CORE-PERIPHERY RELATIONS AND RETAIL CHANGE IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY: THE CASE OF BARBADOS, WEST INDIES

par Robert B. POTTER, Department of Geography, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, University of London
Graham M.S. DANN, Department of Sociology and Politics, University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados

ABSTRACT

In Barbados, 97 per cent of total retail floorspace is located within the southwestern urban belt, a staggering over-concentration relative to the area and population of this zone. After a short introduction stressing the neglect of retail change in the geographical literature on Third World countries, the present paper briefly considers the historical genesis of this core-periphery structure, relating it to the mercantile-capitalist periods. The objectives of national urban development strategies since the 1960s are also considered. An analysis of both the modern and traditional components of the present-day retail system of Barbados is then provided. In the twentieth century, change in retailing, especially the trend toward large supermarkets, appears to be leading to further social and spatial inequalities within the country. Structurally and behaviourally, such patterns may be viewed in terms of Santos' concept of the shared space.

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INTRODUCTION

Considering the interest that human geographers have traditionally shown in the structure of commercial activities on the one hand, and patterns of economic change and development on the other, it seems surprising that so little research has sought to explore the structure and disposition of commercial activities in Third World countries. What little work has been undertaken in this generally neglected area has, by and large, been carried out by development specialists rather than commercial geographers. In this regard, it is perhaps the work of Santos (1979) and, in particular, his concept of the "shared space" that has been most influential in the field. In a recent conference paper, Guy (1986) has stressed that studies of economic activities in Third World countries have come to be dominated by considerations of small-scale traders, these normally being viewed in the context of the structure and role of the informal sector or the lower-circuit of the urban economy. Thus, it is true that hardly any work has endeavoured to examine the structure of the retail and commercial systems of developing countries taken as a whole. This is a valid observation and Guy goes on to argue that in "those few sources where the whole spectrum of retail activity is considered (e.g. Beaujeu-Garnier and Delobez, 1979; Santos, 1979), most of the attention is given to 'informal' trading and 'formal' retail activity tends to be summarised in a rather trivial manner" (Guy, 1986, p. 1). Whilst this judgement might perhaps seem unnecessarily dismissive of the highly detailed chapter that Beaujeu-Garnier and Delobez *provide under the title "commercial organisation in poor countries with a free economy" (Chapter 2, p. 64-79), which does contain much material on upper-circuit or formal retail concerns, the general point is well-made. Certainly, there is a burgeoning literature on periodic central place systems which basically sees these as market responses to low levels of effective demand, poor transport facilities, poor storage and handling operations and the need for many individuals to remain as both producers and marketers of commodities. The same types of argument can, of course, be applied to explain other forms of petty commodity trading such as street hawkers and vendors in Third World commercial systems. Here also the principal characteristics of the urban informal sector can be noted, expressly its labour intensive nature, limited capital, direct and personalised contact with customers and the negligible fixed costs of operations.*

But, it is perhaps equally as important to observe that few Third World cities are today to be found which do not possess modern retail developments, to some degree or another (see, for example, Mabogunje, 1964; Gwynne, 1978; Paddison, Findlay and Findlay, 1984). These principally take the form of supermarkets and other large stores and also planned shopping malls along Western lines. It is this modern and capital intensive component in juxtaposition with vestiges of traditional retailing that the present paper seeks to emphasise in relation to one small developing country, namely Barbados. Indeed, the central theme is that it is the wide diversity of retail forms and the essential combination of traditional and modern facilities that currently represents the most salient characteristic of the retail systems of many middle-income developing countries such as Barbados. In fact, it is the central argument of this paper that such diversity can be seen as a further expression of a core-periphery type patterning that typifies economic change and development in the majority of developing nations under capitalism. This argument is not only exemplified in terms of the spatial manifestation of retailing patterns in Barbados, but equally with regard to the social implications of the development of large retail stores.

In the next section the background context is provided by considering the wider historical development of settlement and commercial patterns in Barbados since its original colonisation. The overall present-day macro-structure of retailing is then considered. Subsequently, the paper focusses first on the nature of traditional forms of retail practice in Barbados, and then on the development and social impact of modern supermarketing operations. Finally, the wider implications of these developments are considered.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE URBAN COMMERCIAL PATTERN OF BARBADOS: MERCANTILSM AND CAPITALISM.

In the Caribbean, the legacy of colonial settlement and subsequent orientation to Western European economies is witnessed in a large number of shared socio-economic characteristics, foremost among which are open economies with agricultural orientations and marked tendencies toward monoculture. In a spatial sense, the realities of such patterns of dependent development are witnessed most forcefully in the highly skewed and spatially uneven settlement patterns that are to be found throughout the Caribbean region (Potter, 1985, 1986a, 1986b).

