Haiti

Building Social Capital through Media Connectivity

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Introduction

The public sphere is central to the collective shaping of local ways of knowing. Through citizen engagement in dialogue, debates, advocacy and even creative forms of expression, societies propose and refine notions of ways of life and uphold commonly shared values of humanity and dignity. Media platforms, both traditional and digital, offer forms of public spheres that transmit public knowledge, stimulate debates on the status quo, and serve as a rallying call for action in the face of persistent political and social stalemates. In Haiti, traditional media, particularly commercial and community radio, played an important role during the 2010 earthquake disaster and the decade since in Haiti's quest for a more equitable recovery and sustainable way of life for ordinary Haitians. Since 2018, digital platforms have bolstered local and global conversations that aim to hold those in power accountable for unsustainable forms of governance that continue to increase hardships for Haitians. This chapter examines the decade since the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, emphasizing the ways the media serves as a public sphere and a civic institution that generates, disseminates, and curates a local knowledge economy in search of equitable post-disaster recovery that benefits all Haitians. Further, this chapter offers a perspective of the ways in which knowledge economies can be developed through the public sphere in ways that include all citizens and not just those in power, or social and economic elites alone.

The Catastrophe of 2010

In less than twenty-four hours after a 7.3 magnitude earthquake shook Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti, on 12 January 2010, citizen brigades arrived from rural and southern parts of the country, offering food, sup-

plies, tools, and even their hands to pick through the rubble to find the living and to aid in their survival (Bojarskie, André, and Pierre-Pierre 2020; Schuller and Morales 2012). One-third of all Haitians were impacted by this disaster, one the country had not experienced since the 1700s. More than 200,000 Haitians lost their lives.

On 4 October 2016, when Hurricane Matthew, a Category 4 storm, made landfall in the southwest of Haiti, it destroyed over 90 percent of crops and homes in rural provinces. Haitians who lived in the capital of Port-au-Prince, which was slowly rebuilding, emerged to coordinate the relief of their fellow citizens who had lost all they had, bringing immediate food and supplies, and aiding in temporary shelter. Urban Haitians had, in essence, returned the benevolence they had received from rural Haitians six years prior when faced with another disaster. Over 500 Haitians died in the mid-decade disaster, and thousands were forced to evacuate and were displaced from their homes for several months. Meanwhile, public services, schooling, economic activity, and agriculture all came to a grinding stop in the southwest region.

Two years later, Haitians embarked on an exercise of sustained civil engagement in their public sphere that intensified from 2018 to 2021. To outsiders, it was described as "civil unrest." The descriptive "unrest" places emphasis on the disruption, vandalism, and even violence that comes when citizens take to the street in search of institutional accountability. What a term like "unrest" often biases is the diminution of and shifts in attention from the very act by citizens of shaking the status quo in ways that call attention to inequities that can no longer be sustained among a populace. In the Haiti context, this is a citizenry that had endured the vulnerability of natural disasters that can be traced back to the first decade of the 2000s and became increasingly harder to recover from after 2010 and 2016.

The source of Haitians taking action from 2018 to 2021 was simple: knowledge. Haitian citizens had acquired knowledge on why its country had failed to fully recover from disasters and Haitians were seeking knowledge on how to stabilize their country and to protect citizens from the natural threats to come. It started with a question: "Kot Kòb Petro-Caribe a?" (Where is the PetroCaribe money?) (Mirambeau 2018). It was answered with the hashtag: #PetroCaribeChallenge in 2018, a digitally networked movement that was as much offline as it was online.

The next year, as illustrated in the figure below, Haitians mobilized under *peyi-lòk* (country shutdown). Schools and public transportation services shut down in 2019 as Haitians called for government accountability for the billions of dollars directed to aid citizens and the nation as a whole to fully recover from 2010 and 2016.
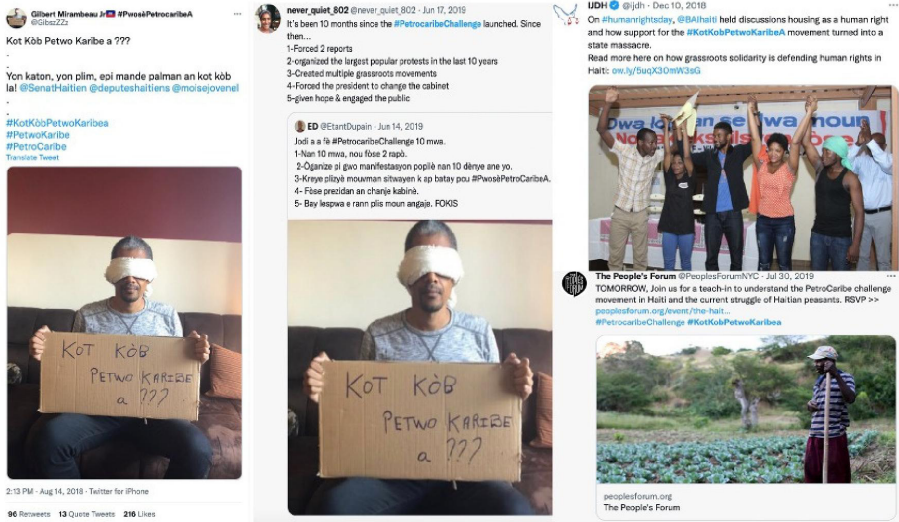
Figure 4.1. #PetwoKaribe Movement. Mobilizing Social Capital Both Online and Offline (Mirambeau 2018) | #PetroKaribe Movement. Educating and Raising Awareness on Post-Disaster Sustainable Recovery (IJDH 2018).

In 2020, Haitians sustained their calls for accountability, as the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated hardships for citizens. They particularly aimed to hold up their constitution, calling for leadership change in 2020 and for elections that would usher in leaders who would work to ease economic distress and begin the hard work of addressing inequity.

