to draw attention to their problems. That the government is seen by a wide cross section of the population to be more conciliatory and a lot more receptive and amenable to citizen activism (including protests) and political participation means that there is political opportunity for networks of citizens to manoeuvre within and impact on the political system in more constructive ways. This is not to say that compelling the state to address community concerns through broad-based popular pressure will soon fade away – and neither is this desirable.

This chapter is not arguing for a halt to the democratic exercise of civil protest. Indeed, civil protest has proved itself time and again in Jamaica as a viable and effective weapon to solicit attention and generate more encompassing remedies to local problems than conventional means. What this chapter and, indeed the study, suggests is that violence cannot eclipse or be seen as a legitimate and more useful option of generating state response than modalities of peaceful protestation and civil negotiation. This is because, however fashionable, the employment of radicalized and/or extremist forms of protest is evidence of the increasing rupturing or shattering of a *civil* way of life and the retreat of *civil* politics.

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# Conclusion

## 10.1   INTRODUCTION

The fundamental goal of this thesis was to examine the nature and tenor of contemporary popular protest in Jamaica through the theoretical lens of civil (and uncivil) society. It is therefore through an in-depth exploration of popular protest – its paroxysms, dynamics, complexities, contradictions, the socio-economic and political framework which underlines it, the moral economy which energizes it, the vocabulary of emotions which both engenders and sustains, it as well as its existing mood, mandate, impact and outcomes – that I have attempted to resolve questions about the character of citizen politics and the quality of civil society in Jamaica. Assessing the quality of civil society viz. a. viz. civic engagement, voluntarism, community organizing and social capital formation is not novel. The plethora of recent work on the subject (Boyd, 2004; Putnam, 2002; 1993; 1995; Deaken, 2001; Barber, 1998; 1984; Foweraker, 1995; Guha, 1997; Etzioni, 1996; 1995; Tarrow, 1994) attests to this. This thesis however, has gone further. It has stretched the conceptual definitions of citizen politics and civil society to incorporate into academic analysis not only the specific ways in which citizens engage collectively to defend their interests and make claims upon the state, but also to account for the brand and character of that engagement, particularly the extent to which it serves or undermines the otherwise normative agenda of civil society of which it is a part (see chapter 2).

Why was this expanded conceptual approach to looking at and understanding citizen politics and civil society necessary? For one, the peculiarities in political culture, historical development and socio-economic conditions as well as everyday grievance politics among other aspects of citizen politics in Jamaica expose, in explicit ways, the limitations and shortcomings of the term *civil society*. For example, as I outlined in chapter 2, the established idea of civil society is that of a dense network of civil

associations that promote stability and the effectiveness of the democratic polity both through the effects of so-called 'habits of the heart' (tolerance, moderation, a willingness to compromise, respect for opposing viewpoints and the rule of law) and the ability of associations to mobilize citizens on behalf of public causes (Foley & Edwards, 1997; Putnam, 1995; 1993; Diamond, 1994; Shils, 1992). At the same time, although rarely given analytic prominence in current scholarship on civil society, it is becoming ever more apparent that not all political behaviours and/or networks of citizens contribute to effective democratic governance and, at times, they may even become the basis of civil strife. These networks often include criminal gangs, extremist organizations and hate groups. Outside this frame, the scholarly evidence suggests that groups of ordinary citizens may also participate in activities that skirt the boundaries of legality; blur the lines or traverse between the realms of legality and illegality. This is while still others attempt to usurp the legitimate authority of the state and establish their own counter-governments or, depending on the circumstance, display outright rejection of the rule of law (Johnson, 2005; Boyd, 2004; Swift, 1999; Munroe, 1999; Whitehead, 1997; Diamond, 1994).

In short, underlying this study is the assumption that civil society is a crucial arena for democracy, development and citizenship but if it is to serve any useful purpose, we are obliged to acknowledge its potential for self-destruction and disintegration. Indeed, civil society is as much about a set of non-state institutions whose members associate and facilitate various patterns of collective action as an arena for cultivating moral attributes and responsible behaviour. That the concept has hitherto rarely departed in any radical way from its normative standing in the scholarship disallows objective analyses of citizen politics in contexts such as Jamaica. In this regard, rather than simply fortify the presumption in the contemporary scholarship of civil society as a liberal and tolerant order, this thesis challenges this interpretation by acknowledging and deliberately foregrounding the possibility and reality of *incivility* within the theoretical and political domains of *civil* society. By the same token, the thesis recognizes the influence of uncivil actors, political practices and unconstructive patterns of citizen engagement and

negotiation embodied in popular protest which, albeit liberatory, may cause real disruptions to the building and/or transformation of citizen politics and civil society in Jamaica.

Of course, the challenges confronting civilian politics in Jamaica could not be divorced from the performance of the state, measured in political decision-making, political will, political representation, political accountability, political inclusion and political sensitivity. This thesis illustrates the disjuncture between perceived government under-performance and the manner in which citizens elect to express their discontent. The study therefore offered an analytic framework based on qualitative interpretivism and social constructionism to illuminate our understanding of the way in which citizens mobilize and participate in the system and how they view and interpret their involvement. In so doing, the analytical approach recognizes the influential role of structure – political and social institutions as well as patterns of political representation – in shaping political behaviour. It, however, extends beyond structure to take stock of individual agency and the responsibility of citizens in determining the character of citizen politics and civil society. This process of establishing how macro forces impact on micro-level motivations and vice versa is part of a process called 'structuration' (Giddens, 1979) - how structure influences behaviour as much as how behaviour impacts on structure forcing it to change (see chapter 3).

In this sense, the case study of Jamaica facilitated an examination of whether the increasing discontent of citizens with the performance of their (representative) government was giving rise to unconventional and alternative modes of political engagement such as violent protest and demonstrations. It explored the nature of these unconventional political practices and examined the extent to which violent protest is effective in securing for the especially disadvantaged classes their political demands. On this basis, the study examined how protest is inescapably performed within the spotlight of the mass media, particularly television, how demands are filtered through the mass media and the extent to which media coverage and treatment, in part, determines the

tenor of protest in the Jamaican context. It also facilitated an examination of the alternate forms of citizen governance at the community level, the influence and impact of rogue citizens on civic life, including popular citizen mobilizations and community organisation. A review of state response to protest and the impact of politician involvement on protest politics were also undertaken. All this was with a view to ascertaining whether popular protests and demonstrations represent a rebirth of reinvigorated citizens in Jamaica or a retreat of norms of civil discourse, engagement and negotiation and a descent into uncivil society.

What does this empirical case study of contemporary popular protest in Jamaica reveal? Based on the examination of the broad themes outlined above, several theoretical deductions stood out which forms the basis for understanding the nature of citizen politics and civil society in Jamaica. These are: (1) poor representation, including feelings of political exclusion and injustice among the citizenry, underscores the emergence of *roadblock democracy* in Jamaica, (2) disruptive demonstrations, including violence, forms the basis of *civil protest* in Jamaica, (3) the media affects protest performance and outcomes while talk radio's potential as a civic conduit is obscured by limits to full participation and a problematic discourse, (4) rogue actors masquerading as civic leaders and stage-managing protest endangers civil society, (5) although violence has emerged as a viable protest tool in the Jamaican context, the poor benefit the least from employing such negative sanctions, and (6) the quality of state response to popular protest influences the tenor of civilian politics in Jamaica. I elaborate on these and examine their implications in the following sections.

