

Contradictions and Change in Jamaica: Theorizing Ecosocial Resistance Amidst Ecological Crisis*

By Tony Weis

This island now is an unjust society...harsh and cruel to the majority of its people; [it is one in which] forces have been manipulated first to run the slave state, then to run the colonial state, then to run the independent state which was handed over not to the mass of the people but to the descendants of the slave-owners and the heirs of the colonial state.¹

Peter Abrahams, Caribbean Novelist

1. Introduction

Jamaica's plantation landscape and its associated racio-class scars persist to this day. Embedded by colonialism, large estates and pastures continue to dominate the best coastal lowland while the peasantry remains confined to the rugged interior. At the same time, Jamaica possesses extreme and persistent rural poverty. Forty-five percent of Jamaica's 2.5 million people live in rural areas, and roughly half of this

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¹Quotation from Peter Abrahams, *This Island Now* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1966), pp. 230-31. This novel is set on an unspecified island in the Caribbean. Although the events are fictional, Abrahams notes that "since the imagination is nurtured by reality, the point of departure of this story is the reality of the Caribbean."

rural population lives below the poverty line.² The third largest island in the Caribbean (see Figure 1), Jamaica is also a nation of tremendous biodiversity and high endemism.³ However, this biodiversity is greatly imperiled as a result of one of the fastest annual rates of deforestation in the world — estimated to be over three percent for more than a decade.⁴

²This poverty line was set at the level determined to command a minimum basket of goods identified as necessary for survival. See Planning Institute of Jamaica and the Statistical Institute of Jamaica, *Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions Report 1998* (Kingston: PIOJ and SIOJ Printing Units), p. 102; Government of Jamaica, *Jamaica National Report on the Environment and Development: Submitted to the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)* (Kingston: Government of Jamaica, 1992), p. vi. The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) most recent *Human Development Report* identifies the gap between the richest and poorest quintiles in Jamaica to be 44 times (83.7:1.9), the highest in the world. While these numbers have since been withdrawn, the disparity of wealth in Jamaica is amongst the most grotesque to be found anywhere. Levitt describes how Jamaica's historic social polarity was exacerbated further by the onset of structural adjustment in the late 1970s. A report on women and children in the early 1990s found that in addition to "highly inequitable" general distribution of income, it was small farmers and agricultural wage workers who are the poorest of Jamaica's poor, suggesting that this poverty was accompanied by deep feelings of social inferiority. See UNDP, *Human Development Report 1999* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 169; Kari Polayni Levitt, *The Origins and Consequences of Jamaica's Debt Crisis, 1970-90* (Mona, Jamaica: Consortium School of Social Sciences, 1991); UNICEF and Planning Institute of Jamaica, *Situational Analysis of the Status of Children and Women in Jamaica* (Kingston: Planning Institute of Jamaica, 1991).

³The most comprehensive ecological survey of Jamaica found that 27 of its 256 birds, four of its 23 bats, 20 of its 24 lizards, 15 of its 19 frogs and toads, and 912 of its 3779 plant species were endemic to the island. See USAID, Government of Jamaica, Natural Resources Conservation Division, and Ralph M. Field and Associates, Inc., *Jamaica Country Environmental Profile* (Kingston: Government of Jamaica).

⁴Jamaica's remaining natural areas are known to provide critical space for its endemic species and habitat loss is recognized as the greatest threat to its biodiversity, although there are serious knowledge voids in the status, ecology, and distribution of most species. While the extent of vulnerability is not definitively known, it is estimated that at least 40 bird species and sub-species and at least a third of Jamaica's plant species are threatened, and future extinction trends are ominous if deforestation rates continue. See Natural Resources Conservation Authority, *Jamaica: National Environmental Action Plan, Status Report 1997* (Kingston: The Ministry of the Environment and Housing and the NRCA, 1997); Lawrence A. Eyre, "Jamaica: Test Case for Tropical Deforestation?" *Ambio*, 16, 6, November-

As with much of the tropics, poverty and the destruction of natural resources are tightly entwined in Jamaica, with the rural poor invariably identified in official and academic accounts as the primary agents of forest colonization.⁵

Nearly half (516,520 ha) of Jamaica's landmass of 1,099,000 ha is devoted to agriculture, while less than a quarter remains forested (77,000 ha of what is classed as "undisturbed natural forests," and 190,000 which is classed as "ruinate" or second growth).⁶ Most of these remaining forests are located in Jamaica's inland hills and mountains. But with three percent of the landowners controlling 62 percent of the best agricultural land in plantation estates averaging 900 ha,⁷ and more than

December, 1987; USAID et al., *op. cit.*; Lawrence A. Eyre, "The Tropical Rainforests of Jamaica," *Jamaica Journal*, 26, 1, June, 1996, pp. 28-30; The Government of Jamaica, United Nations Environmental Programme, and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, *National Forestry Action Plan Jamaica* (Kingston: The Government of Jamaica, 1990), p. 17.

⁵For examples, see *Jamaica: National Environmental Action Plan, Status Report 1997*, pp. 7, 23; Philip R. Berke and Timothy Beatley, "Sustaining Jamaica's Forests: The Protected Areas Resource Conservation Project," *Environmental Management*, 19, 4, July-Aug., 1995, p. 528; The World Bank, *Jamaica: Economic Issues for Environmental Management* (Washington: The World Bank, 1993a); Eyre, 1987, *op. cit.*, p. 342.

⁶The *Jamaica National Report on the Environment and Development* states that less than 7 percent of the island's total land area remained as "undisturbed primary forests" in the early 1990s. Estimates vary widely as to the extent of anthropogenic forest cover that remains. See Government of Jamaica, 1992, *op. cit.*, p. 14; Ministry of Agriculture, *1997 Data Bank*. While notions of "natural environments" and "undisturbed forests" have been challenged in the west African tropical realm by Fairhead and Leach, who importantly reshape the way historical human-environment relations and forest patterns are understood there, Watts discusses how native populations in the insular Caribbean lived in small coastal settlements which did not significantly alter the interior forests. Jamaica's mountainous interior remained sparsely populated until after Emancipation in 1834. James Fairhead and Melissa Leach, *Reframing Deforestation: Global Analysis and Local Realities: Studies in West Africa* (London: Routledge, 1998); David Watts, *The West Indies: Patterns of Development, Culture and Environmental Change Since 1492* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 75.

⁷See Government of Jamaica, 1992, *op. cit.*, p. 31; Timothy Rickard and Barbara Carmichael, "Linkages Between the Agricultural and Tourism Systems in Sustaining Rural Jamaica," in Christopher R. Bryant, ed., *The Sustainability of Rural Systems* (Montreal: Universite de Montreal, 1995).

half of the island with slopes greater than 20 degrees, peasant farmers are commonly forced to clear forests by slash and burn methods and cultivate excessively steep and highly erodible hillsides. The result of cultivating such unstable lands, as the 1990 *National Forestry Action Plan* warns, is that “invariably, the benefits obtained [from clearing marginal land] last only a few years, while the consequences are very long term.”⁸ Deforestation represents a very urgent threat to the ecological health of Jamaica, and in this respect the devastation of Haiti is being flagged as an urgent warning.⁹

In addition to biodiversity loss, the scale of soil and water conservation problems associated with deforestation is also very serious. Soil erosion is estimated to occur at a rate of 20.2 tonnes/ha, versus a sustainable rate in the Caribbean of between 1-3 t/ha.¹⁰ Downstream sedimentation and decreased upland vegetation damage and desiccate watersheds, with 19 of 26 newly defined Watershed Management Units classed by the NRCA as critical and 100 perennial rivers having ceased to flow year round over the past 50 years.¹¹

Jamaica’s Blue and John Crow Mountains are a particularly important refuge of biodiversity (with one of the highest rates of endemism in the world) and of its remaining “undisturbed natural forests.” Already severely degraded over major areas,¹² this

⁸See Government of Jamaica, UNEP, and the FAO, *op. cit.*, pp. 35, 37. In fact, accelerated forest conversion has “practically irreversible” effects on ecosystem functioning in the Caribbean region. See UNEP, *Global Environmental Outlook* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁹Haiti, a nation with a similar topography to Jamaica, possesses only about two percent of its original forest cover and is suffering from widespread desertification. See Norman P. Girvan, “Economics and the Environment in the Caribbean: An Overview,” in Norman P. Girvan and D.A. Simmons, eds., *Caribbean Ecology and Economics* (St. Michael, Barbados: Caribbean Conservation Association, 1991), p. xiii.

¹⁰See Lawrence A. Eyre, “Jamaica’s Crisis in Forestry and Watershed Management,” *Jamaica Naturalist*, 1, 1, 1991 and Ariel E. Lugo, Ralph Schmidt, and Sandra Brown, “Tropical Forests in the Caribbean,” *Ambio*, 10, 6, November-December, 1981.

¹¹See Natural Resources Conservation Authority, *op. cit.*, p. 23; and Eyre, 1996, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

¹²See, for examples, David Barker and Duncan F.M. McGregor, “Land degradation and hillside farming in the Fall River Basin, Jamaica.” *Applied Geography*, 11, 2, April, 1991, and David Barker and Duncan F.M. McGregor, “Land Degradation in the Yallahs Basin, Jamaica: Historical Notes and Contemporary Observations,” *Geography*, 73, 2, April, 1988. There was evidence of soil degradation in southern slopes of the Blue

extraordinarily beautiful and ecologically significant region continues to be under great pressure. In response, the Jamaican government — with the urging and support of international organizations such as USAID and the Nature Conservancy — recently established the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park (BJCMNP).

National parks represent one of the most extreme forms of managerial solutions to Third World ecological problems. Jeffrey McNeely describes how “many national park managers have developed a siege mentality as they suffer animosity from local people, insufficient budgets, encroachment, and insufficient land to maintain the resources the park was established to conserve.”¹³ However, in attempting to manage symptoms without addressing root problems, parks often prove unable to stop ecological degradation or, if managed strictly, tend to exacerbate already gross inequities in land and society. Examples of this abound, from Thailand and Madagascar to India and Togo. Not only can such intervention be socially problematic, but can prove environmentally disastrous by alienating those whose livelihoods are vested in the area.¹⁴

There is a need to challenge the prevailing managerial paradigm and discourse in Jamaica, as historically ingrained disparities prohibit there from being managerial fixes to environmental problems. When the ecologically exploitative behavior of Jamaica’s rural poor is understood

Mountains as early as the 1830s, as a result of coffee plantations. See Watts, *op. cit.*, pp. 436-37.

¹³See Jeffrey A. McNeely, “The Future of National Parks,” *Environment*, 32, 1, January-February, 1990, p. 20.

¹⁴Ghimire describes how the government and the national elite worked together in the cases of both Thailand and Madagascar to establish strict forms of environmental protection to the exclusion of local peoples. Kothari, et al., describe various cases in India where livelihood rights on customary lands have been revoked for national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, often resulting in violent conflict between local tribespeople and park staff. Articles by both Tchamie and Lowry and Donahue discuss how protected areas in Togo deny traditional patterns of resource use and have consequently become the targets of local people’s wrath. See Krishna B. Ghimire, “Parks and People: Livelihood Issues in National Parks Management in Thailand and Madagascar,” *Development and Change*, 25, 1, January, 1994; Ashish Kothari, Saloni Suri, and Neena Singh, “People and Parks: Rethinking Conservation in India,” *The Ecologist*, 25, 5, September-October, 1995; T.T.K. Tchamie, “Learning from local hostility to protected areas in Togo,” *Unasylva* 176, 45, 1994; A. Lowry and T.P. Donahue, “Parks, politics, and pluralism: the demise of national parks in Togo,” *Society and Natural Resources*, 7, 4, July-August, 1994.

to be rooted in the colonialist-capitalist land regime, as this paper argues it must be, then solutions to deforestation need to confront the inequity of access to land and resources that is driving this degradation rather than continuing to manage the symptoms. Environmental solutions must be linked to a search for justice and distributive equity through radical land reform. Roughly akin to changing production relations in a plantation society, radical land reform is central to resolving Jamaica's human-environment contradictions.

Ecosocialism provides a theoretical framework for showing that contradictions in Jamaican society and ecology could generate organized mobilization — amongst the urban poor, the agro-proletariat, and the peasantry — against the social and landed inequities at the heart of its deforestation crisis. Whether material-ecological contradictions can provoke such opposition, and whether any of these three groups can be at the vanguard of change remains undetermined, as the answer urgently awaits.

