

Conceptual Framework

Knowledge Capital in the African Diaspora

PAMELA WALDRON-MOORE

Political and economic development and its likely sustainability within the African diaspora has been critiqued by boundless scholars and activists since the dawn of independence in the 1960s. Reverberating throughout the 1960s was the activism of young intellectuals charging the imperialist system with sole responsibility for the economic retardation of Africa (and its diaspora) via its depletion of African wealth in order to subsidize European advancement (Rodney 1972, 1981). When European exploitation was joined and/or replaced by US capitalists, further underdevelopment of Africa and its diaspora was undertaken. Over the course of political independence granted to colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, and areas of the Americas, the spoils from Africa and its diaspora allowed the more advanced North to seek newer pastures while the exploited South frantically tried to recover lost capital and catch up with the North. Liberal and neoliberal theories with prescriptions for developing nations were found wanting, amplifying the chasm in development rather than providing sustainable solutions for reversing limitations to growth for victims of underdevelopment.

If this were a discussion about history, we would recount numerous tales of how some regions/peoples declined political independence in search of survival within protectorates and similar affiliations. Today, a number of post-colonial societies are driven to near mendicancy, as a result of the exploitation of their raw materials, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the need to purchase manufactured products from the industrialized core in order to ensure the survival of their citizens. But, although much of this discussion is centered on the struggles of the past, it does not reside fully in the past. This chapter presents an attempt to review the intellectual capital still resident in Africa and its diaspora and to

identify pathways for reproducing this capital into development options that offer room for growth and sustainability. So where does the diaspora turn to escape the stranglehold of subordination imposed by imperialists over centuries? Is there any shred of African productive capital remaining, ripe for production and rebuilding? Has everything been taken from Africa and its diaspora, including cultural values, or can remnants of its ancient civilization still be identified and catalyzed into growth options? History teaches us and Black feminists affirm that to reclaim knowledge of the past and not repeat errors of the past, we must find uniquely creative tools to dismantle the master's house and its hold on the present. This study looks to knowledge past to determine how intellectual capital might be reclaimed, produced, and shared among African-descended peoples so that they might etch out new pathways to development.

The problem is that for too long regions in the diaspora have doubted their ability and self-confidence to redeem their capacity to thrive. Elsewhere, failure to prosper has been widely blamed on the diaspora's lack of resourcefulness or on the failed leadership of their governments. This chapter will show that with innovative calibration of knowledge and its production, the diaspora can devise a trajectory for sustainable development that disrupts neoliberal ideas.

In the post-colonial era, the diaspora has encountered its share of disaster: disaster from climate; disaster from political action; disaster from economic loss, and more. In this chapter, we will address the complications for sovereignty stemming from disaster and conceptualize pathways to recovery. We will present a theoretical framework of knowledge economies in post-disaster societies that is laid out through a trans-diasporic analysis of crises in select states and localities that are part of the Black diaspora as an alternative solution to post-disaster crises. The chapter will interrogate meaningful ways to progress in a field where the high-tech-based solutions of the Global North have continuously eluded the Global South, and even some Black localities in the Global North, when it comes to post-disaster sustainability. Taking a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary look at the production of sustainable knowledge economies growing from the ground up, including scholarship in a cross section of fields, this study aims to recenter and reframe how we approach, design, and execute sustainable development in post-disaster societies. The concept elevates knowledge found from within post-disaster societies as providing a blueprint for both a viable and equitable recovery in vulnerable spaces that have experienced both natural and manmade crises. Lastly, this chapter strives to advocate for racial justice through sustainable development as societies across the Black diaspora continue to disproportionately recover from crises.

Theoretical Overview

Omitted from a general discourse on development in US educational institutions has been the role individuals/the masses can and do play in policy-making for sustainable development. The integration of national economies via the process of globalization has advanced the notion that growth can only be achieved and sustained through the application of high-tech and manufacturing expertise. Global North countries have exemplified the adequacy of this theory via extraction of natural resources from their own as well as Global South territories, only to convert these resources with technology into manufactured goods. Theories of economic liberalism and its reported achievements over the past seventy years have exacerbated the chasms in spatial development, contributing to a lag in wealth between the Global North and the Global South (Deaton 2016; Milanovic 2016; Temin 2017). Through this prism of global development, however, advancement has been seen as singularly economic. The reality is that national development is not unidimensional. Thus, emerging nations in the Black diaspora need to identify other integral aspects of growth, as may be evident in intersections of social, cultural, political, and economic factors.

My research argues that when these intersections are taken into consideration, there is a strong motivation to push beyond prescribed Western strategies for tech-based economic development. Smaller societies, especially those in the African diaspora, would do well to consider place-based development options on a scale relevant to their own cultural spheres of reference. Rejecting sole reliance on the tech-based prescriptions of the already advanced economies in favor of new areas of production as a plausible supplement to solutions for development, can catalyze a return to cultural wisdoms and development of innovative ideas rooted in untapped sources of indigenous capital. A framework for such growth is to embrace intellectual capital and knowledge production and, by generating an innovative approach to producing said capital into strategies that meet the need for social, cultural, political, and economic decision-making, a sustainable developmental structure can emerge. The framework, perceived to be meaningful here, introduces pathways to development that begin with homegrown community ideas that, when empowered and supported through advocacy of the community's entrepreneurial value, will lead to knowledge production that may be improved over time by the feedback that comes from continuous generation and tweaking of ideas, culminating in a system of knowledge management that has the potential to sustain development for future generations (see Figure 2.1).

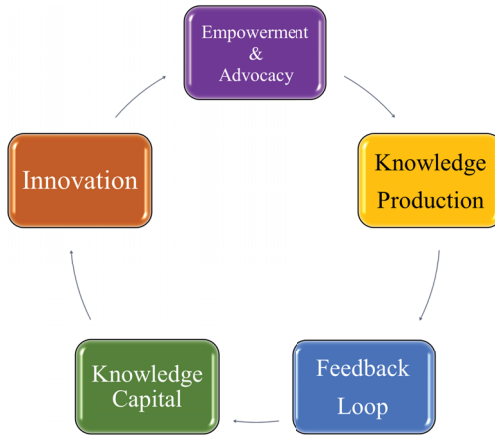


Figure 2.1. Essential Pathways to Knowledge Economies, Conceptual Framework. © Pamela Waldron-Moore 2023.

Theoretical Scope

Identifying the focus of interest for this study as grounded in the literature of disaster, development, regional location, and historical versus contemporary juxtaposition of time and space, it seems appropriate to narrow the discourse to post-disaster recovery in light of the challenges of climate change. Greater is the need to scrutinize development pathways after the ravages of disaster than to recount all the problems of development applicable to political and economic independence and options for self-determination in the Black diaspora. Thus, the theories discussed here will relate to democratic governance, disaster management, risk perception, and equity as they relate to knowledge capital and its production. The literature will also highlight the challenge to development of the gender gap, economic insecurity, and environmental injustice in the regions under review. In addition, steps needed for mitigating the risk to development will include a focus on community empowerment, innovative knowledge sharing and advocacy of ideas, as well as human resilience. These will illustrate the engines of adaptation that can only lead, with community action, to sustainable levels of development in post-disaster communities.

Disaster research has been studied from a variety of angles, often taking a historical approach or contemporaneous reporting as new crises occur. Seldom is there targeted examination of the implications of disaster for developing societies. In the wake of disaster, created by natural hazards or political events, there is need to scrutinize the social, political, economic, and cultural structures that have been impacted, inhibit development, and stagnate the advancement of self-determination in vulnerable societies.

Thus, this study interrogates the commitment in disaster-prone territories in the African diaspora to determining supplemental strategies that may be embraced to effect policy changes that might contribute to sustainable communities. Three societies, similar yet different, that fall into this line of investigation and are explored in this study are Louisiana, Haiti, and Rwanda. Louisiana and Haiti have both experienced physical and political disasters that have hindered, in critical ways, progress toward sustainable development. Rwanda has experienced political/cultural disaster but is moving steadily toward recovery by way of harnessing knowledge practices that stem from anthropological considerations, with the promise of achieving sustainable development in the long-term.

Should there be continued reliance in the Black diaspora on non-governmental organizations, whose expertise lies outside of the vulnerable community and whose interest is primarily in monetizing change rather than developing the community sustainably? Over the sixteen years since Hurricane Katrina, eleven years since the earthquake in Haiti, and twenty-seven years since the genocide of Rwanda, there is clear evidence that without the efforts of collaborative communities, reliance on external forces constitutes a zero-sum game in which sustainable development in the vulnerable communities is absent. And, at the time of writing (August 2021), yet another earthquake has struck Haiti, following sharply on political instability (March 2021) that has left Haiti a precarious political and environmental catastrophe. As Andre Paultre and Sarah Marsh (2021) report, Haitian publics are in despair over what they see as the disintegration of democracy in their disaster-ridden state, as well as their powerlessness to contribute to the kind of change needed to move the needle of development forward at home. Similarly in Louisiana, another devastating Category 4 hurricane (29 August 2021) has overtopped levees in areas only marginally affected by Hurricane Katrina (29 August 2005), no doubt the impact of climate change and consequences of insufficient progress on climate development over the sixteen years between Hurricanes Ida and Katrina. How much more must they do to secure the kind of developmental outcomes necessary for their survival is a question that they must both be asking without an inkling of where clear answers will arise.