The key agent in this historical development was that of mercantile trade, the progress of which served to focus settlement growth from the first on the sheltered leeward coasts of the various islands. Thus, throughout the Caribbean region, linear-coastal settlement patterns are strikingly evident and present a graphic illustration of the appropriateness of the "mercantile model" of settlement evolution suggested by James Vance (1970) as a socio-historical corrective to the traditional theory of central places. In summary, Vance argued that the central place model is one which considers only endogenic demand, that is needs and wants that arise exclusively <u>within</u> an area, thereby rendering what is effectively a closed settlement system. In this sense, Vance maintains that the classical central place model is positively 'Feudal' in its conception. In contrast, the mercantile model seeks to stress the vital role that has been played by exogenic forces, for the source of change for developing countries was <u>external to</u> the evolving settlement system. The outcome is the remarkable linearity of settlement patterns that is mapped into the Vance model. The first component of this linearity is the alignment of urban and commercial fabrics along continental coasts, and the second, the development of linear settlements along the routes which over time come to extend into staple producing areas. The model has been reviewed in detail elsewhere (Potter, 1985) and it can be argued that its principal merit is that it emphasises that the high degree of urban primacy and the littoral orientation of settlement that are so characteristic of the Caribbean region are the direct products of a form of <u>dependent development</u> and associated urbanisation (Roberts, 1978), and not the reflection of a <u>lack</u> of development. Hence, a pattern of spatially unequal or polarised growth emerged several hundred *years ago with the strengthening of this symbiotic relationship between the colony and colonial power.*

The basic mercantile model can, of course, be related to John Friedmann's (1966) four stage core-periphery model, which at least initially envisages the transition of spatially undifferentiated pre-industrial economies to ones dominated by a single strong core, which siphons off factors of production and results in the draining of the peripheral regions. In the sequence Friedmann originally envisaged, a spontaneous trend toward inter-regional convergence occurred during the last two stages of his model. However, subsequently, Friedmann changed his view, arguing rather that historical evidence supports continuing divergence and disequilibrium rather than convergence.

This type of patterning fits well the realities of the historical development of the macro-spatial commercial and settlement systems of Barbados (see Potter, 1985). The island was discovered by the Portuguese in 1536, but was not settled until 1627. In 1625, an English ship returning home from South America came upon the island fortuitously. On return the master reported his find to his employer, a rich merchant, Sir William Courteen. Courteen regarded the island as a potential location for a tobacco plantation. Accordingly, in 1627, settlers arrived and became established at present day Holetown. A year later, a rival group had settled in the vicinity of Bridgetown. Subsequently, the west coast settlements of Speightstown in the north, and Oistins in the south were established. In fact, this early pattern of settlement, geared to the mother country still characterises the country today (Figure 1), and developmemts in the twentieth century have all served to bolster the west coast urban zone. No matter which index of socio-economic structure is