On 7 July 2021, Haiti's president Jovenel Moïse was assassinated at his home and his wife Martine Moïse sustained injuries in the attack. A year later, Haitians continued to hold the appointed acting Prime Minister Ariel Henry accountable on when elections can be held so that the work of rebuilding the country can truly commence.

Whereas Haiti faces challenges in human and economic capital, it is a beacon in the arena of social capital. Social capital's value rests in the investment of people, or citizens, in forming networks that can deliver outcomes and pressure a society to function optimally or to enable change for the effective functioning of a society. Theorists of social capital posit that it is a key resource in aiding societies to harness human capital and to build up and sustain economies.

Civil society coordinates social capital through networks that can be communal, institutional, cultural, faith-based, or otherwise. Those networks are fostered through the linkages and ties of groups in which knowledge and resources are shared and exchanged. When networks

come together in larger societal movements, they are bolstered by the convening of the public sphere. History shows that the coordination of movements is often supported by traditional forms of media. In Haiti in particular, the press has historically played a key role in the shaping of the world's first Black republic (Stieber 2020). At the turn of the century, it advocated for the country's sovereignty as foreign powers encroached on Haiti, resulting in the US invasion and occupation from 1915 to 1934 (Roberts 2016). Radio in Haiti then emerged as a post-occupation vehicle for educating and coordinating the public sphere as Haiti endured several decades of dictatorship, supported and enabled by foreign powers (Wagner 2017).

From 2010 to 2021, Haiti expanded its digital landscape. Digital media nationalized and globalized the relay and transfer of information and knowledge that aided Haitians both in recovering from disasters in citizen-centered ways, but also in mounting a national exercise to dismantle institutions that do not work for citizens and to call for reforms and changes that can build back a nation that is still to recover from the disasters it has seen and the ones that loom in the future.

This chapter explores how mediated knowledge dissemination can aid in citizen-centered post-disaster recovery. It also maps how the expansion of digital media coincides with a widening of the public sphere, contemporizing the formation of social capital networks that work to sustain movements that aim to advocate for the full and effective functioning of societies, when a fledgling democracy disenfranchises its citizens and fails to work to alleviate the hardships and inequalities its citizens must endure.

Social Capital and Dissemination of Knowledge within the Public Sphere

When we think of the resources within societies, social capital often holds the most potential for the dissemination of knowledge. Eric Lesser (2000) points to two key distinctions of social capital: it is a "public good" and it is "'located' not in the actors themselves but in their relations with other actors" (Lesser 2000: 8). Human or physical capital requires "individual" or "collective ownership," but since social capital inherently seeks the public good, it cannot be owned. Additionally, social capital is mobilizing and capacity-building. Lesser writes that it "cannot exist in a vacuum, it is dependent on the interaction of individuals to create value" (2000: 8). Social capital's value rests in its future returns, its ability to be converted into other forms of capital, its linking and connectivity of society around a common goal, and compared to physical capital, it cannot depreciate.

Lesser explains that "social capital, much like organizational knowledge, often grows and becomes more productive with use" (2000: 8). The more societies activate and invest in its social capital, the more social capital works for the good of societies.

Social capital relates to knowledge in that "social capital is necessary to enable the effective management of both explicit and tacit knowledge" (Lesser 2000: 9). It works as such: the more individuals in a system trust those that deposit knowledge into the system, the more that knowledge will be circulated or disseminated. The more individuals in a system see value in knowledge, the more likely they are to contribute and disperse that knowledge. The more individuals can identify and share commonalities with members within a system, the more likely they are to pass on that knowledge. Social capital enables and bolsters the active engagement with and use of knowledge, contextualizing it for networks, and allowing a networked society to convert that capital into other forms of capital. As a key theorist on the networked economy, Robert Putnam (1993) notes that civic participation in local, communal affairs is central to social capital (1993: 37). In societies with strong social capital, civic participation has been built up over many years. The coordination of civic participation is often mostly studied in Western societies, and what that civic participation often looks like is usually based on Western norms. Yet, Haitians have placed their own cultural stamp on participation, as Figure 4.1 above clearly illustrates.

Since the founding of Haiti as an independent republic, civic participation through its networked economy has been at the foundation of building a state that the Western world was hostile to. But Haiti also problematizes the traditional thinking of the convertibility of social capital, as theorists have applied it to date. Putnam indicates that "the social capital embodied in the norms and networks of civic engagement seems to be a precondition for economic development as well as for effective government" (Lesser 2000: 11; Putnam 1993: 37). In studying networks in Europe, scholars like Putnam note that networks enabled communities to pool labor and resources, transferring knowledge to improve local economies and bolstered distressed industries after a downturn. Putman notes that "trust lubricates social life" (Lesser 2000: 11; Putnam 1993: 37). Applications outside of Western case studies indicate that Haiti does not at first glance fit the Western test case on social capital. Certainly Haiti's social capital is rooted in strong and enduring civic networks that carry trust and shared norms and is rooted in histories of civic participation, but where Haiti diverges as a case study of social capital is in how its value is ultimately converted, automatically, to other forms of capital. For, while civil society has shared ownership in Haiti of its social capital, it cannot trans-

late its vibrant social capital to other capitals because Haiti today does not "own" its economy or its governmental authority.

Since the 2010 earthquake, Haiti's economy is dependent on non-governmental agencies and multilateral agencies. Its elections have been either upheld or determined by international bodies or governments. Indeed, both US presidents Donald Trump and Joe Biden agreed that Haiti's President Moïse could delay the country's election and remain in power, in violation of its constitution, despite four years of civil society calling for free and fair elections, government accountability, and governmental change. If nothing else, this external support demonstrated to Haitians that the interests of Haiti's public were of little value to the developed world and continued to mirror the benign neglect of Haiti's wealthiest neighbors.