## 10.2.    THE CONSOLIDATION OF ROADBLOCK DEMOCRACY IN JAMAICA.

The hypothesis here is that poor political representation, including feelings of political exclusion and injustice among the Jamaican citizenry, has managed to consolidate a sort of 'roadblock democracy' in Jamaica. This assumption finds theoretical origins in the work of scholars such as Norris (1999) who proposed that declining performance of representative democracy had not only resulted in voter down-turn but triggered

unconventional forms of political participation such as protest politics. Munroe (1999) made similar suppositions in relation to Jamaica. Having had deep roots in the centuries-old resistance movements against slavery and colonialism (see chapter 4), it is not surprising that popular protest is the principal weapon employed for large segments of the marginalized population in Jamaica in response to what they perceive as government neglect. Although having a more recent history, the roadblock-demonstration has become a ubiquitous apparatus in grievance politics in this context. Usually, this mode of protest is deployed by citizens to expose a condition that does not serve their interest, to lodge a complaint or criticism or to illustrate that a situation does not meet with their satisfaction.

On the basis of the evidence presented in this study, Jamaican citizens are responding to the many faces of poverty – unemployment, low-income, crime and dilapidated social amenities. Since together these are fundamental to basic survival and the quality of life, the study confirms a strong association between perceptions of government underperformance and the frequency of unconventional forms of popular protest in this context. The increased expectations of citizens, their awareness of government's obligation to provide (good) governance and the perceived elusiveness of justice (social, political, economic and judicial) therefore compel contentious citizen politics in Jamaica. For example, deficient delivery of collective consumption and social services – water, proper roads, sewerage and electrification – and the prohibitive costs for telephone service, water and power usage and public transportation trigger frequent mobilizations and roadblock-demonstrations. Issues of justice, security and representation, embodied in human rights violations (police killings and abuse), inadequate and untrustworthy mechanisms of redress for grievances, insufficient protection against crime and the right to ply their trade also regularly drive large numbers of citizens out into the streets mounting roadblocks and engaging in disorderly demonstrations. The research thus confirms Baker's (2001:56) proposition that '[Jamaican] citizens have no sense of being able to exercise effective control over the direction of the state except through vigorous and sometimes violent protest'.

## 10.3 MAXIMUM DISRUPTION FORMS THE BASIS OF *CIVIL* PROTEST IN JAMAICA.

In the face of widespread perception of state neglect among considerable segments of the citizenry, grassroots activism in Jamaica tends to be linked to an ingrained moral economy built on the desire of the poor to survive, subsist, better their lives and assert their rights to justice and, in some instances, to claim autonomy for themselves and their community (see chapters 6 and 8). The empirical evidence however suggests that peaceful forms have, in the main, taken a backseat to intimidation, mayhem and violence in the models of popular protest institutionalized in Jamaica. These violent strategies are embodied in fiery roadblocks, disruptive street demonstrations and, in extreme cases, police–citizen clashes and gunfire exchanges, arson (burning police vehicles; public and private property), mob activity (looting and vandalism) as well as out and out war with the police. Aggressive negotiation, including violence, have therefore become a workable *modus operandi* in wresting justice from the state, that is, collective consumption, the right to subsist and, in instances, even freedom from official (police) surveillance and other norms of modern social control. Violence helps to raise the visibility of their demands through its coverage on the mass media and the perception that more forceful strategies elicit more immediate responses from state bureaucracy. In the context of Jamaica where donmanship and criminality is increasingly normalized and political party competition historically assumes violence as a tool of contestation (Gray, 2004; Charles, 2002; Harriot, 2000; 2003; Stone, 1980) violence as an apparatus in civilian politics is not all that extraordinary. In other words, given that violence has always been imported into the political mix, popular citizen politics necessarily exhibits residual elements of extra-legality and violence. Indeed, the research reveals a lack of concern on the part of some citizens for alternative (read as peaceful) methods. Recall the perspective of interviewees PN18*b* - 'the easiest way to announce that you are unhappy is to get into these negative behaviours' and PN1 - 'if we feel we naah get [not getting] justice, we will bun dung [burn down] the place'.

It is therefore the argument of this thesis that grassroots activism (and civilian politics more broadly) in Jamaica contains multiple elements, both legal and extra-legal. It is not always guided by the rules which inform civil discourse, civil action and civil negotiation which connote a sense of law-abidingness, orderliness and peacefulness. In fact, 'to be civil is to refrain from lawless behaviour likely to disrupt the political community' (Boyd, 2004:26; cf. Diamond, 1994) and there is also a requirement of public civility (Shils, 1992:5), especially from 'those remote peripheries towards the centres of society' which makes a considerable difference to the political order and functions to sustain civil society. It is for this reason that violence-as-strategy is indefensible in accepted modalities of civil protest (see Table 2.1, chapter 2).

### 10.3.1 Violence-as-Strategy is Untenable in Models of Civil Protest.

Whereas disruptive demonstrations, including fiery roadblocks, rigid barricades and burning tyres, are triggered by genuine grievances and injustice and whereas the government's seemingly ritualized inaction humiliates and angers citizens, the moral economy of the poor is not a sufficient explanation for the extremity and destructiveness dominant in the protestation models currently in force in Jamaica. This brand of demand-making rebellion is problematic because (1) genuine citizen mobilizations, when executed in antagonistic ways, run the risk of being hijacked by persons with contradictory or outright criminal intentions, (2) legitimate forces of activism (community groups, student groups; youth movements) will potentially co-opt these so-called 'weapons of the weak' and thereby perpetuate the normalization of destructive mobilization and political negotiation tactics rather than advance strategies that can build a truly participatory and functioning civil society, and (3) the deployment of combative protestation styles gives the impression of instability and a departure from the rule of law and hence invites repression by the state in the name of order.

These developments not only serve to alienate possible supporters but instead perpetuate the further marginalization of the marginal sector and undermine the cause and goals for which they protest. An impression is also being formed in the political culture that

protest cannot take the form of civil discourse and organized civil action. This is not to say that civility does not allow room for overt acts of resistance or criticism of unjust laws and practices. Indeed, roadblock politics, in certain circumstances for example, to protest against bad road conditions, is sometimes a necessary and positive action. However, from the point of view of civility and civil politics properly understood, fiery roadblocks and other forms of violent protest presume superiority to the rule of law as well as disrespect to others who feel differently or actively object to the action (see Boyd, 2004; chapter 6, section 6.1, Table 2.1, chapter 2).

### 10.3.2  Why Employing Negative Sanctions is a Costly Strategy for the Poor

I wish to reiterate Piven & Cloward's (1977:25) theoretical perspective on this issue here because it finds basis in the Jamaica context. They argue persuasively that the amount of leverage that protestors gain by applying negative sanctions (violent tactics) is dependent on: (a) whether the contribution withheld is crucial to others, (b) whether or not those affected by the disruption have resources to concede and (c) whether the obstructionist group can protect itself adequately from reprisals or consequences. How does this thesis relate to the Jamaican context? First, as I argue in this study, unlike factory workers or students, the marginals such as the unemployed usually operate in non-institutional settings and thereby do not have contributions such as labour to withdraw. The poor in Jamaica, as elsewhere, in other words, cannot strike so their only recourse is usually to riot or block roads in order to create maximum disruption of others (see Piven & Cloward, 1977:24). Second, the economic constraints facing the Jamaican state largely determines its capacity to concede resources. Thirdly, in some instances, unless a protest has managed to galvanize the support of powerful groups (politicians, business sector, media etc.), it is very easy for the state to repress or ignore these campaigns and the demands of protestors.

Once these criteria are stated, it becomes evident that it is the poor who are usually in the least strategic position to benefit from this kind of defiance. Blocking roads, barricading schools, burning and looting, as well as exchanging gunfire with the police are no doubt

powerful forms of direct citizen action. However, they impact not just the source of citizens' discontent (the government) but everyone. Schools are shut, transportation is halted, productivity is diminished and food supply is disrupted. The political reverberations are, in other words, enormous. This may of course force the state to act, as I illustrate with examples in Chapter 9, but the disadvantage appears to fall more to the protestor and less so to the state and other powerful interests. While not objecting to protests and the need for citizens with genuine concerns to mount protests, it is problematic when almost all protests operate in breach of the law and depart from the dispositions and tenets of civil politics. Scholarship must therefore decide whether it is justifiable for citizen-protestors to assume a stance of *bullying* (as opposed to *lobbying*) in order to achieve results. It is for this reason that, following this study, I have reached a similar conclusion to that of a former student activist:

> PN3:    People don't have to loot and burn down the place for government to respond. They really don't have to – but I believe it is a fundamental failure on the part of the government in bringing these people to book [to prosecute them], to send a message that says we don't have any problems with you demonstrating, it is a free society – as long as you don't block roads and burn tyres in the streets, burn buildings and destroy the public infrastructure that will cost you more than you trying to get from the government.

