

# Exchange to change

## #48

September 2021

# Alumni

*magazine*



University of Antwerp

IOB | Institute of  
Development Policy

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Dear students,

This is my last introduction to the Exchange to Change as the chair of IOB. Next time, you will probably read the wise words of Danny Cassimon, who will take over my assignment following our principle of rotative leadership in our horizontal, collaborative IOB. In my previous introduction, in 2019, I talked about an exceptional -for Belgium- local code red for the then tropical temperatures, which we have not experienced this year, paradoxically due to the same climate crisis. Just a few days ago, the new IPCC report declared a universal 'code red' for humanity in the face of the imminent collapse of the planetary ecosystems as a consequence of threatening climate disruption. This is not a trivial academic statement, but rather an emerging reality that undeniably affects our own lives, let alone those of our children and grand-children. As always, the vulnerable and poor of the world are already suffering most, but recent events have also come to haunt the lives of the better-off in the so-called 'developed world' (sic). Given the overwhelming importance and urgency of this threat, I feel compelled to repeat my message of 2019, but with even more determination. Also, we need to be very clear that the climate emergency is not a stand-alone issue and that there are several other planetary boundaries which we have crossed or are on the verge of crossing due to systematic and catastrophic overexploitation of the planet (Ripple, et al., 2021). There are clear indications that our current capitalist development model, addicted to continuous economic growth, extracting and destroying ever more natural (and human) resources, is reaching its expiry date, or -at the very least- is due for a fundamental overhaul. Simply switching from a fossil fuel-based to a renewables-based model of capitalism, though clearly laudable progress in itself, will not be enough to bring humanity back to safety.

As a 'development policy institute' (what is in a word?), we are questioned into the depths of our souls by these life-threatening challenges. What kind of 'development' are we actually looking for? What kind of 'development policies' are we promoting? As Achille Mbembe expressed in his talk in 'Debating Decolonisation', today it is humanity itself which is at stake. And it is this stake which we primordially need to address. Along with other scholars, I consider that the current development model is intrinsically linked to historical extractivist, race- and gender- based colonial exploitation, which also promised (and up to a certain point also delivered) 'development' to the global South, albeit at the cost of on-going, often violent, unjust and profound societal transformations. Today, this promise to us all turns out to be an unsustainable mirage. We need to fundamentally transform and find a way out. And I still believe that we can find a way, even an attractive way out, if we manage to re-invent human life itself, make it more convivial (also with nature, of which we are a part) and less dependent on limitless consumption and individualistic appetite, with technology giving us a helping hand to reduce our footprint on the planet. For sure, the so-called 'developed people' (all over the world, and including ourselves) will need quite some 'development cooperation and capacity building' to re-encounter that way. Could there be a role for the IOB community in this crucial endeavour?

*Johan Bastiaensen  
IOB Chair*



# Alumni applause



## Published



Alumna Abeer Hakouz (training Strengthening National M&E Capacities, 2018), besides working as a Monitoring & Evaluation Manager at Queen Rania Teacher Academy is also very actively involved in supporting the evaluation society EvalJordan and in that capacity co-organised the IRIPE event 'Professionalisation of Evaluation'. Find out more about Abeer's work and EvalJordan activities on their new website (<http://evaljordan.org>) ... and both in Arabic and English!



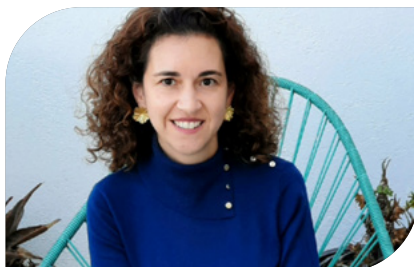
Alumna Rebecca Yohannes (training Governing for Development, 2010), Program Manager at Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) highlighted how CIPE and Asoko Insight jointly launched Ethics 1st, an innovative platform to make compliance easy for Small Businesses in Africa. The initiative sets out to reduce the risk of corruption.

Find out more here:

<http://ow.ly/LcX150G24k3>



Alumnus Bùi Hoàng Hà (DEM, 2011-12) feels proud to be part of two *Water for all* projects in Vietnam whereby two auto running water systems in Hoang Su Phi, Ha Giang are providing free clean water to hundreds of ethnic minority students in boarding school.



Alumna Natalia Wils (DEM, 2006-07), as Mexico country representative for Pro Mujer, puts a new initiative for women empowerment in the spotlight. Pro Mujer joined forces with other partners to promote the women empowerment through strengthening their businesses. The program provides personalised support for interested women and for them to be part of a learning community on Facebook made up of stores located around Mexico. Through the newly created Facebook community, Grandes Tenderas, a space of accompaniment in which tips and practical information for shop/business owners and managers will be shared. The forum invites female entrepreneurs for a friendly chat with representatives of the teams involved.

<https://bit.ly/3zAtRoA>



Alumnus, Abu Said Juel (DEM, 2013-14), currently working as research coordinator of BRAC Bangladesh, has been supporting the project on Open School Data. Open School Data can be used to promote mutual accountability, to foster trust, and to build a culture of open government within the education system.

