

Exchange to change

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Dear students,

This is my first introduction to the Exchange to Change as the new chair of IOB. In his last intro in the previous E2C, my predecessor, Johan Bastiaensen, not only already announced the rotation of chair, but also set a high bar of expectations, by proclaiming that you could from now on read my wise words here. A challenging task indeed, to which I will try to live up in the coming three years; to be on the safe side as a starter I will, implicitly and explicitly, refer to some of his wise words here.

In my first speech as a chair on the occasion of the student graduation ceremony last September, I tried to define what IOB could be for you, and through you: a university-based global community platform, hoping to cultivate a space for active academic encounters of different knowledges and interests where we co-generate relevant knowledge and forge global coalitions in order to find innovative and socially just answers to address the life-threatening challenges to our shared planetary commons. A safe space, that creates for all involved, and foremost for you students, the appropriate conditions and ecology to learn, to develop deep, solid and diverse roots, to get deeply rooted in your profession; a space that also allows you to bravely experiment with using your newly acquired knowledge into the real world, so that you develop strong wings, that allow you to fly out and make a difference!

In stating this at that time, I was of course addressing myself primarily to the current IOB students, but I want to repeat this here again not only to them, but also, very explicitly, extending this same message to all you alumni. I hope that the IOB (alumni) Community, and this E2C magazine, can truly be a platform where you can continue to strengthen your professional roots, and report on how you have used your professional wings to make a difference, professionally and societally. And more importantly, I hope that we can count on your involvement to co-create IOB communal roots and wings. IOB needs this exchange to be able to make a change. Our societal 'license to operate' depends on the ability to co-create knowledge and tackle the big societal

Danny Cassimon
IOB Chair

challenges in our field together with all of you.

We live in very challenging times indeed. Most strikingly maybe, as my predecessor pointed out earlier, some most recent calamities such as the global pandemic, some first more visible eruptions of climate change effects, and also the war in Ukraine, demonstrate to us all that the 'Global North' is by no means exempt from such calamities. In some awkward way, it not only levels the playing field, and may make Western views to become less arrogant and dominant, but also makes an even better case than ever for the need to embark in this co-creation and re-creation endeavor, using all possible experiences and knowledge worldwide, in order to try bring "humanity (back) to safety".

Again this E2C issue offers a blend of more general knowledge creation, such as on Afghanistan, with more personal life-stories, where we see roots and wings develop in a personal way, such as on students being mums at the same time. To me, one of the virtuous consequences of zooming in on these personal stories is the fact that it helps develop the IOB community into an IOB family. In a well-functioning family, difference of opinions can co-exist and enrich the debate, but members care for each other, and especially when the common goal is threatened, the family re-unites around the common goal. This is also what happens when a family member passes away. This issue also reports on the sudden death of our colleague Bert Ingelaere. For the staff of IOB, it constitutes a great loss as Bert meant a lot to all of us. For those among you that experienced Bert as a teacher, or read his work, I am quite confident that Bert also made a difference to all of you, that he contributed in a unique way to the development of your personal roots and wings. At IOB, we were very much touched by the large amounts of your warm personal reactions of sympathy and condolences expressed on this occasion and, more generally, by all expressions of care-taking and support initiated, like what would happen in a family. When I see this all happening, it makes me proud to be the chair of such an institute.

BERT INGELAERE

1979–2022

Oh what a loss we have amidst us! May his precious soul rest in peace.

We as alumni do sincerely cherish that we were fortunate enough to have had him as our teacher. We will surely miss his physical presence but his work shall live on among us, with continued impact on generations yet unborn.

With a sad heart,
Chrispine Botha - Malawi

Prof. Bert Ingelaere was one of my favorite teachers at IOB and the kindest dissertation tutor. Even after my life at IOB, he guided and helped me, and I will be forever grateful for that. He was a brilliant researcher and professor; he always made any conversation brighter with his insights. I feel honored because I was one of his students and had the opportunity to co-author a paper with him. I will always admire him and he will remain alive in my memory and heart. My deepest condolences to his family and friends. May his soul rest in peace and light forever.

Laura Lopez Muñoz - Colombia

My passion for research and what it really means to the world comes from Prof. Bert Ingelaere's teachings. What a deep, meaningful and relevant courses he gave us in IOB!!! I still remember, after 6 years, the examples he used to give us and how he used to share his research in a very interactive and transparent way. It's with deep sorrow that I am writing this memorial....the world will miss him. May God rest his soul in peace.

Abigael Teklu - Ethiopia

I vividly remember Prof. Bert as this imposing figure. He had this quiet confidence that at times would make one self-conscious. But, he's the one who indulged a student's idea and take pauses while deep in his thought on how to respond. I started my year with his class, lost in between discussion about epistemology. Nevertheless, coming from an economics background, I have learned to unlearn and be more critical of the system. A friend of mine reminded us it was Bert who gave us The Idealist as a reading. The book I took away as a student of IOB, a culmination of my journey and a reminder of my role as a development worker. It is Bert's legacy to me about the continuous tension between the ideal and reality, which brings my experiences into perspective.

Cherie Anne Quirante - Philippines

Bert, you were very kind, generous, intelligent and a good person. You touched many lives of students, researchers and respondents in the field. It is very unfortunate that you have gone very early when the world is still hungry for your contribution and presence. It will be hard for us to move forward without you. My sincere condolences to your family, friends, IOB staff and the entire research community. May the Good Lord receive you. RIP Bert.

Frank Ahimbisibwe - Uganda

An amazing professor. I'll never forget him as a committed researcher. It is a pity that one of the few European political anthropologists that considered social, cultural, and political microdynamics passed away so soon. Rest in peace, Bert. Your work and love for conscious and consistent academia will cross generations and continents.

Miguel Saquimu - Guatemala

I had the privilege of having Bert as professor at the IOB. He had the wonderful ability of making you see things from different angles, of making you aware of your assumptions by pointing at other perspectives that put yours into question. He communicated not only his wealth of knowledge, but also a gentle attitude keen on listening and understanding. I have no doubt that he has left seeds of growth in me and in all of his students, and that he will be remembered with the greatest affection.

Gianfabrizio Ladini - Italy

Prof. Bert Ingelaere took me through the qualitative research methods in the academic year 2017–2018 at IOB. As an anthropologist and philosopher, he had a unique way of understanding people. He easily became among my favourites personalities because of his calm nature and genuineness. As someone who has gone through refugee life and is constantly affected by protracted conflict, I found someone who could understand what my world views were in him. Not a single time had I ever heard an impolite or a disrespectful comment towards me from Prof. Bert. Instead, he gave me one recommendation after another whenever I wanted. He was so supportive, long after I left IOB, and has advised me on several occasions to maintain my dreams, especially at my low points. His encouragement, whenever I was down would lift me up, thus seeing the brighter side of life. I remember one time he told me that I should reach out to him whenever I needed any help. To me, that is what a family does to another member of that family. Prof. Bert exemplified the IOB global family in that sense. From an African perspective, he showcased Ubuntu, 'you are because I am.'

In my culture, the death that is mourned most is that of a young person, because they still have a lot of flowers to blossom. This was the case with Prof. Ingelaere. He was young and still had a lot to offer to the world especially in the field of conflict as shown by his book on Rwanda's Gacaca courts.

Kujiek Ruot - South Sudan

In loving MEMORY

Our dear colleague Prof. Bert Ingelaere unexpectedly passed away on 4 February 2022. Bert was a kind and warm person, a deep thinker, a dedicated teacher, a highly respected member of the academic community, a very appreciated colleague and a dear friend. He will be remembered – far beyond IOB – for his profound knowledge of the long-term effects of conflict in the African Great Lakes region.