Thus, the case of Haiti calls us to expand our understanding of the value of social capital. Where scholars have often assumed a linear trajectory from active civic participation to effective economies and governance, Haiti prompts us to consider that Haiti's path is curvilinear, with twists and curves in theorizing how social capital gets converted to other forms of capital. It underscores even more in the Haiti case the importance of social capital because its persistence and endurance when societies are disenfranchised economically, socially, and politically is what must be amplified to truly achieve a functioning society when other institutions fail. Thus, the amplification of social capital is often a function of the public sphere. When the public sphere co-opts and coordinates with media, it intensifies the transfer of knowledge, it manages that transfer of knowledge, and it sets a course for how that knowledge can move societies out of prolonged crises and into sustainable recovery. In examining Haiti, this factor is crucial because civil society requires other forms of power to effect change in the spaces it lacks power. The media and its ability to democratize power, by elevating citizens and networks through platforms, bolster the work of social capital and allow networked societies to leverage that mediated power in pursuit of the public good.

The Contemporary Mediated Public Sphere

Social capital theorists note that technology that can support the movement of knowledge derived from social capital is both a form of management of the dissemination of knowledge and a tool for the dissemination of knowledge. The dominant technology today utilized by networks in society is our digital media landscape. This spans our traditional media platforms now operating online, our new media platforms, social media,

mobile applications, and remote technologies. Prior to our digital landscape, the media often served as a Fourth Estate, a check and balance on other forms of institutional power in a society, be it social, economic, or political, regulating and providing balance to institutional powers in maintenance of the public good (Lawson 2002).

However, media power until the digital revolution was primarily controlled in many societies. Control of the press by families or corporations often concentrated power into a small elite hand that could control the message, persuade governments, and control the masses (Hughes and Lawson 2005; Lugo 2008). Concentrated media power can also marginalize and exclude portions of society. In the United States, mainstream media excluded for centuries the plight of African Americans from their enslavement up to the present day and the systems put in place to devalue their full citizenship as Americans (Chafee 1947). In Haiti, mainstream media until the proliferation of radio broadcasting widely marginalized the masses, reporting in French, the language of elites and colonizers, to the exclusion of peasants who could only transfer information and knowledge in the language spoken by all: Kreyol (Montas-Dominique 2002).

The digital revolution disrupted media control (Jenkins and Thorburn 2003). It democratized the media and opened access to those who can create, curate, and disseminate mediated messages. It also globalized the sharing, management and contextualizing of knowledge across societies. Within the last two decades, the digital revolution has allowed for global learning to take place across continents and in remote locations. It has also allowed social networks to connect across nations, removing borders and boundaries, raising solidarity, and facilitating transnational movements (Hudson and Zimmerman 2015; Jorba and Bimber 2012; Juris 2005) without the need for agents or activists to ever get on an airplane.

Certainly, not all cost barriers have been removed because of the digital age. While citizens no longer need to purchase or own a printing press, a broadcast station, a transmitter, or a license to gain access to a media platform, they would need access to broadband, the internet, a computer, or mobile device. Depending on the scale of information gathering, creation, and dissemination, other costs accumulate in sustaining the transfer of knowledge over new media platforms. Additionally, new media platforms are often controlled and regulated by the private companies that own them, and they have executed that control many times when the free movement of content and dialogue impacts the corporate image (Youmans and York 2012). This, unfortunately, restricted the involvement of ordinary citizens and the potential contribution of grassroots communities to important and necessary conversations for disaster mitigation and recovery.

However, what the digital age has offered is the ability to place social networks online. No single movement relies on a dominant or individual member of a society to manage the knowledge and information disseminated across digital platforms. In fact, social media mirrors the offline networks. It requires trust and shared norms as a condition, and members of the network will then distribute information and knowledge, sharing the burden of doing so in advancement of the public good. It then transfers offline as those without access to broadband then disseminate knowledge online through offline apps like WhatsApp or through standard messaging systems that keep online networks connected to those offline (Earl et al. 2015; Wilson and Dunn 2011). It is a collective system, sustained by a collective effort that harnesses the ease of sharing knowledge, through the media platform. This development did not escape Haitian communities that have risen to the challenge of knowledge-sharing via digital media connectivity.

Still, it would be unwise to believe that such developments eliminate traditional forms of control. In reality, digital media connectivity exists within these forms of control. Social movements operate on platforms owned and controlled privately by multinational corporations that hold large amounts of economic influence and power. Social media platforms have the power to silence citizens through its algorithms and even silence presidents. Social media platforms are often unregulated or deliberately regulated, allowing for misinformation and disinformation to muddle the authentic flow of knowledge and to leave falsehoods unchallenged. Digital media also allow for propaganda and conspiracies to spread virally across the globe, weakening the media literacy abilities of citizens to discern truths from untruths (Benkler, Faris and Roberts 2018; Freelon and Wells 2020).

Digital media can therefore strengthen and bolster social capital, but it can also weaken trust within and across networks, while co-opting networks through disinformation. But its potential and demonstrated power to amplify the work of civil society still remains one of its unique aspects when harnessed in the right way. Its true potential is when it connects with the work of civil society offline, ensuring that digital advocacy is not simply "keyboard warriors" but results in real and tacit gains for the work of moving societies forward (Lopes 2014; Richardson 2020).