[https://youtu.be/YzapH6e0\\_ws](https://youtu.be/YzapH6e0_ws)

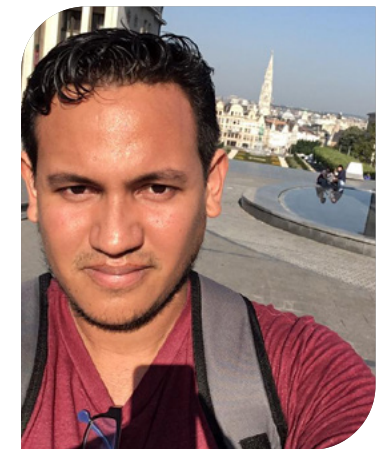
## In the spotlight

**Alumni Alder Contreras and Diana Tiholaz rejoin IOB but this time as our colleagues. They will be involved in PhD research and supporting IOB education as teaching assistant and PhD researcher. Let's find out a bit more about Alder and Diana .**

My name is Alder Miguel Contreras, and I joined the IOB team from the 1 September as an academic and teaching assistant under the supervision of Prof. Johan Bastiaensen. I did my Bachelor studies in Applied Economics at the Central American University (UCA-Nicaragua). In my bachelor's dissertation, I focused on the nature and applicability of spatial econometrics as a research tool to analyse Nicaragua's local and regional poverty levels and their socio-economic determinants. I did my Master studies at IOB, where I focused on qualitative and mixed-methods research strategies and their application in the evaluation of local development policies. My research interest in environmental governance structures and the ecosystem services framework also started during this period with the guidance of Prof. Gert Van Hecken. I wrote my Master dissertation on the theoretical and empirical linkages between the ecosystem services and food security concepts, and how the ecosystem services framework might be

better operationalised to simultaneously tackle environmental and food security issues in rural areas of Nicaragua.

My formal teaching experience includes four years as a part-time Instructor Lecturer and five years as a full-time Associate Lecturer at UCA-Nicaragua. I was the designated lecturer for the undergraduate courses on Econometrics, Microeconomics, Environmental Economics, and Local/Territorial Analysis of the Bachelor in applied economics. During the last four years, I was Nicaragua's representative in the Homologous' Network on Poverty and Inequality of the Association of Universities Entrusted to the Society of Jesus in Latin America (AUSJAL). During my time at UCA-Nicaragua, I also had the opportunity to collaborate with some of IOB's partner organisations in the country such as Nitlapan-UCA and Fondo de Desarrollo Local (FDL).



My name is Diana Tiholaz and, on 1 September, I happily joined the IOB team as a new AAP and PhD student.

I come from a small Moldovan village, and I am a citizen of two countries, Moldova and Romania. I acquired my Bachelor and first Master degrees, both were in Business Administration and Marketing, at the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova.

In 2016, my Belgian adventure started, when I came here to follow the master program in European studies of the Université Catholique de Louvain. There, I followed an amazing course in macroeconomics of development which, besides that made me fall in love with development studies in general (not only with development

economics), it, also, made me dream about pursuing a PhD in this field. It is well known that dreams should be followed, so, next, I enrolled in the IOB's Master in Development Evaluation and Management. Now I am a proud holder of this degree and, this year, finally, my dream became true!! I am working under the supervision of Prof. Nathalie Holvoet, and my research is on ICT-enhanced citizen science/community-based monitoring initiatives.

Apart from studies, I worked with different consulting companies in Moldova, Belgium, and Lithuania. Moreover, this year, I had the chance to acquire some working experience with UNDP Moldova and the Ministry of Finance of Moldova.

# In the meantime...

## “Alumni in action” talks

As part of the ‘Life after IOB’ trajectory, which sets out to prepare graduating IOB students for the challenges that lie ahead, IOB organised two ‘Alumni in Action talks’. In these two – unfortunately – online sessions, two alumni shared their experiences about their professional trajectory, how the IOB experience has helped them in their career and provided several tips about looking for jobs and internships. In a first seminar (12 May 2021), Iacopo Viciani (training Governing for Development, 2010) presented his work on “Migration in the new programming cycle of European Commission: examples from Africa

and Asia and shared some advice and ideas about working in the development sector”. On 28 May, Massiel Jimenez (DEM, 2019-20), currently working as an evaluation research analyst at International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), hosted an interactive session, focusing on some tips and tricks for looking and applying for work as well as provide some input about the content of her evaluation current work at IFAD. Getting some ideas and tips from the alumni from the field can hopefully serve as inspiration for students to find their ideal role as agents of change.



## Graduation

Every year the graduation ceremony marks the intersection of two key moments in time.

The end of an era for one group of students, the exciting beginning of a new era for a new group of students. Let’s hope that in this particular year, the latter group will have a much easier time than the former! For it has been a difficult year, filled with social distancing, testing, vaccination, real distance from family and friends, but hopefully also filled with getting to know new people, new perspectives, ideas...