We are grateful for Bert's professional and personal contributions to our institute.

Visit his memorial page on our website:
<https://www.uantwerpen.be/bertingelaere>

In the meantime...

A taste of Antwerp's culture to start our development studies

After an intense introduction week in which we learned about how IOB works, academic standards, use of the library, and took preparatory tests on English, Excel and Economics, we had time to relax during a fun mission game in Antwerp city centre. We were split into teams of 4 or 5 people and received instruction cards, as well as an app to follow our performance during the game. Looking for hidden symbols in the buildings, houses and streets and taking pictures of specific objects like cactuses, dried sausages and the city's famous *handjes* (biscuits shaped like a hand) would give us points. Constant communication through a chatbox within the app would keep us updated on the scores of the rest of the teams. After the long walk exploring the city, we enjoyed traditional Belgian fries for lunch and had different activities to get to know each other better. The day ended with a soccer game and an end of summer party in a bar in Park Spoor Nord.



Mobility Window in Tanzania

Through its Mobility Window programme, IOB offers students the opportunity to apply their research skills during a research internship at a partner university in the Global South. In 2021, the internship was organised only in Tanzania, at Mzumbe University.

Five IOB students – Ines, Jelinke, Josué, Marieke and Zanna – spent six weeks doing field research. Even though some had done both qualitative and quantitative research on similar topics before, none of them had experience in a programme like this before.

The programme began with a short training on mobile data collection and two research teams were formed which included both IOB and Mzumbe students. One team was focused on (the narratives around) COVID-19 vaccination willingness and the second team participated in the Fuatilia Maji (uantwerpen.be/fuatiliamaji) project, a community-based water monitoring project which aims to reduce waterborne diseases.

Despite coming from different backgrounds, the IOB students got along very well with the Mzumbe students, who were extremely welcoming and friendly. The collaborative interaction allowed for a successful research process.

Challenges

The COVID -19 pandemic is a very sensitive topic in Tanzania, due to the sceptic perspective of the former president, John Magufuli, and the very different approach of the current president Samia Suluhu, who took over after the sudden passing of president Magufuli in 2021. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, the research team had to be creative when collecting data on the topic, building on media analysis, informal conversations and a limited number of survey questions.

The data collection for the Fuatilia Maji project was also challenging due to, for example, poor internet connection and the large distance between villages. Also, while English is recognised as an official language in Tanzania, many people in the villages don't speak the language.

"We learn how data is collected in a development context. Before going there I didn't understand the issues. Data collection in the Global South is different, there are many obstacles that can affect your research." Jelinke

Results and added value

The research showed some interesting results: on the coronavirus vaccination study, the experience illustrated that there is a great hesitance towards the COVID vaccine, due to a fear of vaccination side effects, belief in alternative medicine, distrust of western medicine, and propagated by the information provided at religious gatherings and on social media.

The Fuatilia Maji project, on the other hand, evidenced the value of education for people to be more conscious about water consumption and the importance of the quality of water. The research provides key information for future actions concerning water quality and infrastructure and has increased the capabilities and confidence of community monitors and students.



each other's culture as they organised a multicultural dinner where they discussed differences among countries.

"The most important thing I learned was how to do fieldwork: the Tanzanian students really know how to go into the field, talk to people and do it efficiently. Tanzanian culture is very keen on taking time to talk to people and they really know to use it to their advantage and to practically organise the visits to make them as efficient as possible. I also learned to be flexible, for example with the student permit issue, it was inspiring to see how well they handled it, finding solutions." Marieke

The participants agree that the topics and the methods applied during the research are very interesting and most will consider them for their Master's dissertation and their future career. Although it was an intense programme, they encourage future students to apply for this amazing experience.

"If you like to travel, getting to know a different culture and if you think you match the professional experience and academic training required, it is highly recommended." Josué

"This was one of the best experiences of my life. I would say to all future students to definitely take this opportunity and apply! You will not regret it." Ines



uantwerpen.be/fuatiliamaji

More than just a research experience

Along with the academic experience, the programme gave students the opportunity to get to know a different culture.

The interaction within teams taught students from both countries meaningful lessons. The experience of religion in daily life, perceptions of politics, the students' work ethics, the lack of opportunities and taking the time to listen to people are some of the differences that intrigued the IOB team and gave them new perspectives.

On the other hand, Tanzanian students learned from the academic experience of the IOB team, working together on the data collection and analysis, which also provided additional insights into the local context. Finally, students got a taste of



The heritage of violence and failed aid. What's next for aid in Afghanistan?

In August 2021, the situation in Afghanistan made the headlines once again, after the humiliating withdrawal of US military troops was crowned with a frantic final exit and the shockingly swift Taliban takeover of the country. These events ended America's longest war and closed a chapter in aid history likely to be remembered for its colossal failures and unfulfilled promises. To grasp a better understanding of Afghanistan's reality and the future of aid in this country, we carried out several interviews. The first was with Valentin Poponete, who has been studying Afghanistan for the last 16 years, is currently a NATO policy analyst, and is working toward a PhD on this topic at IOB. Next, we talked with one of IOB's alumni from Afghanistan, Shirshah Amerkhail. Shirshah followed the IOB Master's programme in Globalisation and is currently a sustainability advisor for a firm in Brussels. Before he came to Europe, he worked for a BBC media programme aiming to strengthen government accountability in Afghanistan. Our last interview was with Prof. Althea Rivas who works as a Senior Lecturer in Global Development, Peace, and Conflict at SOAS University in London. In her research, Prof. Rivas explores the politics of development, conflict, humanitarian intervention, and peace. She has been working on Afghanistan since 2005, and also works on Liberia and Somalia.

Our aim is to help the reader understand the complex historical context of the country and its aid flow history, as well as explore some possibilities to move forward.

Overview: Afghanistan's history in a nutshell

Happy is the country which has no history. To understand many of Afghanistan's woes, we need to look back to its past. Afghanistan has a long history of external revenue dependence, perverse aid effects, and a developed war-based economy. This reliance on external sources started in the 18th

century with tributes to the Durrani (Afghan) Empire (Bizhan, 2017), continued with the British Empire's subsidies in the 19th century (Rubin, 2000), and foreign aid in the mid-20th (Bizhan, 2017). This inherited history, along with an unsustainable tax base, had a tremendous effect on the state-building process. The Afghan rulers viewed access to external revenue as a top priority and they had little interest in creating strong state institutions and providing public services. The Cold War dynamics have deepened foreign revenue dependency and lack of state accountability (Rubin, 2000). In the 1960s, foreign aid funded more than 40% of the budget. While changing sides in favor of the communist bloc decreased the aid flows, natural gas exports to the Soviet Union successfully replaced them, and the unaccountability of elites remained unquestioned (Verkoren & Kamphuis, 2013). The Soviet invasion in 1979 laid the foundations of a war-based economy in Afghanistan. The rural economy was devastated. Much of the rural population fled to Pakistan and Iran where numerous Afghan refugee-warrior communities were created, providing a breeding ground for the Taliban movement. Western aid taking the form of humanitarian assistance entangled with the Cold War agenda and led to perverse aid effects (Goodhand, 2002). After the withdrawal of Soviet forces, the aid donors ignored Afghanistan. The lack of opportunities, hunger, and poverty created incentives for smuggling, the illegal trade of gems, and for poor farmers to engage in opium poppy growing. The main economic winners were the strongmen who provided security to the traders in return for tribute (Rubin, 2000). The country disintegrated into fiefdoms with hundreds of warlords.

