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Othered Food Spaces in the Anglophone Caribbean

Samantha Nelson[1] and Shuji Hisano[2]

Abstract

This study aims to contribute to the agri-food discourses on the alterity of food provisioning systems by introducing the concept of *othered food spaces*. These food spaces serve as coping mechanisms for food provisioning and consumption, developed by marginalised groups either voluntarily or involuntarily in response to systemic discrimination. Utilising qualitative research methods, this study explores othered food spaces in Jamaica through archival research and an ethnographic case study. The findings reveal historically rooted othered food spaces, including provision grounds and Maroon food networks, which emerged within the plantation system under British colonial rule. Additionally, the study examines a contemporary example, the House of Dread in Kingston, a food space established by followers of the Rastafarian movement. These food spaces represent alternative food geographies assuming diverse forms with varying rationales under past and present regimes of the global capitalist food system.

Keywords: Alterity, Alternative food geographies, global food system, Food spaces, Jamaica

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1. Introduction

Since the late 1990s, there has been a renewed focus on the nature and merits of local alternative food geographies in agri-food studies research and the political discourses of industrialised nations. In response to the industrialisation of food and agriculture in Western food systems, which led to food scares such as salmonella, mad cow disease, and E. coli outbreaks, as well as other health, social, and environmental issues, the contemplation and adoption of alternative food provisioning practices gained prominence (Blay-Palmer & Donald, 2016). These emerging socioeconomic and environmental concerns prompted a re-evaluation of food systems, particularly as local food networks in these spatialities were disrupted. In the U.S., World War II marked the decline of small family farms and the rise of transnational food corporations (Grey, 2000), while in Europe, between the 1960s and 1990s, the farm became increasingly specialised, with agricultural tasks externalised to agri-industries, eroding traditional cooperative farm structures (Van der Ploeg & Renting, 2000). These initial observations within Western food spatialities shaped the basis for what became accepted as the foundation of the dominant narratives surrounding alternative food geographies, movements, and marketing initiatives within contemporary agri-food discourses. These grand narratives eventually fuelled further debates on other stories of alterity and the relation of diverse alternatives to and beyond the conventional, industrialised food system (Alkon and Agyeman, 2011; Gibson-Graham, 2008; Rosol, 2019; Wilson, 2013). Thus, at the core of these debates is the question of alterity and how it is understood in time and space beyond grand narratives of the global capitalist food system and the spatialities of industrialised societies.

Succinctly, these initial dialogues highlighted the emergence of food production and consumption relationships that presented alternative possibilities to those offered by the conventional, industrialised agri-food system (Edwards, 2016; Goodman, 2003; Jarosz, 2008; Maye et al., 2007; Tregear, 2011; Whatmore et al., 2003). Consequently, agri-food scholars have argued that the emergence of alternative food provisioning systems within the conventional food system has led to a bifurcation in the analysis of agri-food systems. This division distinguishes two main production zones, the standardised, mainstream, conventional system and the localised, alternative system (Sonnino & Marsden, 2006; Tregear, 2011). However, as Tregear (2011) explained, in practice, food systems seldom function entirely within these artificially defined boundaries. Instead, they tend to draw upon and integrate diverse logics over time. Similarly, Follet (2009, p. 49) posited that "the discussion of food networks is incomplete when left at this dualism of conventional versus alternative". And that "the alternative food system is a heterogeneous mix of networks vastly different from one another in their ability to address issues of welfare, sustainability, choice, and power distribution" (Follet, 2009, p. 49). Wilson (2013) contributed to this argument by explaining that by simply describing the alternative as the antithesis to the conventional, promulgates a perception that emerging food practices may singularly be viewed as a reaction to the conventional system; that is, "as an attempt to dislodge the hegemony of dominant systems and practices" (p. 724). This notion

then excludes those systems where the aim may not be to smash or influence the mainstream but to create something completely new and separate from existing systems (Wilson, 2013).

1.1. Purpose of Study

An underlying principle within these discourses is the idea that an alternative inherently implies a direct relationship with a conventional or mainstream system, whether through resistance, opposition or substitution (Wilson, 2013; Fuller & Jonas, 2003). However, scholars within agri-food studies have acknowledged a "diverse array of enterprises and networks which can be subsumed under the 'alternative' label", as such, there are various rationales, political and socioeconomic contexts, and spatialities that can be associated with alternative food provisioning activities (Holloway et al., 2016, p. 158). This paper aims to contribute to the discourse on other stories of alterity emerging under dominant capitalist food regimes, with a focus on the food spatialities of the Anglophone Caribbean. Evidence presented from the Caribbean Island of Jamaica will further support the argument of alternatives assuming diverse forms with varying rationales under past and present regimes of the global capitalist food system. As such, this paper seeks to expand our understanding of the alterity of food provisioning activities with the proposition of the concept of *othered food spaces*.

Othered food spaces refer to alternative systems of food provisioning and consumption developed by minority and/or marginalised groups whose foodways differ from those of the dominant societal norms. These food spaces constitute an alternative food system to the prevailing food regime within a specific locality. They emerge as adaptive strategies for food provisioning and consumption, either voluntarily or involuntarily, in response to systemic conditions of discrimination; rather than a deliberate intent to transform, reform or replace their existing dominant food system. These food institutions exist within spaces of alterity, closely associated with the identity of a subcultural group. Thus, the primary function of these food spaces is to engender community and support human survival. These spaces are formed within sub-cultural groups whose consumption practises centre specific types of food that adhere to particular methods of production and distribution. Their significance lies in their origins, they emerge as spaces that are deemed unacceptable by mainstream society and are shaped by the distinct values and beliefs of these groups. These values, practices, and beliefs further differentiate and isolate these food spaces, as they are deeply tied to the identity of the group. This identity may be unfamiliar, unrelatable, or culturally divergent from the norms of the broader society, further reinforcing their status as "othered."

The significance of these othered food spaces is evident both in the historical and contemporary structuring of local food systems in the Anglophone Caribbean. As such, the present argument surrounding alternative food geographies is well suited to be examined through these food spatialities, which have been shaped by the colonial food regime and its subsequent evolutions into what is now the current corporate food regime. Analysing these othered food spaces necessitates recognising that the globalised system of food commodification and the capitalist transformation of

land, water, knowledge, and labour have long been embedded within political and power structures that privilege settlers and wealthy landowners at the expense of indigenous peoples and other rural communities (Ferrando et al., 2021). This analysis underscores how the uneven dynamics of the global food system originated with the plantation economies and slavery, and yet, persists within the neoliberal elements of the contemporary capitalist food system (Ferrando et al., 2021). This is because, the conventional food regime, "like past regimes, is a specific constellation of governments, corporations, collective organisations and individuals that allow for renewed accumulation of capital based on shared definition of social purpose by key actors while marginalising others" (Friedmann, 2005, p. 228). As Friedmann (2005, p. 228) further explained "food regimes have been shaped by unequal relations among states, capitalist enterprises, and people, who migrated, bought, sold, and reshaped cultures of farming and eating within large, indeed, global constellations of power and property".

Thus, while alternative food geographies in contemporary discourses are often framed in response to the negative impacts of the conventional food system, there are other diverse alternatives, like othered food spaces, that reveal deeper connections to both historical and present forms of the global food system. Therefore, this paper aims to underscore the significance of these food spaces as alternative systems within colonial and postcolonial contexts. It does so by presenting evidence that historically rooted othered food spaces existed in Jamaica in the form of provision grounds and maroon food networks created within the pure plantation system under British rule. Alongside, contemporary evidence, presented from a case study, House of Dread, in Kingston, Jamaica; an existing othered food space established by followers of the Rastafarian movement. These food spaces will show how alternative food provisioning systems were used as tools of resistance against an oppressive global food regime which dictated local food provisioning structures; and functioned as coping mechanisms for the expression of beliefs and values by marginalised sub-groups in the colonial and post-colonial Jamaican society.