On 15 September 2021, we celebrated the end of the era of the class of 2020-21. After a warm welcome by the new IOB chair, the deputy from the Province of Antwerp awarded the three Prizes for Global Research to Busani Marshall Nyathi (Zimbabwe – GOV), Marjorie Dizon Pamintuan (Philippines – GLOB) and Elias Maombi Ndatbaye (DR Congo – DEM). In a short video (available on YouTube) each of the award winners explained their dissertation research, the methods used and the policy relevance. As an interlude, a video capturing the highlights of the student IOB year, livened up the graduation ceremony. Finally, a student representative, on behalf of her fellow students, closed the ceremony with a memorable speech. And then the moment everyone had been waiting for, the proclamation of the students’ results and the handing over of the diplomas! Afterwards, students, staff and other invited guests could celebrate this happy occasion with a toast at the reception. Students continued to celebrate in a very much deserved and overdue IOB party!!

No goodbyes ... only ‘au revoir’!

<https://bit.ly/globalresearch-2021>



# Opportunities

SAVE THE DATE

## Alumni barometer conference & Launch Community of Practice on Citizen Science & Community Based Monitoring

On 8 December 2021 a conference will be organised in Morogoro (Tanzania) which will combine two events:

- Parallel workshops on Alumni policy tools and Community Based Monitoring
- Presentation the results of the alumni barometer research
- Launch of an IOB Community of Practice (CoP) on citizen science and Community Based Monitoring
- Network reception & walking dinner

Alumni are invited to participate! A separate call for the event and for the community of practice will still be sent out.



## First IOB alumni seminar in DR Congo

On 6 November 2021, an alumni event will be organised in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This event will also be the start of a DRC alumni chapter.

All alumni living in the DRC are warmly invited to register here online for the event, have your profile include in our booklet and/or to be part of the DRC chapter!

<https://bit.ly/alumni-seminar-drcongo>



Postponed several times because of COVID-19, we will finally start an IOB Belgium (Europe) chapter. We warmly invite you to join the network! To all alumni living in Belgium (or close enough to attend an IOB event in Belgium): please register for the network. As a first step we would like you to create a profile using the form below. We will use the information to create a profile booklet and to decide what type of activities to organise based on your interest. You can

also indicate in the online form if you’re interested in being a part of a small organising team.

We will have a first brainstorm meeting in October 2021 on what activities to organise in 2021/2022 in Belgium.

<https://bit.ly/belgium-chapter>

## IOB Belgium (Europe) alumni chapter



# “Us” and “them”: reciprocal perceptions and interactions between *amoko* in contemporary Burundi

PhD by Antea Paviotti



After summer in Antwerp, IOB is ready for a new academic year, not only with new students, but also with lots of interesting research output. One of the first things on our agenda is the PhD defense of our FWO-funded researcher Antea Paviotti. On 17 September, she will defend her PhD thesis “*Us*” and “*Them*”: reciprocal perceptions and interactions between *amoko* in contemporary Burundi. In this interview, Antea shares interesting details about her ethnographic work in Burundi, explains how she makes use of

social media in her research and reflects on her future ambitions.

**E2C:** Can you give us a short summary of your PhD research?

**AP:** In my PhD research, I analysed the notions of “us” and “them” in contemporary Burundi. I explored these notions in both the physical reality of contemporary Burundi and in the virtual reality of the Burundian Twittersphere. In Burundi, during 12 months of fieldwork between 2018 and 2020, I worked in three rural villages that had been affected by important episodes of violence between

Hutu and Tutsi in 1972 and in 1993. On Twitter, I analysed four periods of activity between 2014 and 2017 around the occasion of the commemoration of President Ntaryamira, who died on 6 April 1994 (on the same plane as Rwandan President Habyarimana while landing in Kigali, Rwanda). In these different contexts, I analysed the ways in which people positioned each other in in-groups and out-groups. I tried to understand who belonged to “us” and who belonged to “them”, observing the ways in which this reciprocal positioning took place. The aim was to observe when

and how “us” and “them” were defined in terms of *ubwoko*, or “ethnicity” (I use the Kirundi term *ubwoko* in my thesis to refer to Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa, the three groups usually defined as “ethnicities” in Burundi). The history of Burundi has been marked by repeated episodes of open violence between Hutu and Tutsi since independence in 1962. By analysing the role played by the *ubwoko* in the definition of in-groups and out-groups today, my research sheds light on the salience of belonging to the Tutsi or the Hutu *ubwoko* in contemporary Burundi.