The Taliban started little by little to take control of the country in the mid-'90s, receiving popular support by promising to impose stability and rule-of-law. Before the US-led invasion, the original



Taliban regime controlled around 90% of the country (Maizland, 2021). During this period, basic state functions were ignored and no social services were provided. In addition, the regime imposed a harsh type of justice based on an austere interpretation of Sharia law. Women were forced to wear the head-to-toe burqa, music and television were banned, and men with beards deemed too short were jailed.

Following the 9/11 attacks, US-allies troops, along with the anti-Taliban resistance, toppled the Taliban regime. The establishment of a new political order based on electoral democracy and Islamic values, adoption of a new constitution and an exponential increase in aid-flows directed to Afghanistan changed Afghan society in the last twenty years. Tribal links weakened, the country became more urban, the state started to provide public services and the level of education increased.

These events tell us just a little bit about Afghanistan's story and reality. To better understand the context, we need to look into the complex social reality of Afghan society.

Afghanistan's reality: overlapping conflicts and divides

Afghanistan exhibits a complex social mosaic of religious, ethnic, sub-ethnic and tribal groups bound by complex and adversarial relations. Although religion is not a conflict point with the majority of the population identifying as Muslim, there is a vast diversity of more than fifty ethnic groups living in the country (i.e. Pashtun, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Turkmen, and Aimaqs) and further sub-division within clans and groups (Bizhan, 2017; Maley, 2018), which could bring into question the existence of an Afghan identity. However, all our interviewees disagreed with this line of thought and gave us examples of Afghans' sense of belonging, such as numerous pollresults showing that Afghan people love their country and have a strong feeling of belonging to Afghanistan, from Valentin Poponete; a self-identification of common 'Afghan' traits from outside the country by Prof. Rivas; and simple confirmation of said identity by Shirshah¹. Nevertheless, this 'national identity' is not coherent and unified, due to ethnicity being closely tied to citizens' sense of political and social identity, something which, as Shirshah underlined, creates ethnic rifts that run deep in Afghanistan. Moreover, these ethnic differences and rivalry have been heavily exploited by, on one hand, global and regional powers (USA, China, Russia, Iran, India and Pakistan) and, on the other hand, opportunistic warlords fighting over territory, drug production, smuggling routes and populations to tax.

The complex Afghan system of interconnected and overlapping conflicts established an undefined political order and dubious state institutions. Afghanistan constantly drifts from one ideological blueprint to another (secular-nationalism, constitutional monarchy, reformist-socialism, theocratic dictatorship and electoral democracy) creating antagonism from competing political orders of religion,

ethnic allegiances and tribal loyalties. The existence of numerous ethnic groups within the country, dominated by a Pashtun majority, constantly raises questions about the fair distribution of state resources and power. There is a tendency for ethnic-led policies to be put into place, such as the educational quotas per ethnic group. Shirshah mentioned that the Pashtun ethnic group has a higher university enrollment quota allocation due to them being the predominant ethnic group and therefore having the highest population count, as well as living in, arguably, areas that are more affected by war. This policy, which could be cataloged as 'fair', could also hinder other ethnic groups' enrollment into higher education and further increase the disparities between ethnicities.

Nowadays, the Taliban controls the country, and Afghanistan has returned to a theocratic dictatorship. Both our experts agreed that the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan was not as 'swift' as the international press tends to characterise it. In the eyes of Prof. Rivas, the decision to leave the elected government out of the negotiations between the Taliban and the USA that began in 2018 set the stage for the Taliban takeover which was similar to a textbook coup. Mr. Poponete does not agree with the idea of a coup but agrees that the exclusion of the Afghan government from the USA-Taliban negotiations coupled with a reduction of the US and NATO forces and of their support to the Afghan forces facilitated the Taliban quick takeover of the major population centers, in multiple instances without much resistance from either the Afghan security forces or warlords' militias. The fleeing of President Ghani was the decisive element that resulted in the almost total disintegration of the government and the security forces and, ultimately, the Taliban takeover of Kabul. Nevertheless, all our interviewees confirmed that the Taliban regime lacks legitimacy. Mr. Poponete underlined that the population's confidence in the Taliban has never been over 10% in the whole country, thus, the current regime's popular support is very low. Shirsha pointed out some ethnic and

socio-economic differences between the Taliban's supporters and opponents. 80% of the current Taliban are Pashtuns, and most of the Taliban's supporters are Pashtuns from vulnerable groups. The low popular support was replaced with support from many warlords. The Taliban learned lessons from their previous failed regime. They cut deals with warlords of different ethnicity and used the discourse of "the Americans invaded us, we should stay together and take back our country" to create a more unified front. This partially explains why the Taliban takeover went relatively smoothly despite reduced support from population.

Despite the Taliban's take-over, there is still some hope for a brighter future associated with the current regime, according to Shirshah. As explained, the Taliban has reached some agreements with minority ethnic groups, which could potentially lead to less violence and more stability inside the country. Another point worth mentioning is that one of the weak points in implementation and monitoring of international aid was due to the Taliban not allowing convoys to move freely, something which could be a point of discussion and change with international organisations. Besides, we should remember that Afghanistan has changed, partly because of greater urbanisation, and partly because of the influx of external powers that allowed human rights to be implemented. Compared to 20 years ago, Afghans are more educated, less prone to religious fanaticism, adhere more closely to the principles of human rights, and are craving a decent life; 'decent' meaning a life that includes and respects human rights for all. The Taliban cannot ignore it and pretend everything is still functioning as it was when they left power 20 years ago. In order to keep peace, they should be less strict in applying the Sharia Law. For instance, a sign of compromise is that they have agreed to continue with women's education with some restrictions (i.e. complete separation of sexes at school, etc.). The current situation still casts doubts on the possibility that the Taliban regime will manage to bring peace and security to Afghanistan. There are

even more doubts about whether in the long-term they can impose a “political order that would be singular enough to unify all Afghans, yet plural enough to accommodate and reconcile the internal divisions” (Sharma, 2020).

Lastly, the country’s chronic conflict has had a devastating impact on Afghans’ daily lives. In 2021, a Gallup survey revealed that almost all Afghans rated their lives more poorly than any other nationality worldwide, and 94% of Afghans are suffering (VOA News, 2022)². The Afghan people are desperate for peace and security, and as Prof. Dr. Rivas put it “if [peace and security] means talking to the Taliban, then let’s talk to the Taliban”.

After analyzing the current socio-economic and political context, we continue with a deeper dive into aid. We

few years after the US invasion, the country went from a donor orphan into a donor darling. The main aid-supported sectors were (i) government and civil society, (ii) economic infrastructure and services, (iii) production sectors, and (iv) humanitarian aid. Nevertheless, aid in Afghanistan is characterised by volatility, fragmentation, lack of coordination, corruption, and mismanagement; thus, it is safe to say that aid has failed in this country.

Figure 1 shows the evolution of official development assistance (ODA) to Afghanistan from 1995 to 2018. The difference between the aid volume delivered during the 1990s and that delivered after the US invasion is striking. However, immediately after the removal of the original Taliban regime, from 2001 to 2006, Afghanistan received \$57 per capita, much less than

is mostly driven by the erratic dynamics of the aid provided by its main donor, the USA, and this country’s geopolitical interests.

However, figure 1 does not show the vast fragmentation of aid in Afghanistan. Aside from the countries in the graph, the ‘rest of donors’ category encompasses more than 30 bilateral donors and numerous multilateral organisations and funds. Moreover, it excludes the non-ODA flows, such as the aid provided by India, Iran, China and Russia. This fragmentation created serious problems regarding donor coordination and alignment with the recipient’s system. Several documents (e.g. Afghan Compact) and mechanisms were adopted to coordinate aid effectively, but they failed to attain this objective. The donors continued to have their own plans and priorities

cooperation agencies and their governments, jeopardised many plans to reform Afghanistan and led to costly mistakes, abandoned projects, and

teams, a mix of military and civilians, were working together. The civilian workers went to the district leaders to ask which infrastructure was the most needed

machinery, housing, food – such as wheat, or other cereals) and sometimes indirectly (through jobs for the government or government-led projects). Shirshah mentioned that people are, overall, happy with the aid influx. On the other hand, people still perceive that most aid ends up going into warlords’ or political leaders’ pockets⁴ and/or simply covers international organisations’ administrative costs and ensures their staff’s security.