1.1.1. Other stories of alterity within the global capitalist food system

This paper foregrounds the argument that alterity can be understood as a diverse, context-dependent and place-specific phenomenon even within the analysis of hegemonic capitalist food systems (Jonas, 2013). Per the analysis of Ricoeur (1992), alterity can therefore be conceptualised as a means of understanding, depicting, and narrating the 'other' in terms that exist outside the categories of any dominant narrative (Jonas, 2016). In the dissection of grand narratives of alternative food provisioning systems, it is imperative to critically reflect on how "regionally specific histories of incorporation into the global food system have given rise to distinctive normative ideals and practical challenges in alternative provisioning (Freidberg & Goldstein, 2011, p. 25). Freidberg and Goldstein (2011), using Kenya as a case study from the Global South, offered a nuanced assessment of how Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) differ in design and potential when transplanted into spatialities

outside of the global north. They implemented a vegetable box scheme aimed at promoting organic agriculture as an alternative to smallholders' reliance on Green Revolution technologies and niche export crops, while also exploring direct marketing as an alternative to the rigid standards and high mark-ups of corporate supermarkets. However, their project was underpinned by the assumption that external intervention was necessary. Like many AFNs, the project presumed that both small farmers and urban consumers required an alternative form of provisioning, led by a non-governmental or private organisation, and modelled on approaches successful elsewhere. Yet this approach overlooked the socioeconomic, infrastructural, and historical specificities of the local context, undermining its effectiveness (Freidberg and Goldstein, 2011).

In a similar argument, Abrahams (2006), further explained how alternatives, specifically AFN within spatialities of the global south take on a different shape and purpose than those of the global north. As these networks extend beyond merely serving as a reaction to the conventional food system, but instead reflect unique spatial and contextual dynamics. Abrahams' (2006) research demonstrated how AFNs in Johannesburg serve as alternative food consumption spaces for the urban poor and function as food supply systems that meet the demands of the city's culturally diverse urban communities. Though, these AFNs may provide a space for those consumers who share concerns about food quality, "greenness", or spatial proximity, similar to the tastes of consumers in the global north; the central premise of these AFNs is based on satisfying "cultural modes of consumption and accessibility" and preserving cultural heritage through personalised methods of serving their communities (Abrahams, 2006, p. 18). And as such, demonstrated with her research, that in contrast to food spaces of alterity in Westernised societies, these AFNs were not premised on a "romanticised return to the local" (Abrahams, 2006, p. 20). Their roots were not grounded in social and political movements contesting mainstream, corporate industrial agri-food systems (Allen et al., 2003, Holloway et al., 2016), or in "endogenous claims on historical and cultural traditions of product and place" (Maye, Holloway, and Kneafsey, 2007, p.4) as their counterparts in western nation-states.

In another argument on spatial diversity, Alkon and Agyeman's (2011) assessment of the alternative food movements from within the food spatialities of the United States highlight how dominant narratives of the alternative food movement, which oppose the industrialised agri-food system, may obscure other stories of alterity existing within the same temporality. They explain that these other stories depict how food is not only connected to the need for transforming food practices to address environmental degradation, diet-related health issues, and to support the economic success of small and medium-sized producers, but also to broader struggles for racial, economic, and environmental justice. Alkon and Agyeman (2011) argue that low-income communities and communities of colour are disproportionately harmed by the current food system; however, these communities are largely absent from the dominant discourses of the alternative food movement. Pointedly, Guthman (2008) argued that within the American context the alternative food movement has been proliferated by discourses derived from whitened cultural histories, and thus, present

unconscious ways in which whiteness works to shape the social relations and spaces of alternative food. Guthman (2008) further explained that the origins of some alternatives within the food movement have their roots in the 1960s counterculture and land movements, the latter of which were predominantly white. She notes that while alternative marketing initiatives like Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) retain countercultural associations, they are often framed under the strategy of localism, which several scholars argue can be defensive, xenophobic, and blind to uneven development.

The interrogation of grand narratives of the global agri-food system is understood as not a novelty within the agri-food discourse. Similarly, as discourses on alternative food geographies have been influenced by dominant narratives that has shaped how alternatives have been conceptualised and interpreted, theoretical underpinnings of the global food system have also been shaped by prevailing narratives rooted in a Westernised perspective. This, in turn, has obscured other food realities, both those beyond their geographic boundaries and those inherent to their specific spatialities. For even within these western societies there exists anomalous spatialities outside of their grand narratives. An exemplification of such is reflected in the interpretations and debates of the Food Regime theory. The Food Regime lens, purported by Friedmann and McMichael (1989), has been extensively used within agri-food discourses to historicise the global food system and to illustrate the crucial role of food and agriculture in the global political economy (McMichael, 2009). McMichael (2021) explained that the emergence of the food regime analysis was in part "to distinguish the temporal and spatial structuring of capitalism and the state system via comparable governing rules" (p. 224); and to "express relationships specific to their time/space coordinates" (McMichael, 2021, p. 225). However, these clarifications were provided subsequent to interpretations that challenged the theory as portraying a homogenous grand narrative that obscures the realities of deviant local agri-food case studies (McMichael, 2021). The macro-historical perspective of the Food Regime theory has also been challenged for its capacity to encourage "understandings of the world that exclude subjects and subjectivities … Obscuring diversity and fluidity of the relations, actors, metrics, translations and contexts" (Le Heron & Lewis, 2009, p. 346; McMichael, 2021).

It is imperative to foreground that even with its current capacity to analyse changes in various localities across space and time, earlier conceptualisations of the theory reinforced an attitude of Western-centrism. This is demonstrated by how the language of the Food Regime theory revolves around the process of how capital accumulation leads to dispossession. This focuses the "capital-centric narrative of the making of the industrial world", while diminishing its adverse consequences on the lives of indigenous and native peoples, their property rights and livelihoods as externalities to the development of higher income countries (McMichael, 2021, p. 226). In doing so, it reduces the positionalities of states and locales within the world economy as mere background characters to the actions and policies of Western nations.

Thus, by proposing the concept of Othered Food Spaces within the Alternative food geographies discourses, this paper seeks to highlight the multiplicity of stories of alterity enduring under any regime of the global system of food production, specifically from an Anglophone Caribbean perspective. This paper therefore emphasises the prevalence of diverse stories within the global food system and illustrates how this diversity, fluidity, and contextual variation, shape alternative food provisioning systems. In doing so, it addresses critical questions regarding who creates these alternatives, for what purpose, and for whose benefit.

1.2. Outline of Paper

This paper is organised across six sections. Section 1 introduced the concept of "othered food spaces" as a proposition for contributing to the nuanced discourse on diverse alternatives that occupy spaces of alterity within capitalist food systems. This section also discusses other stories of alterity amidst grand narratives of the global capitalist food system. Section 2 is an overview of the historical research and ethnographic methods (semi-structured interviews, participant observation and informal conversations) utilised in the study. Section 3 explains the pure plantation economy system of the colonial Anglophone Caribbean as a background for the subsequent discussions. Section 4 discusses the historically-rooted othered food spaces of provision grounds and maroon food networks and their significance to the contemporary Jamaican food system and the case study presented in Section 5. Section 5 presents evidence from the contemporary case study, outlining an existing othered food space in Kingston, Jamaica. And lastly, section 6 concludes and suggests opportunities for further research.