2. Contradictions in Land and Society

...the Jamaican economy consists of a functionally disconnected national economy which has grown up as an appendage of, and in the interstices of, a foreign-oriented and dominated export economy. And the common theme that runs through the two aspects of the Jamaican economy is the exploitation of labor by property.¹⁵

George Beckford and Michael Witter

At the time of contact, Jamaica was almost completely forested, with the native Arawak population living in small coastal settlements. The Spanish began the large-scale clearance of coastal areas, installing plantations and pastures on the coastal plains — an economic system which became completely dependent on dispossessed African slave labor with the complete annihilation of the Arawak by the mid-16th-Century. It was not until 1655, with the flight of escaped slaves (who became known as the Maroons) during the Spanish-to-British transition, that the island's interior became home to permanent residents. After 1655, the British intensified plantation production and human bondage, but the rugged interior remained only sparsely populated (with small pockets of highland coffee development) until Emancipation in 1834.

¹⁵See George Beckford and Michael Witter, *Small Garden...Bitter Weed: The Political Economy of Struggle and Change in Jamaica* (New York: Zed Press, 1982).

After Emancipation, however, freed slaves fled inland in great numbers and began carving out small hillside plots, seeking to escape the wage slavery on plantations made inevitable by the continued monopolization of the fertile coastal lands by the white plantocracy. By 1834, Jamaica's physical configuration, settlement patterns (with the interior becoming increasingly saturated over time), and social structure were all very ingrained (small numbers of indentured Indians and Chinese were subsequently added to this mix), and all persist — changed very little — to this day. The legacy of slavery, then, is an immediate one, inscribed painfully on the Jamaican landscape, and it is not something that can be removed from contemporary debates over land and environment.

As a result of Jamaica's ingrained plantation matrix, land hunger has long been intense and defined by race. Shortly after Emancipation, numerous revolts centered around acquiring land, since land was seen as “the one true indicator that freedom had been properly achieved.”¹⁶ The struggle for black access to land continues to this day, having been articulated throughout Jamaican history by leaders such as Sam Sharpe in the slave rebellion of 1831-32, Paul Bogle in the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865, national hero Marcus Garvey in the 1920s and 1930s, and George Beckford and the New World intellectuals at the University of West Indies-Mona beginning in the late 1960s.

Yet while the idea of land as freedom obviously has a long history, this has not been met with sufficient attempts at land reform. During the colonial period, land reform efforts that challenged historical property rights were non-existent, while land settlement schemes were poorly-funded and typically involved only marginal Crown lands in the hills and mountains.¹⁷ Sadly, efforts at land reform were not invigorated by Independence in 1962, but rather were cloaked in the dubious rhetoric

¹⁶See Gad J. Heuman, *The Killing Time: The Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1994), p. 39.

¹⁷Although Beckford states that a small amount of superfluous plantation land was distributed to peasants in the first half of the 20th Century, he emphasizes the shortcomings of colonial land settlement efforts, which McBain notes tended to create only very small, marginal, and ultimately unviable farms. See George Beckford, “Caribbean peasantry in the confines of the plantation mode of production,” *International Social Science Journal*, 37, 3, p. 404; and Helen McBain, “Constraints on the Development of Jamaican Agriculture,” in Claus Stolberg and Swithin Wilmot, eds., *Plantation Economy, Land Reform and the Peasantry in a Historical Perspective: Jamaica 1838-1980* (Kingston: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1992, p. 127.

of efficiency — evident in the Land Reform Sub-Committee of the Agricultural Planning Committee's statement in 1962 that:

The problem in regard to land for agricultural production can be viewed from two angles. One concerns the question of how land is used, and the other deals with how the rights in land are distributed...Although the second is probably of equal importance, it can only be dealt with at this time as being incidental to the first, since the general question of land distribution and its effect on the level and distribution of rural incomes is regarded as secondary to the immediate concern for bringing about the fullest use of land irrespective of how such land is distributed in ownership.¹⁸

Although *Project Land Lease* in the 1970s was designed by the left-leaning (at the time) government of Michael Manley, its aims were modest, failing to address the issue of land reform with respect to the plantation sector and leasing only residual lands to peasants.

Today there is a conspiracy of silence about the issue of land and distribution. World Bank and IMF demands slashed *Project Land Lease* in the early 1980s, and the next twenty years of severe structural adjustment rendered talk of equity off-limits from public debate. As noted, export-oriented monocrop plantations and pastures producing for national consumption still dominate the island's limited coastal plains and best agricultural land. Foreign mining interests have for nearly half a century dominated, and ruined, much interior land, and produced the infamous red mud lakes.¹⁹ Plantation-style and chemical intensive agriculture is also increasingly controlling land in the Blue Mountain highlands where high-value coffee can be grown for export. At the same time, the great majority of Jamaica's rural population — primarily black — are relegated to small hillside farms producing for domestic

¹⁸See Ministry of Agricultural and Lands, *Policy Proposals in Land Reform Particularly in Relation to the Fuller Use of Land* (Kingston: The Land Reform Sub-Committee of the Agricultural Planning Committee), p. 11.

¹⁹*Social and Economic Studies* devotes a special issue (36, 1, March 1987) to bauxite production in Jamaica; see in particular George Beckford, "The social economy of bauxite in the Jamaican man-space;" Helen McBain, "The Impact of Bauxite-Alumina MNCs on Rural Jamaica: Constraints on Development of Small Farmers in Jamaica;" and Lloyd B. Coke, Colin C. Weir, and Vincent G. Hill, "Environmental Impact of Bauxite Mining and Processing in Jamaica."

markets, with some exports, as well as many providing seasonal or part-time labor on plantations. Peasant farms are generally less than five acres, and though they tend to be far more efficient than the plantation sector, the tremendous inequities in the distribution of land have helped produce such an extremely skewed distribution of income and high levels of rural poverty.

3. Neoliberal Discourse and Policy: The Environment as a Managerial Problem

Improved management of the environment has been identified as a critical element of the government's approach to economic development.²⁰

The Planning Institute of Jamaica

Increasingly we are told the environment is in need of “more and better management,” an ideology and discursive practice given its “diplomatic blessing” by politicians, corporate leaders, and scientists at the 1992 Rio Summit.²¹ Just as studies demonstrate the power of the discourse of development, and deconstruct and problematize the way language is used to forge arguments and establish authority,²² so also emerge similar problems with the language of environmental management — really only the newest form of development thinking, as Wolfgang Sachs argues.²³ The discourse of environmental management guises in neutral-sounding language highly value-laden assumptions about the benign and infallible nature of a market economy and the inevitability of a skewed distribution in land and wealth. The implicit message, according to Sachs, is that either nothing can (fatalistic) or should (dogmatic) be done to change material contradictions (i.e. accumulation, over-consumption, monopolization of property) as they become manifest in ecological problems; rather,

²⁰See The Planning Institute of Jamaica, *Economic and Social Survey 1999* (Kingston: Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2000).

²¹See Wolfgang Sachs, “Global Ecology and the Shadow of ‘Development’,” in Wolfgang Sachs, ed., *Global Ecology: A New Arena of Political Conflict* (London: Zed Books, 1993), pp. 8-12.

²²Two good examples are Jonathan Crush, ed., *Power of Development* (London: Routledge, 1995), and Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

²³See Sachs, *op. cit.* Adams, on the other hand, argues that the discourse and “technocentrism” surrounding the notion of sustainable development “has not evolved from within the development discourse, but instead has deep roots in Northern environmentalism.” See William J. Adams, “Green Development Theory?” in Jonathan Crush, ed., *Power of Development* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 88-89.

ecological problems that arise should be the subject of ever more “sophisticated management.”²⁴

By speaking of poverty rather than inequity as the problem, and management rather than redistribution as the solution, then sustainable development with improved land management becomes the policy prescription as opposed to land reform and the pursuit of social justice.²⁵ This strategy yields a slightly nuanced version of the status quo, perhaps mitigating the most severe ecological impacts of extant political economic conditions by making less total land available for agriculture while failing to address the foundational maldistribution of land and wealth. Ultimately, the discourse of management creates a situation wherein the only ecological solutions that are made to seem possible are those that accept the basic tenets of the existing paradigm.²⁶

A significant part of managerialist discourse is the notion that poverty causes degradation, in effect levying responsibility upon the victims for their own ecosocial plight without contextualizing the foundations of their poverty. Similarly, state and academic reports routinely identify the peasantry as the leading agents of deforestation in Jamaica, while the coastal plantation landscape which confines them to the rugged interior typically eludes mention. The World Bank, for instance, suggests in its environmental report on Jamaica that “poverty is a cause of degradation” and blames the Government of Jamaica for its inability “to reduce the pressure on natural resources caused by poverty,” going on to note that the “clearing of new plots now comes mostly through encroachment onto public lands by illegal cultivators, who do not have incentives to conserve the land, and who are amongst the poorest and least educated of the rural population.”²⁷ The Natural

²⁴See Sachs, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

²⁵By contrast, Daniel Faber notes how in the case of revolutionary Nicaragua, land reform was seen as having “one of the most fundamental roles for achieving environmental justice” and revitalizing the social vitality of the peasant sector — though he also notes how even the Sandinistas “did not go far enough” in agrarian reform and should have deepened their attention to the peasantry and to domestic food self-sufficiency. See Daniel Faber, “*La Liberación del Medio Ambiente: The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary Ecology in Nicaragua, 1979-1999*,” *CNS*, 10, 1, March, 1999, pp. 54, 73, 77.

²⁶See David Pepper, *Ecosocialism: From Deep Ecology to Social Justice* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 235.

²⁷The irony of the World Bank criticizing a national government for its inability to deal with the impacts of poverty is of course familiar to students

Resources Conservation Authority's (NRCA) 1997 *Status Report on the National Environmental Action Plan* also gives primary responsibility for deforestation to "hillside farmers and squatters," without contextualizing this as it relates to their marginalized position in land and society. The Government's report to the 1992 Rio conference notes poverty, but not inequity, in relation to the destructive environmental behavior of the peasantry. Further, in addition to blaming the victim, the poor also tend to be labeled "ignorant" or as having a "lack of awareness" and being in need of education.²⁸ Overpopulation is perhaps the most commonly given explanation for land degradation in the Third World, obscuring and decontextualizing more fundamental issues,²⁹ and in a 1994 document on land policy the Government of Jamaica attributes the "extremely fierce" competition for land not to skewed distribution but to population growth³⁰ — despite the fact that 78 percent of Jamaica's farms occupy only 20 percent of all agricultural land (inequities magnified, of course, by the differential quality of land).³¹

The description of ecological problems as issues of management and planning is also widespread. The World Bank suggests the need to examine Jamaica's ecological problems sectorally, and advises that focusing on issues relating to managing land use and water pollution are the two biggest priorities.³² In discussing "sustainable land use

of the Third World. Together with the IMF, the World Bank has exacerbated the extent of poverty and hamstrung government expenditure since the late 1970s. See The World Bank, 1993a, *op. cit.*; Levitt, *op. cit.*; Elsie LeFranc, ed., *Consequences of Structural Adjustment: A Review of the Jamaican Experience* (Kingston: Canoe Press, 1994); John Jackson, *Sacrificing the Future: Structural Adjustment in Jamaica* (London: Christian Aid, 1995).

²⁸See Natural Resources Conservation Authority, *op. cit.*, p. 44; Government of Jamaica, UNEP, and the FAO, *op. cit.*, p. 47; and Philip R. Berke and Timothy Beatley, *After the Hurricane: Linking Recovery to Sustainable Development in the Caribbean* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

²⁹Lohmann provides an excellent discussion of how population has been used to obscure the political economic roots of tropical deforestation. See Larry Lohmann, "Against the Myths," in Marcus Colchester and Larry Lohmann, eds., *The Struggle for Land and the Fate of the Forests* (London: Zed Books, 1993), pp. 17-26.

³⁰See The Government of Jamaica, *Green Paper #4: Towards a Land Policy for Jamaica (A Synopsis)* (Kingston: Government of Jamaica, 1994), p. 57.

³¹See Ministry of Agriculture, *Agricultural Production Medium Term Plan 2000/01-2003-04* (Kingston: Ministry of Agriculture, 2000).