So... What’s next for aid?

As stated before, aid flows had become fundamental for Afghanistan. They fueled the country’s dynamic change from a heavily agricultural-based economy to a more urban and service-based economy. Cities grew under the Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani presidencies, fueled by heavy aid expenditure that created more ‘white collar’ jobs and increased the country’s middle class. On the morning of August 31st 2021, the last troops from the United States effectively left the country (Economist, 2021). Since then, the ‘left behind’ middle class who didn’t flee the country, along with all of Afghanistan’s inhabitants have been suffering because “aid dried up abruptly and, with it, government spending” (North, A., 2021, para. 23). Afghanistan’s people are in a tough position where the lack of aid, unemployment in cities, an abandonment of agriculture due to previous migration to the cities, and harsh winter conditions place them dangerously close to a humanitarian crisis.

When asking our interviewees which aid path they envisioned ahead, they unanimously agreed that aid had to continue to be delivered, regardless of the regime ruling the country. Dr. Rivas strongly stated that Western powers “need to take responsibility for the role they have played in the damage that happened to the country”. Similarly, all stated that stopping aid would be a colossal mistake with dire consequences. On concrete ideas about how to proceed, the comments were mixed. However, there was consensus that a clear conversation and compromises will have to be reached with the current Taliban regime. Shirshah told us that the Taliban



‘white elephants’. Moreover, “If one government [the USA development cooperation agencies] is not able to deliver aid to one country, following a coherent approach, how can several organisations from different countries, headed by several people, come together and implement multilateralism in the security-development nexus?”, as Mr. Poponete sharply points out as a matter of concern.

This aid fragmentation and lack of donor coordination is linked to another issue: aid delivery methods. With the exception³ of some donors, most aid was delivered off-budget. Thus, aid was not channeled into the state’s resources and did not strengthen the state institutions.

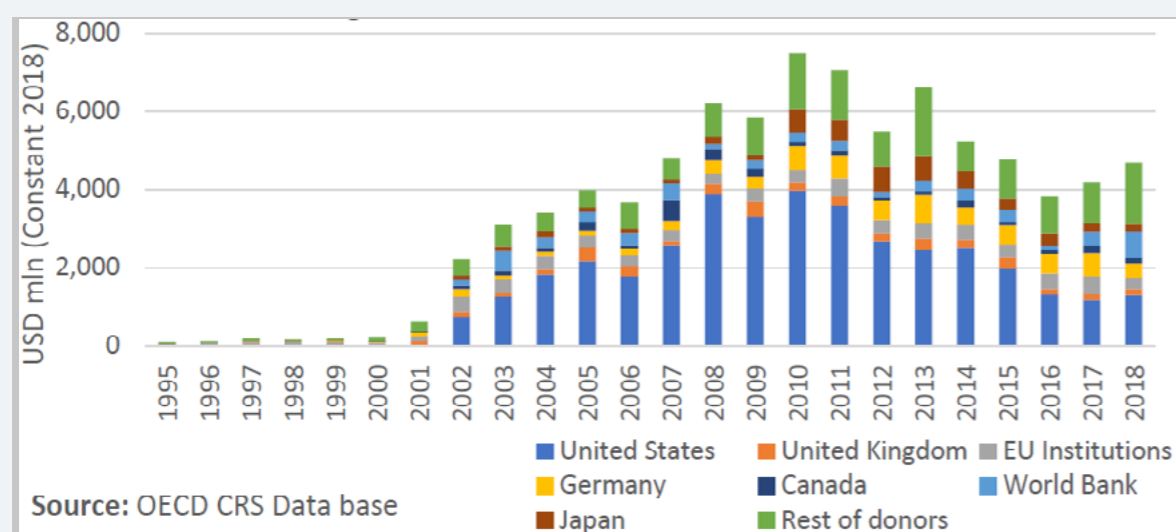
It was also often the case that the aid projects attempted to implement innovative approaches while ignoring completely the local needs. “Afghanistan has often been used by or external actors as a kind of laboratory to try different policies” (Rivas, 2020). The lack of understanding of the local context meant a disconnection with people’s real wants and needs, and a lack of accountability/transparency. To further exemplify this, Mr. Poponete shared with us a relevant story:

“In one of the secured provincial areas in Afghanistan, several reconstruction

for the district. As the water well where women went to get water from was several miles away, they decided to build a well. When the well construction was finished, someone destroyed it within days. They tried to rebuild it several times, with the same outcome, the destruction of the well nearby. After wondering why this kept happening, the civilian workers started indagating through a female engagement team. They found out that the women from the village were the ones who destroyed the well. It was a surprising revelation. The women destroyed the well because the time they spent fetching water from the lake was the only time these women could travel alone, without the need for male supervision, spend quality time with each other and engage in conversation.”

This simple story reveals the importance of understanding the country’s context so aid can be allocated properly. Still, our focus should not lie solely on aid from an international lens perspective. It is important to also study aid through people’s perceptions. Our three interviewees agreed that corruption has played a key role in aid allocation and its perception within international and national circles. On one hand, Afghan people welcome aid flows because they help them, sometimes directly (i.e.

Figure 1: Aid delivered to Afghanistan, 1995-2018



Source: OECD CRS Data base

try to understand how aid has worked in the country before and some possible scenarios it could follow in the future.

Evolution of aid before the Taliban return

Afghanistan’s aid history is complicated. During the original Taliban regime (1994-2001), the aid delivered to Afghanistan shrank tremendously (Goodhand, 2002) until almost non-existent. This happened because of major donors’ lack of interest, and partly because the Taliban restricted the activities of development agencies in the country (Bizhan, 2018). However, this situation changed and in just a

countries in similar situations. To put it into context, Bosnia and Timor-Leste received \$679 and \$233 per capita, respectively (Bizhan, 2018). During this period, Afghanistan needed aid the most but received the least. The war reduced economic activity, and the gaps created were later capitalised on by insurgents. From 2007 to 2013 aid flows increased, peaking in 2010 at 7.5 bn USD (OECD, n.d.). From 2014 to 2018, aid shrunk again, portraying a change in major donors’ interests to other regions (i.e. Ukraine and Syria) or priorities. This figure also shows that the volatility of aid

(Bizhan, 2018), which were weakly aligned with the Afghan government’s priorities. There was also a major disconnection between development and military aid, thus compromising the envisaged multilateralist approach for tackling the security-development nexus. Under the justification that the government was weak and corrupt, a large portion of aid funds were bypassing the national budget, exacerbating the aid coordination and alignment issue. The lack of clear goals, messy coordination, and sometimes even competition between development

regime will have to be ready to negotiate with the International Community because there are no alternatives at that moment. Afghanistan is on the brink of famine and human disaster. There is, nevertheless, the opinion that aid could contribute to the country's militarisation and support the current illegitimate regime. Prof. Rivas has doubts that aid would go 'only' to Taliban pockets and military efforts because the Taliban army is currently well "stuffed" with the military weapons and equipment left by the Americans.

All our interviewees supported the idea that humanitarian aid should be urgently delivered to Afghanistan to tackle the looming humanitarian crises. "The country has major humanitarian

and development needs that will need to be addressed somehow". There is also a place for development aid. For the moment, the macro-perspective should be left aside because of the problems enumerated above. Instead, the aid flows' implementation should focus more on the micro-level (community building/empowerment). Our interviewees proposed funding local organisations to move towards development and sustainability; create local experts for local needs; improve the continuity of projects; and distribute grants for localised projects (i.e. housing, agriculture, education).