As the variation in the above selected disaster locations suggest, there are common lessons of the past to be addressed prior to a search for solutions for the future. Equity is at the heart of this study. Over the last two decades, many emerging economies have witnessed a movement of change from authoritarian to democratic rule. Yet, the world has not equally experienced the performance of democratic theory as espoused by the most developed nations of the world. Thus, when democratic governance is attempted in developing nations and fails to achieve the pre-conditions of modernization that the literature has indicated necessary

if development is to be achieved, diasporic peoples question the value of the preconditions and blame leadership in the Black diaspora for following the North's lead without exposing the inadequacies of modernization theories so many scholars seem to hold dear (e.g., Bernstein 2007; Jaquette 2018, 1982; Lewellen 2006). Along with the idea of democracy as the best path of governance for the diaspora, related gauges for when and how governments might aid the process of economic development in newly democratic societies, are found in applications of Keynesian interventions (see Eichner and Kregel 1975) to mitigate the stressors underpinning governmental management in times of economic collapse. Keynes advocated for increased government intervention via the lowering of taxes on individuals in order to stimulate demand and free societies from economic insecurity and global depression. While his demand-side economic theory was held in high regard in areas of the North, US presidents, including Barack Obama, found Keynesianism difficult to implement in the face of Federal Reserve policies (see Justice 2021).

Thus, if developed countries can find fault with economic efforts at modernization, one might well imagine how disingenuous it must seem to rational observers when the North blames governance in emerging societies for failure to improve development. As Karin Roseblatt (2014) discusses in his related study, Latin American anthropologists have openly rejected modernization theories focused on economic, cultural, and psychological factors while supporting the view that dependency theories, linked with national and global models for economic change, may be a better course of action for development. Roseblatt further found that many of the scholars/intellectuals of the twentieth century, who rejected US economic strategies that support a capitalist world system, strongly believed that science and technology offered better options for generating universal knowledge than parroting strategies of the North. Such knowledge, when culturally applied has the potential to dissuade developing societies from single-minded reliance on core industrialized societies and push them toward creating knowledge economies that can advance their economic sustainability. Africa and its diaspora can benefit from such insights. As some scholars have determined (see Tchamyu 2017), knowledge economies have the potential to impact African businesses positively. Yet, there is little available on the employment or success of such efforts in the diaspora. Instead, African and other diasporic businesses have continued to collaborate with and emulate practices in industrialized societies rather than engage innovative application of knowledge to transform their economies.

We therefore challenge the assertion that following prescriptions for development (such as preconditions for modernization) by the North for

meaningful pathways to sustainable development in emerging democracies will yield the kind of sustainability that the diaspora requires. Thus, we offer, as a plausible alternative, the application of knowledge production to solutions of recovery and resilience in beleaguered communities. In the wake of physical, cultural, and sociopolitical disasters across and within the Black diaspora, scholars have observed the struggle of Rwanda, in pursuit of recovery and sustainability following the genocide there in 1994; Haiti, seeking recovery from the trauma of the 2010 (and 2021) earthquake that ravaged its territorial landscape, and subsequent failed political attempts to lead the country out of the economic morass it finds itself in; and, Louisiana, flailing in its desperate search to regain infrastructural control following the ravages of Hurricane Katrina (2005) and visible in the aftermath of Hurricane Ida (2021), while still envisioning potential strategies for warding off its susceptibility to disaster, exacerbated by the incidence of climate change.

These three societies should recognize that depending on the goodwill of sympathetic benefactors to provide solutions to their developmental issues provides no glimmer of hope within the anarchical world they live. Although theories of justice, liberalism, neo-liberalism, realism, and neo-realism have been generous in their promises of solutions and the achievements of globalization have offered the specter of hope for recovery by way of self-help and participation in the global marketplace of ideas, development is still not yet assured in the Black diaspora.

So, what does development mean for the diaspora? It is time for them to review and reinterpret what it means to recover and find new pathways toward development. Through an examination of growth in these three societies and engaging a framework for development, we offer suggestions for how indigenous, cultural knowledge may be produced and yield development that does not emanate from efforts to catch up with the rest of the world that has already far-outpaced vulnerable societies with technological expertise. This chapter hopes to highlight growth in challenged, disaster-prone communities and encourage reliance on cultural wisdoms that resonate better with traditional logic and practice and empower communities to create their own blueprints for success. In other words, if each society were to examine its cultural roots, it is more likely to find embedded therein potential solutions for recovery. The key lies in the states' knowledge resources and the innovative ways in which said knowledge may be produced and applied, sustainably. As interdisciplinary scholars review the impact of disaster on development and explore innovative avenues for redesigning a trajectory of growth for the sustainability of communities within the Black diaspora, it is likely that post-disaster societies may find the will and be empowered to accept the challenge of devel-

opment that is imperative at this time. What is needed for the diaspora to move forward in the aftermath of disaster and the challenges that exacerbate underdevelopment is education and research, access to information and technology, gender inclusion and equity, food and economic security, and environmental and climate justice that engender collaboration at the local, national and global levels.

Efficacy of Democracy for Equitable Development

In the Black diaspora, over the last sixty years of independence, post-colonial societies, particularly in the Anglophone and Francophone regions, have engaged fully the prescription of democracy and the dividends it offers for development. Political theory is replete with a recognition of the rights of individuals, wherever they may be located. Following from John Locke's treatise on the law of nature (1690) and the more historically recent Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR 1948), not only has the world embraced the notion that democracy, as a political system, entitles humans to freedom and dignity as equals but also that all people without distinction of race, sex, language, religion, national or social origin, birth or other status are entitled to the right to life, liberty, and security. Yet the world, particularly the African diaspora, has known slavery, servitude, and exploitation by the very systems that uphold the United Nations Charter and the UDHR. And though the last three decades have witnessed a movement of change from authoritarian to democratic rule, the world has not equally experienced the performance of democratic theory as espoused by the most developed nations of the world.

Eminent political theorist Robert Dahl (1989) has identified what he considers to be the most significant aspect of democracy central to a critique of democracy. He asserts that a continuing responsiveness of a government to the preferences of its people relies on the ability of government to discern these preferences as well as act upon them so that the contract between citizens and governments can be maintained. Only then can true democracy be attained and what political philosophers, such as Aristotle, called the "good life" be achieved. Thus presented, democracy and democratic values have been the catalyst for a world reformation in which most of the world's nations, under the label of democracy, have sought to experience the "good life" Aristotle envisioned.

Modern political thought has, however, invested more study in pursuit of the "good life" than Aristotle perhaps even imagined. In addition to embracing liberal democratic theory as a prime component of democracy, political scholars visualized a connection between democracy and prosperity and specifically scrutinized the relationship between democracy

and economic development. This became a preoccupation of political theorists arguing about the direction of the relationship between economic development and democracy (see Ansell and Samuels 2014; Collier 1999; Huntington 1993; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Rueschemeyer, Huber, and Stephens 1992; Sanborn and Thyne 2014; Therborn 1979; Treisman 2020), with some arguing that where there is democracy, economic development follows, and others claiming that economic development precedes the struggle for rights and liberties. Either way, it is this preoccupation that led political scholars such as John Gerring (2010) to question why democratic governance in advanced industrialized societies work so well when the same is not seen in developing societies where growth is uneven and political instability ever-present. If liberalism is a political and moral philosophy espousing liberty, equality before the law, and support for individual rights, and neo-liberals hold perceptions respectful of free markets, free trade, gender equality, racial equality, internationalism, and many other freedoms, why does it not extend justice and fairness to all humans, be they in the Global North or South where democracy and economic development are ardently pursued? Why does attainment of the good life seem within the reach of some while global exploitation of less developed countries, worldwide gender inequality, environmental degradation and, most noticeably, wide gaps in economic security persist? In other words, why does Haiti, which attained independence in 1804, fail to model democratization as an off-shoot of economic development or vice versa? Also, what aspect of the debate applies to Rwanda and, to a lesser extent, Louisiana? The answer must surely be related to inequity in all its phases (Gilens 2005).

A few scholars have sought to answer the question by suggesting that attainment of the good life requires citizen competence, perhaps something resembling “the ideal democratic citizen” (Gilens 2016) whose knowledge of the issues and the ability to form interesting and logical questions may play a role in democracy by assessing how well or if their well-being has improved or declined under democratic governance. This introduces the perception that the gap in economic development may be rooted in the intellectual capital of citizens. The politically cognizant and interested citizen would supposedly be more likely to prosper if the right questions and issue preferences were shared with a political leadership responsive to the needs of the community. This is not a lesson yet learned in any of the diasporic communities under review.