2. Methods

This study employed qualitative research methods. The empirical foundation of this research is based on the examination of historical materials and archival records of colonial Jamaica under British rule; and the participatory observation of an othered food space case study in Kingston, Jamaica, during the period July 7, 2023, to September 25, 2023. Data collection was separated into two segments, with historical research conducted first. This involved analysing colonial maps of Jamaica in the special collections section of the National Library of Jamaica; consulting diaries of European figures who visited colonial Jamaica and surveys conducted of agricultural activity and changing land patterns during the 18th and 19th centuries. Furthermore, historical data on maroon food networks were also obtained by visiting the Moore Town Maroon settlement in Portland, Jamaica. The data was collected through a semi-structured interview with a descendant of the maroons in addition to direct observation of their natural food landscape. For the second segment of the research, an ethnographic approach was deemed to be the most appropriate method to adopt for the in-depth investigation of interactions (Yin, 2015), of those individuals who partake in the food space of the House of Dread case

study. It was surmised that an investment of time in the investigation of the case study would allow for a better understanding of the food space and the purpose it serves to those who are a part of it. Thus, the knowledge of the culture of the food space, the interactions of its members and methods of food preparation would be used to contextualise its meaning as an othered food space for this research. As such, the methods of data collection chosen to investigate this case study were: (1) Semi-structured interviews; (2) participatory observation used in conjunction with a research diary tool; and (3) informal conversations with customers about their reason for purchasing food at the case study site. Time spent in the field included observing and recording the type of food being prepared, the methods of food preparation, the interactions of customers among each other and the caretakers regarding discussions about food, and their preference to visit and/or purchase food from the case study site. The purpose of this study was explained to all participants spoken to; this was often done by one of the caretakers who was a key informant to the case study. Participants are anonymised; however, some participants provided an alias which was permitted to be used in the study. Eleven semi-structured in-person interviews were conducted, participants included the caretakers, vendors within the food space, customers/members of the case study community and "higglers".

3. Context

Between the 16th and early 19th centuries, Caribbean agriculture was based on the colonial plantation economy which governed the social, economic, and political spheres of life in the colonies (Beckford, 1985). One of the single most important aspects of this economic structure was the plantation. The plantation represented a system of production that was not of domestic origin; "wherever it is found it derives from external stimulus and enterprise; it has always depended on external markets" (Greaves, 1958, p.76). For Caribbean islands, the plantation economy system produced commodities such as sugar, which was sold in European markets, after which the surpluses accumulated from this economic activity were then used in the development of European economies (Beckford, 1985).

During their era of imperialism and colonialism in the Caribbean, metropolitan countries established a plantation economy system with three main forms of systemic institutional arrangements, settlement, conquest, or exploitation (Beckford, 1972; Best, 1968). Most Caribbean islands were colonies of exploitation (Beckford, 1972). In a pure plantation economy of exploitation, the economy was comprised of a single sector divided into plantations producing a single crop. Local food production was solely for the benefit of trade; food production was never for local consumption within the colonies (Best, 1968). This plantation system was maintained through the configurations of a *total economic institution*. In such a system the plantation became a self-contained and self-sufficient unit of authority, exerting full control over all people within its boundaries (Best, 1968). There existed no separation between the organisation of the plantation and that of society; chattel slavery was weaponised to strip the enslaved of any right to property and their labour power was

recruited exclusively to produce food for export (Beckford, 1972; Best, 1968). Wynter (1971) presented an argument on the antagonistic relations of the socioeconomic divisions of a plantation-plot configuration. Wynter (1971) argued that the plantation capitalism of European colonialisation alienated human beings from nature, thus reducing man to labour and nature to land. This twofold alienation benefitted the plantation system by inhibiting any space for alternatives; the exception was plots of land referred to as *provision grounds* (DeLoughrey, 2011).

4. Historically rooted othered food spaces

4.1. Provision Grounds

Provision grounds were plots of land the Jamaican slaveholders had allocated to the enslaved for them to cultivate food for their own consumption, done with an intent to reduce the operating costs of the plantation and thereby maximising their profits (Wynter, 1971, DeLoughrey, 2011). Historian B.W Higman reported that after 1780, provision grounds were found on the fringes of most Jamaican plantations (Higman, 1988). An example of a provision ground is shown in Figure 1, as indicated by the letter 'E' at the centre of the plan.

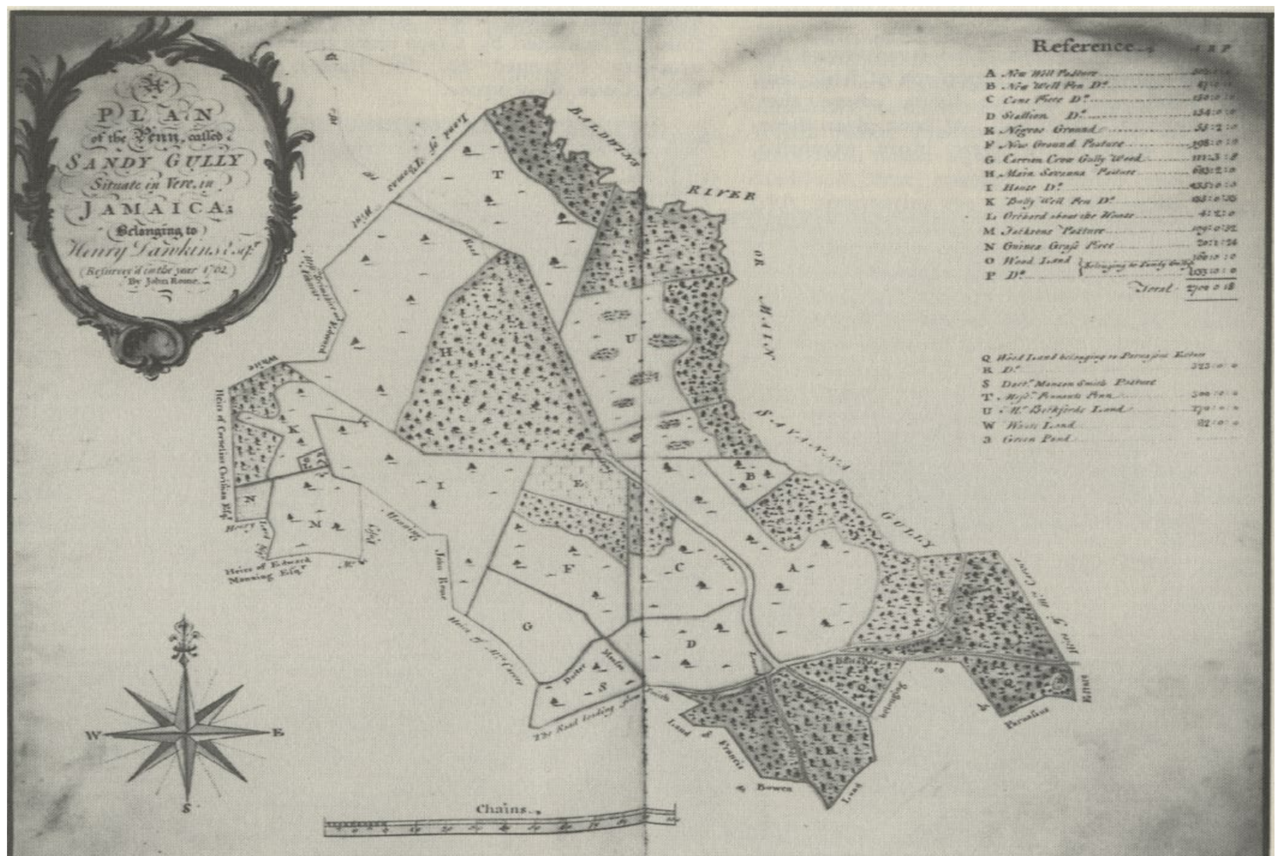


Figure 1. Plan of the Sandy Gully Pen, Clarendon with a provision ground

Note. Plan by John Rome, 1762, as cited in Higman (1988).