In conclusion, there are several important lessons the Afghanistan interventions left us. Firstly, as Prof.

Rivas declared, "large interventions don't work and are never going to be the solution in fragile contexts as demonstrated here [in Afghanistan], in Congo, amongst others". Secondly, there is an imperious need for constant communication. Thirdly, the donor agencies need to learn how to cooperate and reach compromises. Fourthly, understanding the specific context of a country should be prioritised so aid can be channeled towards people's needs and not what the international community assumes they need.

NOTES

- ¹ According to Shirshah, an exception is the Tajiks. Tajiks have separatist intentions and prefer to call themselves Khorasani, considering the term Afghan to identify only the Pashtuns. Moreover, the other non-Pashtun ethnic groups also perceive the term Afghan as referring to Pashtuns, and demanded, during the drafting phase of the 2003 Afghan Constitution, that the citizens to be called Afghanistani (Rubin, 2004).
- ² Gallup asks adults to evaluate their lives using a scale where zero represents the worst possible life and 10 represents the best possible life. Gallup classifies people in three categories (i) "thriving" if people rate their current life a 7 or higher, (ii) "suffering" if they rate their life situations a 4 or lower and (iii) "struggling" if they are in the middle (id est 5 or 6).
- ³ For instance, Denmark delivered 58% of its aid through the on-budget mechanism, whilst USA only 18% from 2002-2010 (Bizhan, 2018).
- ⁴ The warlords and political leaders are the ones either managing the grant allocation (directly through deciding which projects receive funding or indirectly through the use of their companies to carry out said projects) and, also, have the capacity to access the grants.

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Parenting while at IOB: a survival guide

By any standards, these have been challenging years, especially for international students at IOB, studying far away from home while in the midst of a pandemic. Yet, many students juggle all this on top of being a parent. From managing their Zoom classes to overseeing their child's schooling on the same platform, IOB parents navigate their roles as professionals, parents, and students all at once. We spoke to some of them as they shared their joys, challenges, and what they would say to the next cohort of IOB parents.

Andrew Kaggwa | Uganda Father of one



The most tremendous and exciting thing in life is being called Mum or Dad, and being happy to see a child grow through your nurturing and care. As a parenting Dad, combining school with family has always been a challenge. Concerns and issues are sure to arise here and there, so it is crucial that you keep your goal in mind and commit to finishing the programme. At times, you will miss your kid(s), your family, and feel abandoned, you might at times feel like giving up amid the assignments and classes. Don't give up! Keep calm, organise yourself well and give your family a videocall whenever possible. In my experience, I found that making time to talk to your family in the morning before classes works well. Share with them your worries, and what your day will look like; they will guide and motivate you to keep going. Remember, you are always loved more than you think. Your kid(s) might not always tell you how much they miss you, but they always put you first and they know you are in Antwerp trying your best for them. Your academic progress is for their happiness and they want to see you succeed. Remember, you are here for your education so try your best despite the challenges, but put your family first if need be, school can always wait.

Lastly, at IOB you will find friends who are also parents, with whom you can share your worries, and offer each other personal guidance and support. I wish you a nice stay in Antwerp, parents!

Catherine Amenya | Kenya Mother of two



Leaving your kids to be cared for by others while you pursue your dreams is always hard. Especially as a single parent. I realised that for me, one of the most challenging aspects was finding the right caregivers for my children. My advice to future IOB parents is to start transitioning your children to the caregiver's household 3 months before you leave, so that you can see the dynamic. Another challenge I found was in terms of communication. Sometimes I wanted to get in touch at an unplanned time between classes or amidst projects, but the caregiver might not have their phone or may not be there. I recommend investing in a separate phone or another communication device just for talking to your kids. It's hard when your kids are so far away from you but it does bring its rewards - I think my children's minds have broadened. Now, they don't just limit themselves to thinking about what happens in Kenya, but they think more globally about what might be happening where Mom is. I send them videos or call them while I am visiting interesting places. They walked on video with me while I visited Dinant. I think this motivates them to work harder so that they may one day travel and see different places too. You need to know that it is normal that this will be challenging - at times I questioned if it was the right thing to do to leave my children, so I sought counselling through IOB and the counsellor helped me face these challenges. One thing I took away was to do what you can and take one day at a time, don't be afraid to ask IOB for help as they are there to support you.

Lydia Negash | Ethiopia Mother of two



Parenting while studying abroad is already a challenge, add to that a pandemic and a war and it can quickly become overwhelming. Little things arise, sometimes they are sick, there is no internet connection or they simply do not want to talk to you on the phone at the time that you can. Oftentimes, you feel selfish for having pursued this goal, but when I felt like that I remembered that I am doing this for my whole family and it gave me the courage to move forward. The situation of conflict in Ethiopia made it very difficult to achieve my goals, but I took hope when my kids would tell me that I am a strong woman. This helped me to finish my Masters - I did not want to fail as finishing meant success for all of us, and when they were happy this made it all easier on me. My family believed in me and yours will too, don't lose hope and move forward with your dreams.

Sakina B. Mwinyimkuu | Tanzania Mother of four

One of the biggest challenges for me was homesickness, which takes an additional dimension when you are a parent. When I left to pursue my masters at IOB, my youngest daughter was three years old. I remember talking to my baby on a videocall and she would ask me to pick her up or give her a bath, without realizing that Mom was more than 7000 kilometers away. This was hard, and it became harder still when she did not want to eat unless I videocalled her, sometimes I would tell her that if she ate I would bring her chocolates from Belgium and that would get her to eat. It was hard on my older kids as well - they even had a countdown to my return! As a spouse, there are also the challenges of supporting your spouse while he takes on the physical bulk of the parenting, while you try and fill in from afar where you can, not only as a parent, but as a spouse,

daughter, and in-law. As a woman, in a world that often assigns most caregiving responsibilities to your gender, this can be especially hard, on both yourself and your relationships. My biggest advice for IOB parents is to talk to your coordinator and tell them what is going on. I found myself having to go home in the middle of the programme, amidst the pandemic and financial limitations, but she was able to give me a permit to go and IOB was flexible around my needs as a parent and spouse. As a parent, you will have extra responsibilities that might make it more challenging to meet your academic deadlines, just share with your coordinator whatever situation you are facing and you will find a solution together. Lastly, find a programme colleague that you can share these challenges with. The person I found often checked on my welfare and reminded me of deadlines, which made a big difference.

Laurent Mugisho Chihyoka | DRC Father of two

One of the most interesting (and no less trying) experiences of my career has been to combine work, studies and family. As part of working in the public administration of my country, I had registered at IOB for a very demanding and competitive Masters degree. I constantly remember the famous sentence of Einstein repeated to us during the introduction week: "genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration". This sentence perfectly illustrates the very intense pace of work at IOB, with very restrictive deadlines, it requires a great deal of energy to keep up.



The biggest challenge for me, in addition to the sustained efforts put into my studies, was to make sure I made time for my family. Our second child was born while I was taking my second session exams, and I had to be next to my wife. The IOB staff then gave me support where it was needed, especially when I was unable to meet certain deadlines.