The study suggests that violence cannot eclipse or be seen as a legitimate and more constructive option for generating a state response than peaceful protest and civil negotiation, properly executed. This is because the employment of extremist forms of protest is evidence of the negation of the rule of law in Jamaica, an increasing rupturing of a *civil* way of life and the retreat of *civil* politics.

## 10.4    THE (NEWS) MEDIA INFLUENCES PROTEST PERFORMANCE AND OUTCOMES.

Popular protest and popular media (television, radio, newspapers) in Jamaica are mutually constitutive. Each depends upon, and influences, the other in dramatic ways. The study reveals that there is a sharp attention by protestors to the effect of their struggle on the

news media. This is because the media is able to expand their concerns beyond the limited spatial environment of their local communities to a wider national context, generate a stir of public opinion, particularly through the popular radio talk back medium and provoke a swift response from the state. Based on the evidence presented in the study, it is the less educated and affluent citizens who most rely on and need the reach and clout of television and radio to access their political representatives and to hold them to account. Yet, regrettably, it is this disadvantaged group which suffers from *restricted access* to and unconstructive utilization of this domain. This is due, in part, to the unique mix of genuine grievance and pure exhibitionism operative within Jamaican protest politics. Since a commercially-driven media locate themselves at this intersection, they become the platform upon which all of these protest performances (both civil and uncivil) are played out. By virtue of this, the (news) media have a direct contributory impact on the nature and tone of popular protest in the Jamaican context.

The perspectives of many interviewees as well as the audio-visual examination of protests suggest that while the media allow protestors to vent in cathartic fashion and act as a ready channel to access their representatives, they also present an opportunity for protestors *to act* and *to entertain*. As a result, animation and hyperbole, including violence, is part of a combination of strategies which a considerable segment of the Jamaican underclass views as effective protest. In short, there is an issue of credibility that plagues protest politics in this context. Conversely, poor coverage and treatment of protest incidents by the media such as foregrounding dramatic and spectacular episodes rather than communicating a community's concern makes a mockery of protestors, diminishes the integrity of the protest, dilutes the authority of the message and distracts from the real goal of the democratic exercise. It is this inescapable interaction between citizen politics and media practice in this context which implicates the media in the theoretical collision between civil protests and the normative demands of civil society.

This situation is even more apparent within the arena of talk radio. The radio talk show is being used inventively in Jamaica as a valve to filter complaint, criticism and debate. It is

proving to be a workable check on government. Nonetheless, the evidence suggests that its own inherent weakness as a potential civic conduit bridging the communicative gap between citizens and elected representatives and as a model of civil discourse is increasingly apparent. For one thing, it is monopolized by the more educated and affluent citizens and so most of the disadvantaged who depend on its facility participate merely as spectator-listeners of this medium. Second, whether the radio 'call-in' shows can engage in 'strong democratic talk' (Barber, 1984) embodied in democratic negotiation and political bargaining rather than malicious political banter and political partisanship is, at present, doubtful. Their imposing presence and unique function in civil politics is however worthy of serious scholarly investigation. Overall, the study suggests that since Jamaican media is so integrated within citizen politics, they must be seen not as detached bystanders but as central actors in the constitution of civil society. In short, the notions of 'media accountability' and 'media responsibility' (Bardoel & d'Haenens, 2004) are not hollow theoretical terms but powerfully dictate the manner in which the media should consider and treat the public. They also speak to the obligations and expectations that society has regarding the media. At the same time, as Lippman (1922) asserts, civil society cannot live by 'the press' alone. In short, the media cannot be expected to become surrogates for civic institutions and enlightened, active and engaged citizens.

## 10.5 OUTLAW GOVERNANCE MASQUERADING AS CIVIC LEADERSHIP ENDANGERS CIVIL SOCIETY

The study was also concerned with the presence and embeddedness of rogue actors in the local community because of their longstanding civic leadership and influence within many local urban communities in Jamaica. This discussion was based on the theoretical premise that civil society does not only comprise of dense associations and relational networks of citizens working together for the common good and fostering positive social capital. It also includes uncivil actors – criminals, hate groups, fanatics, terrorists, dons and sundry lumpens – who enjoy the rights and privileges of citizenship but who are not prepared to abide by the normative principles governing civil society such as a presumption of legality, tolerance and inclusion. In this regard, the research recognizes

that civil society also has the potential to produce and transmit negative social capital (Boyd, 2004; Swift, 1999; Munroe, 1999; Whitehead, 1997; Barber, 1998; Putnam, 2002; 1995). Based on the empirical evidence presented in the preceding chapters, rogue citizens such as dons and criminal gangs oversee the most extreme form of incivility – crime and violence (Keane, 1996). Their very presence, occupation and encroachment on the civil sphere pose a direct challenge to the legitimate governance of the Jamaican state and underscore the security dilemma it confronts. Moreover, their capacity to interweave themselves within otherwise civic initiatives and bodies and traverse easily between the boundaries of legality and extra-legality represents a fundamental setback for civil society anywhere. This development is even more problematic in contexts such as Jamaica because local community governance structures and authority systems are usually the starting point crucial to bolstering civil society and a ready base from which civic interaction, engagement and negotiation at the grassroots level are encouraged.

Donmanship complicates the promise of communal solidarity and inter-relational cohesion that civil society engenders. For one, the existing basis of commonality and collaboration in many urban neighbourhoods revolves around defiant dons and area leaders who utilize it to pursue extra-legal actions in the pursuit of wealth, power and prestige. Second, these communities serve as the headquarters of organized criminal organizations and safety zones against police action. Third, since citizen-residents of social spaces controlled by rogue actors live under rigid totalitarian circumstances, it negates the normative assumption of civil society as a free and charitable space and betrays the very meaning of civil governance. Fourth, based on the perspectives from the interviewee data, it is fair to conclude that the presence of rogue orders and their incursions into the civic life of urban neighbourhoods, including the stage-management of protest, nullifies genuine attempts at collective deliberation, negotiation and the autonomous engagement of citizens for common action. In other words, despite an apparent political agenda – to survive poverty, secure public goods essential to meaningful living – and leaders (dons), many marginalized citizens are unable to utilize

the *bargaining power* acquired through forceful protest to collectively and legitimately voice and resolve their dilemmas at a political level.

## 10.6  STATE RESPONSE INFLUENCES THE CHARACTER AND TONE OF PROTEST.

The response of the Jamaican State to various protest campaigns was examined in order to gauge the effectiveness of disruptive demonstrations and whether or not the quality of the state's response to popular protest had any effect on its existing character. Based on the analysis of a variety of selected case examples as well as the interviewee data (see chapter 9), I draw the conclusion that capricious state responses to citizen protest contribute to the normalization and institutionalization of uncivil protestation models in Jamaica. There is no set or predictable response by the Jamaican state to protest. State response is, in the main, inconsistent and largely depends on such factors as the magnitude of the protest, whether it involves a considerable number of protestors, whether it has broad-based support from powerful groups such as politicians, the merchant class, intellectuals and other members of the middle and upper classes as well as popular entertainers. State response to popular demonstrations also depends on whether the media provides it with sustained attention and the extent of violence attending it (cf. Piven & Cloward, 1977). In fact, the more violent the protest, the more comprehensive and immediate is the response of the Jamaican state.