As research on the political efficacy of individuals illustrates (see Craig and Maggionto 1981; Finifter 1970; Gamson 1968; Muller 1977; Paige 1971) low trust and high efficacy in Western societies combine to make the case for citizen activism in the decision-making process of governance moot.

While some insist that citizens who trust governments to act on their behalf and are willing to state their demands confidently are likely to perceive the responsiveness from government officials that demands continued participation in the political system, there are many more who believe that governments do not care what “people like them believe” and therefore dissociate themselves from the needs of society or engage in unconventional behaviors aimed at disrupting allegiant actions. This raises the question for both developed and developing nations about how to ensure government responsiveness and therefore sustain democracy. In developing nations where discontent and loss of trust in legitimate government may give way to non-allegiant behavior, it is often the military that engages in unconventional action, such as military coups and other forms of take-over. Haiti is among countries with a large Black diaspora that has experienced such activism to the detriment of growth and development. Crippled dissent or responsiveness does not encourage innovative creativity for a sustainable future. And, in situations where disaster mitigation is necessary, a lack of communication and consensus essentially just kicks the can down the road until the catastrophe is unmanageable.

Introducing theories of knowledge and trust into considerations of democratic governance and connection with economic development is, thus, a useful way to assess the success of advanced democracies and failures of still-emerging nations. Modernization theorists (e.g., Huntington 1984, 1991) who were once eager to embrace the fact that education was the key to development, hopeful that the Asian model of following the cues and in the footsteps of the industrialized West, would have the same effect on other parts of the world were soon challenged by dissenting scholars (e.g., Przeworski and Limongi 1993) whose growing disenchantment with modernization theory as a model for economic growth urged reconsideration of the tenets of democracy as an indicator of economic growth. Many came to the realization that development, via education and experience, perhaps precedes modernization.

As scholars sought connections, scholarly or otherwise, between economic development and democratic governance and watched former Eastern European countries claim democracy, join the West, and begin to experience modest increases in economic development, authoritarian shifts away from liberal theories of governance also became evident. The question for political scholars, aware of the backsliding into command economies in East and Central Europe, is whether the connection between political democracy and economic prosperity is not at all causal but, in fact, spurious (see Heo and Tan 2001). This leads to a contention that the developing world may be better served by interrogating reasons for their failures and identifying new ways to reform the political systems of oppression that attend economic development. History shows that devel-

oping nations have spent much time deliberating the value of democratic principles leading to development because of their fundamental faith in the ideals of fairness, equality, and justice that would help them achieve all that democracy promised rather than a recognition that control of their own natural resources had greater potential to forge economic development and the “good life” they sought than dependence on those espousing democratic ideals. Missing from the literature, however, has been the element of democracy that has fostered slow or non-existent development. So, while it is fair to focus on the recursive relationship between democratic values and economic growth in developed nations, the performance of democracy in the developing world should not be ignored as the source of its uneven development. In developed democracies, there are monetary tools in place to regulate the relationship between democratic value and economic growth. Juxtaposing expansionary monetary policy with contractionary monetary policy has allowed developed nations to implement policies in ways that achieve economic growth (O’Connell and Schmidt 2021). Diasporic systems are seldom able to put such growth into effect, based on political decision-making and, instead, this creates disenchantment between political leaders and their preferred economic strategies. Until such lessons are learned, developing nations must decide the nature of the political system most likely to sustain ideal citizenship for enjoyment of the “good life.” They could make the choice to harness their knowledge and skills capital to effect production of innovative ideas that would yield the economic growth they seek rather than dwell on the institutional values of democracy that have rendered them unequal and politically unstable.

So where does this leave post-colonial peoples, especially those of African origin in the Caribbean and the Americas? How do they engage alternative strategies and leave habits of dependency and crises of legitimacy behind to use their intellectual capacities in more productive ways with the expectation of finding, not material wealth necessarily, but certainly an appreciation for and development of traditional wisdoms/energies that many in the diaspora are ready to reclaim on the way to realizing sustainable development. As Audrey Lorde (2018) so eloquently stated, “one cannot use the master’s tools to dismantle the master’s house.” It is time for Africa and its diaspora to rebuild with new tools, born of their knowledge capital, and produced for long-term development. The COVID-19 pandemic (2020) has reaffirmed for less developed countries the urgency of living in an anarchical world where self-help and resilience are their best resources. It is incumbent upon developing nations not to wait to be invited to the decision forums of industrialized democracies but to start organizing and building their own collaborative forums within which the survival of developing nations can be mapped.

How the diaspora will fend for itself without accumulating debt from borrowing much while gaining little will be explored in this framework of liberalism where rights inalienable to all people have been consistently denied to people of color. Only in an awakening to how marginalized peoples have been trapped, exploited, and deprived of their humanity while ownership of their natural resources has been seized as dependency on the perpetrators prevail, can developmental change occur. It is the absence of access to these inalienable rights, the experience of democracy that claims to grant equal opportunity without the potential outcomes of equality, and the continued discrediting of knowledge as a central capacity builder for nations that warrant an exploration of theories of knowledge economies, which suggest that focus on education, and innovation is critical in national planning strategies. As Jean-Eric Aubert and Jean-Louis Reiffers pointed out in their 2003 World Bank report “countries that fail to become part of the *information revolution* risk becoming even more marginalized than those left aside in the earlier industrial revolution” (2004: xii). Applying democratic theories of liberalism to theories of knowledge development in the contemporary world order makes a logical case for why adopting a knowledge economic framework in the pursuit of development may be advantageous and timely for developing nations.

Expectations of a Knowledge Economy

The idea of knowledge economies took form with World Bank identification of its key pillars:

1. Knowledge economies are institutional structures that offer incentives for entrepreneurship and the use of intellectual capital.
2. It requires a sound education and training system that prepares individuals for skilled labor.
3. It encourages a strong innovative approach by which collaboration among educators, the private sector, and communities could develop struggling societies.
4. It requires access to information and infrastructures for technology that will further enhance development.

Institutional Economic Structures

Across the Black diaspora, regimes have tried to emulate global structures (e.g., those of the West) and institutions in order to pursue effective allocation of resources and motivate citizens to create, disseminate and

apply available knowledge. Often, the economic structures to be emulated were vastly dissimilar from those in the diaspora. Knowledge economies are a collaborative system of consumption and production that are generated via the intellectual capital of communities of citizens who are able/willing to convert homegrown and scientific discoveries into applied research that may benefit the community by allowing value to be assigned to both tangible and intangible assets. In the Black diaspora, in order to survive a life of exploitation and enslavement as meted out by imperialist economies, workers slowly learned that if they pooled their intellectual capital, they could experience growth and development on a scale befitting their needs. Within the Caribbean culture, for example, communities recognized that traditional customs surrounding trade and financing in the immediate post-emancipation period could become a way forward, if managed sensibly (see Moore 1987; Moore and Johnson 2000). Whether in areas of small-scale farming and agricultural produce or in collaboration on sugar, rice, and mining production, collective discourse on the value of shared intellectual property was assessed upon the attainment of political independence.

Recognizing that economic independence could not be gained by simply emulating the commercialization processes of the West, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), founded in 1973, established the Treaty of Chaguaramas to link the economies of Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. Later, eleven other Caribbean territories joined the organization, including Haiti, which was added as recently as 2002. This regional entity set out to investigate links between the scientific community and academic scholarship to determine alternative ways to progress. Its main purpose was to promote economic integration and cooperation among its members. Today, ties with the Group of 77 (founded in 1964 with seventy-seven members), have expanded membership to 134 members of the developing world, with a significant increase in numbers coming from the Black diaspora. Also, the Non-Aligned Movement (1961), founded by Jawaharlal Nehru (India), Josip Broz Tito (Serbia), Sukarno (Indonesia), Gamal Abdel Nasser (Egypt), Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), expanded the mission to ensure the national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security of non-aligned nations in their resistance to imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, and other forms of external aggression, occupation, domination, hegemonic interference, or bloc politics. Today, the movement has 147 members, observers, and international organizations, 55 percent of which are developing nations with approximately 50 percent of those including populations of Afro-diasporic peoples. Further, the ACP (African-Caribbean-Pacific) partnership, established in 1975 along with participation in other regional alliances, provides

collaborative scope for knowledge economies to develop and improve trade, financing, and community-building. At the same time, community partnerships are also developing via traditional household interactions.