³²See The World Bank, 1993a, *op. cit.*

patterns” in Jamaica, American academics Philip Berke and Timothy Beatley urge that there be greater attention given to land use planning at the national level, suggesting that the “rudimentary land use planning framework” does provide “useful regulatory and management frameworks on which to build,” and calling for greater attention to environmental management within an “overall goal of sustainable development” in the context of natural hazards.³³ Jamaica’s 1990 *National Forestry Action Plan* attributes much of the island’s environmental problems to “the lack of an operational land-use policy,” and argues that “the forest resources must be put under proper management and conservation practices.”³⁴ The *5-Year Development Plan 1990-95* also points to the centrality of developing a “structured framework for environmental management” as the means to ensuring the sustainable management of the natural resource base,³⁵ while the Government’s 1992 *National Report on the Environment and Development* ascribes land-use competition and conflict in large part to the absence of a comprehensive land-use policy, a lack of inter-agency co-ordination, and inadequate staffing and data collection, and states that “environmental management has to be integrated into the wide scope of present and future investments and activities in the many sectors of the economy.” The Rio report makes but a single, undeveloped reference to land reform as part of a long list of potential strategies that could potentially improve agricultural production, living standards, and employment, and in helping stem further land degradation.³⁶ The NRCA’s 1997 report links deforestation to “improper hillside farming practices,” calls for the increased participation of the private sector and civil society in environmental management, and highlights such things as a “lack of co-ordination between economic and physical planning” and “inadequate planning at national, regional and local levels” in exacerbating Jamaica’s “unsatisfactory land use situation.”³⁷ Following

³³See Berke and Beatley, 1997, *op. cit.*, pp. 190-91. In a more specific study of protected area management in the Blue Mountains, they take an “institutional approach” to understanding the key “participants in forest resource management” — which somehow do not include the farmers themselves — and the role of these participants in resource management successes and failures. See Berke and Beatley, 1995, *op. cit.*, p. 527.

³⁴See Government of Jamaica, UNEP, and the FAO, *op. cit.*, pp. 1, 36.

³⁵See The Planning Institute of Jamaica, *Jamaica 5-Year Development Plan 1990-95* (Kingston: The Planning Institute of Jamaica, 1990).

³⁶See Government of Jamaica, 1992, *op. cit.*, pp. viii, xii, 30, 49-50, 63.

³⁷Although the report does cite the “under-utilization of large acreages of arable lands” as an important land use issue, not once does it raise the issue of challenging existing property rights or the redistribution of ownership

from these interpretations, Jamaica's most recent *National Land Policy* identifies an improved national land information database, reduced institutional fragmentation, and enhanced coordination between economic and social planning as central factors in optimizing land use.³⁸

In short, the managerialist paradigm reflects an attempt to mitigate environmental problems through changes in land management (ranging from indirect incentives intended to encourage small farmers to terrace their land, to very direct interventions such as strictly managed protected areas) without actually challenging the fundamental contradictions in the landscape which are at the root of the environmental problems (such as gross inequalities in access to land and resources). My intent is not to suggest that all management efforts are (at best) futile or (at worst) sinister: certain tax incentive schemes based on neoliberal assumptions might have their desired impact of encouraging otherwise reluctant peasant farmers to invest labor in terracing their steeply sloping lands, and protected areas have in certain cases preserved threatened areas and species while meeting local needs through such things as locally-run ecotourism ventures, to take but two examples.³⁹ However, managerial discourse frames ecological problems as in need of management solutions and — whether wittingly or unwittingly — leaves fundamental ecological and social contradictions unaddressed. This discourse also feeds the illusion that substantive action is being taken in the only way possible. In this way does it reinforce the status quo.

Within the prevailing managerial ethos in Jamaica, the obvious pragmatic solution to deforestation is establishing protected areas, the most extreme form of environmental management.⁴⁰ Aided by the

of plantation lands. See Natural Resources Conservation Authority, *op. cit.*, pp. 7, 13.

³⁸The Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2000, *op. cit.*

³⁹The ethics of human-exclusive parks is another debate, beyond the realm of discussion here.

⁴⁰In addition to establishing protected areas, environmental economics-based management prescriptions will likely soon be implemented in Jamaica. In 1993, the World Bank suggested that “the Government of Jamaica has so far not explored the full range of incentives affecting environment-related behavior.” Four years later Jamaica's NRCA proudly proclaimed that “the Planning Institute of Jamaica is presently conducting macro-economic and sectoral policy analysis to ascertain the potential for using environmental economic tools for environmental management and sustainable development in Jamaica.” See World Bank 1993a, *op. cit.* and Natural Resources Conservation Authority, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

financial support and managerial expertise of USAID and the Nature Conservancy (U.S.), the Government of Jamaica established the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park (BJCMNP) in 1991-92. Together with the Montego Bay National Marine Park, the BJCMNP was the first step in Jamaica's efforts to establish a series of national protected areas, with several additional parks planned in coming years. The BJCMNP covers just over seven percent of Jamaica's total landmass (See Figure 2). As the government owns roughly 60 percent of the land within the park,⁴¹ many of the peasants in the area have limited or no legal tenure. Thus, the ongoing negotiation of land rights and responsibilities will therefore be a central management concern, and there are no indications that park authorities (which have been largely devolved from the state to the Jamaican Conservation and Development Trust (JCDT), a small NGO based in Kingston) have taken, or have the capacity to take, an authoritarian approach towards occupants as has occurred with some Third World parks.

Establishing protected areas might seem contrary to neoliberal ideology, since this ideology is based upon unrestrained exploitation of resources. But in certain instances where degradation is so severe that the functioning of an entire economic system is jeopardized — as is arguably the case in Jamaica⁴² — establishment of protected areas can help preserve a minimum bio-physical baseline to allow the economic system to function without rupturing (i.e. through ecological “services” such as watershed preservation, soil conservation, etc.). The preservation of critical ecological services is rational by neoliberal economic logic, as critical areas would take on greater economic values

⁴¹See Berke and Beatley, 1995, *op. cit.*, p. 533.

⁴²The *1990 National Forestry Action Plan* acknowledges that “the future of Jamaica's economy will largely depend on putting a stop to deforestation and other forms of forest degradation.” Jamaica's soil and water conservation problems are profound, as the island's rugged terrain makes it very susceptible to soil erosion and watershed degradation with deforestation. Soil erosion, in turn, reduces the moisture retention capacity of the land, increasing the speed of runoff and reducing infiltration, ultimately intensifying the seasonality of and turbidity of water yields (i.e., greater flood peaks and diminished dry season flows, and poorer quality). This ultimately reverberates on industrial, agricultural, and tourism sectors, particularly through decreased water availability — which the World Bank considers to be by far Jamaica's “most serious” environmental problem in terms of what affects the most people. See Government of Jamaica, UNEP, and the FAO, *op. cit.*, p. 1, and World Bank, 1993a, *op. cit.*

since their worth to the economy would exceed the value local users could generate from using that same land. As well, establishing park areas can help placate the environmental conscience of elites, both nationally and internationally (in which case protected areas might make further rational economic sense if given a high aesthetic valuation by these same elites), and allow for concerns over biodiversity and natural areas preservation to be disassociated from individual behavior and economic systems.

In short, protected areas can help curb the worst ecological tendencies of neocolonial capitalism, muting what might otherwise be more pronounced ecological contradictions and abetting the continuing stranglehold of neoliberal planners (both inside and outside the state) on economic policy-making.⁴³ From a human perspective, however, protected areas often serve to further intensify the social contradictions inherent in neocolonial landscapes, as the earlier noted cases attest to. As a result, a great danger with managerial responses like protected areas is that they can encourage a false consciousness that change is occurring for the better, in the process serving to maintain the status quo and reinforcing the causative dynamics of degradation. A comment by one of the BJCMNP's rangers is illustrative here: "The [BJCMNP ranger] stations serve as points of demarcation that tell people where the park starts, and other land ends. Otherwise they will keep moving in."⁴⁴ Protected areas and the discourse of environmental management suggest progress made in tackling critical environmental issues, but in failing to challenge the structural roots of ecological problems they can serve to reinforce economic norms. In order for Jamaica to address its urgent ecological problems, the discourse and policies of environmental management must be overcome by a recognition of the need to fundamentally reform the underlying contradictions in land and society.

4. Inequities as Barriers to Managerial Solutions

Environmental management efforts — protected areas drawn on the American model of human exclusion being the most extreme form — are increasingly common in the Third World, and Jamaica's recent efforts in this respect are quite clearly part of broader Caribbean and global trends. However, when strict managerial solutions ignore the structural roots of the human-environment imbalance, such as massive

⁴³By allowing "capital's complicity in fomenting ecological crises [to escape] examination," Richard A. Schroeder and Roderick P. Neumann, "Manifest Ecological Destinies: Local Rights and Global Environmental Agendas: Special Issue," *Antipode*, 27, 4, October, 1995, p. 322.

⁴⁴Quotation from Berke and Beatley, 1995, *op. cit.*, p. 539.

land inequities, they are not only doomed to failure but can have the dangerous impact of reinforcing the status quo.

Strict managerial interventions in colonized Third World landscapes often represent a new imperialism, displacing outright or restricting the resource use of local people from areas where they traditionally resided or were marginalized to by colonial development.⁴⁵ Ramachandra Guha provides a vitriolic attack on how crusading Northern organizations have taken control over Third World lands, managing these “wild areas” for the benefit of the (often faraway) rich and to the further disempowerment of the local poor.⁴⁶ Such intervention, in the absence of more fundamental socio-economic and land reforms, may only exacerbate local animosity. In cases where management lacks the capacity to monitor and deal with local opposition, as in the famous “paper parks” of the Third World, managerial solutions have proven unable to reverse resource degradation as local peoples simply ignore boundaries. In both “wild areas” and “paper parks,” managerial responses fail to address urgent human and ecological problems because these problems cannot be resolved within the existing socio-economic and land-use matrix, but rather are products of it.

The Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park (BJCMNP) appears for now to be a paper park, except perhaps near the few ranger stations and at the highest, non-arable peaks. Farmers are continuing to clear and cultivate steep mountain hillsides within the park, sometimes on lands so steep they are subject to mass wasting shortly after forest clearance.⁴⁷ Limited budgets and increasing pressures mean that park

⁴⁵There are abundant examples of Western environmental interventionism taking various neoimperial forms, a subject well covered in a special issue of *Antipode* (1995, *op. cit.*). In the introduction to the issue, Schroeder and Neumann argue that “the assertion of sweeping property claims and the reconfiguring of associated livelihood and accumulation strategies” in the name of the environment has come to reflect “a new set of rules of engagement between ‘northern’ cores and ‘southern’ peripheries.” Most telling, they suggest, is the “fact that former ecological pariahs like the World Bank have become standard-bearers (and purse-holders) for a revamped development agenda focused on sustainability.” See Schroeder and Neumann, *op. cit.*, 321-22.

⁴⁶See Ramachandra Guha, “Radical Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third-World Critique,” *Environmental Ethics*, 11, 1, Spring, 1989.

⁴⁷Based upon the author’s personal discussions and observations throughout the area in 1997 and 2000. When a friend, a Jamaican agronomist, noted how he was disturbed at the sight of this ruined landscape

staff generally have insufficient means to police all of the activity, while the marginalization of the peasantry has not changed. Structural adjustment has forced massive cutbacks in the Jamaican government over the past two decades, especially ravaging the capacity of those departments designed to address environmental issues.⁴⁸ Responsibility for the management of the BJCMNP was given to the Jamaican Conservation Development Trust, a small NGO which has been dependent upon external donors but which has very limited means and no long term source of funding.⁴⁹ If management capacity gets to the point where poor farmers are strictly policed or evicted, then the charge of neocolonialism could perhaps be raised. But for now, while the large area marked on the map looks like something is being done on paper, the irreplaceable dense blue hillsides are fast becoming denuded green and brown wastelands.

5. Agroecology, Efficiency and Land Reform

What happens in the settled agricultural areas of the country is probably more important in curbing resource destruction than what is done physically in the nature preserve itself.⁵⁰

William Thiesenhusen

Although it has lost much of its earlier momentum, land reform remains a critical issue throughout much of the Third World for ecological as well as social justice reasons, since inequitable land distribution is often at the crux of forest colonization pressures.⁵¹ However, to assert that land reform will have a de-pressurizing impact on forest colonization, it demands that we consider land use efficiency.⁵² Agro-

during one trip, a local farmer responded: “I know, but them can’t do better ya know — them got no land ya know.”

⁴⁸See Patricia Lundy, *Debt and Adjustment: Social and Environmental Consequences in Jamaica* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Press, 1999).

⁴⁹See Berke and Beatley, 1995, *op. cit.*, p. 540. The possibility of a debt-for-nature swap has been raised, with funds coming from the Nature Conservancy.

