

Institution: Kingston University
Unit of Assessment: 32, Philosophy
Title of case study: Impact on NGOs, activists and journalists engaged with Haitian politics
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Peter Hallward has undertaken the most detailed research in English on recent Haitian politics, focusing on the complex travails of Haitian democracy that began soon after the Duvalier dictatorship collapsed in the mid-1980s. This research has had a significant input into the understanding, advocacy and practices of NGOs working in Haiti, and on journalists and campaigners internationally, with regard to questions of freedom, equality and democracy, and the relationship between domestic and international factors in Haitian politics. Impact has been on opinion-formation and advocacy in NGOs, international media and public political discourse regarding international aspects of Haitian politics.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Hallward's research on Haiti aims to explain why the country remains so poor and so powerless, two hundred years after it ended slavery and won its independence from France, and what lessons can be learnt from the processes that have brought this about.</p> <p>Once the most lucrative of European colonies in the Caribbean, Haiti has now long been one of the most impoverished and most unequal countries in the world. For most of the twentieth century, Haiti was governed by dictatorships that were more or less directly controlled by the USA, but in the late 1980s a popular mobilization known as <i>Lavalas</i>, or 'the flood', sought to liberate the island from dictatorial rule. In 1990, Lavalas leader Jean-Bertrand Aristide became president after a landslide election victory. Nine months later the Haitian army, with US support, overthrew the government. Subsequently, Aristide was obliged, as a condition for a return to democracy in 1994, to accept neoliberal economic policies that undercut Haiti's agrarian economy, weakened its government, privatised its remaining public assets and rendered millions of its people destitute.</p> <p>Hallward's research attempts to explain why and how Aristide's opponents in Haiti, the US, France and Canada ensured that his second government, elected with another overwhelming majority in 2000, was toppled by a further coup in 2004.</p> <p>The goal of the research was to clarify the nature of the anti-Lavalas campaign, to articulate the international and national political interests behind it, and to draw connections to ongoing political struggles in Latin America and the rest of the postcolonial world. An analysis of Haiti's contemporary predicament, Hallward argues, should be based on an understanding of this long campaign to thwart its partial transition to democracy. The impotence of the Haitian government was exposed, at tremendous cost, in the wake of the disastrous January 2010 earthquake, which destroyed much of Port-au-Prince. Haiti's dramatic dependence on foreign-provided reconstruction funds has reduced it, further, to the status of a neocolonial protectorate.</p> <p>The research involved scores of interviews with current and recent politicians, cabinet ministers (including the former president and former prime minister), mayors, officials, journalists, and political activists in Haiti. In 2006-07 Hallward worked with journalists from <i>Haiti Progrès</i>, <i>Radio Solidarité</i>, <i>Haiti en Marche</i>, <i>Radio Mélodie</i>, and <i>SOS Journalistes</i>.</p> <p>The main research underpinning the impact is historical and empirical research into Haitian and international politics. However, it is connected to the construction of political arguments that have a broader intellectual basis in Hallward's work in political philosophy, and their context in the mission and research of the submitting unit. The Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy (CRMEP) is dedicated to research in European philosophy 'characterised by a strong emphasis on broad cultural and intellectual contexts and a distinctive sense of social and political engagement'. Hallward's research on Haiti is the 'applied' side of his main ongoing research project on the concepts of 'political will' and 'the people' in European philosophy since the 18th century. (A preliminary outcome is his Output 3, in section 3 below.) That research is grounded in a study of Rousseau's political philosophy (forthcoming as the book <i>Rousseau and Political Will</i>, Verso, 2014), which grounds the notion of democratic self-determination and the conceptual opposition</p>

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'will / containment' that structures the empirical research.

The research was undertaken while Hallward was Professor of Modern European Philosophy in the CRMEP at Middlesex University, 2005–10 and at Kingston 2010–11. (HECFE have recognised this period at Middlesex as 'transferable' to Kingston for the purposes of REF impact, as a result of the transfer of the CRMEP from Middlesex to Kingston in July 2010.)

3. References to the research

1. Peter Hallward, *Damming the Flood: Haiti and the Politics of Containment*, Verso, 1st ed. 2007, xxxvii + 442 pp.; a 2nd ed., including a new 30-page postface about the January 2010 earthquake, 'From Flood to Earthquake', appeared in late 2010.

Reviewed in *Labour/Le Travail*, Spring, 2010, Issue 65, p.233(3) [Peer Reviewed Journal] and *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology*, Nov, 2010, Vol.15(2), p.518-520 [Peer Reviewed Journal]

2. Peter Hallward, 'Option Zero in Haiti,' *New Left Review* 27 (May 2004), pp. 23-47.
<http://newleftreview.org/?view=2507>

3. Peter Hallward, 'One Step at a Time: An Interview with Jean-Bertrand Aristide', *London Review of Books*, vol. 29, no.4 (22 February 2007 <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v29/n04/peter-hallward/an-interview-with-jean-bertrand-aristide>). (This is an interview with the former Haitian president, conducted in Pretoria while he was in exile in South Africa).