The main lesson I learned from this experience can be summed up in one word: sacrifice. Make time to take good notes and make time to show the care you have for your children and their mother. The most rewarding aspect is to comply with the requirements of the training while remaining a caring parent, even when the conditions make it especially challenging

Lamia Islam | Bangladesh Parent of one



My journey at IOB was full of twists and turns. Starting with getting my visa despite having no Belgian Embassy in Bangladesh and getting to Antwerp amid restrictions, and in the midst of all these challenges, I learnt of the blissful news of my pregnancy. I was feeling blessed at the same time, I was seriously nervous because I realised I was alone in a new country. Amid the pandemic lockdown, my husband traveled from Bangladesh to India to apply for a visa so that he could be beside me. Due to extreme pandemic breakout, he became infected with COVID-19 and got hospitalised in India with a 50% infection of the lungs and got stuck there for almost 1.5 months. Meanwhile, I had started feeling the presence of my baby in my womb, and gradually I started gaining weight. I could not walk much, and I started feeling tired very quickly. At that moment, I found the professors, the administrators, and some great friends at IOB who stood beside me. I can still remember those days when Professor Stef Vandeginste used to come to my desk and ask about updates during class break. I also cannot forget the support I received from my supervisor of the second End of Module Paper (EOMP) and the dissertation, Professor Kristof Titeca. Moreover, Professor Bert Ingelaere helped me wholeheartedly and that undoubtedly paved the way to me getting my degree.

My husband would always stay online with me so that I wouldn't feel lonely. It was a painful time for both of us. While he was sick in bed with COVID-19, I was visiting hospitals. On the one hand, there was the dream to complete my studies, on the other hand, there was my upcoming baby who is another blessing for us - both were creating mixed feelings of happiness and worry. I was blessed with a baby girl on 21 May 2021. It was just between my semester exams, and fortunately, my professors and the coordinator, Greet Annaert, supported me a lot. Considering my situation, they allowed me some flexibility with exams and other assessments, of course maintaining university

policies. I cannot express my feelings in words about how much mental comfort this created for me in my lonely situation.

I continued my studies with dedication while taking care of a newborn baby. I was continuing all my classes, lessons, exams, group studies, and others along with parenting. Eventually, I am so happy that I have achieved the highest happiness of my life by receiving my little angel and achieving the prestigious degree from IOB together.

To the upcoming students of IOB, I advise that if they truly dream to achieve a successful degree, they should hold their confidence and eagerness strong and tight. Deviation from determination can never bring success to anyone. And, lastly, I cannot deny the fact that IOB is not only an institution, but it is also a family of friendly and kind-hearted people from across the world who always stand beside their students. As I have successfully achieved my dream degree being a pregnant mother, surely others can achieve the same if they hold their determination strongly in their mind.



Slowness and development

The debates

Slowness is the principal driver of the proliferating Slow Movements, whose roots can be traced back to the 1980's, in a restaurant in Bra, Northern Italy, when the idea of what would later become an internationally recognised Slow Food movement was conceived. These movements have generally arisen from the conviction that the machinery of development today is heavily rooted in a linear conception of time which decouples the past, from the present and from the future. Such a restricted view of human and non-human life would define development as modern progress at the cost of diversity – one size should fit all. Slow movements therefore would claim to argue for a varied conception of time and temporalities in order to expand the space available for imagining different kinds of worlds and thus different notions of development.

This year's debating development series thus sought to examine the nature of these plural perspectives on time and temporality, and how they relate to the notion of 'development'. Debating Development is an annual event, organised at the University of Antwerp as a collaboration between the Institute of Development Policy (IOB), the University Foundation for Development Cooperation (USOS) and the University Centre Saint-Ignatius Antwerp (UCSIA), which provides a platform for reflection on various development topics. In order to expand our understanding of the particulars of the slowness agenda in its diversity, we critically engaged in a series of debates on several topics including the temporalities of decolonial action, the role of the academy in relation to slowness, and how slowness can be a focus for struggles for social justice and meaningful social engagement.

1 Slowness: a trap or a promise? Understanding time and temporality as relational

- **Michelle Bastian**, senior lecturer in Environmental Humanities at the University of Edinburgh
- **Gert Van Hecken**, lecturer at the Institute of Development Policy (IOB), University of Antwerp
- **Vijay Kolinjivadi**, postdoctoral fellow at IOB



This debate focused on the role of the modern linear conception of time as a 'ticking clock' in sustaining the concept of a chronologically improving development model rooted in a capitalist modernity and colonial practice. The diversity of alternative proposals existing under the banner of 'slow movements' was critically addressed to understand if they really do propose a new model or if they rather represent the privileged choice of some social sectors who can slow down their lifestyles at the expense of others.

While these movements emerge as a response to the accelerationist tendency of Western development models, the danger is that by focusing only on the pace of development to make it more 'sustainable', they do not sufficiently interrogate the structural hegemony of the directionality of future promises of progress

for some, present and future exploitations for others. Thus, it was echoed that arguing that slow is a good response to fast is a trap. Rather, slowness is better viewed as stepping back from time as chronological and moving towards considering time as relational and coordinating. Dr. Michelle Bastian, Dr. Gert Van Hecken and Dr. Vijay Kolinjivadi, therefore, discussed the notion of 'kinship time' as a more radical alternative that can offer a different understanding of time as relational instead of a linear sequence of events. Under the notion of 'kinship time', reciprocal care, accountability and responsibility in our social and economic relations appear to be central to transforming a dominant development that situates progressive economic growth at the core of social relations.



2 Slowness from a food sovereignty perspective

- **Geneviève Savigny**, farmer and a representative of the European Coordination Via Campesina
- **Max Ajl**, postdoctoral fellow at the Rural Sociology Group, Wageningen University
- **Danya Nadar**, PhD candidate at IOB

This debate took as a starting point the irony of the existence of glaring global food inequalities and injustices despite the sufficient availability of food to meet global demands, and aimed at using a slowness lens to discuss the roots and the ongoing imperial domination of our food system.

Max Ajl, a post-doctoral researcher and author of "A People's Green New Deal", asked, "When we talk about the world food system, about food sovereignty, about the world food crisis, about peasant movements – what are we talking about? What is the world they are fighting to change, and what do they want to change it to?" He picked up on the latter point and set the stage for "how we got here" when it comes to the world food system, discussions on food sovereignty, and about peasant movements. He discussed (former) colonial countries as dominions of wealth, capital and power and how they were capable of transforming the colonies' relationships with land, labour and production starting from 1492 (Christopher Columbus's arrival to the Americas) onward. These transformations wouldn't have been successful without the slave trade from Africa; the theft of land and genocide in the Americas, and the exploitation of land in Canada, the United States, Australia and other parts of the world; and commodity production (ranging from cereal, to cotton, spices, tea and coffee). This process converted agriculture and food into something that is distant, something conceptual, which can be seen as primitive accumulation; and the wealth created in the colonies was transferred to Europe and the United States. Max continued to describe the Green Revolution - which was the adoption of hybrid seeds, chemical pesticides and fertilisers by 'developing countries', making them dependent on these inputs and the importance of markets for crop export. Food aid also played its role in controlling the domestic markets of countries in North Africa and India. These processes led to greater or lesser food security in the Third World because of their ongoing reliance on food imports and inputs from the First World, and their production of commodities for export – including soy production to feed livestock and the transformation of food for fuel (agro fuels).

Speaking from a European perspective, Geneviève Savigny, a farmer and member of Confédération Paysanne, noted that there are two main food systems affecting peasants in her network – one that is highly globalised, i.e. using long food chains, industrialised and large monocultures producing commodities for highly processed foods. This is a system in

which it's extremely difficult to identify the raw material and where it comes from. The second food system is territorialised – where food production exists along a short food value chain which can be considered (mostly) organic farm production or (less commonly) agro-ecological. These are involved in direct sales, offer an alternative to the larger value chain model, and a 'slow' food system.