Democratizing Knowledge through the Mediated Public Sphere

When Haitians dismantled a three-decade-long dictatorship in 1986, it was the citizens who ushered in an era of democracy. However, that democratic exercise remains fragile and fledgling, and disasters are central to

the instability of Haiti's democracy (Carlin, Love, and Zechmeister, 2014; Lin 2015; Pierre-Louis 2011) in specific ways. Disasters exacerbate the state's ability to advance an already unequal society, with large gaps between the rich and the poor (Mutter 2015). Developing nations must often look to foreign direct investment (FDI), either through state-to-state investment or private FDI to develop its sectors, train its workforce, and engage in the global marketplace. For developing countries that are vulnerable to natural disasters, FDI is then coupled with post-disaster management through the infusion of humanitarian aid, the global rebuilding sector through disaster-NGOs, and often multinational or bilateral arrangements around disaster relief and mitigation (Felbermayr and Gröschl, 2014). It prioritizes post-disaster aid in the larger framework of nation-building and empowers the donors of disaster aid in setting developmental milestones, often at the exclusion of local, non-political actors (Abrahams 2014; Concannon and Lindstrom 2011; Lin 2015).

The process of how post-disaster aid works and how it is controlled, earmarked, disbursed, and accounted for is often knowledge not readily and easily accessible to citizens (Tagliacozzo and Magni 2016). Often, citizens are unable to advocate for their needs or navigate resources because they lack access to information that allows them to determine what resources are available to them and how to retrieve them. Citizens often do not see disaster aid impact their daily lives. They learn of relief that the state receives but are not adequately empowered to account for that aid distribution in their communities and in their households. Local organizations play a key role in helping individuals and households navigate barriers to knowledge in accessing post-disaster resources (Nakagawa and Shaw 2004). They are often the go-betweens in accessing post-disaster aid from the state and distributing it to communities. When post-disaster aid distribution is effective, local organizations play a strong role in educating, advocating for, and empowering communities to receive resources to improve their short-term and long-term conditions after a disaster. When local organizations are either sidelined or marginalized as middlemen in aid distribution, post-disaster resources are often squandered, diverted, misused, or corrupted (Nakagawa and Shaw 2004).

Also, local organizations operate within the public sphere but require institutional bolstering to advocate on behalf of communities. Naturally, the state is the institution that recognizes local organizations and the role they play in serving communities at the grassroots level. However, when the state is corrupted, ineffective, or illegitimate, local organizations cannot rely on the state to play its role within a post-disaster society (Tierney and Oliver-Smith 2012). In the absence or compromised position of the state, other institutions become important conveyors of knowl-

edge in post-disaster recovery (Tierney and Oliver-Smith 2012). The media assumes the role of a conveyor of knowledge within the public sphere, legitimizing sources or voices, facilitating debates, contextualizing data, seeking out truth, and holding the powerful accountable (Demiroz and Hu 2014; Sommerfeldt 2015). Local organizations and local non-state actors find redress in the media because media power bolsters their social capital, leveraging the trust, reach, and networks of community organizations in framing post-disaster discourse in ways that can be digested and activated by citizens (Sommerfeldt 2015).

Thus, the media support local organizations in their effort to filter the complexities of post-disaster aid in ways that allow citizens to engage in the public sphere about affairs that often impact and affect their daily lives but upon which they feel disenfranchised to act because knowledge is withheld, restricted, or confined to elites. Once the mass dissemination of knowledge through the media aids in citizen awareness and education, civic and grassroots organizations are able to restore power among citizens who can then rally around collective action because public consensus has reached a critical level (Brun 2018; Nakagawa and Shaw 2004). This educative role of the media in post-disaster contexts is crucial for citizen action and, in Haiti, can be seen in the ways citizens and civic groups achieve outcomes in holding other institutions of power accountable. Naturally, given the perceived slow recovery of Haiti, it would be helpful to see a more active public assume innovative and creative roles in empowering communities to action.

Haiti's Media and the Public Sphere in Post-Disaster Context

Over the decade since the 2010 earthquake, the role of Haiti's media models studies on the role of media in post-disaster contexts (Massey 1995; Perez-Lugo 2004). Before a disaster, media functions in the preparation mode, providing information necessary for citizens to make informed choices to protect themselves and their property from destruction. Certainly, disasters with shorter or no lead-time, such as earthquakes and tsunamis, restrict the capacity of the media to prepare citizens for disasters days or weeks prior. However, the media does play a "warning" role in providing ongoing citizen awareness of their environmental vulnerability and risk for disasters that can be sudden. During a disaster and in the immediate aftermath, the media functions in a social utility role. This is a linkage role providing citizens with comfort and solidarity that often allow individuals to overcome loss during a disaster and to develop resilience to face both the short- and long-term recovery ahead. After a disaster,

the media enters a "response" role, providing information to access immediate resources to help citizens with the short-term needs of the post-disaster environment.

While scholars have often studied the role of the media within a few weeks to several months beyond a disaster, scholars in particular have yet to consider how many of these roles endure in protracted and prolonged post-disaster contexts. In many cases, the role of the media evolves in its preparation, social utility, and recovery functions because the effects of a disaster beyond a year become entrenched. In examining Haiti's media after the 2010 disaster, these traditional disaster media functions evolve to both advocate and hold accountable those in power, as the years and the decade after the earthquake unfold and as the state is unable to restore levels of relative stability that would allow for sustained recovery for citizens.

In the first half of the decade from mid-2010 to 2016, traditional media in Haiti, both commercial and alternative in particular, utilized both its social utility role and its response role to empower citizens with knowledge. However, it was a response that both advocated and sought accountability, and this is a key feature of Haiti's post-disaster media function that moves forward studies that theorize on protracted disasters. The fruits of those earlier mediated efforts can be found in the second half of the decade, where mediated spaces became digital public spheres that harnessed an informed citizenry in collective action aiming to advance the constitutional rights of Haitians to call for elections, electoral change, and governmental accountability.

Mediated Social Capital through Traditional Media in Post-disaster Haiti, 2010–2016

One of the key efforts of Haitian media in the first decade following the 2010 earthquake was the collective work of Haiti's Fourth Estate. Beginning in the hours after the disaster, sister radio stations relayed information to the provinces from the capital identifying meeting points for groups outside of the capital and affected areas to locate citizens in need of meals and to coordinate rescue efforts and to put up temporary dwellings.