The examples show that positive steps have been taken by the Jamaican state to increase the availability and access to public goods to more of its citizens, some only after the deployment of massive mobilisations and protest and others, as part of the execution of public policy and state initiatives. Examples of this include the opening up of the telecommunications market which led to increased access to mobile telephony and landline telephone service to citizens, the Rural Electrification Programme which extended power supply to all parishes and the introduction of several water supply initiatives. The most recent statistical data of roadblock-demonstrations (2000-2005) shows a downward trend with regard to protests over inadequate public utilities in

Jamaica. On the strength of these findings, it is fair to conclude that some citizen protest, particularly those that involve heavy mobilisations and violence, have some impact in as far as they direct the state's attention viz. a viz. the media to otherwise neglected problem areas. Other issues, however, arise such as the prohibitive costs for these services, which triggered the September 2005 consumer price protests.

At the same time, the high number of social protests recorded per year in Jamaica (200-300) and the limited number of cases that result in adequate and systematic amelioration does not augur well for citizen perceptions of state performance. When acting in response to vigorous protest action, the quality of the response is, in many instances, poor. This is not to say that the state may not respond, but many interviewees believe that nature of the response is designed to *appease* protestors rather than to *ameliorate* their concerns. Poor quality response, embodied as either non-response, delayed response, sham response or partial response thus largely represents the official response of the Jamaican state to popular protest. To force comprehensive, meaningful state responses, citizens therefore feel compelled to activate less peaceful protest strategies.

### 10.6.1 Inconsistent State Response to Protest Undermines Public Confidence in the System

Poor quality state responses point to a problematic gap between popular aspirations and state policy in Jamaica. The failure on the part of the Jamaican State to address localized problems and, on a more structural level, to strengthen the complaint mechanisms and communicative structures to correspond better with citizens about their problems necessitates disruptive protests and ensures its endurance as an accepted model of citizen negotiation. To break this cycle, a paradigmatic shift in the quality of state responses is required. While neglecting citizen concern is inexcusable, the interviewee perspectives suggest that, in specific circumstances, a non-response by the state has weight. In other words, in circumstances where protestors deploy tactics that negate the very idea of civil politics, political representatives who decline conference with protestors may effectively discourage protestation which is illegal, excessive and disruptive. The argument is not to

discount and diminish the relevance and need for broad-based popular pressure, quite the opposite. Indeed, if the government is seen by a wide cross-section of the population to be largely conciliatory, receptive and tolerant of citizen activism, there is political opportunity for networks of citizens to manoeuvre within and impact on the political system in more constructive ways.

At the same time, poor quality state responses also condition the character of popular citizen politics, particularly when political officials such as Members of Parliament assume a curious stance within protest politics. Such political actors establish linkages with civil society – either as vote- seekers or as the agency through which citizens can access or participate in governance (Posner, 2004; Diamond & Gunther, 2001; Rosenblum, 2000; Diamond, 1994). As I noted in chapter 9, depending on the nature of those linkages, their relationship with civil politics can be dubious. The research shows that through Jamaica's entrenched history of patron-clientelism and the historical relationship of the political parties with grassroots people and politics, the linkage with civil society is ambivalent. It is the argument of this study that political representatives, particularly MPs, are obliged to operate within citizen protest with integrity. This is because the types of issues over which Jamaican citizens protest rise sufficiently above partisan interests and so the forms protest take must be freely determined and not guided by partisan agendas.

## 10.7    SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This empirical study, first and foremost, challenges civil society's traditionally normative principles by foregrounding the possibility of negative norms such as violence, intolerance, discord, and incivility in its participatory (and discursive) aspects. With a few exceptions (Boyd, 2004; Barber, 1998; 1984; Whitehead, 1997; Keane, 1996; Shils, 1992) civil society literature tends to focus on its more positive features as a liberal and tolerant order. This research addresses this gap in the scholarship by delineating the experiences of incivility in the Jamaican context. In the process, it has contributed to providing a fuller account of the nature of civil society and the place of civil norms in popular citizen action. Second, the study contributes to the scholarship on Jamaica which has, so far, not

sufficiently addressed the implications of popular protest politics for civil society in Jamaica. Third, it also contributes to ongoing discussions about what or who constitutes civil society by arguing for active participation by structured groups as well as loose networks and relationships which may or may not crystallise into formal groups. In this regard, the study also foregrounds the definition of civil society as a *social value* in which norms of legality, respect and tolerance are fundamental.

Since the study was concerned with the nature and character of popular protest in Jamaica, it was obliged to uncover not only how and why citizens protest but delve into the ethos, attitudes and emotions urging this type of political behaviour as well as the perspectives on the conduct of citizen politics within the broader framework of the requirements of civil society. As a result, the study was necessarily qualitative. I therefore employed the case study method. This approach to generating the data was useful because it allowed me to pull together a range of empirical sources – interviewees, audio-visual material, documents as well as (participant) observation – in order to derive the best possible explanations and drawing sound theoretical conclusions. This qualitative framework, grounded in the philosophical framework of interpretivism and social constructionism as well as the analytic tool of discourse analysis, generated insights into the nature and tone of popular protest in Jamaica. As I noted in chapter 3, interpretation allows for multiple meanings of an event because the research begins with the assumption that the character of popular protest cannot exist independently of the meanings people attach to it or the way it is socially constructed. The idea was therefore to solicit the participants' perspectives about protest and civil society in Jamaica based on their own interpretations and the various meanings that they attach to these issues. In short, the approach was successful as it represented the efforts of ordinary citizens to make sense of their own politics based on their own (normative) notions of how it ought to be.

These empirical findings about Jamaican popular protest facilitate an understanding of the practice, character and impact of uncivil politics across the developing and developed world as well as extend existing generalizations about the nature of civil society in its

broader context[94]. Indeed, there is much to be learned from the Jamaican case in terms of our understanding of the fabric of civil society in a democratic context. For example, future research may draw pertinent comparisons between the uncivil protest of farmers in India who burned genetically modified crops and protest campaigners who threatened to burn down the McDonalds fast food restaurant and the Jamaican case. The use of the mobile phone in citizen activism in Nigeria also provides enormous parallels with Jamaica. In addition, theoretically, in terms of development and social justice issues, the findings case study on Jamaica provides a richer account of what is likely to be the experience in a range of societies, particularly those in the Third World whose governments face similar socio-economic conditions and whose citizens employ popular protest models to confront their perceived underperformance.

Locating popular protest within the context of current debates on civil (and uncivil) society and governance is also novel. Usually, popular protest finds analytic space only within the theories of collective action, social movements, street politics as well as discussions on democracy which emphasize its liberatory aspects (Jasper & Goodwin, 2003; Bayat 2000; 1997; Pharr & Putnam, 2000; Norris, 1999; Dalton, 1996; Foweraker, 1995; Tarrow, 1994; Scott, 1990; 1985). In this regard, the thesis provides a fresh conceptual framework and new theoretical vistas in which to examine and understand citizen political participation in governance. At the same time, although the case study method was useful, the scope and goal of the research did not allow me to fully explore in detail several dimensions of citizen politics in Jamaica. I outline some of these considerations below.

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[94] For example, the generalizability of these findings is already evidenced in a comparative study of the politics of donmanship and uncivility in Italy and Jamaica carried out by myself and Joseph Soeters. Here, we attempt to expose the emergence and decline of the Mafia by efforts from the state and civil society, in order to determine whether such a destiny was possible in Jamaica. See Johnson, H. & Soeters, J "Jamaican Dons, Italian Godfathers and the chances of a 'reversible destiny'. Forthcoming, *Political Studies.*

## 10.8. FUTURE RESEARCH

### 10.8.1 The Significance of the Liberatory Expressions of Protest

Frequent disruptive outbursts of popular mobilizations and protest (some 200 plus annually) by the marginalized classes in Jamaica has substantially expanded the benefits to them. Although I alluded to the liberatory aspects of protests in chapters 6 and 7, a more substantive separate discussion of this issue is warranted. The street demonstration, for example, has raised the political consciousness of the Jamaican poor by offering them real weapons by which to challenge the shortcomings of the state and enforce their demands. I have argued elsewhere that higglers in the informal economy utilize the political and economic arena of the street to materially and symbolically struggle against the efforts of the state to deny them right to a way of life (Johnson, forthcoming). In fact, rather than passive victims, they are recognized as empowered actors who are using (violent) protest to realize success and social betterment within the otherwise confining socio-economic structures of the Jamaican society. Many marginals are now unafraid to defy the law, challenge the police and, at times, accept the assistance and commanding influence of extra-legal actors – criminal gangs and dons (ibid). Further research may explore the possibility of alternate strategies of political negotiation which may serve the interests of urban informals and Jamaican state.