Although knowledge economies are receiving greater attention in the information age in which we live, they have existed in Africa and the Black diaspora for a very long time. Within and across the African diaspora, informal economic structures existed and still do, though to a smaller extent. As may be observed in areas of the Caribbean (Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, etc.), old financial customs (e.g., those known as *partner*, *box hand*, *sou-sou*) helped grow economic communities in which families were enabled, with the help of the community, to start businesses, contract the building of houses, pay rents, and more without the help of banks to finance such projects (also see Browne 2018). Agriculture was upgraded to commercial levels based on knowledge sharing and micro-financing trade within communities. What is today observed as in-kind contributions, where simple barter techniques are used to share goods/services within the community, may be attributed to the knowledge capital shared in the past among generations of Afro-diasporic peoples. The information age, however, decelerated growth of such processes. Many developing countries shifted to manufacturing and service-based economies, illustrated by research, technical support, consulting, using old sources of knowledge but new reliance on human expertise from afar (rather than within the community) and reliant more on new innovations and greater competition that encouraged more secrets, less openness, and less sharing for community growth.

Can such institutional economic structures survive at the national level or are they better served in small-scale community administration? As the world contracts only to expand to new heights, the Black diaspora is encouraged to think globally but act locally. There is still scope for garden varieties of innovative economic structures to survive but it will take inter-linking networks of efficient economic restructuring to realize the kind of sustained growth knowledge economies imagine. And, to a great extent, focus on disaster mitigation may enhance the scale of developmental outcomes diasporic communities need to survive.

Education and Training

Thriving economies need the support of an educated and skilled workforce, who need to elevate and apply their intellectual capital to expertly use the knowledge that has already been produced and help to train others in the adaptation of important skills. Basic education is needed to provide citizens with the literacy to process information. However, such education need not follow just the basic traditional Western path of pri-

mary and secondary training applied under colonial rule but should embrace technical and higher order learning in fields where technological training, in science and engineering, may enhance development and create innovative practices. Research shows that in today's world, job relevancy and cultural awareness should be at the heart of education if sustainable development is to be the end-product. According to the World Economic Forum, a majority of businesses (over 90 percent) are expediting digitization of their work process, adopting high-tech strategies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, big data analysis, and so forth. Many higher-education institutions in the United States are not geared to train students in areas identified by business to meet the digital demand of the twenty-first century, let alone communities in the African diaspora. The latter, in the context of compiling knowledge on post-disaster potential for development would need to conduct extensive research on the aftermath of tragedy.

As conceived by scholars, researching knowledge from tragedy (see Harrison 2021), using the attacks on New York on 11 September 2001 as a source of education, there are at least four areas of study that warrant focus:

1. Studies of physical and mental health of survivors after a catastrophe (see Alpert, Ronell and Patell, 2011; Mijanovitch and Weitzman 2010; Tosone 2011);
2. Improving a nation's preparedness and security after a crisis (e.g., Hale and Moberg 2005; Schmitt, Eisenberg, and Rao 2007; Shklovski et al. 2010);
3. Evaluating current infrastructure and developing useful adaptations toward green sustainable infrastructure and approaches to fostering resilience (Butenuth et al. 2011; Manfre et al. 2012; Patel et al. 2018); and
4. Examination of policy consequences of disaster and making preparation for future threats (Adam and Bevan 2005; Badri et al. 2006; Fengler, Ihsan, and Kaiser 2008).

There is, however, still a strong need in the Afro-diaspora for retention of past knowledge, reflection on old narratives, shared through the ages via word of mouth when griots relayed historical truths in the form of fables or proverbs to attentive communities. Many of these were passed down from generation to generation and traveled with slavery to the New World, again to be shared with communities fighting for survival. Given the mastery of resiliency in the post-emancipation era, the Black diaspora has much to draw on when facing contemporary disasters such as the

genocide in Rwanda or the destruction by earthquake in Haiti. It is difficult to imagine that none of the approaches of the past have benefit for survival in the present and can be harnessed and modified for application to the present and innovative expression in the future.

Unlike in European communities, skills and competencies of African-descended peoples are not to be found in the annals of history. Archives have repeatedly silenced/erased the capital of Black people, relaying stories of power, competence, and glory attributed to any other than those of African descent. Yet, it is in knowing the past and the intellectual capital reposed in the past that the diaspora can better learn how to be resilient and manage catastrophe, how to rebuild lives, cultures, and patterns of existence that can be adapted to today's circumstances. As described by the literary accounts of scholars, the pain experienced in encounters with "scraps of knowledge in the archive," causes one to fashion and bridge the past and the present and to "dramatize the production of nothing" (see Fuentes 2016). It is this disadvantage that leaves scholars of the African diaspora to choose the path of least resistance, the choice to depend on the educational structures in the Global North rather than delve beyond the archival sources and basic instruction provided in parochial and denominational educational institutions in post-colonial societies across the Global South. Especially in relation to catastrophe in nature and risk mitigation, it is not helpful, for example, for Louisiana or Haiti to simply follow methods practiced in the Netherlands or elsewhere in Europe to resist the ill effects of climate change and its annual impact on the disastrous weather experiences of diaspora locations in these regions. One of the lessons to be learned is in knowing that old technologies, for example, building levees for protection against rising seas, are much less reliable in the twenty-first century than nature-based protections of shorelines that become stronger over time. Stone and concrete levee structures experience more erosion and decay even with appropriate levels of monitoring than structures developed with collaboration between ecologists and engineers who recognize the benefit of planting at higher densities and engaging in maintenance and systematic monitoring that creates resilient structures (Burdick 2021).

As an old African proverb suggests, "until lions have their own storytellers, hunters will always be the heroes in their story," or otherwise stated, "until the lion learns to speak, the tales of hunt will always favor the hunter." The point is that until knowledge about Africa and the diaspora is disseminated by Africans in the diaspora and their entrepreneurial skills shared and adapted to meet development needs, sustained growth and advancement will not be achieved. In her essay "Post-Disaster Futures: Hopeful Pessimism, Imperial Ruination, and *La Futura Cuir*," Yari-

mar Bonilla (2020) discusses how disaster-prone spaces (e.g., Puerto Rico) could imagine and rebuild futures that deviate from a knowledge of post-colonial sovereignty to a promising post-disaster future. Recognizing the psychological impact of slavery and its intergenerational legacy of trauma on the Black diaspora (see Carten 2015), there is little wonder that huge deficits in confidence and innovative creativity could enervate knowledge production and infuse, with empowerment and advocacy, a determination to migrate from pessimism and abject frustration to a new design of freedom, self-determination, and development, devoid of imperialistic tentacles and dependency. Yet, this may be seen in some circles as the only way forward to overcome the lagging development found in post-disaster communities of the diaspora. Haiti's experience is a case in point.

Innovative Systems

The Adaptation Fund, providing funding within/among countries of the Global South aims at building resilience in periphery states to adapt to climate change. Whether through a glorified *sou-sou* system, such as those engaged in the Black diaspora and on the African continent or through regional alliances, as discussed above, developing countries can benefit from opportunities to create entrepreneurial skills that might contribute to knowledge production emanating from shared ideas, financial collaborations, and community engagement. Instead of Haiti, Rwanda, and Louisiana relying fully on external measures to restore the infrastructure needed to resist climate change and its impact on natural, cultural, and political disaster, they can provide the requisite green infrastructure, with community expertise for coastal recovery and improved water quality, among other needs.

One of the innovative practices used to a fair extent in Louisiana has stemmed from the work of the Bucket Brigade, a local group of activists who share work in the academy and within the community. The Louisiana Bucket Brigade, founded in 2000, was a response to the environmental injustice perceived as a threat to Louisiana neighborhoods having to wrestle with the pollution released into the atmosphere by the state's oil refineries, chemical plants, and petrochemical infrastructure. These industrial structures moved into poor neighborhoods on the grounds that they would elevate the economic security of said neighborhoods. Instead, they brought devastation to the health and well-being of residents. The work of this organization incentivizes communities to test air quality within their neighborhoods to ensure that they are not exposed to the harmful effects of pollution. Knowledge is power. Communities are supported, empowered when they are informed, and have the capacity to

build on the information and training to which they are exposed and from which they can benefit. Technology aimed at testing air quality allows the organization to develop air sampling buckets the public can use to determine action to be taken and whom to hold accountable for the costs of poor community health (Rolfes 2010). Moreover, the Bucket Brigade, registered as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is supported by private donations from both individuals and foundations who are willing to invest in the environmental health of communities (Rolfes 2010). Anne Rolfes, having served in the Peace Corps in West Africa, returned to her home state, Louisiana, to practice some of the lessons she learned in Nigeria and Benin (see Thornton 2011) about protecting the environment. As publics become knowledgeable about community action they can take to support the nonprofit as well as extend their understanding of how self-reliance may yield better information on communities' expediting the transition from fossil fuels to clean energy, they can make demands on government institutions and private industry to visualize and effect a healthy and safe community for the current times as well as for posterity.