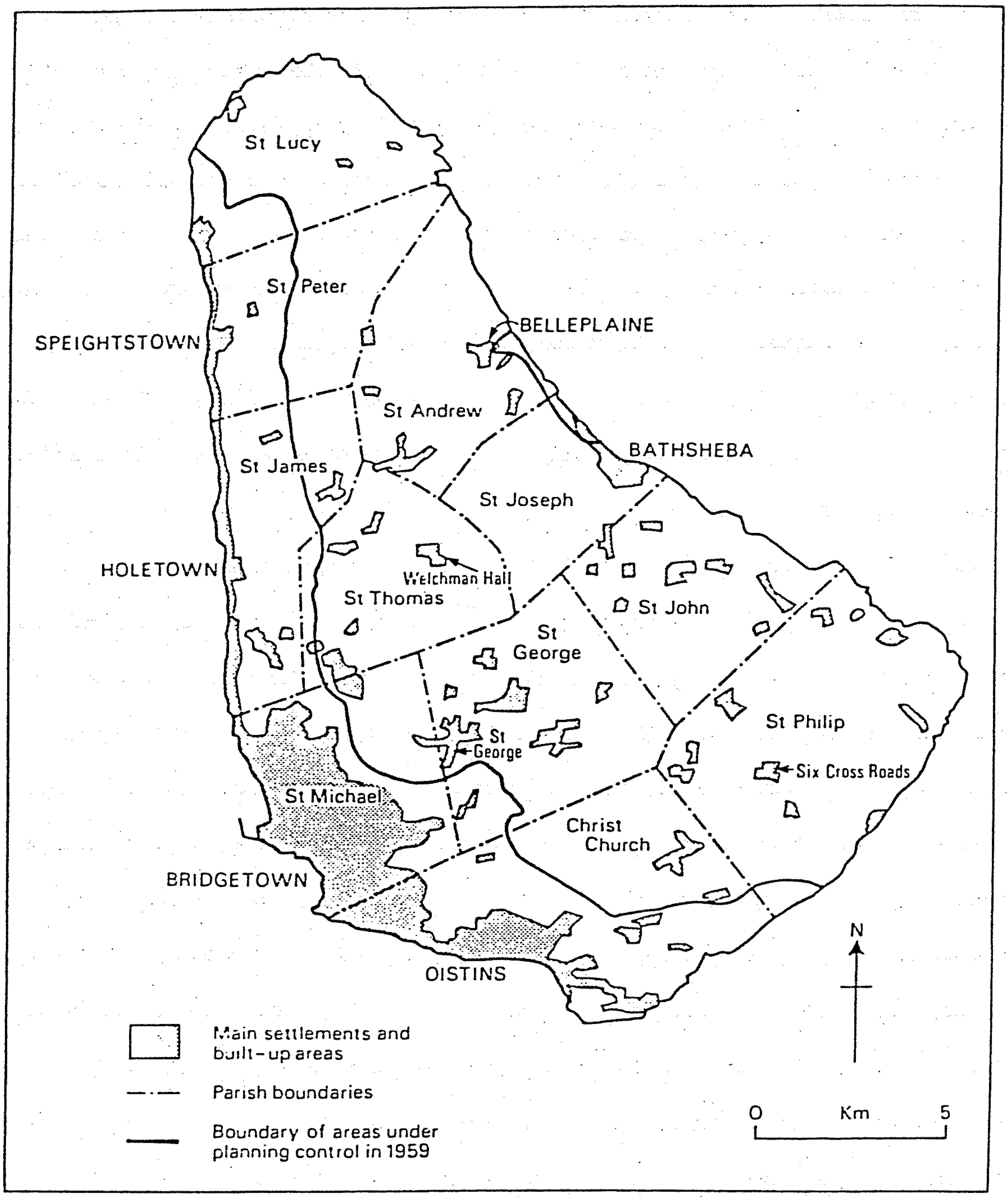

Figure 1. Barbados: principal built-up areas, administrative parishes and early planning zones

selected, a sharply divided map characterises this nation of only 430 square kilometres. The parishes of St Michael, Christ Church and St James constitute the thriving core of the island, and the remaining areas its unmistakable periphery. This pattern cannot be interpreted as the outcome of chance or haphazard processes operating in space, however, but the direct outcome of the original pattern of unequal growth which has been constantly bolstered and intensified during the last two hundred years of capitalist development. In particular, the encouragement of enclave light manufacturing and the tourist industry as principal pillars of post-war economic policy has resulted in continued polarisation within this coastal linear urban zone.

The avowed intention of physical development planning in Barbados since its holistic inception in 1965, has been to reduce such inequalities in development, principally by means of the decentralisation of economic and commercial activities away from the Bridgetown core. The first national physical plan appeared in 1970 and suggested the development of a four-tier national hierarchy of urban commercial centres. The 1970 plan was clearly inspired by classical central place theory, and was almost utopian in its advocacy of a widely dispersed national hierarchy of settlements by the end of plan year 1980. The Amended version of this plan was produced somewhat belatedly in 1983. Its aim is to rationalise and therefore plan <u>with</u> the emerging linear urban corridor and to promote the growth of certain urban and suburban sub-cores within it. In this light the plan is to expand Oistins and Speightstown and the Warrens-Cave Hill area which is situated close to the University in the northern part of the parish of St. Michael. In fact, in the last ten years both Speightstown and Oistins have already been the sites for a number of commercial developments, including modern *shopping plazas. Whether these developments and the current measures adopted in the Amended Physical Development Plan will succeed remains to be seen, but ceratinly there is a real danger than the policy in seeking to rationalise the existing situation of spatial polarisation will merely serve to spread development within the existing core area in a form of concentrated deconcentration. This particular argument is important in that the present paper will basically suggest that recent changes in retailing in Barbados are leading to the intensification of a strong core-periphery patterning of life-chances and life-styles in Barbados, and not their amelioration.*

THE PRESENT-DAY RETAIL PATTERN OF BARBADOS

Surprisingly, little research has been carried out on either the development of retail marketing in Barbados, or present-day patterns of retailing in the country, and the present authors are not aware of anything comprehensive that has been published on this topic. Curiously enough, the 1970 Physical development plan included little on retailing, despite the fact that its primary objective was the decentralisation of infrastructure and activities, including services, away from the primate core region of Metropolitan Bridgetown. The absence of a Geography or Planning Department at the Cave Hill Campus of the University of West Indies and the relatively low regard with which geography is held within the Caribbean in general means that an overtly spatial approach to the analysis of socio-economic issues is conspicuous by its absence. It is tempting to conjecture that this lack of a spatial orientation is also in part attributable to the *influence of living in a small island community where the geographical realities of location seem very much to be taken for granted. Such circumstances have also led to a situation where the types of basic geographical surveys that one might expect to have been carried out during the late 1960s and 1970s have not, in fact, been undertaken.*

As a result of this dearth of information, the Department of Town and Country Development Planning carried out a number of basic retail surveys in connection with the publication of the survey section of their amended version of the Physical Development Plan, which as noted in the previous section was published in 1983. In the absence of other more detailed data, the first half of the account which follows is closely based on the data collated in that document.