Establishing Institutional Credibility and Trust Post-Disaster

Information sharing initially strengthened ties among different Haitian commercial media groups who signed a public declaration to work to-

gether in support of the public good given the magnitude of the disaster. The result of that collaboration was the Code of Ethics of the Haitian Press, signed on 8 December 2011 (UNESCO Office in Port-au-Prince 2011). The document was signed by the heads of the two leading commercial media organizations in Haiti at the time: the ANMH (L'Association Nationale des Médias Haïtiens) and the AMIH (L'Association des Médias D'Haïti Indépendants). Joining commercial media as signatories of the document were the leading community and alternative media organizations in Haiti at the time: SAKS (Sosyete Animasyon Kominikasyon Sosyal), REFRAKA (Rezo Fanm Radyo Kominotè Ayisyen), and MediaAlternatif. Additional signatories of the code were the Association of Haitian Journalists, SOS Journalists Association, and the Haitian Journalists Union Photographers. The code (2011) called for Haiti's Fourth Estate to hold the highest standards that would restore trust by citizens at a time when many institutions were under-resourced, marginalized, compromised, or corrupted. The code emphasized the freedom of the press, the verification and authentication of facts, the separation of facts from opinions, the respect of human dignity, vigilance with processing data and information, the correction of errors, the avoidance of rumors, independence from external influence or controls, electoral impartiality, and upholding brotherhood (UNESCO Office in Port-au-Prince 2011). The code therefore signaled to citizens and civic society that the media, in this post-disaster context, aimed to fill a void that was a missing institutional role, vital for aiding in the effective recovery of the country.

Accountability and Dissemination of Knowledge

Three of Haiti's alternative media organizations, SAKS, REFRAKA, and Alter Presse (the news agency arm of Media Alternatif, a media education/literacy organization), joined together with students and instructors in the Department of Communication at the State University of Haiti, Université d'État d'Haïti (UEH), to launch Ayiti Kale Je or Haiti Grassroots Watch. The investigative project produced thirty-nine dossiers that spanned from the latter half of the year of the earthquake until the work was concluded in 2014. The work of the alternative media collective was republished, repurposed, broadcast, and reprinted in the leading commercial media in Haiti, bolstering and amplifying the work of alternative and community media. The word cloud generated in Figure 4.2 is a sample of the featured dossiers from the end of the four-year project that reflects several key issues and the types of information the investigative media project targeted toward the education of citizens in the post-disaster years.

The project began its work by making its objectives and initial findings clear for citizens. It began its investigative work with the aim of answering
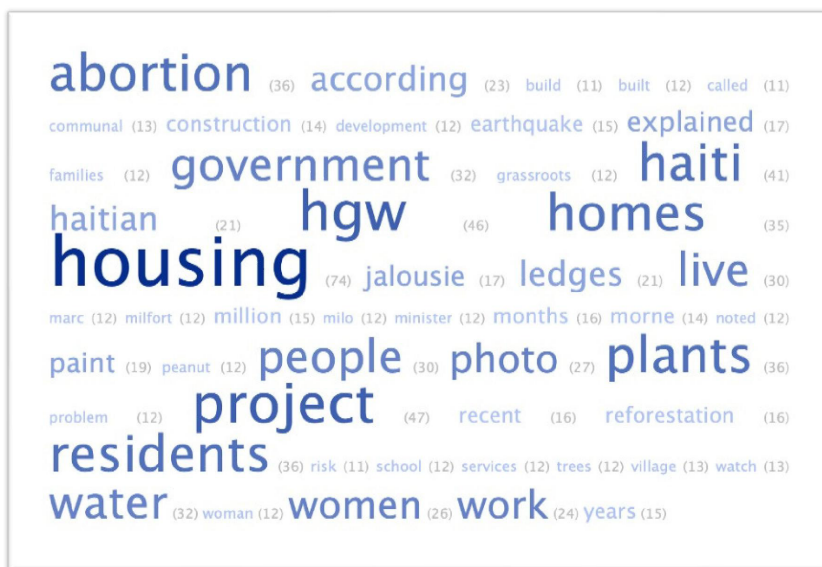
Figure 4.2. Ayiti Kale Je project. Word Cloud generated by Shearon Roberts using TagCloud application.

how Haiti will re-house 1.3 million people scattered across roughly 1,354 "squalid refugee camps." The project outlined its information seeking goal as follows:

> A dozen interviews, scores of documents, and many telephone calls later, Haiti Grassroots Watch discovered there actually does seem to be a plan. However, it is not readily accessible to the media or the Haitian public; it is so far only very loosely coordinated and, thus far, is not overseen by any Haitian agency or ministry, making accountability difficult, if not impossible. (Haiti Grassroots Watch 2010)

It then presents to audiences the following: "Who is in charge and what is the plan?" "What are the challenges?" and "Will it work." The report is disseminated in English, French, and Kreyol, and in text, audio, and visual format. The project took this simple approach to accountability journalism to seek answers to the most important post-disaster issues for citizens. Subsequent dossiers posed the same questions and provided answers for other post-disaster factors beyond homelessness covering cash allocations, elections, the cholera outbreak, restoring agriculture, unemployment, the reopening of business, stimulating exports, providing education access, deforestation, mining and the gold rush, hunger, and abortion.

Equally important to the topics, the project aimed to provide access to knowledge and information on who the project empowered to speak.