As a testament to their place in colonial society, provision grounds were understood as often unseen, positioned in distinct units of land commonly situated in the hilly back lands which were categorised as unsuited for sugar plantation (Higman, 1988). In contrast, plantation monoculture was the central mode of food production which created the basis of the social and economic order of colonial society. The role of provision grounds in the diets of enslaved people varied across the British colonies. In territories such as Jamaica and Grenada, these plots provided most of their sustenance. This contrasts with colonies like Barbados, Antigua, and the U.S. South, where the primary methods of food supply involved slaveholders either purchasing food or organising its production to meet the needs of the enslaved population (Barickman, 1994; Higman, 2008; Mintz, 2021).

Though sanctioned by the slaveholders for their capitalist gains, inadvertently, these provision grounds became spaces where elements of the traditional knowledge, values and histories of the enslaved people were transplanted (Wynter, 1971). For the enslaved people, this production of food on plots for their survival created a folk culture which provided a basis for social order within these spaces (Wynter, 1971). These food spaces were creatively appropriated by the enslaved people and "turned into a commons, where shared property, time, and resources formed resistance to the practices and subjectivities inculcated by the violent exploitation of the plantation system" (Castellano, 2021, p. 17). An abolitionist, Robert Wedderburn described provision grounds as a model of resistance to the transatlantic plantation-based ecologies of the British Empire (Wedderburn, 1817; Castellano, 2021). These food spaces were the embodiment of an alternative, both ecologically and socially, to the monoculture of the sugarcane plantation that existed within the plantation system in Jamaica (Castellano, 2021).

The diet of enslaved people in Jamaica consisted mainly of vegetables and fruits grown within their provision grounds, along with saltfish, which was imported from North America and served as both a principal relish and their primary source of protein (Parry, 1955). Higman (2008) explained that the main products grown within these plots were staple carbohydrate crops such as plantains (*M. paradisiaca*), coco (*Xanthosoma sagittifolium (L.) Schott*) and yams (*Dioscorea cayenensis*). Figure 2 provides a section of a plan of Spring Garden, St. Andrew which shows patterns designating provision grounds, using naturalistic symbols to indicate some of these staple crops cultivated. The plantain trees and yam-poles are some of the crops that can be recognised in the plan (Higman, 1988).

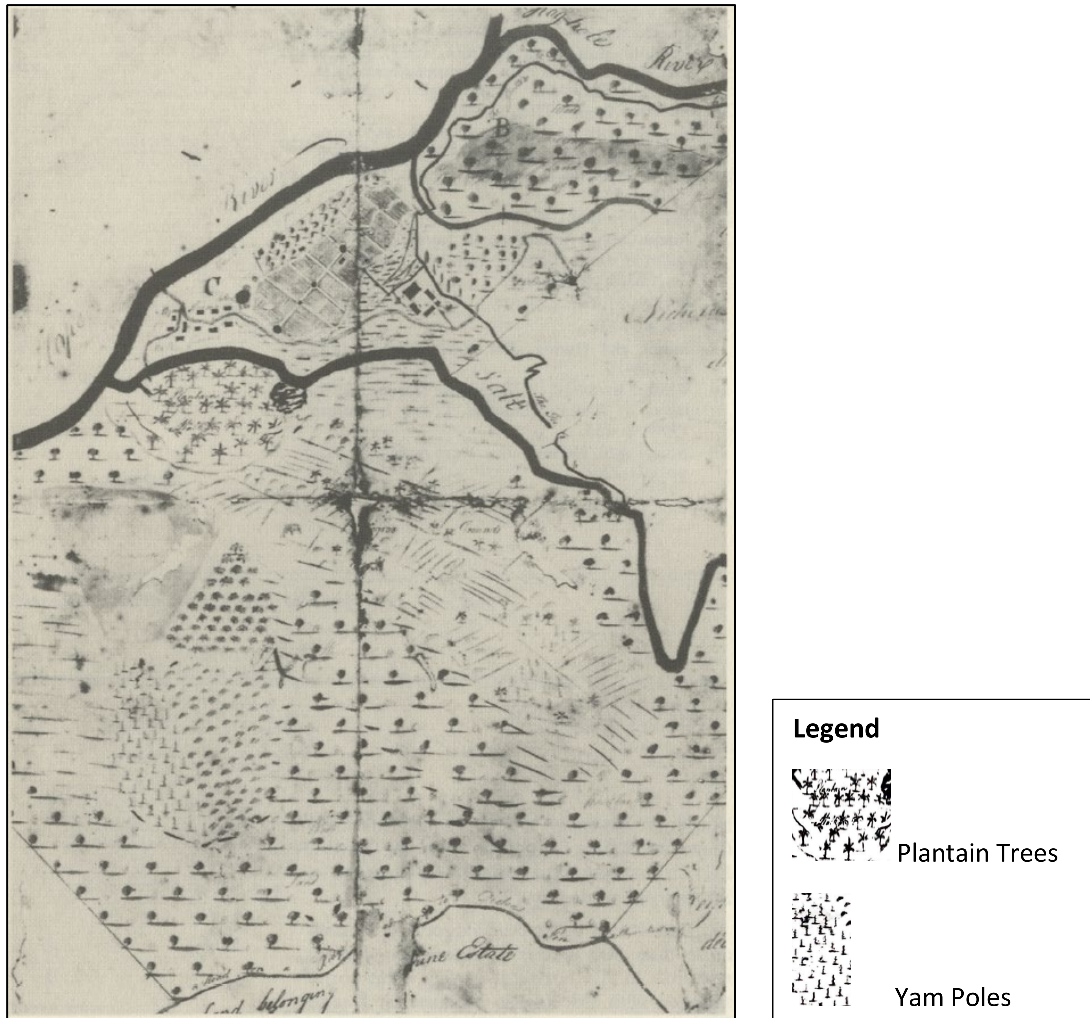


Figure 2. Section of a plan of Spring Garden, St. Andrew showing provision grounds

Note. Plan by Charles Speering,1785, as cited in Higman (1988)

Other food grown in provision grounds included, but were not limited to, corn (*Zea mays L.),* cassava (*Manihot esculenta Crantz*), bananas (*Musa sapientum*), oranges *(Citrus sinensis)*, peppers (Capsicum annuum), coconuts (*Cocos nucifera*) and papayas (*Carica papaya*) (DeLoughrey, 2011; Higman, 1988; Lewis, 1834; Mintz, 2021; Sheridan, 1993). In essence, these food crops represented alternative foods; foods that were insignificant to the core functioning of the plantation system but were relevant to the social system of the othered food spaces in which they were grown.

According to Mintz (1955), the enslaved people were free to do as they pleased with the surplus generated from their food production. The surplus food as well as craft materials created by the enslaved people were exchanged for other commodities or sold for cash at local markets (Mintz, 2021). These commodities were sold on Sundays to prevent any interference with estate production, and as a result, the market grew to be a significant social and economic institution in the lives of the enslaved (Mintz, 2021). Food production in provision grounds and the marketing system of slave-

produced staples in pre-Emancipation Jamaica became regarded as examples of ruptures made to the pure plantation economy system (Łepkowski, 1968; Mintz, 1979; Mintz; 1983). This marketing system provided the enslaved people with access to foodstuff and other goods from various areas across the island which may have been unavailable in their regions. In addition, these markets allowed the enslaved people to gather in spaces where they could trade commodities and news and share relief from the plantation regime (Mintz, 1955). The provision grounds and internal marketing system of the enslaved provided a dynamic, alternative economy to the monoculture of the pure plantation economy system (DeLoughrey, 2011).