The results of this survey of the distribution of retail facilities in Barbados reveal the massive degree of spatial concentration that characterises the island in this sphere, as well as in many others (Table 1). The basic distribution of such facilities is depicted in Figure 2. The most salient fact is that a staggering 97 per cent of the total estimated retail floorspace of the entire country is located on the western and southern linear urban corridor, whilst this area accounts for 77.93 per cent of the national population and only 54.02 of its land area. Obviously, the single greatest concentration of floorspace is found in Central Bridgetown, with the city centre alone accounting for 69,259 sq. m. or 63 per cent of the estimated national floorspace. The city centre dwarfs the remainder of the nation's retail centres. The other urban areas of Speightstown, Holetown and Oistins house the next greatest concentrations of shops, but these contain only 8.0, 4.6 and 2.7 per cent of the national estimated floorspace respectively. The next most important retail areas tend to re-

TABLE 1

The Size and Functional Composition of the Principal Retail Centres in Barbados, 1980

Centre	Floor-space (m^2)	Percentage floorspace	Percentage range of goods
Central Bridgetown	69 259	62.6	100
Speightstown	8 861	8.0	62
Holetown	5 056	4.6	67
Oistins	2 964	2.7	62
Eagle Hall	4 181	3.8	28
Worthing	2 767	2.5	38
Sargeants Village	2 323	2.1	28
Hastings	1 394	1.3	38
Shoppers Centre	1 589	1.4	33
Rockdundo	1 477	1.3	28
Carlton	1 338	1.2	24
Gertz	1 113	1.0	33
Wildey	911	0.8	28
Six Cross Roads	799	0.7	28
Pandoras	557	0.5	14
Stanmore Crescent	539	0.5	14
Totals	*105 143*	*95.0*	-

(Source: Barbados Physical Development Plan Amended 1983, Table 5.5, p. 44)

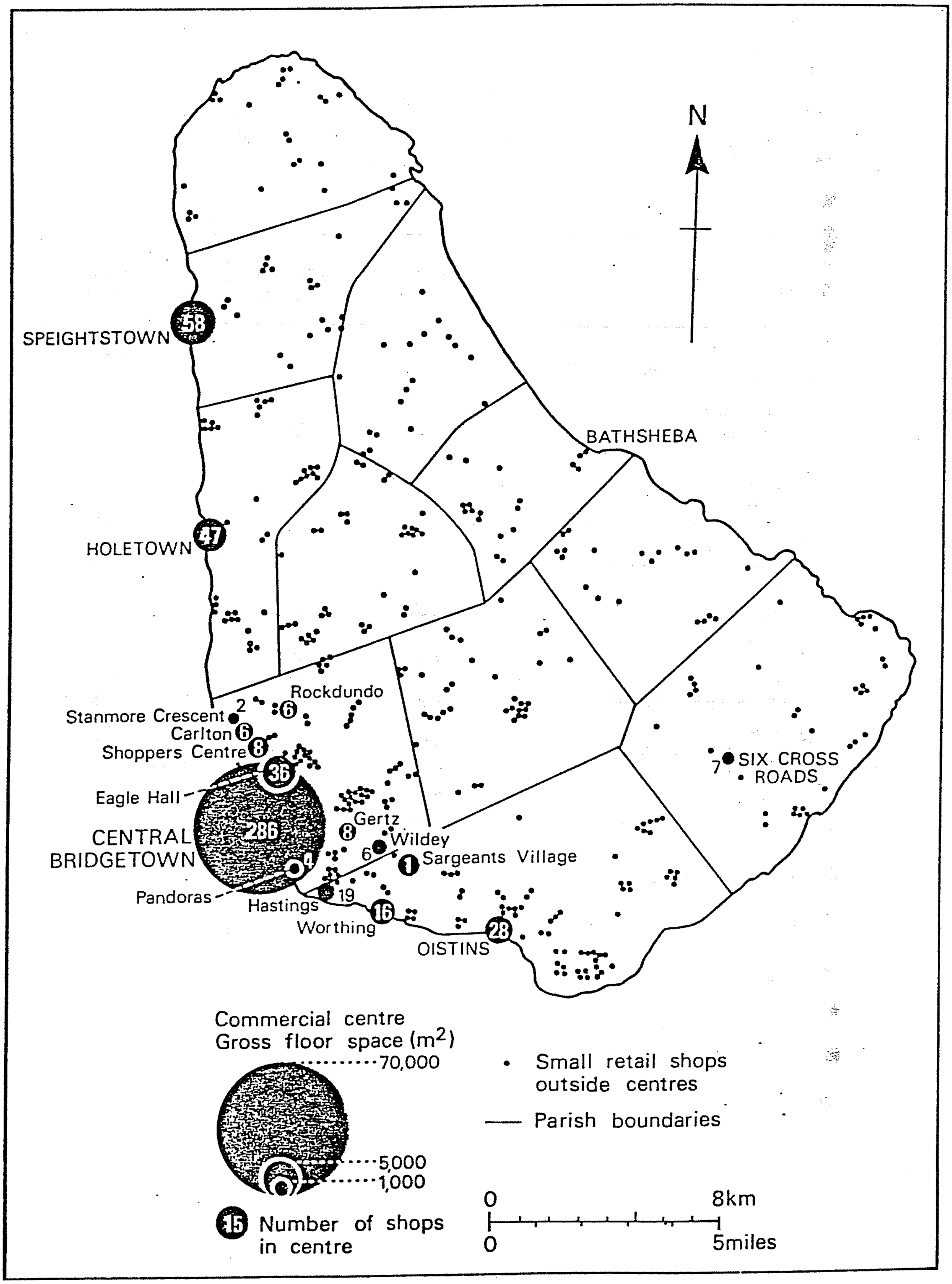

Figure 2. The location of retail facilities in Barbados, 1980

emphasise the importance of the primate capital, for they comprise the nine suburban commercial areas which are located in outer Bridgetown, and these are shown and named in Figure 2. Virtually all of the suburban centres have developed since 1965 and are generally based on relatively large-scale supermarkets which have effectively created new commercial centres. A noticeable feature of the distribution of retailing facilities in Barbados is that outside these principal centres, although there is a scattering of shops in isolated locations or small clusters (Figure 2), there are no significant concentrations in any of the district centres that were designated as growth points in the 1970 Physical Development Plan.