**E2C:** You did ethnographic research. Can you tell us a bit more about what you did and the context you worked in?

**AP:** I did ethnographic research in the centre and the south of Burundi. Bugendana and Gasunu, in the centre of the country, were affected in an important way by the 1993 civil war. During the war, two camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) were created in these villages. These camps are nowadays still mainly inhabited by Tutsi, while it is mostly Hutu who live on the hills surrounding the camps. My third research site in the south, Mugara, has been more affected by the 1972 violence, when scores of Hutu fled the country, leaving behind their land and activities. In the absence of their fellow countrymen, many Tutsi took possession of the refugees’ land. Since the 2000s especially, many Hutu have been returning to Burundi. On their return, important land conflicts started between returnees and those who were occupying their land. During my PhD research, between 2018 and



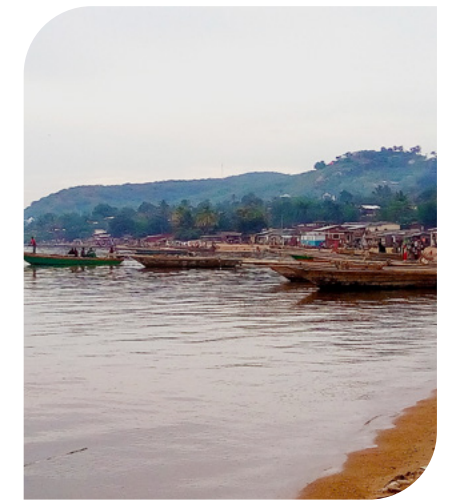
2020, I did interviews with 134 Hutu and Tutsi, men and women, youth and adults or elderly people, living in Bugendana, Gasunu, and Mugara. I collected life histories and asked questions about their daily activities to try to understand their definitions of “us” and “them” in everyday life.

**E2C:** What do you see as the most important finding of your PhD thesis?

**AP:** Categorisations of “us” and “them” in terms of *ubwoko* are still made in several situations that arise in everyday life in contemporary Burundi. This is because memories of past violence, which targeted a specific *ubwoko* each time, are still fresh in the minds of many people. Younger people do not seem to apply the same categorical classifications of the “others” in terms of *ubwoko*, likely because they have not been exposed to the same levels of violence as their parents and older relatives. A challenge will be to avoid the transmission of narratives of violence from father to son. Such narratives push younger generations to adhere to family narratives around the “others”, reproducing categorical classifications and thus perpetuating rigid divides between “us” and “them”.

Another important finding of my research is the existence of people who are situated in between “us” and “them”, in what I call an interstice of the social landscape. Following specific events and circumstances of life, some people ended up in a sort of void, or interstice, in between the two main groups of their social landscape. In this position, which I call interstitial, these people belong to neither of these groups, but in order to survive they need to interact with both of them in daily life. In a context where rigid classifications of “us” and “them” are predominant, I find this position particularly brave. Despite the difficulties endured in this position, people with interstitial identities defy binary divisions of the society, demonstrating to society that living in between “us” and “them” is actually possible, and thus relativising the imperative of group-belonging.

**E2C:** You make substantial use of social media in your research. What role does



the analysis of social media play in your PhD?

**AP:** I dedicated part of my PhD research to the analysis of boundary making on Twitter. This can be seen as an extension of my ethnographic research in Burundi, and it derives from the contemporary socio-political context of the country. Following the 2015 violence, many journalists and activists fled Burundi and continued their activity in exile through social media. Since then, political debate has largely been taking place on social media platforms, where narratives around the “others” emerge and can be analysed. My exploration of the Burundian Twittersphere thus complemented the more traditional ethnographic research that I did in Burundi. My study showed that analyses of boundary making can be done in the virtual reality too. Classifications of “us” and “them” are often done in a discursive way, and this happens on social media too. Processes of othering usually happen through accusations against out-groups, while other discursive strategies (like praising fellow members of the in-group, or using appellatives like “our”) reinforce the internal ties of in-groups. The purpose of my study, however, was not to compare online and offline narratives in order to better assess their reliability. What I could observe online gave me additional insights into what was said offline. This does not mean that the former explains the latter. Nevertheless, it is of relevance, I believe, to observe the relation and possibly the reciprocal influence between offline and online, in



Burundi and beyond.

**E2C: On which social media platforms do you do your research and why?**

AP: For practical reasons, during my PhD research I did systematic research on Twitter only. On Twitter, the content of the tweets is freely accessible unless the account that produced the message had changed its privacy settings (a minority

Instagram.

**E2C: What do you see as the specific advantages of using social media for research purposes?**

AP: Social media can facilitate access to information in contexts where physical access to the “field” is complicated. Information on online platforms can provide different perspectives on what

that information, knowledge for which a more traditional type of offline research is necessary.

**E2C: And are there any pitfalls or disadvantages?**

AP: Besides the reliability of online information, representativeness can also be problematic. In contexts like Burundi, where the Internet penetration



of accounts did so). On platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp, a personal connection is usually needed with the owner of another account in order to interact with his/her messages. On Twitter I could have access to many short tweets from several accounts, which sometimes included links to additional information on other webpages. In total, this represented a sufficient amount of material for my analyses. I did content and discourse analysis in my study: I analysed narratives, without claiming to provide any representative accounts of “what people think” in Burundi. In the future, I would like to continue my research on other social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, or

happens offline, allowing for additional understandings of the physical reality. This may provide richer and more complex information to analysts: nuances are added to the picture that do not easily emerge offline. This is particularly relevant for contexts where freedom of speech is not fully ensured: on social media, information can be gathered that cannot be shared as easily offline. This, of course, requires a careful evaluation of the reliability of what is said online, since information can be put into circulation for political purposes only. Online, this seems to happen more easily than offline. The reliability of online information can only be assessed through an in-depth knowledge of the context that produced

rate is low, social media are used by a small minority of the population. In addition, messages can be produced by bots (automated programs that interact in an autonomous way on social media) and by trolls (physical persons who intentionally instigate conflict in online conversations through hostile and often offensive arguments). Also, different social media platforms are used for different purposes. Twitter, for instance, seems to be particularly apt for political communication. In the Burundian Twittersphere, communication seems to be more aimed at international audiences than at publics inside Burundi, which might lead Twitter users to orient their messages in a specific way. In periods of

political tensions especially, information provided by journalists and activists in exile may be particularly biased