### 10.8.2 The Requirement of a Reformed State and Active, Responsible Citizenship

A related issue is that protests are operating in a fairly democratic Jamaican environment and at a time when the political climate is very tolerant of protests. For many poor, this means that a momentum of resistance can be maintained even in the face of sporadic state repression. The deliberately offensive tactics that they employ not only illustrate the poor's imposing presence in the public sphere but asserts their right to inclusion and participation. Indeed, the Jamaican case is stark proof that citizens' sense of injustice and discontent must find proper expression through politics. This is because when it does not, it turns to anger which eventually erupts into disruption and violence (Blunkett, 2005; Munroe, 1999). Chapters 6-9 explored the failings of the Jamaican state to install and/or reform localized community structures to improve communication between government

and its constituents by opening more (effective) avenues for citizen participation. Indeed, much of the literature in this regard demand heavy state responsibility in implementing institutional reforms and ensuring that the mechanisms of representation, redress and accountability are adequate, accessible, and transparent, and generally function sufficiently to inspire the confidence of the citizenry (Diamond & Morlino, 2005; Blunkett, 2005; Munroe, 2000; 1999).

Although the study is citizen-centred, it does not address how citizens may make room in the conduct of their politics for these potential participatory options. This notion of 'renewing democracy' (Munroe, 1999) through installing effective deliberative democratic procedures and practices ought also to call into account the practice of politics at the citizen level. Whereas the reform of the state is critical to renewing democracy and a precondition for building and/or transforming civil society, the renewal of democracy must also, of necessity, involve not only the state but the active participation of the citizen and/or the community in governance. Further research might therefore investigate and explore how this may be achieved. Too much energy is placed on the *street aspect* of the collective action and not enough on the political negotiation and lobbying at an organized community and institutional level. The fact is that the Jamaican government can and does facilitate political and pressure group activity and at times, attempt to empower citizens to take action on issues of concern to them. The largely successful work of human rights lobby group, Jamaicans for Justice, attests to this. The state is even credited by many citizens for being conciliatory and welcoming of citizen participation and dialogue (see chapter 9; PN7; cf. Franklyn, 2002). Citizens must however be prepared to assume and exercise power in transparent and responsible ways for themselves. The rationale is evident and fittingly summed up by British politician, David Blunkett (2005:240) when he remarked that:

> Democracy has to be learned and practised. It is difficult to trust or influence political change without any real understanding of the workings of political systems. Citizens need skills of negotiation, persuasion, open-mindedness and self-organization to engage with complex issues [and negotiate effectively and successfully with the political system].

It is within a strong civic culture that these skills have to be acquired, not on the street during mob activity and other manifestations of uncivil political action and discourse.

### 10.8.3  Protest Planning and Organization – Possibilities and Challenges

Based on the research findings, the trend towards low level organization of street protests needs to be examined in greater detail. This is evidenced by their episodic and spontaneous nature, a clear contributory element in its disruptive character. To block a local road or a major thoroughfare as a first and sometimes only strategy of protest is problematic and unsustainable, at least within the context of *civil* society, properly understood. I am not proposing a solid institutionalization of protest or a building of membership organizations. Indeed, Piven & Cloward (1977) identified the attempt to construct long-term organizations out of popular protest action as one of the failures of the American Welfare Rights movements of the mid-to late twentieth century. There is, however, something to be said for the value of identifying, selecting and having spokespersons from among protesting groups. Future research may explore how small networks of citizens, particularly in rural neighbourhoods can be supported to articulate their concerns effectively during protest cycles. I alluded to the role of political actors such as Members of Parliament in chapter 9 as having a role to play in this regard. Political representatives can and do provide demonstrations with a more meaningful outlook thereby protecting protestors from repressive state tactics while helping to articulate the issues viz. a. viz. the media. An investigation which explores the comprehensive role of other actors such as youth groups and community leaders as well as state agents in creating coalitions around thematic protest issues such as consumer issues and collective goods is worthwhile.

In addition, the interview data suggested the risk of 'roadblock democracy' becoming antiquated, futile and hackneyed and the possibility of burnout for the 'roadblock democrats' who are constantly on the frontlines. Although interest in the issues of concern is usually high, energy levels are rarely able to be maintained over long periods of time. Indeed, the interviewees suggest that Jamaican protests are unlikely to last for

more than three days because of people's unwillingness to be mobilized over extended periods of time. Given also the dispositions of impatience, indiscipline and the desire for immediacy of solutions, it maybe important to include in assessments of political behaviour in this context the extent to which the Jamaican personality predetermines the models of political action undertaken. This study has, after all, already underscored the political, economic, social, cultural and historical factors which drive certain types of protestation models. Some interviewees drew attention to the Jamaican penchant for exaggeration, spectacle and drama (see chapters 6 and 7). It is undeniable that the Jamaican personality summons attention. Recent scholarly work (Hope, 2006; 2004) locates this predisposition for the spectacular in the Jamaican personality as part of the inventive ways that oppressed and marginalised people navigate, negotiate and project their identities within a restricted colour, class, race and gender-coded postcolonial society.

### 10.8.4  Employing Technology as Tool in Democratic Activism

The increasing proliferation of new information and communication technologies – mobile telephones, internet chat rooms, email, instant messaging and text messaging – suggests its utility for socio-political change, particularly within the context of the geo-political south. The benefits to civic culture in terms of relationship building, networking and citizen engagement are already observable. There is talk in some quarters that the virtual communities created on the worldwide web build social capital and civic collaboration in locales such as neighbourhoods by reinforcing relationships that already exist (Barber, 1998). Of course, where the relationships and networks are weak, it is argued that new technology can increase social isolation and fragmentation (Blunkett, 2005; Obadare, 2005). Political science scholarship is also giving growing attention to technology for democracy and development (Obadare, 2005; Rafael, 2003; Castells, 2002; Myerson, 2001, Adebanwe, 2001; Caldwell, 2000; Myerson, 2001; Tsagarousianou, 1998). Mobile technology has indeed expanded horizontal relationships and networking within such groups as rural farmers, teachers, students, street vendors, entertainers and even criminal gangs in Jamaica.  The real extent of this engagement and whether mobile

connections may be used to create new networks of engagement across groups – Putnam's (1993) idea of 'bridging social capital' – warrants empirical exploration. This is because within the context of the country's historical oppositional culture and increasing relevance of grievance politics, the importance of telecommunications technology, particularly mobile telephony, as a tool of democratic citizen activism and agitation is already apparent.

This study explored in some detail the use of mobile phones by citizens to make claims upon the state, level criticisms or participate in public discussions through 'call-in' radio programmes. The study also discussed the importance of mobile phones in alerting the media to citizen protest. Among the challenges mentioned as impacting on citizen participation and activism via technology were prohibitive costs and the persistence of unequal access to the economically-marginalised classes. Given Jamaica's largely oral culture, a comprehensive examination of the possibilities and challenges to deploying technology for social development, political participation, social capital building, citizen engagement and activism in Jamaica is desirable. For one, the so-called 'digital divide' – the gap in availability and accessibility of technology between the countries of the global North and the peripheral South is often reproduced in developing societies such as Jamaica with huge consequences for citizen politics. In addition, developments such as the use of media in citizen politics and participation have increased the importance of local community cable networks. A liberalized telecommunications market is facilitating the development of local programming but at present it is geared only towards entertainment and rather than education. It functions as a sort of 'spectator sport' and therefore its potential civic uses remain unexplored. The potential to strengthen civil society through this medium, along with the government's proposed introduction of Public Service Broadcasting, thus warrants further research.