⁵⁰William C. Thiesenhusen, “Implications of the Rural Land Tenure System for the Environmental Debate: 3 Scenarios.” *Journal of Developing Areas*, 26, October, 1991, p. 17.

⁵¹See Roger Plant, “Background to Agrarian Reform: Latin America, Asia and Africa,” in Marcus Colchester and Larry Lohmann, eds., *The Struggle for Land and the Fate of the Forests* (London: Zed Books, 1993).

⁵²If multi-cropped, low-input, labor intensive methods characteristic of small farm agriculture in the tropics are less efficient than are capital

ecology — a growing discipline which examines agricultural systems from both an ecological and socio-economic perspective⁵³ — is coming to provide critical evidence on land use efficiency, which in turn empowers calls for land reform on ecological, social, and economic levels.

Agroecologists consistently show that multicropped systems outperform monocropped plantations, not only in terms of typical “sustainability” measures such as species diversity, soil conservation, and nutrient retention and recycling in the agroecosystem (reducing the need for external inputs, and retaining important functional elements of tropical ecosystems), but in terms of yield efficiency and outright productivity.⁵⁴ That is, most multi-cropped systems out-yield the sums of the same crops were they to be grown in monocultures, in addition to providing greater yield stability. Netting provides many examples of how the smallholder farm household, where labor is plentiful, provides the foundation for intensive, sustainable agriculture.⁵⁵ On both national and global levels, traditional agroecosystems also provide an invaluable counter to the potentially calamitous genetic homogenization of Green Revolution agriculture.⁵⁶

On an individual level, diversification of agricultural systems can also stabilize peasant income, offering possible protection against increasingly volatile commodity pricing in the global marketplace, serving as an important hedge.⁵⁷ As well, diverse cropping patterns can

intensive monocrop plantations, then the overall *amount* of land used in agriculture may not be reduced by the radical reform of plantation lands.

⁵³Agroecology implies that material flow in an agricultural system must be understood not only in terms of inputs and outputs, but also in terms of resource and energy retention and recycling within the system. For agroecosystems, productivity should be viewed as a process rather than purely as ends, and human impact must be understood with respect to such things as nutrient cycling, energy flow, and the dynamics of plant and animal populations within the system, in addition to inputs and food outputs.

⁵⁴See Peter Rosset, “Small is Bountiful,” *The Ecologist*, 29, 8, December, 1999; Miguel A. Altieri, *Agroecology: The Science of Sustainable Agriculture* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1998); and Miguel A. Altieri and Susanna Hecht, eds., *Agroecology and small farm development* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 1990).

⁵⁵See Robert M. Netting, *Smallholders, Householders* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993).

⁵⁶See Vandana Shiva, *Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives on Biodiversity and Biotechnology* (London: Zed Press, 1993).

⁵⁷See John Schelhas, “Building Sustainable Land Uses on Existing Practices: Smallholder Land Use Mosaics in Tropical Lowland Costa Rica,”

help keep peasants out of unmanageable debt burdens which they might otherwise acquire to purchase non-regenerative Green Revolution seeds, and the fertilizer and pesticide intensity these crops demand.

The need to balance risks through the diversification of production systems would seem to have tremendous exigency throughout the Caribbean as the era of preferential trade comes to an end. Without preferential arrangements, Jamaica's traditional exports (sugar and bananas) cannot compete in a liberalized regime in terms of cost (both crops) and quality (bananas).⁵⁸ J. Mohan Rao also shows that small farms (defined as up to 25 acres) had approximately 75 percent greater gross yields than farms over 100 acres in the late 1970s because of higher cultivation intensity, despite typically possessing poorer land.⁵⁹ As well, various researchers have argued that the Jamaican peasantry have an immense, intuitive understanding of complex agroecological processes, manifest in the systems of agroforestry that have a long history on the hillsides.⁶⁰

Cuba's recent agricultural transition provides further instructive lessons on the importance of land reform. While early state collectivization helped keep agricultural production and employment relatively stable in Cuba in the decades following the revolution, at a time when they were declining throughout the Caribbean,⁶¹ a more radical program of restructuring both the type and methods of agricultural production did not occur until after 1989 — from which important ecosocial lessons can be discerned. Cuba's incorporation within the Soviet sphere kept its agricultural sector more or less bound in a neocolonial, dependent relationship as a sugar producer, with the

Society and Natural Resources, 7, 1, January-February, 1994; and Emmanuel A.S. Serrao, Daniel Nepstad, and Robert Walker, "Upland agricultural and forestry development in the Amazon: Sustainability, criticality and resilience," *Ecological Economics*, 18, 1, July, 1996.

⁵⁸For bananas, see Paul Sutton, "The banana regime of the EU, the Caribbean and Latin America," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Summer, 1997; for sugar, see Michelle Harrison, "Caribbean 2000: No Place in the Sun," *Capital and Class*, 64, Spring, 1998.

⁵⁹See J. Mohan Rao, "Aspects of Jamaican Agriculture," *Social and Economic Studies*, 39, 1, March, 1990, p. 176.

⁶⁰See Barker and McGregor, *op. cit.*; and Donald Q. Innis, "Aspects of Jamaican Post-Industrial Agriculture," *Journal of Geography*, 82, 5, September-October, 1983.

⁶¹See Tom Barry, Beth Wood, and Deb Preusch, *The Other Side of Paradise: Foreign Control in the Caribbean* (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1984), p. 29.

surplus from grossly inflated terms of trade used to fuel broader social development. As a result, mechanized, mono-cropped, chemically dependent, labor-alienating, and export-oriented state farms controlled roughly four-fifths of the land into the 1990s, while Cuba remained a high-level basic foods importer. However, the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the suffocating American economic blockade produced dire shortages in foreign exchange (and hence in food, machinery, chemical, and fuel imports) and forced Cuba to make the transition from extreme food dependency to relative food self-sufficiency based on smaller-scale production units and low-input methods. Recognizing that small farms were much more efficient and adaptable to techniques involving biological pesticides and fertilizers, crop rotations, cover cropping, and animal traction than were the large state plantations, Cuba embarked on a significant divestment of state lands to workers in 1993. Owing in large part to these changes, Cuba has made massive strides in increasing its food self-sufficiency in a very short period of time.⁶²

In short, there is much evidence to suggest that in Jamaica, as throughout the tropics, labor intensive, low-input, multi-cropped systems on the fertile lowlands would improve the efficiency of agriculture as a whole, both ecologically and economically. If these efficiency gains were coupled with distributional equity in land ownership, the colonial agricultural model in Jamaica would undoubtedly be moderated.⁶³ Reducing hillside cultivation, particularly on marginal and critical watershed areas, would improve soil conservation and water yields (allowing reforestation of degraded upland forests). Ultimately, however, the implementation of more sustainable agroecosystems demands that the socio-economic determinants governing production systems be fundamentally altered, and as the late George Beckford noted: “unless some revolutionary change occurs, the position of the [Caribbean] peasantry is likely to remain static for some time to come.”⁶⁴ Following this, ecosocialism is next explored as a way to conceptualize how evident contradictions might generate opposition to societal norms, most fundamentally in terms of

⁶²See Hugh Warwick, “Cuba’s Organic Revolution,” *The Ecologist*, 29, 8, December, 1999; Peter M. Rosset, “Alternative Agriculture Works: The Case of Cuba,” *Monthly Review*, 50, 3, July-August, 1998.

⁶³This could also have the added benefit of improving what Balfour Spence describes as Jamaica’s “dismal situation in its domestic food security.” Balfour Spence, “Influence of Small Farmers’ land-use decisions on the status of domestic food security in Jamaica,” *Caribbean Geography*, 7, 2, p. 132.

⁶⁴See Beckford, 1985, *op. cit.*, pp. 407-08.

relationships to land, and the potential role for certain groups as catalysts.

6. Ecosocialism and the Role of Labor

Only a socialist development path can eradicate existing gross economic disequalities [in Jamaica] and remove the social ugliness which now stands in contradiction with the physical beauty of our land.⁶⁵

George Beckford and Michael Witter

If we recognize that revolutionary distributional changes in land and society are critical to reversing ecological degradation and creating a lasting balance in the relationship between Jamaican society and its small land base, the inevitable question raised is how can such change possibly occur given the current stranglehold of international financial institutions and the entrenched and monied interests intent on preserving the status quo? Is it only hopeless idealism to suggest that revolutionary change is necessary, and an exercise in futility to discuss how small farm agroecosystems on plantation lands could de-pressurize agriculture's impact on the landscape while increasing on-farm efficiency and sustainability? Ecosocial theory helps douse the debilitating sense of fatalism imparted by the overwhelming hegemony of neoliberalism (and augmented by the ready interventionism of the U.S., particularly throughout the Americas), by allowing us to conceptualize how irresistible, organic change could be rooted in the very contradictions which appear to be entrenching themselves further.

The foundation for theorizing ecosocial resistance is rooted in the assumption that the nature of labor and production processes conditions how people know and interact with the world. Following this, ecosocial theory posits that the contradictions created in the social order through the dual exploitation of land and labor in a capitalist system — such as the unequal burdens of degradation and systemic inequities in accumulation — will inevitably be understood best by the workers experiencing them through their daily toil. These contradictions are caused by capitalists perpetually competing against one another, together driving down human and resource costs and labor and environmental standards. In the case of a Caribbean plantation economy, this can be seen in the historical pattern of land monopoly by agrarian capitalists, and the maintenance of a surplus labor force to keep wages down. As competition of international capital continues to erode ecological and social standards in the global “race to the bottom,”

⁶⁵See Beckford and Witter, *op. cit.*

workers who appreciate these structural inequities most immediately are apt to become politicized. The competitive drive to keep plantation wages down is re-igniting with renewed vigor in Jamaica as plantation capital — long insulated by preferential trade agreements for both sugar and bananas — is being forced to compete with lower cost global producers as liberalization breaks down these preferential regimes.

These material contradictions provide the foundation for resistance, positioning labor to drive change. As workers become increasingly alienated from their own existence, their families, and from the environment, they will at some point become aware of the contradictions inherent in the nature of their work, its surplus extraction, and the exploitation of the environment through their labor, and will become politicized. David Pepper argues that urban labor movements are key agents for ecosocial change, given their historic capacity for mobilization — rather than the coalescence of social movements that post-modernists tend to celebrate⁶⁶ — and their front-line experience with the ecological, physical and emotional degradation of capitalism.⁶⁷ Change is then foreseen to arise out of the struggle to control and reshape the means of production, making the production processes themselves socialized, dignified, and ecologically balanced.

Ecosocial analysis provides important insight into the contradictions inherent in capitalist systems, as well as identifying those on the frontlines as being the key agents for precipitating change. However, a theoretical end-point of socialized production is problematic in the context of Jamaican agriculture because there is not one mode of production, but two — peasant agriculture existing somewhat independently on the margins of the plantation system.⁶⁸ While

⁶⁶Escobar is perhaps the most famous example. See Escobar, *op. cit.*

⁶⁷See Pepper, *op. cit.*

⁶⁸Whereas the plantation system is an ultimate archetype of dependent capitalism, integrating productive units with the advanced capitalist nations through finance and markets (facilitated by local compradors) but largely disconnecting them from national economies in the Third World, the peasant system is integrated into national economies through production geared towards domestic consumption (with some exports), investment patterns, enhanced use of local resources, and the localization of productive surplus. The peasant-estate divide is, however, not a simple dualism. Rather, the two modes of production are inter-connected, with the peasant system conditioned by its relationship to the plantation (with many being part-time peasant, part-time agro-proletariat). Although the peasant system has always been defined by the struggle for land, there is not a pure peasant type, as tenure security, the extent of market versus

contradictions in the latter are obvious and potentially explosive, peasant agriculture is, though impoverished and somewhat internally differentiated, nevertheless more egalitarian. Thus, revolutionary opposition to the contradictions in the plantation system, were it to occur, would not bring an end to peasant agriculture. On the contrary, Jamaica's historical experience suggests that a system based on small, independent holdings would be the most likely alternative to the plantation sector. This is because the legacy of slavery and the psychological association of land with freedom has made the peasantry very committed to the private ownership of land and likely to resist communal forms of ownership.⁶⁹ While the maintenance of private property after redistribution ultimately raises difficult theoretical issues of accumulation over time, given the historical tendency of capitalism and private landholding regimes, it should be kept in mind that traditional Caribbean systems of family land have proven highly egalitarian over prolonged periods.⁷⁰ Even Cuba has recognized the benefits of an agricultural system based on smallholder productive units, and their tendency to engender greater worker morale, dramatically increasing the amount of privately controlled land since 1993.⁷¹ In short, while ecosocialism is an attractive way to conceptualize radical change igniting in a neocolonial landscape like Jamaica's, we must recognize how historical experience conditions the range of alternatives.

subsistence orientation, the degree of off-farm income earned, and the intensity of cultivation and commercialization all vary widely among peasants. Two classic articulations of agrarian development in plantation Caribbean societies are George Beckford, *Persistent Poverty: Underdevelopment in Plantation Economies of the Third World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); and Lloyd Best, "Outlines of a Model of Pure Plantation Economy," *Social and Economic Studies*, 17, 3, September 1968. See also Clive Thomas, "Three Decades of Agriculture in the Commonwealth Caribbean: A General Survey," in Kari Levitt and Michael Witter, eds., *The Critical Tradition of Caribbean Political Economy: The Legacy of George Beckford* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1996).