Ordinary citizens were elevated in every dossier to speak about their lived experiences, hardships, and fears in the years after the disaster. Additionally, Haitian organizations were given the platform to articulate the work they were doing and the ways they were marginalized. On the first anniversary of the disaster, Alterpresse reported that even international aid organizations had conceded that Haitians were "finding their own solutions" (Alterpresse 2011). International organizations had failed in their attempts to re-house over 800,000 displaced citizens, and it was Haitians themselves who were finding better solutions so they would not have to stay indefinitely in the squalid tent camps that had been set up by aid organizations. This was a remarkable source of pride for well-wishers of Haitian recovery. Haitians had worked to relocate to provinces outside of the capital, sourced money to repair homes to quasi-functional living status, combined living spaces with relatives and friends and/or simply moved their tents to safer, more communally co-ordinated neighborhood locations around the capital. The anniversary report also helped citizens contextualize why international aid does not always reach the source.

Additionally, the report noted that the international aid approach toward housing was ill-conceived because it was designed to help home-owners and failed to account for the fact that the majority of the displaced were renters. The report questioned international organizations that were leading the re-housing effort:

> The NGOs have $100 million for "transitional shelters" . . . but the beneficiaries are without shelter. To whom should the NGOs be accountable, the donors or the would-be beneficiaries? What is or should be the role of the state, which seems more intent on focusing on its plan for 4,000 units in the Fort National neighborhood?
>
> And, after a "transitional" life in a "transitional" camp, will it be possible for the former renters—somewhere between 500,000 and 600,000 people—to save up one year's rent so they can move into something permanent? (Alterpresse 2011).

The project concluded its first anniversary analysis with the following critique that "Haiti Grassroots Watch considers the term 'non-governmental organization' or 'NGO' a bit of a misnomer because many 'NGOs' receive a great deal, and sometimes all, of their funding from governments" (Alterpresse 2011). In the case of this media project, this was truly the work of community stake-holders without considerable reliance on national or external organizational assistance.

The Haiti Grassroots Watch *Ayiti Kale Je* project distinguished international aid organizations as holding solutions that are not rooted in an understanding of social contexts prior to and during the disaster. It explained how Haitians are finding their own solutions to post-disaster challenges

that the state is not willing or does not have the capacity to solve or that the international aid community fails to understand how to solve effectively. The project provided a space for citizens and civic networks to convey both their marginalization as well as their concerns that international aid solutions in post-disaster Haiti were neither native to the country nor sustainable, and in fact further formed dependencies that would be difficult to overcome once FDI was removed. This is precisely an observation that supports knowledge economies as a better model for development and recovery within the Black diaspora than other developmental models proposed by the West.

In Dossier 6, for instance, the Haiti Grassroots Watch (HGW) project examined the USAID program to provide Monsanto seeds to Haitian farmers, citing a concern about food insecurity and hunger post-disaster. The HGW project investigated the \$20 million UN-led food program by interviewing farming groups. In its findings, the HGW team noted that some peasant farmer groups "receiving Monsanto and other hybrid maize and other cereal seeds have little understanding of the implications of getting 'hooked' on hybrid seeds." Other farmer groups did not know of the "health and environmental risks involved with the fungicide- and herbicide-coated hybrids" and "until Haiti Grassroots Watch intervened[,] they were planning to grind up the toxic seed to use as chicken feed" (Haiti Grassroots Watch 2011). The report quoted one farmer who noted that the seed had "little yield": "What I would like to tell the NGOs is that, just because we are the poorest country doesn't mean they should give us whatever, whenever," disgruntled Bainet farmer Jean Robert Cadichon told Haiti Grassroots Watch" (Haiti Grassroots Watch 2011).

The seeding report also helped citizens understand the lack of power and capacity the state held in intervening. The report noted that there were only two staffers that worked for the Ministry of Agriculture's National Seed Service. The report contextualized the challenges of the state by quoting the director of Haiti's National Seed Service who stated that since Haiti experienced severe disasters due to hurricanes the decade prior, the international NGOs and the FAO (the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization) determined that they would exclusively fund and administer Haiti's seeding program dating back to 2008. Haiti's then director of the National Seed Service also pointed out the program could not be sustainable because the subsidies would only last for four years. The director, Emmanuel Prophete, told the HGW reporters that: "you have to ask yourself about the sustainability because if the policy changes one day, where will peasants get seeds? . . . We'll get to the point where, one day, we have a lot of seeds, and then suddenly, when all the NGOs are gone, we won't have any" (Haiti Grassroots Watch 2011).

For four years, the HGW project allowed citizens to have a deeper understanding of why billions of aid dollars did not reach or adequately serve them. The dossiers allowed Haitians to understand how post-disaster aid worked, who funded it, what the conditions for funding were, what was outlined and promised in donor plans, and whether international donor organizations met those objectives. The dossiers then assessed the work of international aid workers through bolstering citizens and civic groups on the ground to then evaluated whether the programs were working or not and how they could better suit the Haitian context. The HGW reports also helped Haitians to understand the constraints and limitations of their own government in executing and asserting control over disaster aid and provided space for government workers, where possible, to weigh in on the weaknesses of the state to intervene.

While the work of the dossiers was helped by independent, alternative media, the reports became the main news agenda items for mainstream commercial media. Popular radio talk programs in Haiti centered the reports and their findings as starting points for shows, interviews with elected officials, and Haitian experts who provided alternatives to the current approach to post-disaster recovery and development. Mainstream media served as a secondary site for alternative media in a rare show of solidarity lending its large, mass audiences to further distribute and contextualize the dossier's reports in the first half of the decade. It created a public sphere that was critical of the state of post-disaster aid delivery and laid the groundwork for the second half of the decade, which saw Haitian civic organizations pressure its government for accountability reports on the billions in international aid. The coordinating of Haitian society in civic protests was amplified through digital media but it was traditional and alternative/community media that served as a crucial, vital institution in the early post-disaster years, providing access to information and knowledge to aid citizens in seeking accountability and change in the years that would follow.