4.2. Maroon Food Networks

Ruptures to the pure plantation economy were not limited to the cultivation of provision grounds. Best (1968) suggested that modifications to such a system were also manifested with the existence of a "few nomadic native survivors, runaway slaves, and small settlers from the metropolis who resist the hegemony of the plantation" (p. 288). One of these groups, namely, the runaway slaves, is crucial to this discussion of alternative food provisioning activities to the hegemonic plantation system under colonialism. In Caribbean culture and history, these runaway slaves are referred to as Maroons[3]. Maroons were agents who had escaped the plantation system and actively resisted it to live a domestic, independent, and secluded life. Their existence was seen as forging an alternative to slavery (Mullin,1992). Roberts (2015) aptly describes how "during marronage, agents struggle psychologically, socially, metaphysically, and politically to exit slavery, maintain freedom, and assert a lived social space while existing in a liminal position" (p. 10). Thus, in an act of distancing themselves from the total encompassing socio-economic machinery of the plantation, Maroons were forced to develop alternative agricultural systems, along with political and social institutions that opposed the nature of the plantation society.

In the west central interior and eastern mountains of the island Jamaica, there are four major maroon settlements; Moore Town, Charles Town, Scott's Hall and Accompong. These communities are populated by descendants of the enslaved people who rebelled and escaped from the plantation system in the 17th and 18th centuries (Mintz, 1983). During this period, these Jamaican Maroons developed into a formidable force that significantly challenged the system of enslavement imposed by the British Empire. As outlaws of the colonial system, maroon societies typically shared features across their settlements; one of these crucial elements was the inaccessible locations of their communities (Kopytoff, 1976a). Since Maroons were able to acquire land and create thriving communities in the mountainous regions where they settled, this afforded them some degree of independence from the plantations (Beckford, 1985). Wedderburn (1817) explained that the Maroons'

[3] There were Maroons prior of the arrival of the British. They were the formerly enslaved people of the Spanish which settled in Jamaica in 1509, up until the island became a British colony in 1655. The period of Marronage being reference in this paper was that under British colonialism.

freedom relied partly on their ability to feed themselves. Maroon societies were thus forced by their circumstances to create independent subsistence production in their isolated mountain settlements (Barker & Spence, 1988; Beckford, 1985). The practice of subsistence production preceded the temporality of the maroon societies' emergence; and for many people, subsistence production may represent the rural dimensions of food production of civilisations that had passed or those transitioning due to industrialisation. However, the space curated by the Maroons in which this agricultural system was situated, was a direct resistance to the hegemony of the plantation economy system. While these practices established were not a novelty outside of their spatiality, it does not deprive them of their positionality as an alternative under their corresponding system of dominance.

Mullin (1992) explained that, unlike the monoculture of the plantocracy, Maroons had a diversified economy which included activities of agriculture, hunting animals, gathering fruits and livestock management. The signing of peace treaties with Britain[4] led to a growth in commercial activities, which saw Maroons frequenting marketplaces to exchange and sell fruits and vegetables from their grounds, as well as animals such as pigs and fowls (Besson, 2003). Some Maroon women became intermediaries who engaged in the marketing and trading of goods in these marketplaces, while the men became responsible for cultivation. Some of these women specialised in marketing the food surpluses bought from different households in their settlement and reselling them at local markets in the lowlands nearby (Besson, 2003). In addition, the production and manufacturing of tobacco was also a significant business activity conducted by the maroons, and this cash crop was an important commodity for export for some settlements (Besson, 2003; Picking & Vandebroek, 2019).

In contrast to the plantation economy, the earnings gained from these commercial activities were not invested in the economy of the metropole or the sustenance of plantation life. Rather, the economic earnings of the Maroons served the purpose of maintaining their local economies, feeding themselves and providing an income to the inhabitants of their settlements (Dallas, 1968; Sivapragasam, 2018). The food production and marketing activities of the Maroons remained on the peripheries of the Jamaican colonial society until it transitioned to an independent society, and thus, their assimilation into the wider Jamaican society.

4.3. The relevance of historically rooted othered food spaces to the food system of contemporary Jamaica

The food spaces sculpted by the provision grounds and maroon food networks outlasted their initial purposes as alternative forms of food provisioning within the plantation society. These othered food spaces became the precursors to peasant agriculture in the post-emancipation era in Jamaica and

[4] The first of the two Maroon treaties was signed on March 1, 1739, representing the Leeward and Accompong Maroons, while the second was signed a few months later on behalf of the Windward Maroons. Through these treaties, Britain formally recognised the Maroon communities' freedom, their distinct existence, and the autonomous management of their internal affairs (Kopytoff, 1976b).

other islands of the Anglophone Caribbean (Beckford, 1985). Peasant culture or peasant societies existed in different spatialities before those in the Anglophone Caribbean. However, Caribbean peasants do not subscribe to the traditional notions of the peasantry. There is an absence of a deep-rooted traditional relationship with the land and a void of any connection to the rural aspect of old civilisations (Marshall, 1968; Redfield, 1956). Instead, the Anglophone Caribbean peasantry had its beginning at the start of emancipation in 1838 (Marshall, 1968). This peasantry is a "negative reflex to enslavement, mass production, monocrop dependence, and metropolitan control" (Mintz, 1964, pp. xx-xxi). It is an antagonistic structure to the plantation system, which originally comprised of ex-slaves who created small farms on the fringes of plantations and mountainous interiors where they could find land (Mintz, 1964; Marshall, 1968). Weis (2006) explained that due to the unique circumstances of their emergence, Caribbean peasants possess a heightened degree of dependence on a market system, relative to their counterparts elsewhere in the world. For these peasants, there were no opportunities to depart from this way of life unless they opted to become a part of the Marronage. Thus, Mintz (1955) argued that structures and patterns of the contemporary internal marketing system in post-emancipation Jamaica, are related to the subsistence-plot production under slavery and the subsequent growth of peasant agriculture. Thus, the contemporary internal marketing system of Jamaica has roots in the alternative food systems that existed during slavery (Mintz, 1955; Weis, 2006). The subsequent discussion will highlight the continuing influence of the island's colonial past on the conceptualisation and emergence of alternative food spaces in contemporary Jamaica.