⁶⁹Collectivized estate labor bears an inescapable link to slavery, whereas the "atomized" labor of provision grounds laid the foundation for the peasant system. See Abigail Bakan, *Ideology and Class Conflict in Jamaica: The Politics of Rebellion* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), pp. 24-25.

⁷⁰See Veronica Dujon, "Communal Property and Land Markets: Agricultural Development Policy in St. Lucia," *World Development*, 25, 9, September, 1997.

⁷¹Warwick, *op. cit.*, Rosset, *op. cit.*

In this case, the relevance of ecosocialism demands theorizing a place and position for private property.⁷²

Before ecosocial theory can be discussed with respect to potential agents of change in Jamaica, a brief review of Jamaica's failed attempt at democratic socialism is necessary because this failure not only gives evidence of significant structural barriers to change, but because it persists more than two decades later as a colossal weight on the oppositional imagination in Jamaica.

7. The People's Plan and the Failed Socialist Project of the 1970s: Lessons for Change

The nature of the historic struggle of our people was, and is, centred on the struggle to secure land. Solutions for dealing with the economic crisis must deal with the land question if the structural malaise within the economy is to be corrected with any degree of permanency. That structural condition creates the kinds of disjunctures that foster the development of an agro-industrial (food processing) sector which does not draw its raw material requirements from domestic sources...The task now must be to correct this...to lay the foundation for integrating the economy, and the only way this can be achieved is by uniting the land and the people.⁷³

The People's Plan (1977)

⁷²Historical experience also affects the baseline assumptions from which critical ecological theory can begin, and in the case of the Caribbean it must accept an anthropocentric approach (or instrumentalist rather than intrinsic valuation of nature) as a baseline for theorizing ecosocial change. Of course an instrumental view of land was forged by entirely different motivations — Europeans out of a desire for accumulation, and Africans (and later arrivals), out of the context of bondage and the perception of land as freedom. In either case, as Potter suggests, “pure environmental matters” seem to have little importance in the way most Caribbean people view land. Thus, as Pepper argues, “social and redistributive justice has now become the central issue in achieving the kind of relationship with nature which ecocentrics want. See Robert B. Potter, “Caribbean views on environment and development: A cognitive perspective,” *Caribbean Geography*, 3, 4, September, 1992; Pepper, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

⁷³George Beckford, Norman Girvan, Louis Lindsay, and Michael Witter, *Pathways to Progress: The People's Plan for Socialist Transformation Jamaica 1977-78* (Morant Bay, Jamaica: Maroon Publishing House, 1977), p. 57.

To suggest that a socialist path is necessary to overcome the massive contradictions ingrained in Jamaican society by colonialism and perpetuated by dependent capitalism is hardly original. In fact, owing to this recognition — inspired to a large degree by critical New World intellectuals at the University of West Indies-Mona⁷⁴ — Jamaica appeared headed for a transition to democratic socialism under the leadership of Prime Minister Michael Manley between 1974 and 1977, and particularly after the 1976 elections. The barriers to future change evidenced by, and which are products of, the failure of democratic socialism in the 1970s cannot be dismissed lightly — and for this reason the plan itself and some of the reasons democratic socialism was not realized will be briefly discussed.

After winning the 1976 election on a socialist-transition platform, Manley enlisted four UWI-Mona New World economists to prepare a plan that would lead Jamaica on a path to democratic socialism. The plan for this transition, entitled “The People’s Plan,” called for the continued socialization of the basic means of production as its central theme, with the deepening of this process to the level of the workers and peasants as its “single most important policy prescription.”⁷⁵ The plan raised many themes that remain of great relevance to Jamaica from an ecosocial perspective over twenty years after it was written, as the “structural conditions” on which it is based have not changed.

Foremost among these structural conditions is the issue of land and agriculture. As the Plan notes, any discussion of food and the goal of productive, dignified employment — identified as “over-riding objectives” — raises “the fundamental question of the land, for the legacy of inequality and injustice left by slavery and the plantation system still scar the face of rural Jamaica.” The primacy of the land issue to average Jamaicans was evidenced by the fact that of the more than 10,000 suggestions received by the authors from citizens, the “vast majority of these suggestions had to do with land, agriculture, and food, which are evidently primordial preoccupations of the Jamaican people.” As a result, land reform was stated to be “the single most critical need for integrating the Jamaican economy. Land for the people.”⁷⁶

Unfortunately, due to an array of internal and external problems, hope for democratic socialism collapsed dramatically in April 1977 when Manley, rather than carrying through with the People’s Plan which he had commissioned, “sold Jamaica to imperialism and its

⁷⁴Also known as the Plantation School.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, pp. iv, v, 58.

central bank, the IMF.”⁷⁷ While it is impossible to completely differentiate between external and internal problems, among the most significant of the internal problems were the oil crisis, the collapse of bauxite prices and tourism (the latter being a notoriously fickle industry, particularly amidst heavy U.S. propaganda), ensuing foreign exchange problems, and serious U.S. and CIA intervention and subversion. Among the most important internal problems were the extreme capital flight of the period, the sabotage by local capitalists who withdrew basic consumer goods, and a bloated bureaucracy and mal-administration of the government (including insufficient attention to public education).⁷⁸ Much has been written on why democratic socialism failed to take root in Jamaica, but it is enough to say that while the economic demise of the 1970s had an independent momentum, the political changes — both real and feared after Manley’s outspoken rhetoric — between 1974 and 1977 unquestionably exacerbated the severity of the decline and weakened the courage of Manley to proceed. After a violent campaign (800 killed) in 1980, Manley was resoundingly defeated by the Jamaican Labor Party’s (and Washington ally) Edward Seaga, but by then democratic socialism was already dead.

Since 1977, Jamaica has endured the third most World Bank-IMF adjustment packages in the world, is one of the most heavily indebted nations per capita, saw its human development index fall more than any nation in the world but one from 1970s to 1990,⁷⁹ and yet has remained firmly entrenched on a neoliberal course. Manley’s party — the People’s National Party — is currently in its fourth-straight term in power (and second under P.J. Patterson), and bears little resemblance to the one that was close to opting for democratic socialism.

Michael Witter, one of the authors of *The People’s Plan*, suggests that critical thought in Jamaica and the Caribbean is at an all-time low ebb, and the retreat of Manley in the 1970s still constrains the popular credibility of the left. He also believes that the geopolitical reality evident from the 1970s was that the United States would simply not let a small nation like Jamaica charter a course at odds with the

⁷⁷See Beckford and Witter, *op. cit.*

⁷⁸Clive Thomas provides a good account of both external and internal constraints to the realization of democratic socialism in Jamaica. See Clive Thomas, *The Poor and the Powerless: Economic Policy and Change in the Caribbean* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1988).

⁷⁹Only Romania experienced a steeper decline in this measure. See UNDP, *Human Development Report 1993* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 103.

neoliberalism of transnational and national capital. Nevertheless, the sense given should not be that American hegemony in the region dooms any hope for change, but rather that there must be caution against inflammatory anti-American rhetoric and posturing (which was lacking in the 1970s).⁸⁰

Other lessons include the need to overcome the political “tribalism” that still haunts Jamaica, by seeking to build social coalitions that transcend the huge party chasm.⁸¹ Education efforts on the ground must also be extended for any progressive political project to succeed, especially in the case of the peasantry who were easily turned against a socialist path by a U.S.-fostered red-scare, which effectively played upon fears that their land would be taken away.

Finally, it seems clear that the vanguard in the 1970s was at the academic level, rather than being rooted firmly in the urban poor, working class, agro-proletariat, or peasantry recognizing and acting upon the societal contradictions they faced. Though the PNP’s radical turn in the mid-1970s found a very receptive electorate, it was led by intellectuals and followed by Jamaica’s poor, who were not sufficiently mobilized and included in the process of organic social transformation. While their responsiveness to a radical political agenda suggests a base of support that could potentially be rebuilt in a new way, the failure of democratic socialism before it began in Jamaica also points to the need for greater education, organization, and assertion of its traditionally excluded social groups. Whether these actors themselves are developing an awareness of these contradictions is perhaps then the central question for future ecosocial change, and various contexts where this awareness could arise — and should be fostered — will next be explored.

⁸⁰From discussions in July 1997 and August 2000.

⁸¹While the discursive label of a “tribalistic” political culture in predominately non-white nations often carries racial overtones, this is nevertheless how Jamaica’s political climate continues to be described by most of its commentators, critical and otherwise. George Lamming describes the “ritual blasphemy” of elections: “every five years [the masses] become visible and decisive in a tribal power game which concludes with their absence from any serious consultations about their future.” The challenge of overcoming non-ideological block voting cannot be overstated. See George Lamming, “Epilogue,” in Judith Wedderburn, ed., *A Caribbean Reader on Development* (Kingston: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1986), p. 210.

8. Prospective Vanguard for Ecosocial Change

Exploring the practicability of ecosocial change in Jamaica — related to the future praxis of activism and research — is framed by the question: Who might play a vanguard role? The emphasis on the issue of peasant-driven deforestation in the context of agricultural land-use means that there is an explicit rural bias to this paper. However, in line with Pepper's notion that urban areas and the labor movement provide the most fertile ground for ecosocial change, together with the recognition that Jamaica has an increasingly urban population, overwhelmingly centered in Kingston, the potential for such transformation to arise out of the urban ecological problems of Kingston is first discussed. Next, the potential for the agro-proletariat to be the vanguard of changing production relations amidst the tumult of collapsing agro-export plantations is considered by assessing the restructuring of three major banana estates on the northeast coast. Finally, the potential for the peasantry to become mobilized is explored by considering their position at the front of the ecological degradation.

The Urban Context in Kingston. There is tremendous urban poverty in Kingston, which contains one million of Jamaica's 2.5 million people and possesses the ecological blight characteristic of Third World urban centers.⁸² There is also evidence that the problems are getting worse — a survey on living conditions in Kingston in the early 1990s found that close to 9 out of 10 residents were “much less satisfied with life than ten years ago.”⁸³ Kingston's urban poor must deal with inadequate public water, sewerage, and garbage services, and typically live in very crowded conditions with poor indoor air quality and close to areas of hazardous waste.⁸⁴ The denuded slopes of the Blue Mountains overlook Kingston's sprawling slums with gated mansions perched on the hillsides, putting into obvious juxtaposition the deforestation crisis of the Blue Mountains with the tremendous polarity

⁸²For a comprehensive discussion of Third World urban ecological problems, see Jorge E. Hardoy, Diana Mitlin, and David Satterthwaite, *Environmental Problems in Third World Cities* (London: Earthscan, 1992). Chapter 2 provides an excellent review of how ecological problems are manifest in the home, workplace, and neighborhood, and their impacts on human health.

⁸³See Derek Gordon, Patricia Anderson, and Don Robotham, “Jamaica: Urbanization during the Years of Crisis,” in Alejandro Portes, Carlos Dore-Cabral, and Patricia Landolt, eds., *The Urban Caribbean: Transition to the New Global Economy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 216.