Mediated Social Capital through Digital Media in Post-Disaster Haiti, 2017–2021

The two hashtags #PetrocaribeChallenge and #Peyi-lòk, the first in 2018 and the second in 2019, defined the second half of the decade following the 2010 earthquake by demonstrating the protracted state of the failure of post-disaster recovery in Haiti. It also came after Hurricane Matthew in 2016 and other storms that reminded Haitians of their vulnerability and renewed the frustrations of how post-disaster aid does not mitigate the

hardships disaster victims increasingly face. The hashtag #Petrocaribe-Challenge sought to use digital media to advance awareness from a simple question: Kot Kòb Petwo Karibe a? (Where is the PetroCaribe money?) The hashtag #Peyi-lòk took action on the ground. One digital movement aimed to raise awareness, the other pressured for accountability.

#PetrocaribeChallenge: Seeking Awareness

"Knowledge is power" is a well-used saying that applies to the #Petroca-ribeChallenge. The movement that started digitally and then resulted in massive protests over four months, coincided with a government report on what happened to roughly $2 billion from the Venezuelan initiative in place between 2008 and 2016. Haitians had received access to information through the "Rapport de la Commission Sénatoriale Spéciale d'Enquête sur le fonds Petro Caribe Couvrant les Périodes Annuelles Allant de Septembre 2008 A September 2016" (Report of the Special Senatorial Inquiry Commission on the PetroCaribe funds for the annual periods spanning September 2008 to September 2016) (2017).

The report noted that three governments failed to properly manage the funds, awarded contracts to companies that did not adhere to ethical bidding processes, and misrepresented accounting of the exchange rates and the funds, some of which may have been stolen and were still unaccounted for. Although the report was released in 2017, Haitians soon began to experience the crunch of inflation and rising fuel prices in 2018 that brought the issue into full focus as it added even more hardships for citizens. Haitians took to the streets calling for President Jovenel Moïse and implicated government officials to be prosecuted (Nugent 2019). The delay in when the report was released and when Haitians began protesting the following year allows for a better understanding of how digital media played a role in globalizing Haitian social networks, specifically in knowledge awareness, more so than knowledge acquisition. Certainly, knowledge acquisition had taken place the year prior with the release of the Senate report, a result of the work of civic organizations and media in the years before aiming to seek answers not only about PetroCaribe dollars but the roughly $14 billion in aid from the international community since the earthquake. While Venezuela's FDI was state-to-state and the UN's Haiti Reconstruction Fund was multilateral, Haitians and Haitian organizations had been shut out and marginalized from the effective administration of aid from both approaches.

Haitian society had already been asking questions about international aid prior to the protests of 2018 and the use of the hashtag, which was first is-

sued by Haitian-Canadian activist Gilbert Mirambeau, Jr. However, questions about Petro Caribe dollars and Haiti Reconstruction dollars existed, long before the hashtag trended, among local organizations, citizens, and traditional media. Therefore, the #PetroCaribeChallenge movement was not based in knowledge access and acquisition. That existed prior to the 2018 protests, marked specifically by the 2017 Senate special report. The #PetroCaribeChallenge was aimed at building external solidarity for Haitians.

Social capital is transformative when it is bolstered and allied with other powerful institutions. Global media was co-opted to bring international pressure and attention to the Haitian state for squandering funds it could control, compared to the UN-administered Haiti Reconstruction Fund, which often flowed through US aid programs and NGOs. PetroCaribe dollars, on the other hand, were managed directly through the Haitian state, and as such, Haitians could hold their government accountable for the mismanagement of this state-to-state FDI. Since Haitians are acutely aware of the power that foreign states play in bolstering Haitian governments, the protests were aimed at discrediting the current Haitian government among global citizens, making it unpopular for citizens to support their government's position to accept the status quo of leadership in Haiti.

An analysis of the first 200 random Twitter results for the #petroCaribeChallenge, filtered from 1 January 2018 to 1 January 2019, indicated that the hashtag was primarily used by accounts that posted with English text. When using the accompanying hashtag #KotkobPetwoKaribeA, the first 200 tweets primarily used French text, followed by English text, with Haitian Kreyol as a distant third.

Marc-Henry Pierre and Mehmet Güzel's 2021 study of the #PetroCaribeChallenge as political communication also supports this finding. The researchers examined a sample of 163 purposely sampled tweets using the hashtag #KotKobPetwoKaribeA and found that the majority of the posts between December 2019 and January 2020 were in French, and the majority were merely retweets, carrying little information or details about the movement and the information it aimed to provide or featured only a small number of comments engaging in a digital dialogue around the hashtag. The most important discourse of the hashtag was to accuse the Haitian government of corruption, the researchers found. In applying media political economy and political communication theory, Pierre and Güzel argue that "the critical analysis of the Twitter-based Petro Caribe Challenge revealed a movement that excluded the majority of the Haitian population as most of the selected tweets are written in French . . . . Despite the political content of the tweets, the lack of comments and reactions to the tweets hinders communication between protesters" (Pierre and Güzel 2021).

While Pierre and Güzel see little evidence of engagement from Haitians in the country itself with the digital aspects of the movement, local media coverage showed that the hashtag was prevalently showcased in demonstrations and protests. Certainly, Haitians may not have widely utilized social media platforms to post the hashtag, but the hashtag's relevance and symbolism in the movement was prevalent offline as well. This is because digital movements do not require every citizen to participate but representative actors, who then translate digital activism through offline social networks. This does not delegitimize the digital nature of movements; it only speaks to its limitations when large mass publics are unable, due to digital access constraints, to fully engage a movement online.