Production of knowledge gained from attempts at reducing pollution and dwelling in a healthier environment tends to build informed communities, healthier societies, and pollution-free neighborhoods. Further, in addition to other grassroots innovations, more of which are discussed in our chapter on Louisiana, informed residents organize for participation in a fair and equitable state where ordinary citizens prosper from their knowledge acquisitions and their capacity to generate sufficient intellectual capital to help the state make a just transition toward green infrastructure and relief from climate catastrophe. In disaster-prone Louisiana, poor communities are likely to be the most negatively impacted, a result of racial and economic disparity. According to the 2020 census and other data reports, a majority of African-descended (approximately 33 percent) residents, the second highest (second only to Mississippi) concentration in the United States compared to other ancestry groups, reside in Louisiana communities. They endure poor air quality and sanitation and experience myriad health deficiencies. Empowered with the knowledge and skill to test air quality on a given day allows local residents not only to take action to protect against ill health but also to hold health officials in their communities accountable for distress to their families and other residents. Through community actions like these, and outreach to neighboring communities, community organizations such as the Walls Project in Baton Rouge, Louisiana (Williams 2021), and other organizations on the Gulf Coast, collaborative options are engaged in successful post-disaster development. In addition, with support for women's innovative practices under the auspices of the State Department, there is greater scope for

addressing climate and disaster issues and sharing knowledge on disaster preparedness and recovery than ever before. Launching *The Innovation Station*, Aubrey Paris (2021) has disseminated information and advanced knowledge capital on subjects such as shoreline resilience, food security, urban conservation, green infrastructure, landscape architecture, water management, marine protection, soil restoration, and so many other areas of knowledge that need to be produced, especially on the Gulf Coast but everywhere where the disaster impacts of climate change may be found. *The Innovation Station* serves as a great example of how local and national policy operatives can collaborate in an attempt to share knowledge and grow the success of innovative methods that may adopt and transform standard practices into more culturally relevant designs for sustainability. The more collaborative the efforts, the greater the potential for knowledge sharing and the advancement of a more sustainable ecosystem.

Other innovative practices may be found in Rwanda, where there is a strong cultural belief in healing the community. After the 1994 genocide, the idea of creating opportunities for mental health and trauma recovery introduced an idea of care, using traditional and international therapies, including representations of laughter and dance. One of the grassroots organizations established there, under the leadership of Samuel Habimana, a co-author in this volume, has contributed much to healing in the quarter century since the deadly genocide of 1994. Practicing laughter yoga at the Remera campus of the University of Rwanda's College of Medicine and Health Sciences has achieved remarkable gains for communities who grow to understand better how to mitigate the effects of stress by way of laughter. Participating groups have benefited from interaction with local residents, international visitors, and peers from neighboring communities, where they exchange ideas, share vulnerabilities, and develop easy practices to de-stress and better manage health and wellness conditions.

Community development centers in neighboring towns/villages have also incorporated dance practices handed down from the past to integrate communities in the fight for cultural harmony. Dissension in the past, which disintegrated into open anger across communities, led to one of the world's greatest sociocultural disasters. Incentivizing communities to develop strategies for harmony, peace-building, and forgiveness has empowered Rwandan communities to develop a language of common understanding that portends not just to rebuild a broken culture but to build on the knowledge of the past to create a new, vibrant future where healthy citizens advocate for programs, cultural and political, to move Rwanda into a healthy, harmonious, and just environment, where knowledge of the past and recovery from past catastrophe will generate a more healthy, safe, and environmentally sound Rwanda.

Music and dance have always been an integral part of Africa and its diaspora in the Caribbean and Americas. Traditionally, singing and dancing were a popular way not only to celebrate special events but also to teach cultural beliefs and promote social values. Where these practices were conducted, communities learned their histories, made connections across groups, and gathered problem solving skills that could be transmitted from past to present and have vibrancy for the future, if preserved. Celebratory practices were accompanied by oral histories, storytelling, recitations of struggles and how they were overcome. Singing songs from the past were used to advocate for present-day action or point out creative wisdoms that may be losing their place in younger lifestyles. Within the African diaspora, music was/is used as a revolutionary, or perhaps just disruptive technique to share information. In the Caribbean, calypsos were renowned for the messages they contained. Slinger Francisco (lived 1935–2020), Grenadian calypsonian and griot, in the African tradition, was known globally as the “calypso king of the world.” His contribution to the knowledge capital of Caribbean and other diasporic audiences via the indigenous African tradition of storytelling in song chronicled the issues and philosophies impacting the lives of Africans in the diaspora in ballad form. His music challenged the colonial impact on Caribbean education and beliefs, for example, in the song “Dan is the Man” (1970). In that song, Mighty Sparrow, as he was familiarly nicknamed, laments the lessons taught in Caribbean schools and commented that the only reason he did not suffer from bad education is because he was not intelligent enough to learn to read. But he satirized that had he learned to read, he would have become a “block-headed mule.” The familiar Reader, *Nelson’s West Indian Readers First Primer* by J. O. Cutteridge (latest edition, 2014), was required reading for primary schools across the English-speaking Caribbean as a first reader for all students, a majority being of African descent. In more recent times, Jamaican singer, Robert Nesta Marley (lived 1945–1981), fondly known as Bob Marley, called on audiences to “emancipate yourselves from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds,” (originally released 1980; 2020) echoing Mighty Sparrow’s disrespect for the miseducation of Black people, who were transhipped to and enslaved in the Caribbean and needed to seek redemption, to free themselves from colonial teachings.

Lessons from Louisiana and Rwanda, providing other ways of *knowing*, will also serve as a template and provide a framework, if shared, for implementing meaningful ways of addressing post-disaster recovery and other issues that plague Haiti and other areas of the diaspora. Although Haiti’s experience with disaster has been mostly physical, it was certainly not entirely natural. Earthquakes and hurricanes are often described as acts of God. This could be seen as either an opportunity to inspire faith-filled

approaches to development or a call to the Haitian intellectual community to devise better structural measures to a recovery program. Of course, such a call would require the collaborative efforts of the citizens, the government, the technocrats, the artisans, and the international public and private sectors, as a whole, to collaborate on a master plan for rebuilding homes, communities, think-tanks, as well as seeking governmental buy-in. There is no doubt that a strong political will, bolstered by local intellectual capital and the commitment of private sector supporters can be an engine of motivation for the accomplishment of a safer, structurally secure human society.

Haiti's earthquake (2010) was a clarion call to action for the international community, as noted in a blog by Rebecca Winthrop of the Brookings Institute (2010), as well as a reminder that disaster preparedness was/is an imperative, not just for Haiti but for developing communities everywhere that lack the financial resources and the intellectual capital for managing such disasters. What would it take for appropriate mitigation efforts to be put in place not just to safeguard developing societies but to steer off the impacts of not instituting such efforts? Whether it be the costs of migration, or that of food insecurity, or achieving any of the other goals of development, what is perhaps most required is the will to ensure that democratic values of fairness, justice, equity, and the pursuit of happiness are achieved. In an ecosphere where the single human species must survive, the ethics of sharing knowledge and caring for "the least among us," as our spiritual leaders remind us, must be embraced by the entire global community. The challenges to be met for Black communities in Louisiana, Haiti, or Rwanda, if communities are to overcome disaster effects and build sustainable futures, continue to reside in solutions to economic security, gender equity, and environmental justice. As a reminder, knowledge economies offer incentives for entrepreneurship and the use of intellectual capital. It requires a good education and training system that prepares individuals for skilled labor. It encourages a strong innovative approach by which a collaboration among educators, the private sector and communities could develop struggling societies. It insists that acquisition of these elements means ensuring access to information and infrastructures for technology that will further enhance development (Chen and Dahlman 2006; Weber 2011; World Bank Group 2020).

Access to Information

Importantly, one of the pillars of knowledge economies is its access to information and infrastructures for technology that will further enhance development. This is perhaps the area most lacking in the Black diaspora.

Not only must the diaspora engage technological development to pursue growth and recovery after a disaster but it must expand its access to information in a variety of areas and provide similar access to all its communities. The challenge to achieving success in this area is structural as well as political. It is often argued that democratic governance opens the door to political freedom and economic prosperity. Regardless of the direction of this relationship (economic development → democracy **or** democracy → economic development), the challenge is for development and good governance to work together. In Africa and its diaspora, pessimistic perceptions of how democracy will be sustained (see Lemarchand 1992) and assist in fostering economic growth still prevail (O’Neil, Fields, and Share 2021).

Access to information is largely connected with access to the internet. In the developing world, only 35 percent of populations have broadband services (see Haider, McLoughlin, and Scott 2011) as opposed to nearly 80 percent in the developed world. As shown in Figure 2.2 below, African-descended people in Louisiana fare less well than white households in access to broadband services. With access to the internet, come opportunities for smart electric grids, innovative transportation designs, and intelligent new technologies. Such smart features make it possible for democracy to work globally. The disadvantage of not being digitally and equitably connected to the world and its resources do not augur well for sustainable development in the Black diaspora. Referring to Robert Dahl’s (1989) perception that what makes democracy work best is the responsiveness between governments and the governed, it makes sense that where there is communication between the public and governmental leadership, the opportunity for expressing public demands, for gaining government feedback on the demands, and allowing communication to freely flow cannot but lead to government accountability and individual efficacy and trust. Before the communication revolution, governments easily got away with a lack of transparency. In today’s world, growth demands easier access to information than in the past; without access, knowledge communities cannot produce sustainable development.