4. Peter Hallward, 'Insurgency and Betrayal: An Interview with Guy Philippe', *HaitiAnalysis* 23 March 2007, <http://haitianalysis.blogspot.co.uk/2013/03/insurgency-and-betrayal-interview-with.html>. (This is a long and unprecedented interview with the main leader of the military insurgency of February 2004, who has been in hiding since early 2007).

4. Details of the impact

Hallward's book *Damming the Flood* has been influential on activists and NGOs working in Haiti, and on journalists covering the political problems in that country. It is widely recommended as the key text for anyone wishing to understand the political turmoil in Haiti. The book is credited with changing the way journalists report on Haiti, ensuring the economic viability of a campaigning media organisation, and contributing to political reform in that country.

Activists and NGOs

Damming the Flood is regarded as a key resource by NGOs and activist organisations working in Haiti. The Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti requires that new staff and interns read the book in order to understand the issues central to their campaigning work, while Partners in Health recommends the book not only to new staff and interns (c.50% of staff have read it) but also to the partners they work with in Haiti [1].

The Director of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti has said:

"Damming the Flood is by far the most detailed and reliable account of events leading up to the 2004 coup in Haiti, and we continue to recommend it to researchers, students and journalists interested in the period... Anecdotally, many ... journalists expressed gratitude for having such a credible and meticulously sourced resource, and I have seen their work improved as a result of having studied the book.

Being able to refer people to *Damming the Flood* saved IJDH significant staff time, as we could refer people to the book rather than collecting the information ourselves ...

It allowed newer staff members and volunteers to get up to speed quickly, and was a handy source for more experienced staffers to find the quote or cite they needed. This was useful in a range of activities, including legal filings in international courts, asylum hearings in the U.S., academic papers, briefing memos, book chapters, action alerts and Congressional briefings.

Damming the Flood was highly influential in the Haiti solidarity community in the period before the 2010 earthquake. We sold several boxes of the books... mostly to activists in

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North America. The book informed, influenced and inspired a whole range of activism. It is hard to measure this impact, but I believe the book did help hasten the return of democracy in Haiti.” [2]

The Haiti Support Group and the Canada Haiti Action Network both recommend *Damming the Flood* as essential background for understanding the challenges facing Haitian civil society today and for contributing to the modern struggle to establish political democracy [3]. The book has been a hugely important resource for the Center for Economic Policy Research from the time it was published to the present day.

The distribution of the book to the activist community on Haiti was also of crucial economic benefit to *Haiti Liberté*, the Haitian weekly campaigning newspaper, according to one of its journalists:

“We sold several hundred books, and those sales provided critically needed revenue when we were just launching both the newspaper and community center in the second half of 2007. The sales of the book may have indeed have been the one critical element that assured our survival at that embryonic stage.” [4]

Journalists

The wealth of detail and rigour of argument in *Damming the Flood* made it a resource that was prized by journalists. For example, freelance journalist Reed Lindsay has said:

“Of great importance, his book is the only one of its kind that refutes the mainstream narrative, a much-needed counterweight to Michael Deibert's *Notes From the Last Testament*. Peter's book has been an invaluable resource, and it will continue to be so for years to come. It is so refreshing to see such a practical and useful book coming out of a Philosophy department.”

The book influenced the reporting by journalists of the political situation in Haiti, by improving their understanding of the context of current events. A freelance journalist who was based in Haiti from 2010 to 2011 has said:

“Peter's book was a central influence in our understanding of Haiti's history and politics. I brought *Damming the Flood* everywhere... I would also refer correspondents and other journalists who flew in for short periods to his book pointing out chapters and sections they should read... I was living ... with dozens of other Haitians, journalists, activists, advocacy and NGO types. There were many books in the house, but *Damming the Flood* was the only one we had multiple copies of. [It was]...regularly discussed and recommended as the definitive history of the Aristide years.” [5]

while Daniel Lak, journalist with Al Jazeera, has stated that:

“I found the book immensely helpful in provoking thoughts and curiosity about how international players (Canada, France and especially the U.S.) were involved in the downfall of JB Aristide and Famni Lavalas.”

Despite activist organisations having put out some similar information previously, journalists regarded *Damming the Flood* as the only publication to have told this story. In the assessment of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, this illustrates the reluctance that journalists often have in accepting narratives that go against mainstream official sources, and the key role that a rigorous academic work can play in changing how the media reports complex and controversial stories. [2]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[1] Testimonial from Advocacy and Policy Director, Partners in Health

[2] Testimonial from Director, Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti

[3] Testimonial from Secretary, Haiti Support Group

[4] Testimonial from journalist, Haiti Liberté.

[5] Testimonial from freelance journalist