**E2C: Do you have any tips or tricks for our readers who do not yet have experience doing this kind of research?**

AP: Social media can provide insights into public opinion and I would recommend including them as an additional field in research designs, especially in our increasingly connected world. This is certainly needed today in disciplines like sociology and anthropology. However, the reliability of online information needs to be carefully weighed up in order to gain a proper understanding of what is going on “out there”. For this purpose, the in-depth knowledge of the (physical) context of production of online information is essential. Before approaching online data, an analyst needs to really know where that data comes from. Triangulation of the information is all the more necessary online, where people can more easily project an online persona and spread false information (the so-called “fake news”). In addition, one should always keep in mind that the online is never the simple translation of the offline. What we read on social media is part

of a discourse, and discourse is always situated (online as well as offline). Discourse analysis is key in approaching information on social media.

**E2C: Your PhD defense is planned on 17 September. How do you look back on your PhD trajectory?**

AP: I cannot believe how fast it has gone! It seems to me that I have just arrived in Antwerp, while it was almost four years ago. I learned so much during this period, about Burundi, about Belgium, but most importantly about myself. It has not always been easy, really. Sometimes I look back on some periods of my PhD and I really wonder how I could have gone through them. Regardless of how I survived them: I did it! However, I am happy to close this chapter of my life, and I am looking forward to starting a new one.

**E2C: What are your future aspirations: would you like to continue academic research; and do you have any plans for future research?**

AP: I have plenty of ideas for future research, but I still need to figure out what form I would like it to take. I love the rigorous approach of academic research, but I would like my research to reach

broader audiences, outside academia too. Unfortunately, these two aspects seem to be difficult to combine, especially at the early stages of an academic career, when one needs top-level academic publications to become known. To produce this type of publication, which is time- and energy-intensive, one might end up having little time for blogs and other non-academic publications.

In terms of content, I would like to continue working on some aspects which I did not have the time to investigate in depth during my PhD, like the relevance of the *umuryango* (usually translated as “clan” or “extended family”) as social identity in Burundi. On the other hand, I would find it appealing to analyse boundary making between “us” and “them” in Europe, and in our times of increased sensitivity to the decolonisation of research, I actually almost feel called to do so. An intriguing new avenue for future research is of course that of social media. I think that I would like to try to better understand the impact of social media on societies where the divide between “us” and “them” is already rigid, like in conflict-affected societies.

## Antea Paviotti

kindly invites you to the public defence of her doctoral dissertation

### PHD DEFENCE

## “Us” and “them”: Reciprocal perceptions and interactions between *amoko* in contemporary Burundi

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Bert Ingelaere  
Prof. Dr. Stef Vandeginste

**17 September 2021 - 17.00h  
Room B004 - Prinsstraat 13 - Antwerp**

Register by email to [antea.paviotti@uantwerpen.be](mailto:antea.paviotti@uantwerpen.be)  
or follow the defence online: <https://bit.ly/phd-paviotti>

Safety regulations will be confirmed in due time.

After the defence, you are welcome for a drink and  
a bite at Antea's place. Please register before  
Wednesday 15/09 to [antea.paviotti@uantwerpen.be](mailto:antea.paviotti@uantwerpen.be)

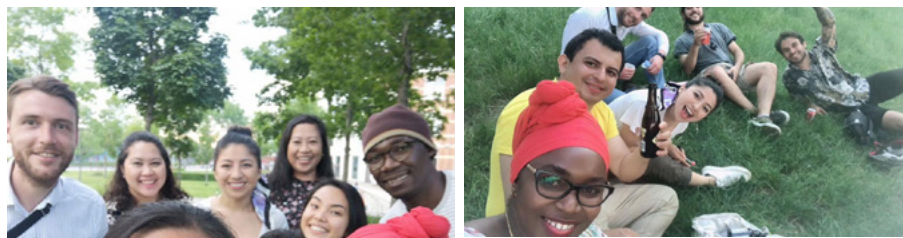




# This was the year 2020-2021



"I must admit that I had my first ever oral exam, something that I never knew existed, since that was unheard of in Ghana."



"IOB has provided me with a challenging but unforgettable year that really changed my perspective and allowed me to make some great friends along the way."



"This academic year was both challenging and exciting. But despite the challenges with online learning and being away from home during the pandemic, I'm happy that I managed to pull through thanks to my newfound friends and family."