There are several barriers to information access in the twenty-first century. According to Akobundu Ugah (2007), not knowing what is available or desirable or what knowledge access to information may yield is a primary impediment to development. Public awareness of impending disaster, costs of disaster, sources of funding to offset disaster, the search for shelter/safety from disaster, and so on is critical to planning for and finding solutions to the problems stemming from disaster. At the World Economic Forum, Denise Nicholson (2015), a communications librarian at the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa, compellingly argued that access to

Black households are less likely to have a computer with broadband in the home than their white neighbors in both urban and rural parishes

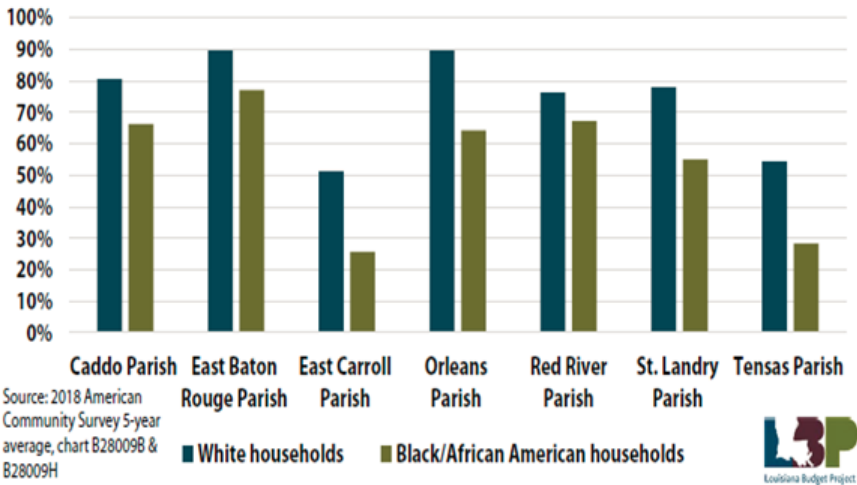


Figure 2.2. Black Households and Broadband Access in Louisiana (2018 American Community Survey included in the Louisiana Budget Project) Data taken from: <https://www.labudget.org/2020/05/separate-and-unequal-students-access-to-technology-in-the-time-of-coronavirus/>.

information is crucial for developing countries, if they are ever to achieve sustainable development. She challenged the government of South Africa to take a careful look at the constitution of the country and explain why that instrument acknowledged that access to information was a human right but did not take adequate steps to remove impediments to claiming those rights. Certain disaster-prone areas of the Black diaspora have been unable to benefit from necessary information because they lack continuous access to the internet. Indeed, in many countries when there is political instability, one of the first actions taken by government leaders is to cut off access to information in an effort to stifle activism and control behaviors against the lack of government responsiveness.

Other barriers, such as restrictive copyright laws, or even the absence of such laws, have a harmful impact on trade in developing countries and also contribute to economic loss. Censorship and overpricing of educational materials for libraries or for course readings and academic policies limiting publication via open access and online distribution further contribute to barriers affecting knowledge production and sociocultural de-

velopment (Nicholson 2015). In a recent Louisiana Budget Project report (Butkus 2020), the state of public education as “the great equalizer” was brought into repute. With the COVID-19 pandemic moving students from classrooms to remote knowledge spaces, it was easily observed that deficits to learning were more likely to occur among low-income students of color and persons residing in rural areas than those from wealthier communities. Reflecting on the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision (1966), where the US Supreme Court outlawed segregation in public schools, political leaders were strongly encouraged to recognize the deficit in access to information and technology in public education as a form of segregation and take steps to correct the imbalance so that students of color could benefit equally from the educational resources they need to be fully informed (LBP 2020). If such deficits are observed in Black communities within the developed world, how much more likely are communities in the developing world to be barred from knowledge resources? How then might developing areas gain access to critical information and understand the urgency of managing disaster, staving off poverty, ameliorating public health concerns, and more if access to information is denied? Knowledge economies can only thrive where access to information exists and has the potential to connect communities with the past and the present to provide opportunities for future growth and development.

Of course, there are solutions for each of the known barriers to lack of information access. For the diaspora, *knowing* is critical to survival and sustainability. *Knowing* starts with access to research and research leads to innovative applications and development, which in turn leads to sustainability. Within the academy, there are opportunities to access publicly funded scholarship, which allows anyone with internet access to benefit from the research. The University of Rwanda has taken full advantage of scholarly resources on trauma and recovery and, in addition, has published the findings and innovative strategies emanating from anthropological studies, social work, psychology, and the creative arts in an attempt to build, via community action, on opportunities for recovery from the catastrophe of genocide twenty-seven years ago (Uwihangana et al. 2020).

On the other hand, Haiti has not been as fortunate in their search for and access to scientific and specialized information because their institutional affiliations have been marred by political instability and excluded from networks of organizations, such as RELX (formerly Reed Elsevier). This group serves the four largest publishing houses: Sage, Taylor & Francis, Wiley-Blackwell, and Springer. The latter has established a knowledge-sharing policy that implements limitations on what information can be accessed and by whom (see Diallo and Calland 2013). Of course, US and European academic institutions, through which Louisiana

may benefit, have easy access to these scholarly resources, with abundant knowledge on a large variety of disciplines. Much of the material owned by the above-mentioned publishing houses are, however, not openly accessible (see Nicholson 2015) to all, so unless institutions in developing countries can afford to pay subscriptions for access, current knowledge and knowledge transfer activities are denied them for a period of years. While the developing world is used to barriers to growth, a barrier to knowledge, scholarship, and subsequently, advancement, in an age where information is updated rapidly, denies access that might aid development to countries that can ill afford the deficit in time and cost. Such lack of access is tantamount to cruel and degrading punishment, as may be observed in the 1966 United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and fails to meet human rights standards of agreement as recognized by the international community (Diallo and Calland 2013; UDHR 1948).

Challenge to Development

Gendered Education

Although World Bank reports stress the importance of education to the development of knowledge economies, they seem to limit the focus to formal education, as is readily available in the developed world. In most developing countries, many people do not have the opportunity to attend formal schooling, from which research skills may arise. This lack of access to formal education hampers individuals in the developing world so that management of disasters and culling new innovative practices may not come from lessons learned in formal institutes of education but from past cultural wisdoms and in training programs observed over time between and among generations. Not including traditional, cultural knowledge as tangible knowledge capital hinders the opportunity to perceive knowledge economies as a solution for development in the Global South, especially where decisions about who gets educated is a deep cultural controversy rooted in the past. As we know, in the developing world as in a few spaces in the developed world where the wider Black diaspora is dispersed, girls are the first to be deprived of education and their intellectual capital is the first to be dismissed as uninformed. As presented by Eric Westervelt on National Public Radio's (NPR) *Morning Edition* program, systemic educational barriers have obstructed and are continuing to obstruct the progress of young Black Americans. The issue has not gone unnoticed in the policy chambers of the United States. But, former president Obama was only one of a few highly positioned leaders in past years to recognize and take steps to help close the opportunity gap for African Americans. He

targeted vulnerable Black men for this initiative. Unfortunately, he did not do the same for young Black women (Westervelt 2014).

Also, since they are not engaged/included in policy analysis or sit at the decision-making tables, little to none of their intellectual capital is addressed or finds its way into the innovative policies persons in academia or government offices might need to enhance developmental structures. For such reasons, bottom-up collaborations with local communities may contribute more to knowledge production than formal lessons learned in educational institutions. Recently, the US State Department, under the guidance of Aubrey Paris, took the unusual step of hosting a series of webinars on *The Innovation Station* (see podcasts of the webinar discussions on S/GWI 2021–2023). Conversations with women and community builders, supported in these forums, have made it clear that the entrepreneurial skills of women within grassroots communities are not only of high value but offer the kind of research and data that can produce knowledge capital to meet the scale of needs in disaster-resilient communities in Louisiana and elsewhere.

Of course, in academic institutions of higher education and in government agencies where investment in research and development is abundant and where successful technological strategies have pride of place, the educated members of society must still translate the knowledge of their parents and communities into data that can then be accessed by agricultural, healthcare, and other workers whose ideas are then channeled, manufactured, and sold to help improve crops, yields, or healthcare procedures now digitally engaged for public consumption. Post-disaster recovery thus relies on the institution of cultural wisdoms within communities where they matter. In Louisiana, for example, having external specialists propose and build infrastructure for recovery of vulnerable communities often has a lower chance of success when external forces are relied on for planning and propagating new technologies for successful recovery. Following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the Army Corps of Engineers and the national government engaged technological skills not only of the United States but of the Netherlands and other well-wishers who offered their expertise on building reinforcement for the levees that had collapsed. They quickly realized that patching the levees was not the most sustainable effort for addressing the causes of the collapse. Without consulting communities or working collaboratively with local entrepreneurs to extend and support the infrastructure to withstand climate change, repairing the levees would only provide a temporary fix for a problem that was not just technological. In both the southeast and southwest of the state, the communities' relationship with water and water management had to be addressed, providing the livelihood people needed to survive but

also developing the skills that communities needed to collaborate in the rebuilding and recovery of the state. Working with the fishermen to better understand marine life and its place in the community and with farmers to care for farmlands and enrich the soil for better yields presented greater prospects for recovery than engagement in technological bandages alone.