⁸⁴See World Bank, 1993a, *op. cit.*

of Jamaican society. As Holland notes, there is “such a visible spatial identity to urban class politics.”⁸⁵

Fuel wood and water shortages are two of the most obvious ways that deforestation problems impact on the urban poor. Many Kingston residents — especially in the context of mass unemployment, inadequate urban infrastructure, and structural adjustment-driven declining wage levels — are dependent on the decreasing supplies of fuel-wood from the nearby Blue Mountains. In fact, in the early 1990s charcoal made from harvested wood was estimated to provide roughly 37 percent of all household energy in Jamaica,⁸⁶ while levels of frustration and violence in Kingston were also found to be exacerbated by a lack of access to electricity.⁸⁷ Pollution and the lack of other urban infrastructure to large areas are also potentially volatile, as poor and declining environmental health is linked to such things as air and water pollution and deficient solid and toxic waste collection and disposal (open lots typically become dumping grounds), all worsened by declining expenditures mandated over two decades of structural adjustment.⁸⁸ Further, the severely eroded watersheds loom very ominously for Kingston’s future water supply. Thus, the context might seem ripe, especially as Kingston continues to grow from rural emigration, for its residents to begin to recognize and act on evident ecosocial contradictions. As Rastafarian poet Sam Brown wrote:

Some young desperates look to the hills, see the seat
of their distress,

They see the dwellers of the hills as them that do
oppress....

Executives in horseless chariots sometimes pass
through hold their noses,

⁸⁵Jeremy Holland, “Global process, local change: Adjustment in urban Jamaica.” *Caribbean Geography*, 4, 2, September, 1993, p. 94.

⁸⁶See Government of Jamaica, UNEP, and FAO, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2. In urban settings, the reliance on charcoal often creates intense indoor air quality problems; see Hardoy, Mitlin, and Satterthwaite, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

⁸⁷Based upon survey research in a number of Kingston neighborhoods. See Caroline Moser and Jeremy Holland, “Can Policy-focused Research be Participatory? Research on violence and poverty in Jamaica using PRA methods,” in Jeremy Holland and James Blackburn, eds., *Whose Voice? Participatory research and policy change* (London: Intermediate Technology Publications, 1998), p. 51.

⁸⁸See Government of Jamaica, 1992, *op. cit.*, pp. viii, 24.

Hapless poor look with vengeful eyes, for them no
bed of roses.⁸⁹

There are, however, significant barriers inhibiting mobilization of the urban poor and working class in Kingston. Akin to old colonial efforts to divide and rule, the popular participation stemming from the discontent of the urban masses has been conditioned (through extreme degrees of constituency patronage, or clientism) in a destructive, instrumentalist manner. Kingston is one of the world's most violent cities, with intense divisions rooted along party (but not ideological) lines — the “garrison constituencies” of the PNP and JLP being the most famous example of the intensity and violence of partisanship.⁹⁰ Moser and Holland note how violence creates widespread fear which in turn permeates through “both social and spatial aspects of community life,” ultimately impeding social cohesion and organization.⁹¹

These profound fractures, or turf wars, are an enormous barrier to organization, as the urban poor see their well being linked to the patronage of the political party they support, rather than to contradictions and structural inequities in their condition.⁹² Some major unions, most prominently the National Workers Union (PNP) and Bustamante Industrial Trade Union (JLP), are also allied along divergent

⁸⁹Quotation in Leonard C. Barrett, *The Rastafarians*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), p. 15. A recent study also finds Kingston residents to have a “high level of social perception” with regards to class and residential divisions; see Gordon, Anderson, and Robotham, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

⁹⁰Bakan notes how both the PNP and the JLP were developed with a “mass structure” but “bourgeois spirit,” and this has changed little over the course of Jamaica's history, but for Michael Manley's sharp but fleeting turn to the left in the mid-1970s. Most of the urban poor is aligned with either the PNP or the JLP, and the garrison constituencies are those heavily-armed ridings which are widely known for their particular affiliation. As Gordon, Anderson, and Robotham point out, these intense divisions ironically make “Jamaica's political system simultaneously more volatile and more stable. During elections, competition between the two parties spills onto the streets and gunfights erupt between competing party gangs. This periodic instability is balanced by long-term popular demobilization, as the poor focus their political energies on acquiring handouts and gaining the attention of political bosses.” See Bakan, *op. cit.*, p. 136, and Gordon, Anderson, and Robotham, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-192, 218.

⁹¹See Moser and Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

⁹²See Gordon, Anderson, and Robotham, *op. cit.*, p. 191. Drugs have also become central to the turf wars. However, police are often the aggressors in the ghettoized violence such that some poor neighborhoods are more frightened of the police than of the gangs.

political lines.⁹³ Gordon, Anderson, and Robotham describe the ultimate impact of this, noting that “the poor must...compete on behalf of elites in a vertical system of loyalties that makes for weak grassroots politics...[meaning that] the Jamaican working classes are politically “active,” but in both instances their power to alter social inequalities and to bring relief from the traumas of the new economic development model appear to be nil.”⁹⁴ In other words, labor has effectively been fragmented into “internally cohesive yet distinct and alienated working class residential groups.”⁹⁵ There is a strange geography to this form of urban politics: many neighborhoods that are identical in class composition and which sit side-by-side, are bounded by enormous figurative walls characterized by hostility and often violence.

There are a number of further constraints inhibiting the ability of urban labor movements to act as catalysts for ecosocial change in Jamaica. One of the most significant of these is the small size of the manufacturing (11 percent) and construction (seven percent) sectors, and the predominance of services (roughly 50 percent) and agriculture (25 percent) in Jamaica’s employment structure.⁹⁶ The reality is that many urban residents earn their living in the informal sector, or shadow economy, which provides very difficult terrain for organization — not only are informal sector workers typically spread out and atomized, but many fear exposure for illicit activity or seek to evade reporting income. Jamaica’s informal sector experienced explosive growth during

⁹³In Jamaica, political parties and trade unions were born in tandem during the 1930s, and old allegiances persist seemingly regardless of ideology.

⁹⁴See Gordon, Anderson, and Robotham, *op. cit.*, p. 192. This economic development model is “new” only to the extent that neoliberalism represents an intensification of classical development models, which have long pervaded in Jamaica and much of the Caribbean.

⁹⁵Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

⁹⁶See United Nations, *Statistical Yearbook 1997* (New York: United Nations Publication, 2000), p. 270-71. Jamaica’s most important export, bauxite, has historically employed very few people, with most industrial processing occurring abroad. Even when Jamaica was the world’s leading producer of bauxite in the 1960s, the industry employed less than one percent of the national workforce (today it is one-half of one percent). While Jamaica’s most significant economic sector today, tourism, has historically served to embed feelings of inferiority and “stimulat[e] submissiveness and deference on the part of the masses,” its potential for raising political consciousness is nevertheless inherent in the servile relationships engendered between race, class, and nations. See The Government of Jamaica, “Tourism,” *Emergency Production Plan, Volume 2* (Kingston: National Planning Agency, 1977), chapter 5.

the 1980s as a product of structural adjustment, which caused a contraction in both formal employment and wages. Formal-sector employment declined from 60.4 percent of the workforce in 1977 to 53.3 percent in 1989, and informal sector employment rose from 17.4 to 26 percent over that same period.⁹⁷ These figures also suggest another significant barrier to labor mobilization: the persistently high level of unemployment that, as Pepper notes, “invariably wrecks solidarity just when it is most needed.”⁹⁸ Although it is difficult to measure precisely given the extent of the informal sector, unemployment is believed to be far higher than the roughly 15 percent reported by the government.

In addition to being relatively small and plagued by unemployment, the nature of industrial labor in Jamaica is changing. Industrial free zones (or Export Processing Zones — EPZs), constructed as a product of structural adjustment, are foreign capital enclaves (extra-territorial sites outside local regulation) in both Kingston and Montego Bay. EPZ employment tends to be predominantly (95 percent in the early 1990s) female, low wage and low security, and the capacity of EPZ-capital to quickly relocate with any sign of social instability combined with the job scarce environment effectively disempowers the ability of labor to mobilize in these contexts.⁹⁹ Beverley Mullings has, however, found that there are covert, everyday forms of subversive resistance being exercised by the overwhelmingly female labor force in the export-oriented information-processing services (i.e. data-entry and telemarketing) in the face of debilitating industry demands. She attributes this covert resistance, when compared with the typically greater docility found in similar settings elsewhere, to “the critical consciousness grounded in culturally specific notions of injustice and redress in Jamaica, and the strength of support networks of kin at home and abroad.” Yet while Mullings provides some hope about the capacity of this female labor force to resist abusive norms, she also notes “that

⁹⁷See Alejandro Portes, José Itzigsohn, and Carlos Dore-Cabral, “Urbanization in the Caribbean Basin: Social Change during the Years of Crisis,” in Portes, Carlos Dore-Cabral, and Patricia Landolt, eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 45-46.

⁹⁸See Pepper, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

⁹⁹Thomas Klak has described the difficulty of labor to maneuver within Jamaican EPZs. See, for examples, “A Framework for Studying Caribbean Industrial Policy,” *Economic Geography*, 71, July, 1995, p. 311, and “Distributional Impacts of the ‘Free Zone’ Component of Structural Adjustment: The Jamaican Experience,” *Growth and Change*, 27, Summer, 1996, p. 371.

the motivations behind such acts are not consistently grounded in a consciousness aimed at redressing the often-exploitative relationship between capital and labor.”¹⁰⁰ Another serious new constraint to the potential assertiveness of workers in this sector is the fact that Kingston has recently experienced a major contraction of its EPZ employment, as foreign capital has fled to seek out even cheaper labor rates elsewhere.

The Gas Price Riots of April 19-21, 1999 provide some evidence of a widespread, yet vague, frustration over poverty, social inequity, and growing economic crisis.¹⁰¹ During this time, spontaneous rioting begun in Kingston subsequently spread across Jamaica in response to the government announcing an increase in gas taxes, and these riots effectively paralyzed the island. However, they appear to have been instigated by non-ideological and unorganized political antagonisms, rather than representing a specific recognition of, and challenge to, structural problems. Nevertheless, the rapid spread of the riots from Kingston to road blockages across the island demonstrates the latent volatility of the populace and how Kingston could serve as the fuse for igniting change.

The Agro-proletariat. As in the urban context, Jamaica’s agro-proletariat would seem to have much capacity for politicization with respect to the ecological-material contradictions they experience in the plantation system. The historical memory of the institution of slavery, and its resistance, are indelibly imprinted on the contemporary Jamaican experience,¹⁰² and nowhere is the divide between race, class, and capital more evident than on large estates.¹⁰³ In many respects, plantation

¹⁰⁰See Beverley Mullings, “Sides of the Same Coin?: Coping and Resistance among Jamaican Data-Entry Operators,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 89, 2, June, 1999, pp. 221, 229.

¹⁰¹See Norman Girvan, “Lessons of the Gas Price Riots,” unpublished manuscript, May 1999. Girvan notes how roughly one in three Jamaicans lives below the poverty line, and that the frustration of such a large, excluded underclass tends to engender sporadic acts of looting and destruction.

¹⁰²An important legacy of this, Bakan argues, is the “the historical significance of small-scale, private agricultural cultivation and landholding” to the working class in addition to the peasantry. See Bakan, *op. cit.*, pp. 3.

¹⁰³Michelle Harrison describes how the sugar “industry’s historical associations and present day circumstances are such that employment within it is commonly abhorred,” yet workers are entrapped in it by a lack of other employment opportunities in rural areas. See Harrison, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

agriculture has evolved little since Emancipation. Today, the agro-proletariat remain wage-slaves mired in monotonous routines with conditions and earnings driven down by plantation capital.¹⁰⁴ In addition to the natural animosity engendered by this exploitation, harsh environmental conditions (with respect to chemical intensity) on plantations could engender an ecosocial awareness among workers who bear the ecological burden.¹⁰⁵

The collapse of preferential trade agreements could politicize agrolabor and its call for land. Traditional Caribbean exports sugar and bananas have for decades been protected in European markets by British and French “benevolence” in the absence of “market logic.” In 1998, even on the largest and most productive Jamaican banana estates, the production cost per box of bananas was almost double that of the larger-scale Latin America banana producers.¹⁰⁶ Bananas from Latin America are also bigger and brighter than those produced in the Caribbean. Protected by price and quota guarantees into both European and U.S. markets (in the latter at slightly lower prices), Jamaican sugar is sold at roughly 3 times the world market price,¹⁰⁷ keeping afloat its production

¹⁰⁴See Beckford and Witter, *op. cit.* The Ministry of Agriculture estimates that cane farming employs 41,000 during cropping season, 28,000 out-of-season, and directly or indirectly contributes to the livelihoods of 200,000. Banana farming provides work for 45,000 people. In the case of both sugar and bananas, production is divided between the estate sector and small and medium independent farmers. See Ministry of Agriculture, 2000, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁵Grossman discusses the impact of pesticides on Eastern Caribbean farmers, attributing the chemical intensity largely to the competitive pressures of foreign markets, while Murray Douglas and Mendis and Van Bers provide valuable overviews of the environmental health issues related to the plantation production of tropical fruit. See Lawrence S. Grossman, “Pesticides, people, and the environment in St. Vincent,” *Caribbean Geography*, 3, 3, March, 1992; Murray Douglas, *Cultivating Crisis: The Human Cost of Pesticides in Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994); and Asoka Mendis and Caroline Van Bers, “Bitter Fruit: Attractive supermarket displays of tropical fruit conceal ugly environmental and social costs,” *Alternatives Journal*, 25, 1, Winter, 1999.