### 10.8.5 Renewing Civic Organizations

At the outset of this research, I noted that part of the reason disruptive protests occur with such frequency and assume the forms they do, is due to the perceived

ineffectiveness of the official organs of civil society. Although Munroe's (1999) research confirms a density of up to 5,000 community-based organizations, it is clear that that civil society in Jamaica is terribly weak in its ability to organize itself for collective action and in its ability to address the needs and demands of its citizens (see Chapter 1; cf. Baker, 2001). For example, criticism is levelled at the Church for its 'lame duck' approach to civil activism while human rights lobby, Jamaicans for Justice, is accused of creating divisiveness rather than societal cohesion where its approach to human rights advocacy is concerned (Hope, 2000). The fact that the recently installed Jamaican Prime Minister, Portia Simpson-Miller is actively creating space for the active participation of the Church in governance, underscores the urgency and relevance for real research into the activities, functioning and nature of official organs of civil society and their capacity as agents for transformations in citizen-led politics. Whether or not these groups are able to bring about the kind of structural change in society or offer any real alternatives to the alienated sections of the urban, lawless poor or even lawful informals to get access to social goods which are tied to larger structures and processes, depend on the types of activism in which they engage. In other words, further research may determine whether these civic organs can represent real hope for the wider political community by becoming part of the process of teaching the disenfranchised to become mobilized on a collective basis and that the struggles of loosely organized disruptive protesting networks are linked to broader reform initiatives.

Jamaican music has also come under harsh criticism (see Johnson, 2004; Boyne, 2003; Munroe, 1999). The country's music product has always been a reaction to society and reggae artistes have helped to articulate the concerns and grievances of the poor and often mount a lyrical counter-war against an oppressive power structure. Indeed, the enormous pecuniary resources and status recognition generated by music industry players also define them as sources of economic and social capital and asserts their identity as potential power brokers within civil society. However, Jamaica's contemporary (reggae versus dancehall) music culture transmits intensely violent and antagonistic values and norms, leading to the development of an ambiguous social language inimical to civility

(Johnson, 2004; Boyne, 2003). Current research into this arena (Hope, 2006; Stolzoff, 2000; Cooper, 1995) only renders passing commentary on this development and so it is worthy of critical exploration.

Finally, it bears repeating that the culture of civility in Jamaica, as elsewhere will remain vulnerable and imperfect unless it is also premised on state transformation. As I have noted previously (see chapters 2 and 5), civil society is not at war with the state but deeply depends on its efficient performance and accountability. The relationship between the state and civil society is mutually-supporting and inter-dependent. This suggests that the state not only create opportunities and mechanisms for wider public involvement in governance but form coalitions with different interests to improve its communication and linkages with citizens. At the same time, civil society must be empowered to take real and responsible action when, as is inescapably the case in Jamaica, some 'roadblock democrats' or political official tries to replace a democratic event with wanton violence. Without doubt, some legitimate protests will be hijacked by rogue elements, and they so often remind us that not all groups in society are civil. In other words, whereas the state is obliged to act as a guardian of public civility as well as a vehicle for the popular will, the measure of its legitimacy rests as much on its economic performance as on its capacity to maintain social order and the rule of law. While there is a firmly entrenched culture of resistance to oppression, Jamaica runs the risk of anarchy and disintegrating in what Keane (1996:14) calls a 'totally uncivil society' if citizen politics only serves to browbeat, disrupt and ignite violent participation. As Jamaican journalist Ian Boyne, so poignantly asks in an article in *The Jamaica Gleaner* in 2002, 'Do we wait until the state has provided a basic standard of living for our poor before we demand of them socially acceptable behaviour' (Boyne, 2002)?

## 10.9   SUMMARY

This empirical investigation into grievance politics and popular protest in Jamaica exposes the counter political force that sections of the disadvantaged class have become by virtue

of trying to survive poverty and confront state abuse, social injustice and exclusion, while seeking to improve their lives. At the same time, new developments within the civil sphere, particularly the political evolution and increasing influence of informal groups such as dons and criminal gangs as well as the extant uncivil practices of other citizens exposes the moral ambivalence of civil society and the complexities and contradictions that are inherent in current understandings of the term. For example, whereas the marginalized classes often suffer the absence or poor quality delivery of essential goods and services vital to meaningful existence, and inflationary standards of living impinge most of these sectors, they sometimes engage in activities that are highly destructive, criminal and constitutive of everything that civility is not. This increasingly pressing reality in Jamaica, as elsewhere in many other Third World democracies demands that traditional civil society perspectives be expanded or subjected to greater scrutiny.

In short, current civil society theorizing needs to be re-examined and re-shaped. Such a refashioning is important because it allows the scholarship to consider not just the existence of a plethora of civic groups in a society, the membership levels of these civic associations and lament about 'bowling alone', but also take into account the practices and politics of both structured groupings and loosely organized networks of citizens as well as the events in the informal sphere which are impacting on the nature and functioning of civil society. It is true that the actions and practices of citizens are not always benevolent and may not always contribute to the 'common good'. It is however within this variegated domain called civil society, populated by both virtuous and unscrupulous citizens, that we have to locate and/or construct real civil societies. In doing so, we are obliged to shift our concern, as Deaken (2001) advises, to the fertility of the subsoil of civil society and the nature of what grows in it. In other words, it compels more critical attention to be given to civil society's *uncivil* manifestations, and charts a theoretical and political context through which this *hurrah* term can best serve the normative obligations cast upon it.

In terms of the practical significance of this study, I wish to draw attention to what I call 'target' areas which I believe require mandatory rethinking and transformation if Jamaica is to experience any kind of social reconstruction. The first two fall within a structural and institutional dimension as they concern (1) the economic dependence of the state and (2) the misuse of state power. The third has more to do with 'culture' and regards the uncivil elements within Jamaican civil society. It is noteworthy that the study shows that the source of uncivil politics in Jamaica is to be found both in social institutions *as well as* in human behaviour, and that both have contributed in considerable measure to the existing calamity of governance that Jamaica confronts. For example, the study reveals that perceived poor state performance in adequately addressing community plight, particularly citizens' rights to proper amenities, and to reliable delivery of other collective goods, as well as its failure to respond satisfactorily to citizen grievance and improve available means of redress, drive, justify and consolidate uncivil politics in Jamaica. In addition, it is without doubt that the economic dependence and subservience of the Jamaican state within a context of global capitalism, manifested in the resource constraints that define the political economy, have hampered its ability to adequately respond to the public demand for goods, and increased the propensity for uncivil demand-making politics among the Jamaican citizenry.

The repressive character of the Jamaican state, manifested through its police force, also speaks loudly to misuse and/or abuse of state power in this context, and therefore underscores the present violent responses from the citizenry. There is therefore an overwhelmingly clear need for the state not to act in ways that provokes such behaviours. Indeed, it is crucial for those of us working for a more *civil* society to recognize that violence is the antithesis of civil society and 'authoritarian law and order strategies are rendered redundant unless cultures of civility are cultivated at the level of civil society' [as well as the state] (Keane, 1996:164). The Jamaican state must, in other words, assume some culpability for the current temperament of civilian politics in this context. In this regard, it is required to pay due attention to its historically embedded and continuing role in accommodating, fostering and otherwise becoming complicit in uncivil behaviour. I

reiterate here that the reasons uncivil politics, including uncivil actors and elements, have persisted and found consolidated place in Jamaica are powerfully connected to those that informed its development, that is, a compromised Jamaican State, which continues to foster a symbiotic co-dependent relationship with alternate, outlaw authorities, and informal practices by public officials which constitute de facto approval their independent authority and uncivil norms.