In an interview with Aleksandra Dragozet, founder and CEO of the Sea Going Green project in the Netherlands (2021), on sustainability strategies for tourist destinations, such as New Orleans, she made it clear that publics must play a critical role when interacting with external consultancies. Dragozet was insistent that destination tourism required knowledge and innovative insights from the local community to identify areas in need of recovery and planning for sustainable development of those areas. Given her training in marine biology, she highlighted the benefit of interacting with women in the tourist community whose insights were critical to understanding the cultural-social dynamics of the impact of climate change on disaster-prone communities. Excluding community leaders, and especially the women of the communities, from the discussion table has tended to minimize opportunities for sustainable development, primarily in tourist destinations, which are hardest hit by physical disaster and climate change. Thus, the education of women, 50 percent of whom are engaged in the tourist industry in one capacity or another, is critical to sustainable tourism planning. Community outreach must therefore include education and training in relation to making the public aware of the carrying capacity of their dwelling spaces, in terms of the sewage system or impacts on the workforce in a disaster or food security in the region. So, providing women with a voice on aquaculture, or on preservation of marine life, or on conservation activities so that knowledge sharing/transfer may contribute to a transition of women's roles from lower-level engagements to decision-making at the highest level of the relevant industry, is an easy lesson for community development. Approaches taken by the Sea Going Green organization to build tailored sustainability strategies may be especially instructive to island communities in the diaspora.

Economic Insecurity

Transitions from manual to tech-based strategies are not without difficulties. Attempts to close the opportunity gap for many in the Black diaspora have been slow to yield the kind of closure that may be desirable for development. An alarming example of the impact of tech-based strategies introduced in developing countries for economic recovery is the experience of Ghana in its transition from agricultural development to new industries based on traditional agricultural yields. The process may be highlighted

by the experience of Ghana in its painful transition from reliance on local agriculture to mass production of abundant agricultural resources. The cocoa pod, in Ghana, provides an insightful example of the difficulties that attend manufacturing. Converting the cocoa pod into chocolate products, because of a lack of technological expertise, was outsourced to be manufactured in the North. The low price at which the cocoa was sold within Ghana, given its abundant growth, paled into insignificance against the price Ghanaians paid to purchase the manufactured chocolate generated from the cocoa. A few missteps occurred. (1) Had Ghanaians built on the low-tech strategies adopted in the past, they may have benefited more, initially, from converting the abundant raw material (cocoa pods), easily available in the communities, into a homegrown confection which could then have inspired growth into a larger community-based industry; (2) being too swift to accept a monetary package in exchange for product without performing a competent risk-benefit analysis is a mistake that Ghana and many developing countries make in the name of short-term gains of survival; (3) innovative ideas/skills must be systematic rather than sporadic. As a recent survey suggests, 75–100 percent of innovation challenges result in an idea that can be implemented. Knowing how to evaluate success with innovative programs is part of the *knowing* that is required for knowledge economies to develop. Initially, Ghanaians may have perceived it a herculean effort to manufacture quality chocolate such as that available for purchase in Europe and North America. In their need to survive, however, they relinquished a chance for long-term gains by accepting a short-term financial boost from the sale of their cocoa pods and ultimately ended up purchasing the manufactured cocoa pods, now artfully converted into quality chocolate, at a higher price than what the unit price of the product was.

The reality, though, is that in post-colonial societies, especially within the Black diaspora, the craftiness of capitalism is pervasive. Local African-descended communities are culturally oriented toward sharing and enjoying communal traditions. They readily illustrate their prowess in the kitchen, share recipes, demonstrate traditional practices and invite friends into their celebrations. They share knowledge with outsiders without thought of patenting ideas and practices and easily bargain away their rights in the face of crafty negotiation. They seldom exercise the kind of scrutiny/analysis of the salesmanship of external producers nor do they value their own innovative cultural competencies in the art of food, spices, and other production, and the resilience of their ancestors who had successfully converted scraps from the master's table into delicious, homegrown cuisines that were amplified and enjoyed by entire communities of food innovators. So, in Africa and its diaspora, it took a while to recognize



Figure 2.3. Real GDP growth in Ghana 1980-2028. Data from: https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDP_RPCH@WEO/GHA?zoom=GHA&highlight=GHA.

how their intellectual capital was being used and how their communities were purchasing goods manufactured overseas at a price higher than that gained from selling their abundant but perishable crops. By the time community leaders/elders recognized the loss of capital and resources and the benefits of developing their own chocolate, for example, and marketing it for their own profit, Europeans and Americans had already cornered the market.

Comparing economic realities of Ghana in 2001 and 2005, it was evident that Black communities were learning from their economic failures at home that success would only come with a return to collaborative norms and a deeper understanding of how to be entrepreneurs of their own capital. With the help of the World Bank, IMF, and collaborations within the private and public sector, Ghana made a significant economic turnaround. The structural adjustment program, supported by the IMF and international organizations, gave Ghana the space it needed to grow and as shown in the figure above and in World Bank data (2019), Ghana staged a remarkable comeback and is poised to become one of the world's fastest growing economies in the decade.

The economic forecast for Ghana is not unique to the development of post-colonial societies. Very similar forecasts have been made for other areas in the Black diaspora. The potential oil wealth forecast for Ghana

has also been predicted in Guyana, where centuries ago, slaves were removed from Ghana, the former Gold Coast, to inhabit the highly forested and mineral rich Guianas, occupied concurrently by the British, French, and Dutch in their search for gold and precious stones. Ultimately, agreement among European colonizers divided the territory into three states—Guyana (formerly British Guiana), Suriname (formerly Dutch Guiana), and French Guiana (still under the protection of France). Just a few years ago, technology-supported strategies uncovered rich deposits of oil in Ghana and Guyana, its Black diaspora, and the scramble for wealth (this time, black gold) has resumed.

Environmental Injustice

To some extent, this turn of events contradicts the argument that the Black diaspora need not rely as heavily as they do on tech-based solutions to the problem of development as curated by the West. But, on a more realistic scale, the argument is supported that without the collaboration of educators, local enterprise, the private and public sector, development in the diaspora will not be achieved. In the geographical regions under discussion here, the obstacle to development over the years has been the rape of natural resources by capitalist conglomerates and multinational exploitation. As communities have grown and collaborations have improved, there has also been the recognition that ideas alone cannot yield development nor can economic recovery be sustained without technological intervention. Yet, this recognition does not mean that communities will/should sit back and allow themselves to be exploited. That ship has sailed.

Environmental lessons of the past, for example, Nigeria's experience with Shell (see O'Neil et al. 2021) or Ecuador's experience with Chevron (Randazzo 2021), as well as the Deepwater Horizon oil spill (April 2010) that severely impacted Louisiana wildlife, have allowed communities to find their voice and not only push political leaders to hold multinationals accountable but also engaged sister communities in their efforts to find international support from governmental and non-governmental organizations to learn the science and develop changes in regulations to stop the endangerment of offshore drilling (Luft, Korin, and Gupta 2010; Meiners 2020; Oatley 2019). While many of those dangers still remain harmful to marine life, households, and industry, the search continues for a better understanding of the science of oil drilling as well as how marine life may be protected from oil leaks and harmful toxins. In actively pursuing sustainable goals related to the UN's commitment to reversing the nega-

tive impact of global climate change on places and peoples experiencing economic insecurity, communities in the Black diaspora are challenging exploitation of their natural resources, inequity in the distribution of environmental rights, and continued governmental and external disregard for human resources vested in every community (O'Neil et al. 2021).

Other lessons of history and the past for the African diaspora teach the importance of knowledge sharing but also the wisdom of owning one's knowledge capital. The benefits of collaboration empower communities to capitalize on the scientific knowledge needed for development as well as embrace and advocate for the sociocultural traditions that may yield development. Communities also understand the value of revering traditional practices as a community, patenting ideas as a social responsibility and working collaboratively toward economic development and collective recovery in pre- and post-disaster environments. Recognizing that collaboration and sharing of ideas within communities is a more innovative way to build knowledge economies is the lesson many countries in the Black diaspora need to understand.