The most significant threat the food system is facing, according to Savigny, is the encroachment of large food and pharmaceutical corporations dominating the production to consumption chain, which in turn marginalises small family farms which produce 70% of our food on only 25% of the land globally. The globalised food system is further concentrated, relying upon large and intensively competitive processors and retailers who impose conditions on producers. Large companies like Monsanto (now purchased by Bayer), or major foundations like that of Bill and Melinda Gates, are heavily invested in the food system through their capacities to provide financial capital and dictate the terms for farm production, distribution, and consumption.

European farmers find themselves in an "in-between" situation: small and medium farms engaged in industrialised models but mostly owned by families, and those which run peasant farms. Geneviève described peasant farming as maintaining the values attributed to production beyond business but through an engaged relationship with the land. Peasant rights are protected under the UN system – including their right to seeds, their rights to land and human rights.

Danya Nadar, the doctoral student at the University of Antwerp who moderated the debate, thus suggested two take-aways. The first, is how the effects of 'development' are a global phenomenon: how peasantries from the global South can work in solidarity with farmers from north of the Mediterranean, to family farmers in the Nile Basin, all the way to milpa growers between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. The second, that the current food production systems are neither coincidental, novel, nor a successful outcome of our current economic models and date back to 15th century colonialism when plantation logics based on the exploitation of cheap land and labour dominated as imperial modes of production. These processes continue to shape the contemporary production-to-consumption model today.

3

Slowness and knowledge production - towards a slow academia?

- **Filip Vostal**, senior researcher at the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences
- **Valerie De Craene**, researcher for Motief, postdoctoral researcher at Cosmopolis (VUB) and guest professor in Social and Economic Geography (Ghent University)



In this debate, the keynote speaker, Dr. Filip Vostal, pushed for a ‘responsively stagnant academia’, borrowing from de Saille and co-authors who in their book, ‘Responsibility Beyond Growth: A Case for Responsible Stagnation’ coin the notion of ‘responsible stagnation’ as an economic model bypassing the dogma of endless economic growth. Filip linked the politics of publishing to broader socio-economic structures of capitalism that influence academic practices. According to him, responsible stagnation in academia would start with discussions of where we publish that would require renegotiations of requirements requested by funders and evaluation systems. Secondly, it would require discussions around the unprecedented pace of global academic publishing output. In his view, this would require a functional fix. Contemporary academia probably needs more commentaries, rejoinders, debates, interviews and synthetic books rather than the current publishing output. For clarity, the speaker was not against discovery and the search for explanation but rather its reduction. The responsibility for this would lie in responsiveness, new utopias, different economic post-capitalist models and ways to enact and legislate these ideas

What was, perhaps, especially interesting in this debate was a sort of withdrawal by the speaker from earlier calls for slowing down that he has also contributed to in one way or another. “Over time, I realised that by drawing attention to accelerating academia I am co-generating calls for slowdown and escalating victimisation discourse and culture of excessive complaining,” he exclaimed. He further stated that “I have never been sure about slowdown as an overarching common denominator that should define the new and desired academia. ... I would therefore suggest a different

strategy, a strategy that is embedded in practices, activities and behaviors associated with something all too common for all of us: how we publish.”

But why take a different stance? He continued, “Mushrooming and often radically voiced critiques of academia – including my own – have had very little effect on academic cultures, governance and management and performance ideologies. Hence, I would like to take a different approach.” In response, even though the discussant agreed with the keynote on the need to think about slow publishing, the causes and consequences of the acceleration in academia, and how unsustainable and problematic the current system is, Dr. Valerie De Craene disagreed on the strategies to follow moving forward. “...[S]tagnation, and responsible stagnation, seems to indicate that if we do more of the same, but just slightly differently, that the problem is solved, rather than fundamentally challenging the system as such,” she contended. Her approach was to focus on wider temporal rhythms that are forgotten in the current academic system. Missing in the discussion of temporal rhythms was a rethinking of what another university could look like and the strategies we could adopt. To her, what is missing is the rhythm of all reproductive and care work.

For the keynote speaker, it would suffice to add that perhaps a reflection on some of the positive attributes of acceleration as he points out in his other publications, could have played a part in advocating for a responsively stagnant academia, a kind of middle ground. On this, Valerie agreed, “... I also share your opinion that not all acceleration is necessarily bad.”



Postcolonial and decolonial dialogues from the slow movement vantage point

- **Elaine Gan**, artist-theorist at New York University, Center for Experimental Humanities and Social Engagement
- **Dr. Francine Rossone de Paula**, lecturer in International Relations at Queen’s University

This debate’s discussions centered on different understandings of time and temporalities from a human and non-human relationships perspective. Prof. Elaine Gan led with her main argument that we need better languages, clocks and calendars and better ways of studying the interconnection between places, times and histories. Interestingly, she proceeded with the analogy of rice to draw attention to more-than-human temporalities.

Looking at rice, not just as a crop but, as an assemblage, Elaine carefully mapped the history of rice innovations including the development of ‘miracle’ rice varieties. Rice production being considered as a key to development goals in the Global South increased the push towards its massive and accelerated production. While this shift to intensive rice production systems may have been considered an industrial revolution in food and agriculture, the resultant chemical saturation from excessive use of agro-chemicals coupled with genetic erosion provoked unintended effects. Elaine thus highlighted the connectivity of this rice assemblage to a wider network of post-colonial development issues including the water hyacinth proliferation, bilharzia trouble and unsustainable fishing habits. She then argued that, “by changing those temporalities which have been around for millennia, we have not accelerated a single timeline of food production or development; we have rather opened up multiple temporalities, with their novel world-making dynamics which require new analytics.”

Dr. Francine Rossone de Paula, stated in her response that, “If we are to allow ourselves just for a moment

to translate the situation that we are living through as a species into a simplistic historic timeline, we realise that we may be past the deadline to change our relationship with our productions. The temporal orientation toward more production or more future harvest, as has been shown by the rice production assemblage and connectivity through time and space, is not only dangerous but potentially counter-productive.”

The discussions proceeded to expound on how post-colonial technologies have created more development problems in the process of championing development solutions and on the notions of agency and responsibility – how we should challenge the assumption that only particular humans have the power to effect change. The need to destabilise currently established hierarchies and relations of power in place was made apparent. For instance, the imaginary that currently dominates in agricultural systems is one that supports intensive agricultural production, which is built on the promise of ensuring high yields – quicker – in order to feed growing populations. Therefore, among the many conclusions drawn from the debate was that engaging with the decolonising potential is to argue for certain kinds of imaginaries, around improving life and living on earth, that have been largely erased. In this case, decolonisation would then require us to reclaim our capacity to re-imagine different ways of farming which we have had for thousands of years.

5 Slowing medicine and the COVID-19 crisis

- **Julie Levingston**, medical historian at New York University
- **Magalie Schotte**, coordinator of the Be-cause health platform at the Institute of Tropical Medicine Antwerp



From the outset, the panelists and organisers of this debate agreed that the COVID-19 crisis has now become a global social total fact. As the perverse effects of this crisis can be observed in almost all areas of social life around the world, it seemed important to our guest speakers to question the speed with which the COVID-19 pandemic has been imposed on public policy. One of the key explanatory factors that has been mobilised to understand the changes generated by COVID is that of self-devouring growth. According to Prof. Julie Livingstone, the keynote speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters and global warming all have their origins in self-devouring growth. COVID-19 is therefore only part of the collateral damage that uninterrupted growth, the pursuit of profit, and the commodification of well-being (including health), have made possible in today's complex world.