The structure of retailing facilities in Barbados is such that we can talk about a typology of centres, as shown in Figure 3. At the upper end of the retail system, Central Bridgetown is primate, and together with the three other major urban centres located at Speightstown, Holetown and Oistins respectively, accounts for nearly 80 per cent of the total retail infrastructure of the nation. But the most salient fact perhaps is that the middle ranks of the national retailing hierarchy are entirely accounted for by the nine suburban centres located in Bridgetown, thereby further stressing the capital's importance. This typology is perhaps best appreciated if a measure of functional importance is taken rather than one of absolute size. As a part of their survey work, the planning team looked at the frequency of occurrence of some twenty selected functions among the retail centres. The key functional traits identified in this analysis were: market, supermarket or minimart, grocer/bar, other food sales, footwear, pharmacist, furniture or office supplies, vehicle sales, stationery and books, travel agents, betting and gambling, beauty salon, clothes cleaner, photographic supplies, photocopying, florists, and gifts or crafts. The

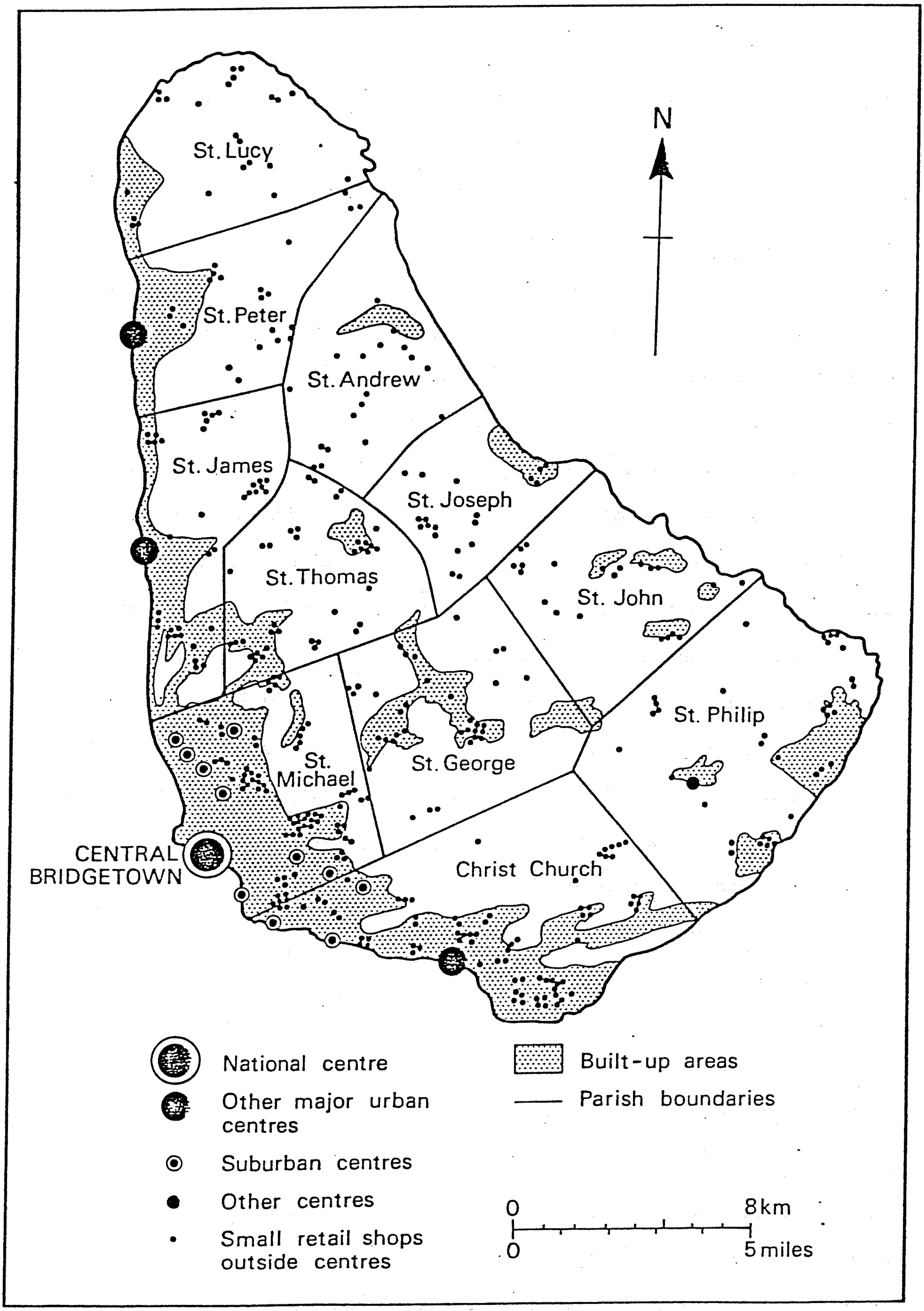

Figure 3. A classification of retail centres in Barbados

percentage occurrence of these functions in each of the centres is denoted in the final column of Table 1. Central Bridgetown is the only location at which all these goods can be obtained, whilst the other major centres supply between 24 and 38 per cent of them. Although quite small in terms of its overall size, the centre at Six Cross Roads, in fact, provides as many functions as its suburban counterparts, reflecting its rural central place importance within the south east of the country.

However, the most striking feature revealed by the above analysis is the disparity between the urban core of Barbados and the rural periphery. Although the Amended Physical Development Plan argues that the four principal urban centres of Speightstown, Holetown, Oistins and Bridgetown each have "east-ward service areas which as an aggregate cover the entire country, thus reflecting the complete dependency of the rural areas on the western/southern centres for the higher-order commercial services" (p. 45), this statement underplays the overall primacy of Bridgetown. Certainly, it is hard to believe that the rural residents of St Andrew parish will not be more drawn to Bridgetown than to Speightstown given the radial nature of the national transport network and the geographical realities of community belonging in Barbados. The overall disparity within the country is well-exemplified by calculations of floorspace provisions per capita for the eleven administrative parishes. The level of provision is as high as 0.8 sq. m. per capita in both metropolitan St. Michael and St. Peter and drops to 0.3 in St James and Christ Church. In all the remaining parishes however this figure is well below 0.1. The same disparity is also suggested if we look at the average number of persons per shop in the eleven parishes. The results shown in Table 2 indicate that a level of provision well below the national average is characteristic of the rural