"Embracing diversity and inclusion, new knowledge, and self-discovery"

"Diverse, unforgettable, funny"

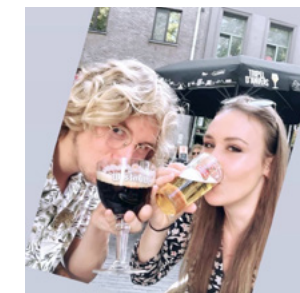
"Multicultural, challenging, transformative"

"It's been an enriching year where I got the chance to meet exceptional people from all over the world and experience intercultural exchanges in many respects."

"My experience at IOB has been beyond expectations. During this program, I gained new knowledge about multiple topics and I was able to specialise in poverty reduction. Furthermore, I have learned a lot about development issues, discovered new passions, and I – unexpectedly – noticed I am really interested in doing research. Most importantly, I met amazing persons from all corners of the world. I will forever cherish our moments together."

"The most memorable moment for me was when I finally got to see my classmates and professors face to face in January 2021."

#knowledgegoldmine



**REMEMBER**  
that you once  
dreamed of being  
**WHERE YOU  
ARE NOW.**





# The sport of resistance: pariahs and national heroes

It is easy to think that fun is all there is to sports. Just as with anything else, sports can be and has been used as a tool, even for political agendas. In this article, we highlight the many faces of sport and show how it has been used to send political messages, speak out against injustice and bring together warring factions.

For instance, before crossing the finish line in the 2016 Rio Olympics marathon, Ethiopian runner Fayisa Lilesa crossed his hands over his head, exhibiting an 'X' mark. Very few at the time realised the significance of this gesture, not only to the sport, but also to the politics of Ethiopia at the time.

imprisonment or life in exile. He chose the latter.

Lilesa was only able to return to Ethiopia in October 2018, after a new government led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came into power. Mass demonstrations by the Oromo community and acts of defiance like that of Lilesa, had forced the Hailemariam Desalegn-led government out of power.

Lilesa is one of the many sportspersons that have used their fields to show their discontent regarding injustice and political persecution. Sportsmen and women have always been a voice for the oppressed even when their actions have defied those with political power. Sports

Lives Matter campaigns especially, in an echo of the way George Floyd died. An example is Belgium's forward Romelu Lukaku kneeling down as part of a Black Lives Matter campaign ahead of the Euro 2020 quarter final between the Red Devils and Italy.

In May 2019, Manchester United players Paul Pogba and Amad Diallo were at the centre of a storm following their raising of a Palestinian flag during their team's Premier League game with Fulham. This took place following intense hostilities between Palestinian militant group Hamas and Israel, that resulted in weeks of bombardment of Gaza and the deaths of hundreds of civilians, mostly Palestinians. Caught in the middle of the controversy, Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer defended his players, arguing that they had a right to a different view.

Following that duo's show of defiance and bravado, in their triumphant Football Association Challenge Cup (FA Cup) final against Chelsea, Leicester City players Hamza Choudhury and Wesley Fofana followed suit, raising the Palestinian flag. All four of these players are Muslims, just like the hundreds of Palestinians killed during the conflict. Other Muslim football players also expressed solidarity for the Palestinian cause, including Arsenal's Mohamed Elneny, Mesut Ozil of Fenerbache and Inter Milan's Achraf Hakimi.

A few years earlier, Ghanaian footballer John Pantsil had stirred up a storm when he raised the Israeli flag while celebrating his team's world cup win over Czech Republic, in 2006 in Germany. Pantsil, who played for Israeli club Hapoel Tel Aviv pulled the Israeli flag from his sock, before waving it before the fans and cameras.

His gesture was in appreciation of his Israeli fans. However, following a barrage of criticism from the Arab world, and Muslims online, the Ghanaian national team issued an apology.

Sports boycotts based on political

ideologies and differences have often played out on the field. From the Cold War up until now, boycotts still persist in sports. Israel has perhaps suffered most boycotts in recent times.

In some sports where Israel has participated, Arab competitors have boycotted the games in protest of the long-running conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians. Countries like Iran have a policy of not allowing their players to compete against Israelis.

In the recently concluded 2021 Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo, the International Judo Federation suspended Algerian Fethi Nourine for refusing to compete against an Israeli athlete. Fethi, who was already in Japan, withdrew from the Games after it became apparent that he would face Tohar Butbul from Israel. Previously, he had withdrawn from the 2019 world championship in Tokyo to avoid facing an Israeli competitor.

At the same Olympics in Tokyo, a Sudanese judoka player, Mohamed Abdalrasool, pulled out of his game against the same Israeli opponent, Tohar

Butbul. On both occasions, Butbul won by default due to the withdrawal of his opponents.

Even more recently, in July 2021, Lebanese martial arts fighter Abdullah Miniato withdrew from the International Martial Arts Federation Youth MMA World Championship in Bulgaria, avoiding the possibility of competing against an Israeli opponent.

Arab and Muslim sportsmen and women face a lot of pressure, at home and from their fans, not to compete against Israelis because of the decades long Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although most federations don't force their sportspersons to boycott Israeli opponents, the decisions they take can affect their careers and status at home. Failure to analyse the political ramifications of whichever decision they take can have consequences. In 2007, Kenyan born marathoner Mushir Salem Jawher lost his Bahraini citizenship after competing in the Tiberias Marathon in Israel. Although this was later overturned and he regained his Bahraini citizenship,

it served as a warning to athletes who go against public opinion.