Yet, a civil society cannot exist without civil values and attitudes because civility depends on behaviour, attitudes and institutions that only civil society can create (Boyd, 2004; Barber, 1998; Diamond, 1994; Shils, 1992). Indeed, it is now widely agreed that the 'quality and stability of both contemporary neo-democracies and long standing democracies are likely to be affected by the solidity and structure of civil society' (Whitehead, 1997:96-97; cf. Diamond & Morlino, 2005; Diamond, 1994). These characteristics are, however, heavily conditioned by the challenges arising from the uncivil interstices. The conspicuous absence of a culture of civility and positive civic leadership within crucial social domains in the Jamaican context means that lawlessness, anarchy and incivility have become dominant norms here. The idea here is that the requirements of a good society and good governance cannot rest with the state alone. Civil society is also a fundamental part of the desire to have a *civil* society. In short, the compromised politics of the Jamaican state and its manifest shortcomings are not entirely responsible for the character of Jamaican civil society and the tenor of citizen politics.

After all, citizens' behaviour is influenced by far more than institutions such as the state. Their collective or shared meanings, subjective consciousness, emotions, culture and lived experiences also shape the norms and values they uphold as well as determine and constrain their behaviour. In other words, Jamaican citizens and communities have a role to play in determining the quality of their civil society and in giving effect to citizenship. This will mean deploying more imaginative strategies and models of participation to engage with the state to secure their demands and defend their interests. The

fundamental question now is whether there is sufficient social and moral capital existing in Jamaican civil society to effect a paradigmatic shift from uncivil politics?

Although recent research (see Powell, Waller & Bourne, 2007) would appear to indicate that social capital is dangerously low in Jamaica, the empirical findings of this research suggest otherwise. This study reveals an extraordinary amount of social cohesion and trust among those involved in aggressive demand politics, a manifest awareness about the distinctions between civil and uncivil participation modalities and a genuine desire to act civilly and to sustain a civic culture. Of course, there are substantial segments among the Jamaican citizenry who retain powerful intrinsic satisfaction from participation in uncivil politics and a willingness to continue to exhibit contrary norms. Gray (2004) maintains that it is this etiquette of badness which gives this rebellious contingent social honour and status within the limits of a socially hierarchicalised society. Yet, the dilemma that Jamaica faces is that otherwise civil segments are adopting and absorbing the uncivil norms, strategies and politics of the uncivil sectors. It would indeed appear, as Munroe (1999) declared at the outset of this study, that 'the competing forces of deepening democracy and anarchic disorder are struggling for dominance in Jamaica". The shift away from uncivil politics will rely on the latter not being allowed to predominate by a renewed focus on not just the shortcomings of the state, but also the failings of the citizens and *how* they elect to conduct their politics.

## 11.    POSTSCRIPT

Like much similar work which elects to take stock of the very loaded concepts of civility and incivility, this project may seem controversial. Indeed, within the context of post-slavery and postcolonial Jamaica, it may sound loud bells in some quarters about discourses of power embedded in the use of the language of hierarchy, exclusion, conservatism and condescension. Others may think it tenuous to link debates on civility with contentious democratic politics. Yet, in the face of increasing incivility – of violence masquerading as emancipatory politics – it seems imperative to reclaim the ethos of civil society in order to ensure a move towards empowerment of the most marginalised.

# APPENDIX A

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**INFORMATION PACK**

**THE RESEARCHER**

Hume Nicola Johnson is a Doctor of Philosophy student in Political Science & Public Policy at the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand. She holds a Masters of Science Degree in Government (International Relations) and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Media and Communications from the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Kingston, Jamaica. She previously worked as a television and radio broadcaster at Radio Jamaica and the Television Department of the Jamaica Information Service (JIS).

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**WHAT IS THE STUDY ABOUT?**

This research examines popular protests (riots, demonstrations) in Jamaica as an accepted and widespread (unconventional) political tool used by citizens to access the state and seek redress for perceived 'injustices' and the provision of social goods (roads, water, telephones etc.). My main concern is:

(1)  The nature and tenor of popular protest in Jamaica.
(2)   The impact of these protests on the quality of citizen politics and civil society
(3)  Whether the country's civic sphere can break free of 'uncivil practices' and find modes of struggle and expression within improved mechanisms of political representation and revived civil society structures.

**CONTACT RESEARCHER:**

Feel free to contact this researcher about any issues, comments, questions or concerns about the study and /or its procedures at the following address:

*Hume N. Johnson*

*9 Thetford Avenue,  Patrick City*

**Kingston 20, Jamaica West Indies**

*Tel: (876) 933-3813; 340-1977; 398-5859*

Email: nhj2@waikato.ac.nz; hnjohnsn@hotmail.com

Or you may contact the supervisors: Dr. Priya Kurian: pkurian@waikato.ac.nz; Dr. Alan Simpson: poli0219@waikato.ac.nz; Dr. Patrick Barrett: pbarrett@waikato.ac.nz

**WHO ARE THE PARTICIPANTS?**

Members of Jamaica's civil society - taxi-drivers, vendors, students, entertainers, vendors, the unemployed, students, activists, human rights advocates, entertainers, church leaders, members of community organizations, media practitioners, talk show hosts, academics and the police as well as representatives of the state – Members of Parliament.

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE PARTICIPANT?

Your participation will involve taking part in focus group discussions or face to face in-depth interviews with the above named researcher for approximately 1 - 2 hours at a mutually agreeable place and time. My aim is to get your perspective on the nature and character of Jamaica's protest movement/civil society, the values at work in the society today and its impact on civil society.

## HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE USED?

The data collected for this study will be analyzed, compiled and published in fulfilment of the requirements of a Doctor of Philosophy Degree at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. It will also be used as presentation material for academic conferences; consultations and seminars as well as for publications in academic journals, books and other publications.

## WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS AS A PARTICIPANT?

### The Right to Privacy, Non- Participation and Withdrawal

- You reserve the right *not* to participate in this research, to discontinue or to withdraw your participation. In the case where you choose to withdraw from the study during the data collection phase, your raw data will be returned to you or destroyed.

### The Right to Retract Statement or Contribution

- You reserve the right, within one month of the date of your interview, to request a transcript of the material relating to you and to retract or withdraw, within one month of the date of the receipt of that transcript, any statement and /or your contribution to the research.

### The Right to Anonymity

- You reserve the right (if you choose) to remain anonymous [nameless]. This means that your identity will not be revealed or directly used when the collected data is being compiled and analyzed.

- In the event that you agree to be quoted and/or named, you will be advised in order to give you an opportunity to consent to the attribution.

### The Right to Confidentiality

- You reserve the right to examine and amend the data you have provided during your interview.

# APPENDIX B

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## RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

I, ……………………………………………………………… agree to be a voluntary participant in this research and am aware of the nature and purpose of the study and its intended publication as a Doctor of Philosophy thesis at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand.

I am aware of my right to:

- clarify any issues or ask further questions of the researcher
- decline to be interviewed or to participate in focus group sessions/interviews
- refuse to answer particular questions and to withdraw from the research
- examine, amend or withdraw information provided within a period not exceeding eight weeks of being interviewed.

I am aware that all information derived from my interview will be held securely; confidentiality is assured and my identity will not be disclosed without my consent.

I confirm that I have not been coerced into participating nor led to believe that any financial rewards will be offered.

Please indicate with a tick one of the following

- I wish to remain anonymous

- I consent to being named and quoted


Participant [Print Name]

_____            _____

Signature                                              Date

# APPENDIX C

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## INTERVIEW LETTER TO INTERVIEWEES

(Date)

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am a student at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Political Science & Public Policy. I invite your kind participation in the fieldwork aspect of my thesis entitled: **When Citizen Politics becomes Uncivil: Between Popular Protest, Civil Society and Governance in Jamaica.**

This phase of my research involves interviews with ordinary citizens, politicians, academic commentators, civil society groups, media practitioners and members of the Security Forces. The discussion will embrace issues of civility, governance, popular protest and political participation.