More important to the discussion of whether the #PetroCaribeChallenge was widely used in Kreyol online is the concern for who its intended audience was. Haitians already had knowledge of the misappropriation of PetroCaribe dollars before 2018 and certainly prior to the 2017 Senate report, which already confirmed what Haitians perceived was mismanagement of the Venezuelan fund. The hashtag was not a message among Haitians; it was a message from Haitians to the outside world, signaling that Haitians intended to seek a change in governance and wanted to amplify this messaging given the foreign influence exerted in Haitian elections, particularly since the earthquake. Haitians themselves did not need to engage in this digital messaging. They only required the Haitian diaspora, its "10th department," and transnational allies to amplify the messaging. However, on the ground, protests prepared the country for what was to come, which was the collective shutting down of the country in 2019 in order to pressure the government to step down and hold elections. Therefore the #PetroCaribeChallenge movement did not seek to acquire knowledge, it aimed to share awareness over digital platforms and gain solidarity for collective action, which was regime change in the country.

#Peyi-lòk: Seeking Change

While the #PetroCaribeChallenge was largely marked by digital media use in French and English, #Peyi-lòk (Country shutdown) was declared in Haitian Kreyol and used as such in 2019. Haitians forced the closing of schools, government offices, transportation, and much more, bringing the country's economy to a grinding halt for ten days in February 2019. The lockdowns would continue throughout 2019 as Haitians protested energy shortages as a result of the end of the discounted fuel from Venezuela given that country's own economic challenges. Peyi-lòk intensified the civil disobedience actions of the #PetroCaribeChallenge in defiance

of a government that refused to step down, hold itself accountable, and retaliated against protesters resulting in the death of dozens of citizens who participated in the movements. The outcomes of Peyi-lòk, compared to #PetroCaribeChallenge, were specifically geared to internal outcomes. It prompted the senators and representatives of the government opposition to call for the president to step down for the "stabilité et la protection des vies et des biens" (for the stability and protection of lives and well-being) (Pierre 2019). The parliament also demanded a change in power that followed the constitution and put in place a transition.

Chambers of Commerce then supported the call by citizens for change and called for a *dialogue national* (national dialogue) among all diverse sectors, which would be a conversation among Haitian sectors and built on trust and transparency. The religious community, led by the Catholic church, also spoke for the need for political change and reform, citing the growing misery of citizens. Peyi-lòk demonstrated the importance of a collaborative exercise, maintaining that in using digital and traditional media, other powerful institutions in Haiti would come on board as a check and balance on political institutions. The movement saw economic elites, the religious community, and the opposition join forces with the media and civic organizations to demand change for the sake of the country.

Social networks in Haiti were truly empowered when multiple institutions reached critical consensus about the state of affairs in the country and what was needed to change the status quo. It first started with educating the public sphere at the beginning of Haiti's recovery after the disaster, and the role of the media was central in the acquisition, contextualizing, and dissemination of knowledge that allowed civic society to sustain a decade-long effort to bring about social and political change. This effort continued even after the assassination of President Moïse in 2021 and the continued inability of the interim state to hold free and fair elections. However, Haitian citizens are fully aware of the power of their social capital and continue to leverage it as multiple sectors across the country continued convening in 2022 to keep the pressure on the state to fully follow its constitutional duty to hold elections and to begin the difficult work of building a more equitable and sustainable Haiti for all its citizens.

Conclusion: Non-Western Knowledge Economies

For a country that is often labeled as impoverished, Haiti is rich in social capital. What this chapter outlined is that when social capital is empowered through knowledge access, knowledge acquisition, and knowledge dissemination, citizens are equipped to collectively bargain and lobby

their state in advancement of both the macro and micro well-being of the nation. Social capital cannot operate in isolation either. It needs institutional validation and recognition in pursuit of national transformation. When the state or other powerful forces marginalizes civic groups, other powerful social institutions are needed to ensure that social networks can build national consensus, coordinate national action, and sustain the kinds of pressure that would result in change, particularly for economies that have suffered under decades of systemic strain, as is the case in Haiti. In other words, social capital requires empowerment in order to achieve other forms of capital gains.

The media remains a social institution, that when societies require it, can work to aid the public sphere in building consensus. The information gathering and disseminating role of the media makes it powerful as an agent in building knowledge acquisition in societies often shut out from decision-making and disenfranchised by a fledgling democratic state. While the media may not often work in the best interests of citizens at all times, prolonged and protracted disasters force media systems to aspire to a greater public good, because its very nature as a social institution rests on its value to be of service and need to citizens as both a source and a platform.

This is even more relevant in our digital media landscape where citizens can often bypass traditional media systems and access information directly and use media networks to disseminate information and contextualize it without the filter or use of traditional media. And while new media platforms can often usurp the ability of traditional media to set the agenda and to frame discourse, disasters prove that traditional media will still have a role to play. This is because, often, the platforms that are still able to operate in a disaster are often analog and offline, like terrestrial radio or in some cases standard messaging systems. Not every citizen is able to engage digital platforms equally, even as broadband penetration grows globally or in developing nations where disposable income does not allow for vast use of the internet or mobile applications. Citizens will still require traditional media, which has a far wider penetration, to convey and relay digital conversations in a more widely accessed public sphere. What digital discourse offers, particularly in the Haiti case, is a global awareness of why *èd pa mache* (aid does not work), sensitizing citizens abroad to understand how the actions of foreign governments and international organizations further aggravate the ability of a country to self-determine and seek its own sustainable path without perpetuating forms of economic dependency that have kept Haiti impoverished in the modern era.

More importantly, institutions are able to hold other institutions accountable. Media discourse can educate and activate citizens who then

hold officials accountable as they take to the streets in protest, or when they vote for electoral change. It introduces into the public sphere ways of knowing and builds understanding around a path forward that is rooted in native ways of knowing that allow citizens to navigate the opportunities and risks of the environments they inhabit. Without institutional power, the social capital of a citizenry remains a latent force. It becomes transformative when it can leverage the networks within it to advocate for systemic change and that often first starts with an educated, aware, and empowered citizenry.

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