¹⁰⁶See Ministry of Agriculture, 2000, *op. cit.*; Gleaner Staff, “2,000 banana workers rehired,” *The Jamaica Gleaner*, December 15, 1998. Because roughly 50 percent of these costs are for labor in Jamaica, it is little wonder that wage levels are an obvious target for producers.

¹⁰⁷Jamaica does not sell any sugar on the world market. See Ministry of Agriculture, 2000, *op. cit.* The Lomé Agreement was established in 1975, while the U.S. sugar arrangement derives from Reagan’s Caribbean Basin Initiative, which was designed to placate its “anti-communist” allies in the region during the tumultuous 1980s.

that ranks amongst the least competitive in the world.¹⁰⁸ This protection brought a guaranteed return that allowed high cost production to be viable. As a result, wage levels for plantation workers were, although still meager, nevertheless significantly higher than they otherwise would have been (in the case of bananas, roughly double their Central American counterparts).

Plantation capital is, however, now sitting on unprecedented and very shaky ground in the Caribbean. Europe's banana regime with former Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) colonies was successfully challenged and affirmed on appeal as an unfair trade practice at the level of the WTO, by the U.S. (on behalf of agro-giants Chiquita, Dole, and Del Monte) together with five Latin American banana producing nations. While the European Union appears determined to provide some sort of new protection for bananas from ACP nations, the fallout has begun to hit the Caribbean in terms of reduced earnings.¹⁰⁹ The protection of sugar in European markets, previously governed by the Lomé Convention, was renegotiated in June 2000 in Cotonou, Benin to maintain privileged access for certain products such as sugar from the ACP to the EU. Although the terms from Cotonou are set for 20 years, the U.S. and Latin American nations are seeking to eliminate this special trade status for various ACP commodities.¹¹⁰ This agreement was therefore endangered from its birth, and is unlikely to be upheld when inevitably challenged at the WTO. The preferential sugar agreements with the U.S. also seem doomed, particularly in light of current negotiations to develop the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

In response to the looming demise of preferential trade agreements with Europe, Jamaica's plantation sector seems intent on "racing to the bottom" in the hopes of competing with cheaper production abroad by decreasing wages. Early indications are that the uncertainty of traditional exports wrought by the liberalizing imperative of international trade agreements has weakened agro-labor, rather than this opening emboldening it — an unfortunate trend noted earlier in the context of urban labor.

¹⁰⁸The European quota is a much more significant "life-line" to the sugar industry, "protecting it from the vagaries of the world market in which it could not compete." Harrison, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

¹⁰⁹Although at the same time the EU continues to pump large sums of money into the Caribbean banana industry in an attempt to help it adjust to new competitive pressures. See Claude Mills, "Boost for Bananas: \$1B EU support for the next 5 years," *The Jamaica Gleaner*, June 5, 2000.

¹¹⁰See Reuters, "EU and ACP trade partners sign new deal," *The Jamaica Gleaner*, June 24, 2000.

The restructuring of the Eastern Banana Estates, Victoria Banana Company, and the St. Mary Banana Estates provides a good example of this process. In late 1998, the Jamaica Producers Group (JPG; the island's largest banana growers) began a reorganization of these estates, a decision which the JPG's Chairman said was "taken against the background of a reduction in the preference that Jamaica now enjoys when it sells bananas in Europe."¹¹¹ In describing the decision, he also contrived an image of a shared destiny between capital and labor amidst rising competitive pressures:

We have to take a decision to make the industry viable, and it will also mean that workers will have to take lower wages...If it works it will allow us to maintain viability of the industry...To preserve our market, however, we must continue to increase our production and improve our quality at the same time we undertake the restructuring.¹¹²

The vice-president of one of the four unions representing plantation workers in negotiations shared this outlook, affirming that "the unions and workers are prepared to work with the management team for the national interest, to save jobs, and the investment of the companies."¹¹³

Located along the northern slopes of the Blue Mountains, these three estates dominate the fertile alluvial coastal plains in the parishes of St. Mary and Portland, and accounted for 2,650 (mostly low-paying) jobs prior to 1998. The 1998 restructuring combined the three estates into a single management entity called Agri-Services Ltd., making all workers redundant and subsequently rehiring 75 percent. While the rehiring process did not remove workers' rights to union representation as threatened in negotiations, the unions conceded to austere terms. As a manager at one of the estates explained, "the rates of pay and work rules are lower and they are geared towards higher productivity."¹¹⁴ In fact, the minimum standard for individual productivity jumped 46 percent overnight; prior to restructuring the average estate worker produced 13 boxes/day, while new standards demanded this increase to 19 boxes/day

¹¹¹See Gleaner Staff, "All banana workers to go," *The Jamaica Gleaner*, November 13, 1998, p. A1.

¹¹²See Observer staff, "Last-ditch plan to save bananas: 2,500 workers cut as firms restructure," *Jamaica Observer*, November 13, 1998), pp. 1, 3.

¹¹³See *The Jamaica Gleaner*, December 15, 1998, *op. cit.*, p. A1.

¹¹⁴See Sylvia Lee, "Pay cut hurts banana workers," *Jamaica Gleaner*, December 29, 1998, p. A1.

in an attempt to close the productivity gap with the average Central American worker (who average 28-30 boxes/day).¹¹⁵ Further, access to overtime pay ended and all health and school benefits were dissolved.¹¹⁶ While the estates claim to have made efficiency gains in the two years since restructuring,¹¹⁷ whether the industry can become viable beyond the infusion of European aid remains highly uncertain.¹¹⁸

Politicization of the agro-proletariat might come as impacts of the changing work conditions are felt. Indeed, the search for justice is a foundation for political action. However, the unions and workers involved in the plantation sector appear to be in a coping mode at present. Although complaints about the reduced earnings and more demanding workload on the estates abound, many workers remain grateful to simply to have a job after the restructuring.¹¹⁹ Scott differentiates coping from resistance, arguing that coping strategies represent compliance without subversive intent, and are trivial in terms of effecting change regardless of whether structural inequities are collectively recognized.¹²⁰

It seems evident that the banana plantation workers appear to have been co-opted by capital into a *coping* rather than a *resistant* or *subversive* mode of thought and action. The presence of high levels of unemployment and the rising sense of insecurity wrought by globalization appear to be very significant obstacles to solidarity and collective action during times of crisis and change. However, long-term feasibility of both sugar and bananas remains doubtful, and the potential agency of workers amidst this uncertainty must not be forgotten.

A Revolutionary Peasantry? In describing peasant agriculture, one old farmer explained to the author that “farming be easier if you have flatter land, but we don’t got it, we just got hillside.” This remark conveys both a conscious awareness of the unjust landscape and a degree of resignation to working within its confines. Peasantries are often

¹¹⁵ See *The Jamaica Gleaner*, December 15, 1998, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁶ Christopher Llanos and Peter McIsaac, “Caught in the Crossfire: The Banana War and Jamaica,” Paper prepared for the first part of the Global Economy and Cultures project of Woodstock Theological Center, August 1999; *Jamaica Observer*, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁷ See Gleaner Staff, “EB receives ISO 9002 Certification,” *The Jamaica Gleaner*, November 12, 2000.

¹¹⁸ Ministry of Agriculture, 2000, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁹ See Lee, *op. cit.*

¹²⁰ See James C. Scott, “Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance,” in Forrest Colburn, *Everyday Forms of Resistance* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1989), p. 21.

dismissed by Marxist scholars as being too “backwards” and dispersed to recognize the contradictions inherent in their position to become politicized. Marx himself showed famous disdain for the inertia of the peasantry,¹²¹ and there is an explicit urban bias to David Pepper’s discussion of potential avenues for ecosocial change.¹²²

Michael Witter expressed similar frustrations in explaining why the peasantry did not rally around the democratic socialist movement of the 1970s. He suggests that the peasantry lacked socio-political organization and political education, and that the PNP did not place enough emphasis on grassroots education. The peasantry was manipulated by counter-revolutionary forces, which included covert CIA involvement, by playing upon their historic fears of communism. These fears are related to fears of land expropriation and a consequent attachment towards private land ownership as a symbol of their freedom from historic bondage.¹²³

Large sectors of the peasantry were also emotionally tied to the opposition JLP because of a persistent, mythic image of party founder Alexander Bustamante, Jamaica’s first Prime Minister.¹²⁴ This support came despite the fact that the JLP cut programs like *Project Land Lease* which had been designed to help the peasantry. They also liberalized national markets to a flood of foreign food imports, cut domestic food marketing boards, and slashed education and health expenditures — with

¹²¹Having made the well-known analogy between peasants and sacks of potatoes. However, as Teodor Shanin illustrates, Marx moderated this view after 1870 following a variety of Russian intellectual influences, and began to be deeply interested in, and see the revolutionary potential of, the Russian peasant commune. See Teodor Shanin, *Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and “the peripheries of capitalism”* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 48.

¹²²Pepper, *op. cit.*

¹²³As cable television extends into poorer and more remote households in Jamaica, Witter also suggests that future research must recognize and assess the social psychological impact that the export of the “American dream” — through movies, soap operas, and sit-coms — has in weakening the critical consciousness of poor and poorly educated people. Based on discussions with the author in July 1997 and August 2000.

¹²⁴Although Bakan illustrates clearly “Busta’s” mythic image as standing up to foreign imperialists masks his conservatism and subservience to Jamaican elites, whose interests were tied to foreign capital in a classic comprador relationship. Bustamante also strategically played upon popular attachments to private landholding to discredit more radical political opponents. See Bakan, *op. cit.*, Chapter 4.

severe impacts in rural areas. Such contradictory partisanship is, as in the urban context, a serious barrier to change.

Helen McBain also supports the perception of the Jamaican peasantry as an historically conservative, disorganized, and largely apolitical class, connecting the lack of militancy in part to the advanced age of many farmers.¹²⁵ The issue of age in agriculture is not insignificant, in Jamaica as elsewhere, as many young people are not attracted to the hard work and “dirty life” in farming. Barry Floyd links this negative perception of farming, even independent peasant farming, to an historical association with slavery.¹²⁶ This negative perception is shared by many youth and is a major barrier to politicizing land reform and ecosocial change. Further impeding the potential for peasant solidarity is the historic dependence of most peasants on the disorganized, inconsistent, and volatile higgler (independent petty traders) marketing system, which fosters an economic outlook exactly the opposite to one of communal thinking — independent, self-interested, and speculative behavior as the means to improving profitability.

¹²⁵See McBain, *op. cit.* While Barrett suggests that the majority of peasants accept their conditions with little hope for change — “they can scarcely make ends meet but see no way out of their dilemma” — he identifies the Rastafarian movement as having long identified the centrality of the land issue, as well as advocating a communal pattern of living. However, whether Rastas can still be considered “champions of social change” in Jamaica, as Barrett asserts, is debatable. See Barrett, *op. cit.*, pp. 88, 116, 174, 263. King and Jensen describe how reggae music became a powerful vehicle for communicating Rastafarian concerns with social justice (especially in the 1970s), though King also notes how the internationalization and commercialization of reggae later diminished its association as a medium of Jamaica’s poor and oppressed. Nevertheless, many reggae lyrics continue to voice the anger and frustration associated with Jamaica’s historical scars and contemporary social realities, and it remains an important means for popular political mobilization. See Stephen A. King and Richard J. Jensen, “Bob Marley’s ‘Redemption Song’: The Rhetoric of Reggae and Rastafari,” *Journal of Popular Culture*, 29, Winter, 1995; Stephen A. King, “International Reggae, Democratic Socialism, and the Secularization of the Rastafarian Movement,” *Popular Music and Society*, 22, 3, Fall, 1998.