Sadly, this is not an area of education that communities in the Black diaspora explore. They have been denied their rights, stripped of their cultures and made to assimilate into the culture of their oppressors for so long that it is not surprising that they unknowingly teach their cultural wisdoms to imperialists and developers who, without leaders, patents, and community ownership to restrict them, capitalize on exploited communities' knowledge capital, produce said capital, and coerce or charm impacted communities into buying back their cultural wisdoms from exploitative agents. As Walter Rodney's (1972) historical writings and revisits to his work by West Indian and other scholars argue, Africa was drawn into a world economy that reduced the entire continent into underdevelopment. As the diaspora spread, taking their vulnerabilities with them, there has been full agreement with Black feminists (e.g., Lorde 2018) who recognize that the Black diaspora needs new tools to dismantle the colonial, imperialist economic and social structures that persist in disrupting pathways to sustainable development. Post-disaster communities such as Louisiana on the Gulf Coast of Mexico or Haiti in the French Caribbean or Rwanda in East-Central Africa can only disrupt the downward spiral of development by building knowledge economies partnered with the social and scientific community, public and private sectors, in bottom-up innovative arrangements built on the knowledge capital collectively produced and grounded in intersectional sharing and practices. Through the lenses of gender inequality, economic insecurity, and environmental injustice, this study can implement strategies for sustainable development.

Lessons in Innovative Practices

So, how may sites in the Black diaspora move forward innovatively toward sustainable development? Borrowing from a series of informative webinars centering community action for disaster resilience, there are many lessons on how innovations in resilience may be addressed via the lens of gender equity, economic security, and environmental justice posited in this volume as being critical foci for sustainability in post-disaster communities. In July 2021, Dr. Aubrey Paris of the US State Department, in her capacity as policy advisor for gender, climate, and innovation, highlighted the phenomenal innovations being orchestrated by women on Gulf Coast states. Titled *The Innovation Station*, Paris launched the inaugural discourse in the series, featuring women in the coastal economy, women in the advancement of food security, and alliances across these communities as they expand innovative practices for the development of local, national, and global communities. In Louisiana, with regard to engagement in innovative projects, such as shoreline resiliency, much was shared on collaborative water management, urban conservancy, and African-centric cultural interrogation to assist with artistic illustration of water management (Dandridge 2021).

Discussion of the importance of highlighting women's voices and expertise at the grassroots level (Bowie 2021) when creatively leveraging efforts in coastal resilience across the public and private sector was instructive. For example, reusing silt from dredging as part of the process of restoration is beneficial to new infrastructural design that attracts resource-sharing commitment from business as well as public partners at affordable levels. Cost sharing in terms of money, expertise, and time brings entire communities together in providing green infrastructure with the capacity to endure. Such collaborative exercises reinforce the view that knowledge production "takes a village" and when communities learn together, they grow together. Further, as persuasively argued by the Louisiana presenter (Dandridge 2021), when states invest in whole communities, and women are invited into discourse on development and groups get to listen to what the marginalized or silenced voices of women have to contribute, benefits to the state become tangible. Further, she cautioned that "building bridges without investing in people first is a recipe for disaster." Inclusion of women in deliberation on disaster recovery has the potential to close the gender gap, enhance workforce development, empower communities, and build resilience for a sustainable future.

Relevant to global efforts at recovery, especially in spaces like Haiti where tourism has declined since the earthquake of 2010 and economic security has become even more tenuous than prior to the disaster, the

importance of information to the knowledge/education of publics is unquestionable. Political instability in Haiti, along with the lack of economic vitality there, must rely on collaboration and investment. Consistent access to the internet and social media may allow for innovations and critical rebuilding expertise to be shared. Lessons on food security, as shared by Karina Campos (2021) whose work in Argentina in combating food waste by moving agricultural surplus from the cities to rural areas experiencing drought and lacking in nutrition are quite helpful to knowledge building and production. Innovative ideas on packaging and redistributing food, creating accessibility to fruits and vegetables are supportive of public health and beneficial to the economy as it contributes to expanding the workforce as well as educating publics of efforts communities can take in collaboration with each other rather than reliance on the government. In both Haiti and Rwanda, excessive reliance on governments has led more to instability and economic deficiency than to innovative redesigning of the economic order at the local/national level.

Building knowledge economies that target development requires community access to information, advocacy for new self-help strategies, and an explosion of new, creative ideas for funding of infrastructural projects, diversification of old skills, and empowerment of communities for collaborative production/advancement. This means engaging nonprofit, for-profit, big business, political strategists, artists/artisans, and a wide variety of experts to participate in knowledge sharing, knowledge production and new vision for sustainable development in disaster-impacted communities. The impact of climate change, which has the single most devastating effect on disaster recovery, rests on adaptations for reducing reliance on yesteryear's practices of neglect resulting in food deserts, coastal erosion, destruction of marine life, inaccessibility to knowledge/education, and the devaluing of social entrepreneurship (Dragozet, Gurung, and Williams 2021).

Conclusion: Knowledge Transitions for Sustainability

Tracing the trajectory of knowledge economies over decades, we learn that the liberal international economic order (LIEO), proposed in the mid-1940s, offered a set of global, regulated, structural relationships embedded in political and economic liberalism, supported by liberal internationalism. This international order was grounded in a set of norms, rules, and institutions that recognized the bonds of friendship between European countries and the United States. Although seemingly open to inclusion of rising powers in the East, for example, China and Russia, there was

not much consideration given to the interests of the less developed nations. International theorists did not lose time pointing out the restrictive nature of LIEO regulations and its hyper-globalization that undermines democracy (Ikenberry 2018; Rodrik 2012). Initially, harmony prevailed among the architects of the order. As challenges arose, however, many of the developing nations, recognizing their exclusion from the spoils of liberalism, began a search for a new international economic order (NIEO) in 1974. In the latter, developing countries advocated for an end to neo-colonialism and dependency and sought to promote South–South economic cooperation, founded on equity, sovereign equality, and elimination of the widening gap in economic and social development between the Global North and the Global South (see Marklund 2020).

In this contentious economic atmosphere, especially for Africa and its diaspora, ruminating on a framework for development exposed very harsh realities of why these regions may seem to have stagnated and, further, why there seems such little global confidence that Africa and the diaspora can catch up with the developed world and achieve a semblance of political, economic and sociocultural sustainability. As the decades since independence roll by, many ponder the prospects for Afro-diasporic communities managing well, at a time when the rise of environmentalism, the need to stem climate change, the impact of climate change on fomenting greater environmental disaster, and international advocacy for mitigation strategies by 2030, are major imperatives for the globe. This study has posited the view that a new framework for development be examined with a view to catalyzing engines of growth and reviving the potential for sustainable development in vulnerable diasporic communities such as Louisiana, Haiti, and Rwanda.

Reflecting on the World Bank Knowledge Economy Assessment pillars, it is recognized that when knowledge is the main driver of economic growth, conditions are favorable for sustainable development. What makes conditions favorable are sustained investments in education, sustained opportunities for innovation, and sustained access to information and information technologies (Chen and Dahlman 2006). First, the diaspora must overcome the barriers established by the psychological devastation of slavery; for example, lack of cultural confidence and individual and collective self-contempt; extricate itself from the political stranglehold of post-colonial dependency, and claim full sovereignty for self-determination; “emancipate yourself from mental slavery” (Marley 2020) and be innovative and imaginative in developing ideas for the future; limit investment in the global marketplace of ideas and choose to embrace new ideas aimed at overcoming disadvantages of geography and climate; and, most importantly, invest in its people by building universal education to aid research and development, universal healthcare, to create better,

stronger, healthier communities; enabling access to digital sources of information, and be less timid to innovate creative policies on how countries may transform marine life and agricultural inadequacy that lead to food deserts. Engaging in knowledge economies of scale portends well for the Black diaspora.

Without question, the experience of slavery has taught the Black diaspora resiliency. Such resiliency has made Afro-diasporic communities competent to manage their susceptibility to disaster, to imagine solutions for humanizing the world, and to dispense social justice to all. The four pillars of success in establishing knowledge economies are all within reach of the diaspora: institutional economic structures, on a scale relevant to the individual country; education and training in areas relevant to the needs of the community; innovative systems in pertinent areas of invention and in harmony with technology, artists, pioneers, healthcare workers, and so on; and access to digital information to update strategies, empower developers, and advocate for the health and safety of the labor force. Relying on their own cultural values and supported by their own transformative will, the Black diaspora can divine its own trajectories for development and, moreover, initiate sustainable practices for posterity. The most difficult hurdle to overcome, however, is inequity—structural and legal. If/when these are successfully disrupted, sustainable development will be achievable.

Pamela Waldron-Moore, the Leslie R. Jacobs Professor of liberal arts education at Xavier University of Louisiana, holds a PhD in political science with specialization in Comparative Politics and International Relations. She has taught at universities in the Caribbean and the United States. Among her research interests are the political economy of development, gendered disparity, and climate justice. She is published in peer-reviewed journals of comparative politics and international studies and contributes regularly to scholarly forums on transformative pedagogy. She is a recipient of Keynote Speaker awards for research on women and the 2018 Jewel Prestage Mentorship Award from the National Conference of Black Political Scientists (NCOBPS).

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