TABLE 2

The Distribution of Retail Outlets in Barbados by Administrative Parish and Person-Shop Ratios, 1980

Parish	Number of shops	Population 1980	Persons per shop
St Michael	442	99 953	226
Christ Church	159	40 790	256
St James	95	17 255	181
St Peter	78	10 717	137
St George	42	17 361	413
St Thomas	48	10 709	223
St Philip	46	18 662	405
St John	21	10 330	492
St Joseph	19	7 211	379
St Andrew	18	6 731	374
St Lucy	27	9 264	343
Totals	*995*	*248 983*	*250*

parishes of St. Lucy, St. Andrew, St. Joseph, St. John, St. Philip and St. George.

TRADITIONAL RETAILING IN BARBADOS

Before turning to a fuller analysis of the nature and development of modern capital-intensive retailing in Barbados, it is necessary to consider briefly traditional forms of retailing. There are two components to this sector, referred to respectively as the rum shop and the hawker or street vendor. The former have been considered from a primarily sociological viewpoint by Stoute and Ifill (1979, p.146), who define a rum shop as "a retail outlet for that intoxicating by-product of sugar, well known the length and breadth of the Caribbean". As the authors of this piece stress, the rum shop does much more than sell liquor, acting as it does as a meeting place and an informal community centre and catering to the leisure and social needs of the local population. In fact, in many instances, the proprietors of rum shops also possess licences to sell foodstuffs, normally tinned meats and vegetables and other frequently-demanded provisions. Thus, Stoute and Ifill note that the front section of rum shops often represent villages' sole retail outlet for groceries, kerosene, oil and other general provisions. They also stress the operation of gender segregation between the front shop and the exclusively male preserve of the backroom bar. It is these types of establishments which make up the bulk of the isolated stores which form the fifth level of the retail hierarchy supplying the rural areas of Barbados (Figure 2 and 3). In this study published in 1979, the total number of rum shops in Barbados was given as 897, of which over half were located in the metropolitan parish of St Michael (52.8 per cent), and a further 11.5 per cent in Christ Church. The remaining eleven parishes contained between 2.5 and 6.2 per cent of the country's total. Clearly, if the data on which Figure 2 is based are to be trusted, then only a relatively small proportion of all rum shops also possess grocery licences. Such establishments are still very much a part of the Barbadian national scene and must be viewed as very important components of the lower circuit retailing system of the country.