5. Contemporary Othered Food Space: House of Dread

5.1. Introduction

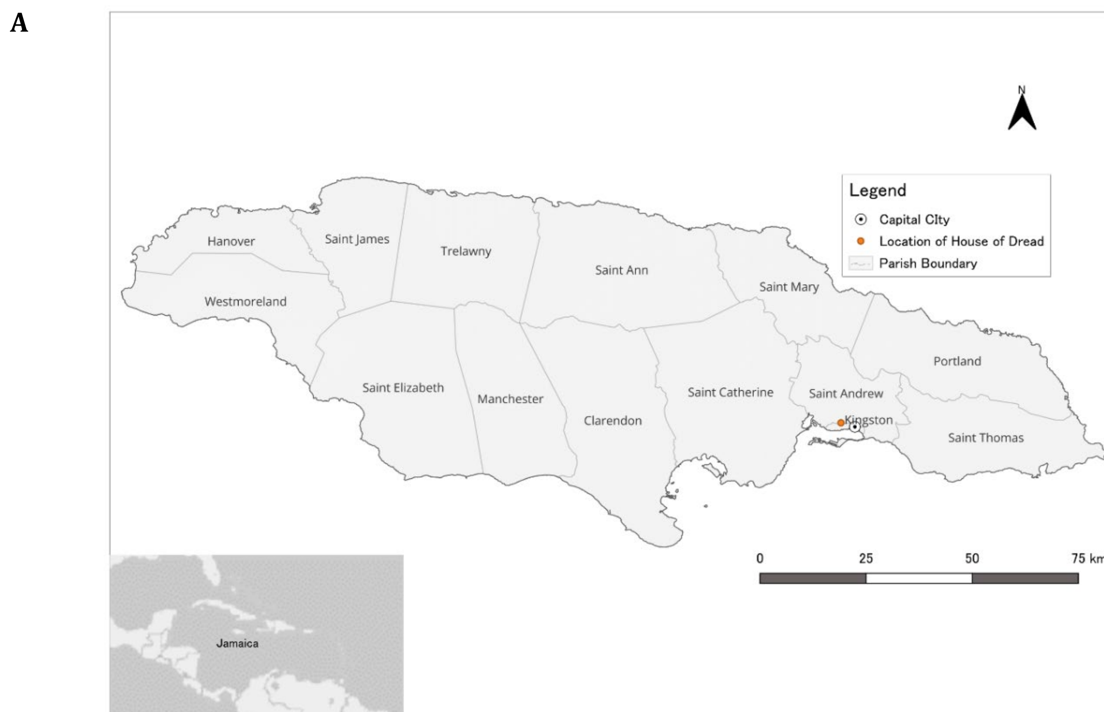
This section of the paper presents evidence of a contemporary othered food space located within the urban centre of the capital city. Similarly, with the formation of historically rooted othered food spaces, this contemporary case study will exemplify a food space created under a period of imperialism of European ideas and values which enabled systemic conditions of discrimination of Afro-Jamaicans within the Jamaican society. This food space was created as a coping strategy for Rastafarians, a sub-group whose presence and way of life were perceived by the wider Jamaican society as being incongruent with the established norms and institutions. Its connection to the historically-rooted othered food spaces, sees parallels with how both Maroons and Rastafarians rejected colonial structures within the Jamaican society and sought to build their own community with strong pillars of self-sufficiency. Similarly with the Maroons, Rastafarians emphasised the "radical freedom and liberty of the individual," but given the dialectical nature of the movement, it also strongly fosters collectivism through "communalism and community as a result of its anti-capitalist, anti-materialist ethos" (Barnett, 2002, p.54). The findings from the exploration of this case study and the historically rooted othered food spaces demonstrate a progressive adoption of these food spaces by individuals

external to their pioneering subgroups. The acknowledgement and subsequent acceptance of these spaces arose from a recognition of their distinct characteristics that exist independently of their prevailing hegemonic food regime. Thus, the food practices and consumption habits exhibited within these spaces present an alternative to those in the domestic conventional food system. Over time, the once negatively perceived distinctions of these food spaces evolved into desirable substitutes for the deficiencies inherent to their dominant food regimes.

5.2. Location of Case Study Site

The case study site, "House of Dread", is located at 3 Deanery Road, Kingston 3 in the Vineyard Town community in the parish of St. Andrew (see Figure 3). It is nestled within an inner-city community district, among the surrounding communities of Franklyn Town, Mountain View, Woodford Park, Allman Town and Rollington Town, in the Kingston Metropolitan Area. House of Dread is situated within a complex, which contains other enterprises in close proximity that provide other food and social services to the nearby communities. In its surrounding environs are a variety of social institutions, some of which include primary and secondary schools, local markets, tertiary institutions, a hospital, and a multipurpose sports complex.

A



B

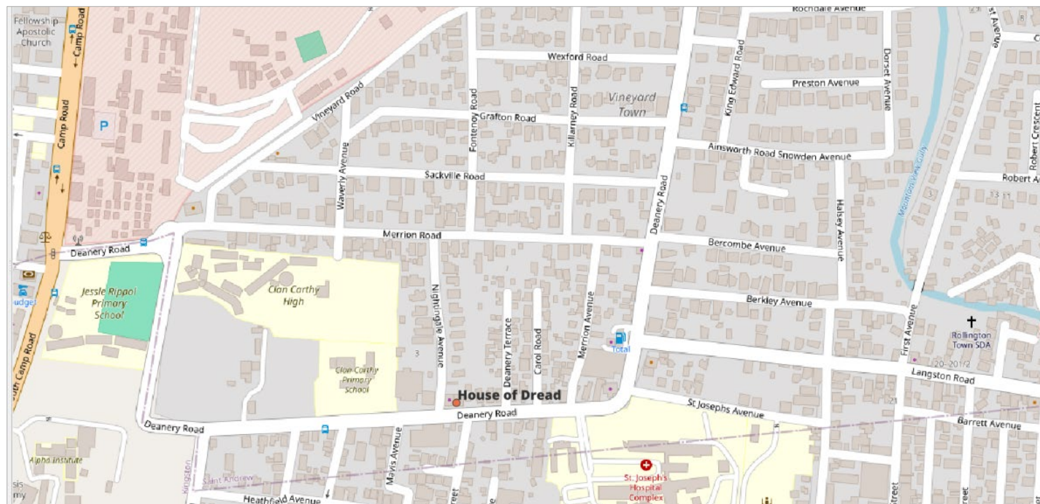


Figure 3. Map of Jamaica showing the location of the case study site, House of Dread

Note: Maps created using the Open Source QGIS

Outwardly, House of Dread can be perceived as what Jamaicans would typically refer to as a "cookshop" or "restaurant". That is, an establishment where food is prepared to be served to the public during breakfast and lunch hours. Consumers would purchase the food and have the option to sit in the environs to dine or inside the actual building (See Figure 4). Following weeks of data collection, this study found that House of Dread represented a social enterprise beyond the services of food provisioning; it is instead a food space that fosters networks and a community of people who may share in the *Rastafari* way of life or respect their values attached to the production and consumption of food.

Figure 4. Photo showing the entrance of the physical building of House of Dread

Note**.** Photo taken during field research in Jamaica.

5.3. Rastafarianism: a cultural and political movement

Rastafarianism is a spiritual and political movement that emerged in the 1930s as a resistance to European slavery and the concomitant oppressive post-emancipation colonial structures that shaped the foundation of the socio-cultural landscapes of modern Jamaica (Chevannes, 1994; Smith, Augier & Nettleford, 1967). Rastafarianism was the manifestation of resistance from poor and disillusioned Afro-Jamaicans who were subjected to conditions of economic deprivation, political disenfranchisement, and cultural alienation under colonial Jamaica (Edmonds, 2003). Many of them were descendants of peasants who were landless or small cultivators, some of whom resided in rural areas but eventually migrated to the capital city in search of opportunities beyond agriculture (Chevannes, 1994).

Rastafarians have historically faced severe prejudice and discrimination in Jamaica due to their message and stance, from both the state and their fellow citizens (Chevannes, 1994, Edmonds, 2003; Goodison, 1975; Office of the Public Defender Jamaica, 2015). Pioneers of the Rastafarian community in the 1930s and 1940s were targeted and persecuted by colonial authorities in Jamaica for their anti-colonial critique and organisational activities towards self-determination (Office of the Public Defender Jamaica, 2015). As a sacred action, and a further act of separation from the society, it became identifiable for many followers of Rastafarianism to possess matted locs. Chevannes (2021) argued that the "dreadlocks symbolized the outcast, the lunatic, and the derelict in Jamaican society. In adopting this style, Rastafarians physically demonstrated their rejection of and alienation from mainstream society" (p. 253).