Julie and Magalie Schotte, the other speaker, agreed that exchanges, social relations and interactions with otherness, have become, in the COVID era, the settings par excellence for our vulnerability to illness. However, this fragility of relationship and exchange already existed, long before the COVID pandemic broke out. The economic disparities between rich and poor, the pollution of the atmosphere by motor vehicles to the detriment of the health of asthmatics, and the accelerated destruction of forests and fauna, are all factual elements that show that the cohabitation of

humans with themselves, and the cohabitation of humans with other living beings, was already paralysed long before COVID. It goes without saying that the social distancing measure and the restrictions of movement imposed by public policies are merely extensions of a prior dynamic of weakening social relations.

In this global context of human vulnerability to otherness, the whole grammar of slowing medicine, which advocates a friendly doctor-patient relationship, permanent physical encounters and an extension of consultation time, is modified. Telemedicine and self-medication, observed during the COVID crisis, show not only that slowing medicine has been difficult to apply, but even more so, the ways of saying and practicing medicine, producing vaccines, etc. have been completely modified.

However, even if it is undeniable that there has been an acceleration in the production of vaccines, in the application of medical recommendations by governments throughout the world, disparities still exist in terms of access to vaccines and health by the underprivileged. The political, social and economic changes brought about by COVID-19 have not yet solved the problem of the 'sacrificed zones', which lack the financial means to access health and which the world's leaders voluntarily keep in chaos. One of the solutions proposed by the speakers is to open up the borders of rich countries to the poorest.

The possibilities of transnational activism: the slow movement in context



- **Thomas Davies**, senior lecturer in International Politics, City University of London
- **Leen Schelfhout**, Allforclimate, Citizen Spring
- **Ellen Haverhals**, Fashion Revolution

In this closing debate, the political action of transnational movements was traced through time and the panel discussion with protagonists of different social movements in Belgium allowed for engagement with the possibilities and prospects for the slow movement today.

Social movements/activism generally emerged to counter concerns and mitigate the perceived disequilibrium and inequalities arising and persisting in a neoliberal state of affairs. The keynote, Dr. Thomas Davies, highlighted that with globalisation, including cross-border economic and governance influences, came the need for social movements to extend mobilisation and promote social justice causes across international borders. These transnational movements have been significant in promoting an array of political and social objectives. Notably, the international norms attributable, at least in part, to the action of transnational movements include, the 1997 Ottawa ban on landmines, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and their implementation, the campaign against apartheid in South Africa, and the formation of the League of Nations and subsequently the United Nations.

The methods of transnational activism include the 'boomerang pattern', where change in a state which is unresponsive to local campaigns is effected by pressure from without, as a result of transnational activists mobilising international actors and governments against the recalcitrant state. In the case of responsive states, a transnational cause leading to establishment of a global convention can be coordinated by a transnational movement across several nations with multinational actors applying pressure on their respective governments towards the desired goal. However, global change can also happen through transnational activism beyond the state, that is, activism which bypasses governments and focusses on transforming the governed. For instance, voluntary recycling in some communities in various countries across the globe resulted from activism which did not rely on government responsiveness.

Thomas further classified three major approaches to transnational activism. The reformist approach principally involves lobbying governments and holding mutual negotiations with the aim of establishing political reforms and possibly new international conventions. The revolutionaries approach focusses on regime change and thus involves direct

action to ensure that a regime is overthrown. These two approaches are government-centric and more short term. In contrast, the third approach, less apparent in literature, is the transformationists approach which is long-term and targets the society with the aim of transforming individual behaviour irrespective of government policy. Thomas argued that this is possibly the most effective approach to transnational activism.

Leen Schelfhout representing Allforclimate and Citizen Spring, and Ellen Haverhals from Fashion Revolution joined the discussion, situating their organisations' activities within the discussed approaches. Reflecting on the principles of slowness, focusing especially on time as relational and less on time as chronological, the speakers defended transparency, open communication, inclusivity, and reflexivity, among many as key values for the success and effectiveness of national and transnational movements. Leen stressed the importance of commons, and that as we try to reinvent society, there is a glaring possibility that the future of humanity is in the past. Ellen on the other hand, re-emphasised the importance of prioritising the education of the individual in moving towards a behaviorally transformed society.

The speakers were challenged to reflect on Andreas Malm's critiques of (trans)national activism, specifically his claim that there is a need for some form of violence in order for meaningful systemic socio-political change to happen. In his book "How to Blow Up a Pipeline", Andreas criticised several movements for not being radical enough to bring about meaningful change. To this, the speakers unanimously decried the use of violence in this contemporary error. They explained that violence, whether physical and towards people or infrastructural, can undermine the broader efforts of movements. Thomas contended, in regards to violent revolutions, that violence might result in quick changes but often leads to the reproduction of established hierarchies of state-centric global orders. He further stated that the use of violence, for instance by a minority championing climate change awareness, might lead to labelling and misconstruction of the wider movement's work. Ellen foregrounded that boycotting particular clothing brands in a bid to fight injustice could be an insensitive move towards the people who depend on the precarious jobs supported by these brands to make a living. Finally, they agreed that violence could lead to counterproductive impacts.

Alumni panel

Eric Akede Metougue GOV 2015 | Cameroon



Where are you currently living? I am living in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Where do you work? I currently work at the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education, as the Director of the Department of Legal Affairs. Before this, I served as a State Auditor at the Supreme State Audit Office. In my current duties I am in charge of

- ensuring that the various documents enacted by the Ministry are in conformity with the existing norms and legislations put in place by the Government.
- I prepare, amend and revise all regulatory texts within the Ministry.
- I represent and defend the Ministry in all legal procedures in justice.

How has the IOB experience affected your life/ career?

- It gave me a broader thinking ability and made me more open-minded in development-oriented issues.
- The ability of self-reflection and to carry out individual

research work in diverse fields.

- It also helped me acquire the necessary skills for collective or group work with people of various cultural backgrounds.

Tell us more about one of the exciting projects/ programmes/ ideas you are currently working? In our Ministry, we are currently working on the Three Years Special Youth Plan, which is a programme put in place by the Head of State for the socio-economic insertion of youths. This project aims at reducing unemployment amongst youths. It also serves as an umbrella for all related government projects designed for youths. Four priority domains are involved, namely, agriculture, livestock, fisheries and animal rearing, crafting industry and digital economy and innovations.



Ousséni Kinda ECD seminar 2019 | Burkina Faso

Where are you currently living? I am living in Maiduguri, Nigeria.

How has the IOB experience affected your life/ career?

The course strengthened my evaluative thinking, and enabled me to improve the quality of evaluations by using additional knowledge, methodological grounding and content expertise gained to address complex situations. It also provided me with platforms for networking and knowledge sharing. Beyond that, it has given me the opportunity to grow, to do my job better and to bring a powerful mix of academic rigor and practical real-world experience to my career.

If you were the director of a research fund, what is a research question that you would agree to finance? “Child and youth participation in evaluation and research” or alternatively “Reforming evaluation to improve adaptation to climate change in African agriculture.”

Laura De Backer GOV 2020 | Belgian



Where are you currently living? New York City, USA

Where do you work? I am a Political Affairs intern with the Policy Planning Team in the Policy and Best Practices Service of the Division of Policy, Evaluation and Training in the UN Department of Peace Operations. The Policy Planning Team supports various policy and strategy developments, works on evolving strategic context for peace operations, and engages with various UN and external actors in peace and security, including the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C34) and the Security Council. As an intern, I support the Policy Planning Team in various ways including notetaking, preparing talking points, organising meetings and webinars, and conducting research and analysis on issues related to peacekeeping.

How did the IOB experience affect your life/ career? Studying at IOB was such a fun and fulfilling experience! I got to know so many people with different backgrounds from all over the world. Many of the issues discussed during the programme regarding conflict, peace and state reconstruction have also been extremely relevant during my internship and I’ve caught myself going back to some of the material from my courses at IOB.

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