The other major component of traditional retailing practice in Barbados is that of street hawking, which even in the 1920s was second only to the occupation of seamstress in the national employment league table. In a review of one type of street hawker, the nutseller, Crichlow (1979) has stressed how at a time of poor transport infrastructure, it was the hawker who retailed foodstuffs in rural environs. But with an inadequate number of retail outlets, the hawker was equally to be found in the city streets selling her merchandise. The author records how during the 1930s, the generic occupation of hawking did much to ameliorate the worst effects of unemployment for many. Traditionally hawkers have been poor white folk, whilst their suppliers were prosperous and white. Crichlow records how the development of more extensive forms of fixed retailing during the twentieth century resulted in compensatory changes in hawking. With regard to the nutseller, for example, the original focus of her operations was normally schools, but later due to increasing competition among vendors, fairs and cricket matches became favourite haunts. The major change in strategy came however with the development of the modern retail sector, for the ensuing competition necessitated not only a change in location, but also in product range. Thus, the hawker diversifed her product to include *consumer goods thus far not to be found in the stores, and changed location from the school to the bus terminal in order to better serve the commuting public.*

It is important to stress here that the traditional retailing system of Barbados cannot be seen as entirely separate from the formal sector, a point stressed in particular by Beaujeu-Garnier and Delobez (1979). This is so for two reasons. Firstly, as the above account demonstrates, the two systems have evolved side by side through the twentieth century. Secondly, although it is true that rural areas are largely dependent on supplies obtained through rum shop grocery stores, the urban areas are characterised by all types of retail organisation, both formal and informal, modern and traditional, petty commodity trading and capital intensive. Functionally, the operation of a true shared space between the formal and informal sectors can be identified, whilst at the broader spatial scale this is dovetailed with a core-periphery pattern. Indeed on such a small island, the trips of consumers and producers both serve to interlink the various components of the retail system, the price being paid in terms of the time, effort and expense of overcoming the friction of distance, the salient point to which we shall return shortly.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF SUPERMARKETING IN BARBADOS

The advent and popularity of one-stop supermarket shopping in Barbados can be said to coincide roughly with the expansion of mass tourism to the Island in the early 1960s. Whether the association was causal is debatable, but it seems to be no coincidence that, with few exceptions, the location of such modern forms of retailing outlets is to be found in metropolitan Bridgetown and alongside the southern and western strips of coastal development, as previously stressed. Whilst it can also be argued that this pattern of consumerism is derived from tourism's demonstration effect, at the same time, it should be realised that with approximately 70 per cent of all households currently possessing a television set, Barbadians have long since been exposed to this facet of metropolitan life. Others, of course, have experienced the phenomenon directly by travelling to the United States and Europe on a regular basis.

The mercantile community in Barbados, which historically merged with the white planter interests through the processes of corporatisation and intermarriage, has been prepared to satisfy (some would say to create) this new consumer demand. The upper layer of Barbadian commercial interests comprises a complicated network of interlocking directorates, which together form what is commonly referred to as "The Big Six" group of companies. All are in the main white dominated, and thus representative of 4.0 per cent of the national population, and from a position of virtual monopoly have a stranglehold on the import sector of the economy. Indeed, much of their power is derived from the general process of amalgamation and the sheer size of their operations when compared with the small businesses of the local black entrepreneurs whose limited success some would argue they generally try to stifle.

A brief consideration of the control of the major supermarkets confirms the foregoing analysis. One retail chain, known as Supercentre, has four strategically located outlets. One of these is in the city centre, close to the new central bus terminal, whilst another is situated in a retail centre *serving a middle-class residential area, that of Rockdundo to the north of Bridgetown (see Figure 2). The remaining two supermarkets are to be found in malls adjacent to the tourist belt. Supercentre is a subsidiary of Da Costa's, one of the Big Six, which also controls the Gardiner Austin Company. Another commercial group, Goddard's Enterprises has two supermarkets, one located on the south coast, another in the rapidly expanding northern outskirts of Bridgetown. This highly successful family business has its offices in C.F. Harrison's, one of the major departmental stores to which it is linked commercially. Goddard's is also involved in the tourist business through the ownership of hotels and control of the Barbados Flight Kitchen, the sole supplier to the Grantley Adams International Airport. The group has additional interests established in one or two of the nearby Caribbean islands. As with Da Costa's, the composition of the board of directors and management is predominantly white. R.L Seale is another successful white businessman who operates from a large dry goods warehouse situated to the north of the city, and who represents the island's commercial interests in the Senate. He has two supermarkets as well, one known as Carlton, the other A1, both of these stores being located in the parish of St Michael.*

While the above cater to an expanding lower middle to middle class clientele, two other large concerns seek to promote a distinctly up-market image. One is known as Big B and is located on the Worthing section of the south coast, whilst the other is J.B.s Master Mart at Sargeants Village, Christ Church. The former establishment looks after the interests of the Bourne family and is run by a Mr Edwards. The latter belongs to Mr J.B. Simpson, hence the initials, who unlike some of his "redleg" competitors can trace his ancestry back to the original English settlers.

The case of J.B's* is particularly fascinating as it serves to highlight the complex interconnections which exist among commercial interests in Barbados. Back in the early 1960s, prior to the gaining of independence, the Simpson, Bourne and Goddard families decided to open a supermarket on the Worthing tourist coast and christened the store with the name of the first mentioned family. The three-way partnership endured for some years, after which time J.B. Simpson decided to sell his interest to his remaining two colleagues. Bourne latter followed suite and with the proceeds was able to establish Big B. The Goddards held on for a while longer, but with another outlet just a few hundred yards away, eventually saw little sense in retaining Simpson's as a supermarket. The store was therefore converted to a hardware and variety goods emporium under the name Star Discount. In the meantime, Mr Simpson had bought and sold an hotel and became a significant shareholder in the largest Broad Street store of Cave Shepherd. However, it was still his ambition to be the owner-operator of a supermarket. Eventually, an opportunity arose and J.B. Simpson was able to lease a suitable property which became the A1 supermarket. Some four or five years afterwards his ultimate dream became a reality and he was able to sell A1 to R.L. Seale and to set up his own Master Mart on three acres of land, the store itself compirsing some half an acre of floorspace. Today, at some 22,000 square feet, this is the largest of all the island's supermarkets and there are plans for continued expansion. Currently, the