Nevertheless, Rastafarianism became a creative and revolutionary force in the evolution of Jamaican popular culture, especially popular music, which bares the movement's language, philosophy, symbolism, and ideas (Edmonds, 2003; Savishinsky, 1994). Edmonds (2003) purported that the contribution and influence of Rastafari on the visual and performing arts, literature, and music, saw the routinisation of Rastafarians in the wider Jamaican society. The movement became "embedded in the social and cultural fabric of Jamaican life", where it has an enduring presence in the nation's consciousness (Edmonds, 2003, p. 115). The impact of Rastafarianism on popular culture, however, transcended the borders of the Jamaican society. Savishinsky (1994) argued that in the period of the 1970s, Rastafarianism was distinctive among other contemporary socio-religious movements because its diffusion was "directly linked to various mediums of transnational popular culture, most notably reggae music" (p. 260). "Reggae music" and "Rasta" became synonymous in the minds of individuals, allowing the music to act as a catalyst for the dissemination of the culture of Rastafari beyond Jamaica, and across various localities within and outside of the Caribbean region (Savishinsky, 1994, p. 260). It is estimated that there are 700,000 to 1 million people who follow the Rastafarian faith worldwide (Edmonds, 2012), with only an estimated 29,000 Rastafarians living in Jamaica (Statistical Institute of Jamaica, 2012). Savishinsky (1994) asserted that one of the factors which contributed to the global appeal and spread of the Rastafari movement was the emphasis its

followers placed on a healthy and natural way of life and their "subsequent rejection of Western artificiality in the realms of food, medicine, social relationships, etc" (p. 274). The case study of focus for this paper provides a practical example of how followers of Rastafarianism rejected food practises and diets they perceived as Westernised and created a food space which exemplifies an alternative foodway embracing the values, beliefs, and practises of their movement.

5.4. Ital: The diet of the Rastafarian

The Rastafarian's departure from the systemic spread of Western ideologies in the Jamaican society was exemplified in their commitment to an *'Ital'* way of life. Ital to the Rastafarian means from the earth, natural or organic (Edmonds, 2003). Thus, Rastafarians believe that they "ought to live, eat and think in a nature-friendly and wholistic way that is in harmony with the ecological balance that promotes life, health, collective growth, development and survival" (Afari, 2007, p. 142). Therefore, the diet of the Rastafarian excludes the use of synthetic materials and the eating of chemically treated foods (Edmonds, 2003). The food eaten by the Rastafarians is typically sourced from vegetables, herbs, whole grains, fruits, and nuts; where animal products, sugar, processed foods and made seasonings are sparingly used or not at all (Afari, 2007). Food is prepared as naturally as possible, where the use of gas or electric stoves is barred, so cooked foodstuff is prepared on woodfire, or some Rastafarians exclusively prepare their foods by solar cooking, thereby only consuming raw food (Afari, 2007).

5.5. The Food Space of House of Dread

House of Dread was established in response to a need for a space where Rastafari adherents could connect through food provisioning, consumption, and shared hospitality to cope with living in a country where some of their fellow Jamaicans had "othered" their way of life. One of the caretakers of House of Dread explained his journey to the space by stating that:

> *"When you stop cut your hair, and start to define the food you eat, no meat just vegetables, you turn Rasta…Rasta have to leave their mother's home…Rasta had to move out and go amongst brethren where they are welcomed."*

House of Dread represents a space that encourages the recognition of the Rastafarian identity. It fosters an interconnectedness between its adherents while extending the hospitality engendered in the space to the wider public. Thus, there is a dualism that exists in the space, where it fulfils the dietary needs of the Rastafarians and acts as a social enterprise within their community while functioning as an establishment for nutritious and affordable food for consumers in the wider society.

During my time spent at House of Dread, there was never an acknowledgement of an owner, however, introductions were made to "Ingo" the current head chef; and "Bear," an elderly, respected figure within the space who makes natural juices and assists with the preparation of food. In the mornings, along with two or three other members of the Rastafari faith, they gather the vegetables, herbs, natural seasonings, and fruits, needed for the preparation of lunch for the day. A non-exhaustive

account of these foodstuffs includes Ackee *(Blighia sapida)*, Callaloo *(Amaranthus viridis)*, Sweet potatoes *(Ipomoea batatas)*, Irish potatoes *(Solanum tuberosum)*, Yams *(Dioscorea cayenensis)*, Breadfruit *(Artocarpus altilis)*, Green Bananas *(Musa acuminata)*, Pak Choi *(Brasica rapa var chinensis)*, Plantains (*M. paradisiaca*). The dishes are prepared on a coal stove outside of the building (see Figure 5). The waste accumulated from food preparation activities is stored for collection by a consumer who repurposes it as animal feed for his cows.

Figure 5. Photo showing the caretakers of House of Dread during their food preparation activities

Note. Photo includes Bear (in blue) and Ingo (in white) (own photo)

The food used in preparation at House of Dread is sourced from a variety of channels. Most of the food is sourced from the *Coronation market*, the largest fresh produce market in the capital city of Kingston. Between 60 per cent and 70 per cent of the fruits and vegetables that arrive at the Coronation market are redistributed through various wholesale markets in and around Kingston, making it a significant trading hub for fresh food flows into the city (Seepersad and Ennis, 2009). Each morning, Ingo visits this market to buy the produce needed for the day, but on Friday afternoons or Saturday mornings, this act is done by Bear (See Figure 6).

Figure 6. Photo showing Bear at the food stall of a higgler buying fresh produce at Coronation Market

Note. Photo taken during field research in Jamaica.

This practice is conducted because the caretakers do not refrigerate their produce, as food needs to be freshly prepared daily. Additionally, another source of food for House of Dread is from their customers who share or exchange food from their private or communal gardens. Since House of Dread is regarded as a place of community, some customers are encouraged to contribute food that adheres to the idiosyncrasies surrounding the food prepared there. One of the permanent vendors, who is referred to as "Gold", supplies House of Dread with coconuts which he procures every Sunday, along with ingredients for his natural juices, from his backyard farming and nearby markets. This contribution is important as coconuts are a staple ingredient in the dishes prepared at House of Dread.

5.5.1. Space for Community

During one of the visits on a Thursday to House of Dread, it was observed that there were additional activities held there on this specific day of the week. The first observation made was a festive atmosphere, stimulated by classic and modern reggae music being played on the outside of the establishment. Also observed were vendors, mostly women, who use the establishment as a space to sell their baked goods, unprocessed honey, coconut oil, herbal medicine, and cultural craft goods. While these women were only present on Thursdays, other vendors had a more stationary presence within the space. As previously mentioned, "Gold" is one of these members, selling natural juices made from fruits, vegetables, and herbal roots. Other individuals who frequent the establishment sell medicinal herbal tonics, spices, and cultural crafts and clothing. These vendors are permitted to participate in the space without a subscription charge or formal membership. Rather, their presence is perceived as strengthening the bonds between members of the community and elevating those who

hold similar beliefs and lifestyle choices. Furthermore, another form of support extended to community members is the promotion of their small businesses using flyers posted within the physical building (see Figure 7). The majority of the products advertised were foodstuffs. These products were seen as beneficial to consumers and the act of advertising them in the space assisted with the elevation of these community members.