In 2019, Iranian Saeid Mollaei, who refused to withdraw from the World Judo Championship in Tokyo in order to avoid the likelihood of facing an Israeli opponent in the final, could not return home for fear of persecution. He sought asylum in Germany.

Some Arab and Muslim majority countries, including Malaysia and United Arab Emirates, have denied Israelis visas while hosting sports events, and in other cases outrightly denied them the right to participate. Where Israelis have participated and won, either the Israeli flag has not been raised or the national anthem has not been played. Although most international sports federations have a non-discriminatory policy, this has not stopped such acts from happening.

International sports events have over the years provided cover for sportspersons fleeing from political persecution and ideologies they don't agree with. A Czechoslovakian gymnastics coach became the first person to defect in 1948



Lilesa was protesting the continued persecution and killing of Ethiopia's largest ethnic group, the Oromo. Lilesa's solo protest followed larger protests that resulted in bloodshed over the Ethiopian government's plans to reallocate Oromo land. Hundreds of people were killed in these protests.

His gesture divided public opinion among Ethiopians, with some, especially his fellow Oromo people, showing sympathy for his cause, while others regarded him as a traitor. It was only after this protest that Lilesa realised the real impact of what he had done and the possible consequences, which included death,

has always been a theatre of political protest.

Ahead of the National Football League (NFL) games in September 2016, San Francisco 49ers' Colin Kaepernick, with the help of a teammate, Eric Reid, knelt during the national anthem in protest against police brutality and racial injustice. This was followed by his ostracisation from the league and he has not been allowed to play since new year's day of 2017, in addition to being denied jobs. However, the gesture, which was inspired by Martin Luther King Jr.'s practice of kneeling in prayer and protest, has transcended time and is used in Black





during the London Games. Her defection was due to the lack of civil liberties in Hungary.

During the 1996 Games in Atlanta, Iraqi weightlifter Raed Ahmed, who opposed Saddam Hussein's rule, defected to the United States of America. During the Cecafta Senior Challenge Cup in Uganda in 2019, seven members of the Eritrean national team defected, running away from political persecution, forced labor and forced conscription in the army. Eritrea has been under strongman Isaias Afwerki's rule since 1993.

Cuba has also suffered several defections over the years, including in 2021 when popular baseball player Cesar Prieto defected to the USA. Most recently, during the 2021 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, Belarusian sprinter Krystsina Tsimanouskaya defected to Poland, fearing persecution at home in Belarus after criticising the team coaches.

Although sports boycotts have dominated the back pages, there are several cases where sportsmanship has triumphed over politics.

Perhaps the most iconic of these is of Luz Long embracing and supporting Jesse Owens at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. In 1936, Adolf Hitler had started implementing his plan to prove Aryan

supremacy over other races. The public embrace between Luz and Jesse showed that sportsmanship could triumph over racism.

In the 2021 Summer Olympics in Japan, the Iranian basketball team competed against the United States of America, despite their political rivalry.

In Ivory Coast, footballer Didier Drogba is credited with halting the Ivorian Civil War. The civil war had been raging since 2002, with a country divided between the south controlled by President Laurent Gbagbo and a rebel force controlling the north of the country. In 2005, Ivory Coast was on the verge of qualifying for the World Cup. With a Didier Drogba inspired win over Sudan, Ivory Coast, despite political differences between the north and the south, had qualified for the World Cup for the first time.

Perhaps the most iconic of Didier Drogba's actions came after the match. In a post-match address to his nation, Drogba called upon the men and women of Ivory Coast to be united. Drogba, accompanied by his team-mates, called upon the country to narrow the divide by holding general elections.

The World Cup qualification had united the country where politics had failed. Both the north and the south were united

in victory, and thereafter both sides intensified the negotiations, resulting in a ceasefire between the two opposing sides.

Although Ivory Coast was eliminated in the group stage at the World Cup, this didn't stop Drogba from continuing with his efforts for peace. In 2006, after being voted the African player of the year, Drogba toured the rebel-held northern part of the country and in 2007, through his influence the country's match against Madagascar was moved from the Capital Abidjan to the rebel-held city of Bouake in the north.

For the first time in years, the sounds of firing guns were replaced by football chants. Rebel militants, who had been preoccupied with fighting, joined chanting fans to support their national team. Although Didier Drogba and his team mates' efforts didn't end the civil war, their efforts contributed to bringing peace to Ivory Coast. At a time of heightened adversity, Drogba and team-mates gave Ivorians hope.

In Liberia, in the midst of a civil war that lasted almost a decade, one football player stood out as a national icon. George Weah remained loyal to Liberia, advancing issues of education, sexual health and refugee protection as a

UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador in 1997.