¹²⁶See Barry N. Floyd, “No Easy Harvest: Policies and Priorities for Agriculture in Jamaica,” *Journal of Geography*, 82, 5, September-October, 1983. Barry, Wood, and Preusch suggest that this problem of young people not choosing agriculture has plagued the Caribbean (but for Cuba) for some time, noting how it has “hastened the ugly process of urbanization.” See Barry, Wood, and Preusch, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

Despite these obstacles to mobilizing the Jamaican peasantry, it would be a mistake to ignore their potential to recognize ecosocial contradictions.¹²⁷ Peasant farmers have, as Gérard Chaliand describes, in certain Third World contexts been the most potent force for change (most famously in the case of Vietnam).¹²⁸ Indeed, resistance movements from Nicaragua (Sandinistas) and Mexico (Zapatistas) to Nigeria (Ogoni) and India (Chipko) that were born out of varying degrees of anger over social injustice and resistance to ecological degradation (and could loosely be seen as ecosocial in orientation) have had strong roots in peasantries.

From Jamaica, one needs only to look north at Cuba to find evidence of a peasantry playing an instrumental role, though admittedly not at the vanguard, in revolution. Further, throughout Jamaican history, the issue of land has been a critical issue in social upheaval.¹²⁹ Reverent attitudes among many Caribbean people towards their land also challenge the assumption that young people necessarily resist farming because of its association with slavery.¹³⁰

While the peasantry is more self-sufficient than are other marginalized classes in Jamaica, peasants are not generally seen to have the capacity to “exit” from the market and revert to subsistence “economies of affection,” which Göran Hydén describes in the African context (albeit controversially).¹³¹ Jamaican peasants have, in fact, been linked to the market since Emancipation, becoming accustomed to a diet with a large degree of imported foodstuffs during the slave period. After Emancipation, new peasant farming communities became dependent on selling their products in domestic and export markets in

¹²⁷Similar to how Pepper warns the green movement against ignoring the capacity of the working class to mobilize for change in favor of “new bourgeois social movements,” see Pepper, *op. cit.* p. 247.

¹²⁸See Gérard Chaliand, *Revolution in the Third World* (New York: The Viking Press, 1977).

¹²⁹Bakan, *op. cit.*

¹³⁰See Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 186, and Dujon, *op. cit.*

¹³¹See Göran Hydén, *No Shortcuts to Progress: African Development Management in Perspective* (London: Heinemann, 1983); “The Anomaly of the African Peasantry,” *Development and Change*, 17, 4, October, 1986; and “Final Rejoinder,” *Development and Change*, 18, 4, October, 1987, as examples of Hydén’s argument, and Nelson Kasfir, “Are African Peasants Self-Sufficient?” *Development and Change*, 17, 2, April, 1986; Lionel Cliffe, “The Debate on African Peasantries,” *Development and Change*, 18, 4, October, 1987; and Gavin Williams, “Primitive Accumulation: The Way to Progress?” *Development and Change*, 18, 4, October, 1987, for critiques.

order to buy imported foods. This market-orientation has historically tied peasant farmers to global food systems, and market liberalization — intensified during the 1990s — has brought rising competition from cheap imports. This competition is squeezing peasant earnings and compounding problems with access to land, irrigation, credit, farm inputs, consistent marketing, and inadequate rural infrastructure.¹³² The degree to which this frustration becomes rooted in an immediate sense of history and an awareness of contemporary food economy issues could influence how readily peasants might become mobilized.

However, perhaps the central reason that Jamaican peasants could become politicized agents follows from the ecosocialist suggestion that those most likely to understand and act on the ecosocial contradictions of the capitalist order are those for whom the nature of their labor brings them into first-hand contact with the process of ecological degradation. One in two rural households lives below the poverty line, and potable water supply, sewage disposal, and electricity are significantly less developed in rural areas than in urban ones.¹³³ Clearly, though they are the leading agents of land degradation, Jamaican peasants are also the foremost victims of this process — particularly as it relates to soil and water conservation problems. These soil and water problems are manifest in rural communities in the form of declining soil fertility and agricultural productivity, and reduced water yields for both agriculture and domestic uses. Soil scientists de Graaff and Sheng contend that if soil protection measures used by most small farmers are not improved, soil erosion may well destroy hillside (i.e. peasant) agriculture in Jamaica.¹³⁴ The contradictions of self and land exploitation rooted in colonialist-capitalist marginalization — famously articulated by Henry Bernstein in the case of African peasantries¹³⁵ —

¹³²For an expanded discussion of the problems constraining the peasant sector, see Tony Weis, “The Role and Limitations of Peasant Co-operatives in Rural Jamaica: The Case of the St. Mary Rural Development Project,” *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 21, 3, December, 2000.

¹³³See Government of Jamaica, 1992, *op. cit.*, p. vi., 21.

¹³⁴See Jerome V. de Graaff and Ted C. Sheng, “Land Capability and the Economic Analysis of Soil and Conservation and Land Use: A Case Study in Jamaica,” in Ted L. Napier, Silvana M. Camboni, and Samir Aly El-Swaify, eds., *Adopting Conservation on the Farm: An International Perspective on the Socioeconomics of Soil and Water Conservation* (Ankeny, IO: Soil and Water Conservation Society, 1994). A similar process has devastated Jamaica’s Middle American neighbors Haiti and El Salvador, and contributed to violent conflict there.

¹³⁵See Henry Bernstein, “African Peasantries: A theoretical framework,” *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 6, 4, July, 1979. Similarly, in a paper based on

might someday foster the mobilization of the peasantry along ecosocial lines of social justice and ecological necessity. And as with the agro-proletariat, the looming collapse of plantation staples could help politicize consciousness over land inequities and redistribution.

On the edge of the St. Mary Banana Estates, on former plantation lands left fallow by the JPG, a small group of farmers have moved from their hillside plots to occupy plantation land, having pooled resources and labor to transform the land into a productive farm that is cooperatively operated. It is not difficult to imagine such direct action spreading like wildfire amidst plantation collapse.

9. Conclusion

...it might not be long before the immiserization of the Caribbean peoples fuels a new wave of social upheavals. [However] it is wise to be cautious in predicting the reaction of Caribbean people to oppression in light of their immense capacity for suffering, the facility of political leadership to capitulate to external pressures, and the inevitable confusion that is gathering each day as a result of the crises in the socialist world and the victories of the counter-revolutionary forces in the region.¹³⁶

Michael Witter

This paper has set out to argue that if Jamaica's deforestation crisis is recognized to be historical, political, economic, and essentially one of social injustice in land and society, real solutions lie not in managing the symptoms of these societal contradictions but in overcoming them — most centrally in terms of land reform. As William Thiesenhusen suggests, "an alternative to all of this would be to bring smallholders down from the hillsides and make them owners of

fieldwork with a peasant community in the Blue Mountains, the author argues that the spatial and economic marginalization of the Jamaican peasantry by the plantation landscape has created a situation in which the economic development priorities of farmers tend to be in contradiction with ecological ones. See Tony Weis, "Beyond Peasant Deforestation: Environment and Development in Rural Jamaica," Paper presented at the *Great Lakes Political Economy Conference*, SUNY-Binghamton, May, 1999.

¹³⁶See Michael Witter, "Plantation Economy: Insights for the 21st-Century," in Claus Stolberg and Swithin Wilmot, eds., *Plantation Economy, Land Reform and the Peasantry in a Historical Perspective: Jamaica 1838-1980* (Kingston: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1992).

the rich and underutilized bottomland — land reform in the name of environmental preservation.”¹³⁷ It is also put forth that a more appropriate goal for an alternative agricultural system is one based on independent small farmers and agroecological principles, following James O’Connor in the belief that decentralized production is a more likely conclusion to meet ecosocial goals than is a monopolized version of state socialism.¹³⁸ However, the overthrow of private property is not seen to be a viable goal in the Caribbean, where the slave history and ongoing plantation legacy has equated land ownership with freedom. This suggests that there is a need to explore the ways in which ecosocial theory may be contextually relevant, and may need to be somewhat pliable across different societies.

With faith that the Jamaican state might sponsor the empowerment of the poor having long since vanished, different contexts where the evident ecosocial contradictions might provoke awareness and resistance were explored. Although the objective basis for ecosocial awareness and mobilization to arise in these contexts is strong, this paper has intended to explicitly — though not fatalistically — demonstrate the subjective barriers to their realization. Indeed, while one could hopefully conclude that change will occur through the politicization of marginalized sectors of society as they become increasingly aware of the ecosocial contradictions they face, Witter’s suggestion that an “immense capacity for suffering” inhibits this implies that such reflection should be undertaken with caution. Further, it is important to recognize that in Jamaica, as throughout much of the Third World, there is a clear alliance — rooted in a confluence of material aspirations and ideological assumptions — of local elites, plantation capital, transnational economic autocrats (Bank-Fund planners), and government officials bound by the twin fiscal pillars of debt service and the need to generate foreign exchange which has, for the time being, succeeded in creating a hegemonic and demoralizing political discourse. This has undermined solidarity and suppressed hope for substantive social change with the familiar logic of globalization that no alternatives to a neoliberal order are possible.

In the context of Jamaica’s deforestation-related environmental crisis, this logic has been refined to produce an ecomanagerial regime in which emphasis is given to restraining the behavior of the poorest segments of society while the underlying societal inequities driving land

¹³⁷Thiesenhusen, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹³⁸See James O’Connor, “Socialism and Ecology,” *CNS*, 2, 3, October, 1991.

degradation are treated as unchangeable and effectively de-problematized. A decade ago, the *National Forestry Action Plan* warned that at the prevailing rate, all of Jamaica's forests would be denuded in 30 years "unless steps are taken now to prevent this from happening."¹³⁹ Following this, deforestation has been routinely ascribed to poverty and poor land management. Conceptualized this way, the necessary remedial steps are framed as being rooted in standard development goals together with technical solutions and improved management regimes, such as protected areas. These managerial prescriptions reflect the blame the victim mentality of neoliberal proponents, and can in certain instances have the insidious impact of mitigating the most severe ecological problems ensuing from the neocolonial socio-economic order, in the process reinforcing the contradictions at the roots of ecosocial degradation. However, while the managerial response has de-politicized the urgency of land reform in Jamaica, the establishment of weakly supported protected areas seems to have done little: the rate of deforestation, for a decade recognized as one of the highest in the world, has been found to be increasing.¹⁴⁰ In this context, international green advocacy has an important role to play in forging a consciousness which includes social justice and land reform as central tenets of environmental protection.

Although the Jamaican state (but for a short period in the 1970s) has traditionally privileged elite interests, it is nevertheless difficult to overstate how influential foreign debt has been in narrowing its policy options and in keeping it bound to the interests of national and transnational capital according to the dictates of Bank and Fund planners.¹⁴¹ Given the overwhelming nature of debt bondage and state complicity, even progressive NGOs concerned with improving the plight of the poor are largely resigned to accomplishing this within the straightjacket of a neoliberal economic framework,¹⁴² while environmental NGOs like the JCDT are given the task of implementing the prescribed managerial solutions as they are devolved from the state (as the state as forced to contract by the Bank and Fund). Thus, it

¹³⁹See Government of Jamaica, 1990, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

¹⁴⁰See Barry Wade, "The Environmental Imperative in Jamaican Development," *Jamaica Journal*, 26, 1, June, 1996, p. 8.

¹⁴¹In the 1998-99 fiscal year, debt service exceeded government revenue, accounted for roughly 60 percent of state expenditure, and demanded more than 100 percent of the government's borrowing requirement. See Norman Girvan, "Jamaica's options," Address given to the Kingston Rotarians, May 26, 1999, p. 3.

¹⁴²For one example of this with respect to the peasantry, see Weis, *op. cit.*

should be understood that some constituents of managerial solutions have been brought on board by their perceived pragmatism rather than necessarily out of an ideological commitment. This hegemonic shift has been further entrenched in Jamaica by the destabilization of potentially counter-hegemonic forces. Perhaps because Jamaica's radical potential is so evident to political and economic elites, internal class divisions and barriers to class consciousness have been fostered, such as the severe political fragmentation of the urban poor, the exploitation of plantation workers perceived vulnerability, and the isolation of peasant farmers.

Yet the potential for ecosocial change remains laden in Jamaica's ecological, socio-economic, and political contradictions, and is dependent on how ordinary Jamaicans read and act upon them — suggesting future areas of activism, education, and research. In this interpretation, one can find the hope common to vibrant Caribbean literary narratives of “caution and celebration,” whose authors continue to imagine the region being “rescued back to a time when these slums of empire was paradise.”¹⁴³

¹⁴³See Lemuel A. Johnson, “Inventions of Paradise and the Utopian Bent,” *Voices of the African Diaspora: The CAAS Research Review*, VII, 2, Spring, 1991, p. 12.