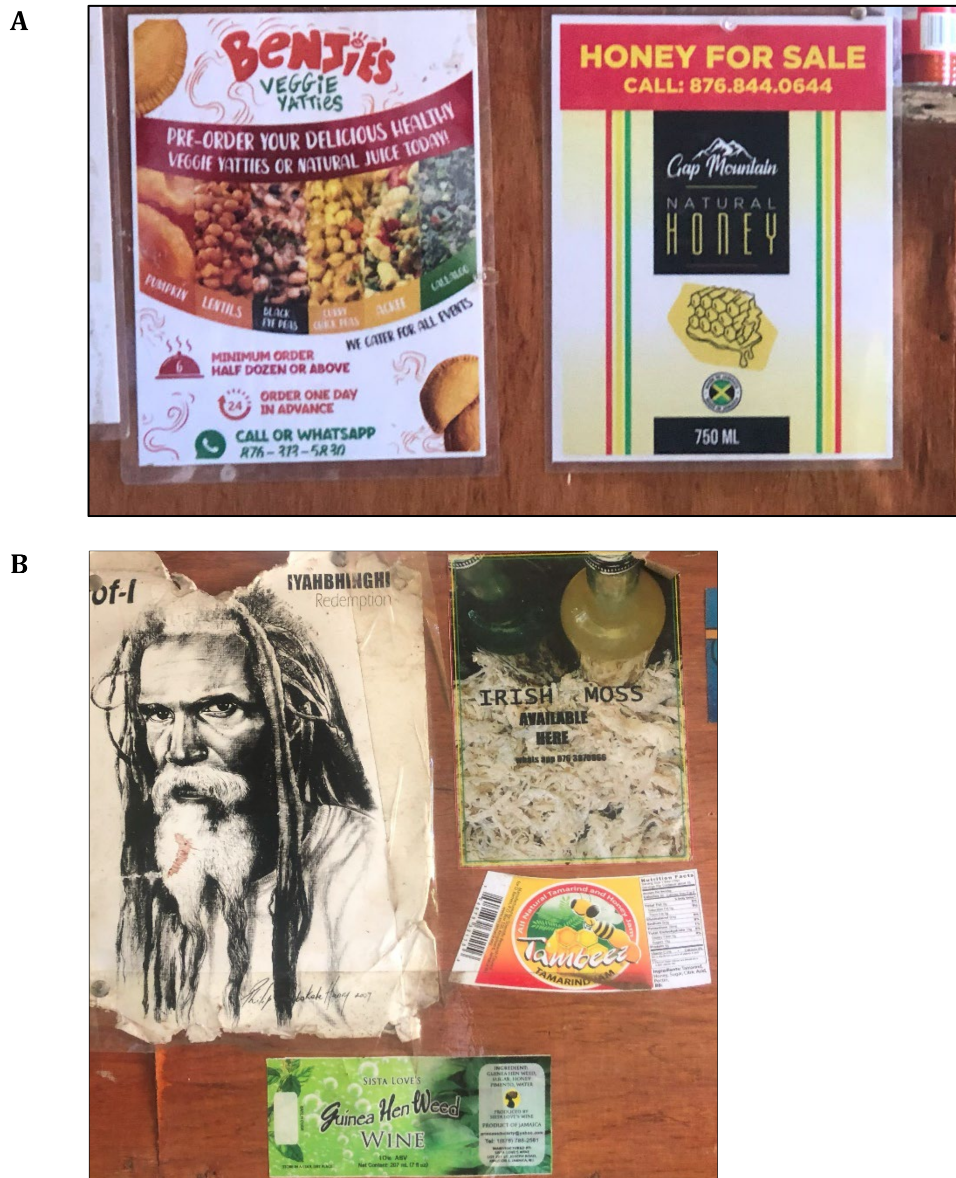


Figure 7. Photos showing flyers advertising food products in the physical building of House of Dread

Note. Photos taken during field research in Jamaica.

5.5.2. Consumers of House of Dread

House of Dread is visited by a diverse profile of consumers, many of whom are from the neighbouring communities. During my time there I was introduced to individuals from various professions, such as a teacher, lawyer, college student, entrepreneur, taxi operator and a track and field coach. However,

these consumers could be placed into two broad categories, those who were members of the Rastafari faith and those who were not. This was evident in the responses given when they were asked for their reasons for visiting the space. One individual from the Rastafari faith expressed that:

> *"House of Dread was the only place in Franklyn town for a cultural experience. My reason for coming? Maintaining the balance between the physical and spiritual wholistically. The food, the socialisation, relaxation. It's [House of Dread] a form of social enterprise, a community support group."*

He further explained that House of Dread was the first place of actualisation for him regarding knowing his place in the Jamaican society as a Rasta or Black person. Another participant of the faith explained that:

> *"I am a Rastafari. Food is a health program to me. The food that Rastafari cook heals. I come here, I get an ease of mind, can relax, can focus. It's like a nature paradise…I not vegan, I'm an italist. Have to be careful with that vegan and organic thing cause they put all kinds of things in it. Because everything was ital before they start put all kinda things in it"*

In contrast, responses from consumers who were not adherents of Rastafarianism expressed mainly that their reasons for visiting the space were motivated by their concerns for their health. One participant explained that their reason for eating at House of Dread is because:

> *"Food is health, Food is wealth"*

Another participant expressed that:

> *"I have high blood pressure, other food has too much salt, it sick you more. When you eat this natural food, you feel better"*

For some consumers, an important part of their relationship with House of Dread is the trust they have established with knowing what is prepared and how it is prepared. This trust in food preparation was also evident in the relationship between the caretakers and the higglers at the local market. Some participants explained that there are specific higglers within the market that the fresh produce is purchased from. These individuals would understand the peculiarities surrounding the food eaten by the Rastafari and attempt to satisfy these needs. These linkages have developed into longstanding relationships where respect and trust are shared between members within the network, which is understood and appreciated by the consumer. The conclusion drawn from the data collected is that House of Dread provides a haven and a communal area to Rastafarians, but also serves as a space to access healthy and affordable food for members of the wider society. It is a food space identifiable by its rejection of chemically treated, mass-produced food and an emphasis on food that is naturally grown and locally produced.

6. Conclusion

The prevailing discourses on alternative food geographies have acknowledged that alternative food provisioning systems take on various forms. This paper presented the idea of othered food spaces as a type of alternative food provisioning and consumption systems developed by marginalised groups whose foodways differ from dominant societal norms. These food spaces, as presented by the data retrieved from Jamaica, reveal a complex reaction to a multilayered history of imperialism and colonialism in their food localities. The assessment of historically rooted othered food spaces such as the Maroon food networks and the contemporary food space, House of Dread, show parallels of alternative food systems shaped by resistance to oppressive structures, formed on the basis of a cultural identity, with an emphasis on self-sufficiency. Both emerged in opposition to dominant food structures, with Maroons establishing autonomous agricultural networks for survival within the enclaves of the mountains, and Rastafarians rejecting industrialised food systems in favour of their Ital principles. Although located in distinct physical environments, the Maroons in the island's rural interiors and the House of Dread in the urban centre of the capital city, both spaces exist on the margins of mainstream society, often regarded as peripheral or excluded by the broader population. These past and present food spaces function as repositories of traditional ecological knowledge, preserving indigenous and African foodways while emphasising sustainability and health. And though, both groups have been marginalised, with their food practices considered unconventional within mainstream Jamaican society, their food networks foster community cohesion, reinforce cultural identity, and challenge dominant food regimes by promoting self-reliance and alternative models of food sovereignty. As research on the alterity of food provisioning systems progresses, it is essential to critically engage with dominant narratives of the global food system. This approach helps to uncover the complexities and uneven dynamics of how established understandings of institutions within agri-food discourses may obscure or erase alternative food geographies across different locales.

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