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* The material for this section is largely derived from a personal interview with Mr Simpson on April 20th 1986, for which the authors express their gratitude.

store is retailing selected Sainsburys goods although at the present time there appears to be some doubt on the part of the UK firm as to whether they are willing to continue with this arrangement.

One other type of operator may briefly be alluded to and that is the discount business based on bulk purchase. At the present time there is one such establishment in Barbados which offers supermarket type items at reduced prices. This establishment is known as General Traders Company and is mentioned here because it falls under the financial wing of another influential member of the Big Six group of companies, namely Plantations Trading Limited.

The aforementioned concerns operate modern and relatively large supermarkets which cater for the upwardly mobile, and as we have stressed, control of them all rests in the hands of the elite minority commercial group. Such rivalry as exists is generally of a quite friendly nature, for many of the proprietors are related by kinship and otherwise share the same outside interests, such as horse racing, for example. They also have the opportunity for meeting socially at embassy receptions, for instance, as their hosts on such occasions are frequently their customers.

By contrast, the older smaller concerns managed by black entrepreneurs tend to cater to the lower end of the market. Even chains such as Excel, Shamrock and Ricks are largely patronised by working class black consumers. Such retail establishments tend to be located in the poorer urban areas of Bridgetown and Speightstown, with their customers travelling to them by bus or on foot from nearby depressed housing areas. In contrast to the more sophisticated supermarkets, they tend not to possess car parks. Their few rural outlets are not much more than village stores, although they do carry more than the basic provisions that are *customarily offered by rural rum shops. Closely allied to these chains are the medium to small-sized family operated black businesses. Although these are even to be found in the tourist zones and rural districts, they most closely resemble minimarts and indeed many are so named. Usually their prices are no cheaper, and frequently far more expensive than the large modern establishments which regularly feature loss leaders and specials as a result of bulk purchasing and high turnover.*

CONCLUSIONS: CORE-PERIPHERY AND THE SHARED SPACE IN BARBADOS

The consequences of retail change in the post-1960 period in Barbados seem quite clear, in that the process has generally served to intensify the core-periphery structure that characterises so many aspects of social and economic life in the country. The outcome has been a highly polarised map of shopping opportunities. Although there are functional and spatial linkages between them, in terms of both the movement of produce and consumers, it is correct to talk of the modern and traditional sectors of the Barbadian retail system, and further, to acknowledge that these types are at least in part spatially defined, although as stressed earlier it would be erroneous to regard these as comprising quite separate systems. Thus, the urban and tourist zones are characterised by modern supermarkets, which generally sell a very high proportion of imported goods, especially food stuffs. These stores, or more accurately suburban retail centres, cater to expatriots, tourists and the indigenous upper middle and upper classes. But the metropolitan area of Bridgetown is also, of course, the locus for the street vendor, attesting to the complex interrelation of the *two sectors. The rural areas of Barbados are however characterised by a much more homogeneous pattern of retail provision, consisting principally of the rum shop grocery, a few minimarts and small chain supermarkets.*

In recent publications, both of the present authors have pointed to the strong and continuing social and spatial inequalities which pervade Barbadian social and economic life. For example, Dann (1984, 1986) has looked at various aspects of the quality of life of people in Barbados and the provision of health services and has stressed such inequality. Here a basic divide is made in terms of four types of area: urban (St Michael), suburban (St James, St Peter, Christ Church), rural 1 (areas of growth) (St Philip, St George), and rural 2 (areas of decline) (St Lucy, St Thomas, St Andrew, St Joseph and St John). In a remarkably similar vein, but using the results of social-psychological surveys, Potter (1986a) had produced the following classification of Barbadian administrative areas: Highly developed/non-agricultural: St Michael, St James, Christ Church; Intermediate 1: St Peter; Intermediate 2: St George, St Thomas, St Philip; and finally, less developed/agricultural; St John, St Joseph, St Lucy and St Andrew. As might be expected, the salient point is that developments in retailing correspond almost exactly with these socio-economic divisions. In particular, those who live in the most disadvantaged parts of the island, the parishes of St Lucy, St Andrew, St Joseph, and St John are faced with something of a dilemma. Either they can travel by public transport in search of bargains from large supermarkets, at the expense of time, physical effort and a two-way bus fare, or else they can shop locally and face inflated prices for items which are not government controlled. In such a manner, the already existing social welfare disparities in Barbados are further reinforced, with the poor having to pay proportionately more *than the affluent for the necessities of life. It is primarily in this regard that we can talk of the existence and operation of a strong core-periphery pattern of retailing in Barbados, and one which will require much change for even a basic improvement to occur.*

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