Please find attached an **information pack,** which outlines in greater detail the objectives, justification and procedures involved in this study as well as your rights as a participant. Each interview session is expected to last between 1 – 2 hours.

Please feel free to contact me at 933-3813 or 340-1977 if there are any issues, questions or concerns that require clarification. I look forward to talking with you.

Respectfully,

**HUME N. JOHNSON**

# APPENDIX D

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**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

- When you think of protest/riot/demonstrations, what comes to mind/What is your general feeling regarding street demonstrations and the forms that protest take in Jamaica?

- Were you involved in any way in the 1999 Gas riots and what was the extent of your participation?

- Did you feel that this riot deserved your involvement?

- What is your most vivid memory of those three days / By using single words/adjectives, how would you describe the gas riots?

- When politicians attach themselves to protest action, does it affect the legitimacy or the spirit of the action? Does the involvement of opposition forces assist or detract from a resolution of the issues of the protestors?

- What is the difference between this riot and other demonstrations/protest and civil disturbances (roadblocks for water, phone, police brutality) that you felt you would refrain from participating in?

- Did you approve or disapprove of the actions by citizens on those days? / Five years has elapsed since the Gas riots, to what extent has your feeling/perception about those events changed?

- The riots which followed the July 2001 police operation in Western Kingston appeared to have been politically driven. Were citizens aware that such protest was against the State for a legitimate police action?

- Would you say that Jamaicans are confused about their role as citizens first as opposed to political animals tied to issues based on their allegiance to a particular political party?

- How would you rate the state's response or the political action taken in light of the riots you have seen?
- (What would have been an appropriate state response)?
- Is the state's 'positive' response to this type of civil disturbance fuelling it?
- Based on your observation of successive riots and demonstrations over time, how does protest benefit the protestors / society?
- To what extent can this type of protest be harmful to the society?
- To what extent are protests and riots successful ways of 'lobbying' government or seeking redress against perceived injustices?

*The Media and Popular Protest*
- How do protestors respond to the media's presence at the site of a demonstration?

- Based on your coverage of successive riots and demonstrations over time, what are the kinds of behaviour usually displayed by protestors?

- What is your perspective on this type of behaviour?

- Some people say we have a culture of riots? Does this minimize its impact and the premium placed on it?

- Is 'protest' as this great tool to complain or to force the hand of the state abused?

- What are the likely benefits that protestors derive from having media coverage?

- In what ways do you think media coverage takes away from the effectiveness of protests or to the potential advantages to be derived from protests?

- What do you think should the media's role be during instances of protest and riots?

- Based on your knowledge of riots and demonstrations in Jamaica, what are the kinds of behaviour usually displayed by protestors?

- What is your opinion on this type of behaviour?

- In what ways can acts of criminality and indiscipline during demonstrations and riots help or hinder the cause?

- Do you think protests and riots are successful ways of 'lobbying' government or seeking redress against perceived injustices?

- Five years after the Gas riots and having witnessed many other demonstrations and acts of protest after that, have we learned how to participate differently?

- Are you satisfied with how the media acts in its civil society role?

- How should the media execute this duty?

- Talk shows appear to be the new MP/ What can media do to improve its mediating/ advocacy role?

- Do you think the media exploit the political divisions between Jamaican citizens?

*Civil Society in Jamaica*

- When we speak of 'civil' society, what do you take it to mean? What are its strengths/limitations in the Jamaican context?

- Would criminal gangs, drug lords, community Dons be included in this civil society?

- How would you like to see civil society functioning ideally?

- As a part of civil society, how do networks of vendors, squatters, the unemployed, inner city residents to be represented?

- In what ways does Jamaica's social cleavage impact civil society development and functioning in Jamaica?

- How do Jamaicans generally respond in a conflict situation? (do they attempt to pacify the situation or is conflict ignored)

- Would you describe Jamaica as a 'civil' society?

- How would you describe current behaviour norms of Jamaica? Source of it?

- Provide some examples of what would constitute incivility, undisciplined and badmanism?

- What changes, if any, do you detect in our value system?

- What are people striving for in Jamaica/ rank their priorities in terms of importance/ what is important to them, what are some of the things we value or place premium on today?

- What are some of the values that you think the society ought to espouse and share?

- Commentators say Jamaica is in a social crisis. Is this claim exaggerated?

- What responsibility do you place on the state as against civil society in transforming negative behaviours and norms?

- Do you believe the government is doing enough to bolster civil society and various groupings of ordinary citizens?


*State-Sponsored Citizen Initiatives*

- How do you rate the government's values and attitudes programme?

- Do you think it is necessary to train people on proper attitudes and values?

- What do you think would be the main difficulties in implementing and then sustaining values –based training programmes?

- How could these challenges be addressed?

- Do you believe that initiatives such as the values and attitudes programme can directly help to restore civil relations in Jamaica?

- What are your impressions of the Church; Jamaicans for Justice, Office of the Political Ombudsman, PMI as civil society actors?

- How relevant are these citizen initiatives to civic engagement in Jamaica?

- To what extent are the activities of these groups, in your opinion, at risk of being subverted by the inclination to riots and demonstrations?

- How can the effectiveness of citizen initiatives be improved?

*Additional Questions*

- Women involvement in riots
- Women in leadership position in riots
- gender relations in protest.

# APPENDIX E

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## LIST OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

(PN – Participant Number)

PN1:     Taxi Driver/Ex- Resident of the Inner city                     (2004 May 4)

PN2:     Music Selector/ Disc Jockey                                          (2004, February 3)

PN3:     Former University Student Leader/Political Activist          (2004, January 20)

PN4:     Rastafarian Entertainer                                                 (2004, January 28)

PN5:     Radio Talk Show Host/Producer/Reporter                      (2004, February, 3)

PN6:     Entertainment Manager                                                 (2003, January 3)

PN7:     Communications Consultant/Academic                          (2004, January 27)

PN8:     Attorney General/Minister of Justice                            (2004, April 28)

PN9:     News Editor/Media Manager, Radio (Female)                 (2004, February 13)

PN10:   Sportswriter                                                                 (2003, January 13)

PN11:   Focus Group Participants – Farmer, Lawyer, Urban Planner, Graphic Designer, Member of Disabled Community                                  (2004, January 31)

PN12:   Cultural Anthropologist                                                (2004, January 26)

PN13:   Roman Catholic Priest/ Talk Show Host/Attorney, Member of Parliament/Coffee Farmer                                                                  (2004, March 16)

PN14:   Radio Disc Jockey                                                        (2004, March 11)

PN15:   Innercity Residents                                                      (2004, February 2)

PN16:   Police Officer                                                             (2004, February 3)

PN17: Deacon; Youth Leader                                                  (2003, January 9)

PN18: Focus Group participants – Public Relations Executive; former student leaders; Teacher (2004, January 30)

PN19: Music Promoter /Entertainer (2004, February 10)

PN20: (Focus Group) - University Students (ages 19-24) (2004, February 2)

PN21: Media Regulator/Attorney (2004, March 25)

PN22: Member – Human Rights Lobby (2004, March 26)

PN23: News Reporter (2004, February 7)

PN24: Reporter/Inner city Source (2004, June 27)

PN25: Former Student Activist/Dancehall Researcher (2003, December 2)

PN26: Media Manager, Newspaper (Male) (2004, February 24)

PN27: Political Activist/Innercity resident (2004, March 8)

PN28: Female Rastafarian/ Entertainer (2004, March 16)

PN29: Cultural Commentator/Innercity Resident (2004, February 14)

PN30: University Communications Student (2003, December 19)

PN31: Self-styled *Shottas* (2004, April)

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