Despite attacks on his family, including the rape of his cousins, Weah remained committed to the Liberian national team. Weah's political activism continued from the time of Charles Taylor until his election as President of Liberia in 2017. Other sportsmen who have been elected into political office include Manny Pacquiao in Philippines, Vitali Klitschko in Ukraine and Imran Khan in Pakistan.

South Africa's winning of the 1995 Rugby

World Cup was a great boost to a country that was emerging from apartheid and international sports isolation. For the first time in decades, the nation was united to celebrate their victory over New Zealand in the finals held in Johannesburg.

The world over, sports diplomacy has been used to bring peace to beleaguered communities and nations. Sports like football have been used to rehabilitate communities recovering from conflict like

Kosovo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast.

Sport has been used all over the world in an attempt to foster development or peacebuilding. Countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ivory Coast use football as one of the few successful vehicles when it comes to driving some form of integrative unity (Levermore, 2008).



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# Alumni panel

## Phonenipha Mathouchanh

*My IOB-friends call me Pui*

**GOV 2014 | Laos**



**Where are you currently living?** I am living in Vienna, Austria.

**Where do you work?** After graduation, I continued to work for my government in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). I then moved to the international level where I am now working as a consultant supporting nuclear non-proliferation efforts in Southeast Asia. My tasks include: providing insights into the nuclear safeguards situation in Southeast Asian countries; suggesting solutions to overcome these challenges; and supporting related projects and activities.

**How has the IOB experience affected your life/ career?**

Applying for the Advanced Master Programme in Governance and Development at IOB was the right

decision to make. Professionally speaking, I developed strong research and analytical skills using different methods. This includes how to develop the most pragmatic policies and solutions based on analysis, which are useful skills for my current job. I really enjoyed the programme's courses, which allowed me to have full freedom to research the topic that I was interested in. Culturally speaking, I also learnt how to work in a multilateral environment. IOB students come from around the world and that is the charm of the programme. Furthermore, being in Antwerp allowed me to experience not only Flemish culture but also European culture in general which allows me to be adaptable and understand the value of diversity.

governance.

**If you were the director of a research fund, what is a research question that you would agree to finance?** My experience as a PhD student has allowed me to better know the initiatives from indigenous communities who are developing and implementing "development" projects based on their own interests and needs. In these projects, the local actors are asking questions that are relevant to them regarding territorial governance, environmental justice, indigenous epistemologies, and so on. I consider this kind of proposal to be one of the most important strategies to decolonize the development agendas. So, more than a specific research question, I would agree to finance action-research projects which involved this kind of initiative whether in "knowledges" production (yes, in plural) or governance "experiments", that reframe and open up the development agendas.

## Marianne O'Shea

**GOV 2012 | Ireland**



**Where are you currently living?** Having studied and worked abroad, I have been living and working in Ireland for the last couple of years!

**Where do you work?** I am a Lecturer at Maynooth University Department of Applied Social Studies, where I teach on and co-ordinate under- and post-graduate professional programmes in Community Work and Youth Work.

**Tell us more about one of the exciting projects/ programmes/ ideas you are currently working on?** I am currently a member of faculty at MU DAPPSS, where I love my work with the students. There, I try to create a space for them to critically engage with the root causes of inequalities in Irish society and seek to address these alongside the communities and young people that are most affected. My IOB experience helps me to bring a global dimension to this work, in terms of both solidarity and in seeking solutions. One advantage of the pivot to online teaching that has happened over the last year is that we have been able to connect more easily with voices from across the globe and I have been lucky to be able to call upon some of my IOB network to share their insights with MU students!

In terms of research, I am currently involved in the development of a community-led enquiry into women's experiences of participating in local governance processes. As a researcher, I think it is important to focus on topics and themes that will contribute to community and youth work.

**How did the IOB experience affect your life/ career?** My time at IOB was wonderful and significantly impacted both my life and career. From meeting an array of interesting people from around the world, to developing new perspectives on global concerns, to building on my own academic skills, my studies at IOB provided a strong foundation for my career development over the past decade.

I arrived at IOB with a background in community development in Ireland and a strong commitment to its values. The literature and frameworks I was exposed to at IOB provided a new lens for me to engage with that work. My doctoral research brought the two worlds together to some degree, using a collaborative governance framework to examine civil society participation in local governance spaces in Ireland.

At a personal level, my time at IOB provided me with networks and friendships that have sustained almost a decade now. Given that my work now involves creating the conditions for a group of students to work together to examine and address complex social issues, I have a renewed appreciation for colleagues at IOB's capacity to create a dynamic and inclusive learning space for students from all over the world!



## René Rodríguez Fabilena

**GLOB 2017 | Nicaragua**

**Where are you currently living?** I am living in Antwerp, Belgium.

**Where do you work?** Currently, I have the great opportunity to work at IOB as a PhD student. I am working on the role of mitigation climate policy in the competence among indigenous (mayangna) and State territorialities in Nicaragua. I am particularly interested in how climate mitigation projects influence the ontological, subjective and material dimensions of the the processes of (de)territorialisation in mayangna territories. Beyond pursuing an academic degree, I consider this PhD journey as an opportunity to learn from different actors and try to build bridges among different levels of environmental and climate



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