

Exchange to change

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Contents

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Edito take over by Moira

As spring arrives, the academic year for the 2022-2023 IOB Master's programmess reaches its halfway point, and with it comes the release of the latest issue of Exchange to Change magazine. This edition's academic news features the University's recent dedication of one of its historic auditoriums to Patrice Emery Lumumba, the first Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This momentous occasion represents a coming together of transformative research, in which IOB students played a collaborative role, and the pursuit of decolonial futures at the University of Antwerp.

Within the Student Stories section of this issue, readers will gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of foreign students at IOB. From culture shock to pleasant surprises, difficulties and positive aspects of studying as a foreigner in a globalised academic institution, these stories provide an enlightening perspective. Additionally, as is customary, we report on the annual students' trip to Paris, including a visit to the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) alongside the iconic Eiffel Tower. This visit highlights the vital importance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the pursuit of a sustainable world.

This issue also includes a range of other fascinating topics for readers to explore. As a student representative, I am honored to contribute to this editorial and be a part of the editorial team. I hope that readers enjoy the latest issue of Exchange to Change magazine.

*Sincerely,
Moira Cornejo Zambrana
Student, DEM 2022-23*

In the meantime...

Paris

As is customary every year, the students of the 2022-2023 academic year went on a trip to Paris. The trip was both informative and cultural, including a visit to Agence Française de Développement (AFD).

Our first stop on the trip was the magnificent Eiffel Tower, where we were treated to a breathtaking view. This was followed by a boat ride on the Seine River, which took us through the main tourist attractions in the heart of the French capital. We sailed past the Louvre Museum, the Alexander III Bridge, Notre Dame, and many other iconic landmarks that Paris has to offer.

The second day of the trip was dedicated to the visit to AFD. There, we learned in greater depth about this government development agency, its objectives, areas of action, and goals. Currently, the AFD finances, accompanies, and accelerates transitions towards a more just and sustainable world in the areas of climate, biodiversity, peace, education, urbanism, health, and governance. Different specialised teams are involved in more than 4,000 projects in 115 countries to meet Sustainable Development Goals.

We gained insights into AFD's work in terms of research, knowledge, and financing to achieve sustainable development goals. AFD provides financing not only for states but also, more broadly, for all development actors, including projects initiated

by public and private companies, local communities, banks, investment funds, and NGOs. All these funded projects are in line with the achievement of the SDGs and aim for the best possible transition to a more sustainable world.

Finally, on the third day, we visited the Musée du quai Branly, where we had the chance to see items from various parts of the world and learn about the different cultures of the world. Australian boomerangs from the 19th century, oyuki masks from the early 20th century in Africa, Mayan and Inca cultural figurines from the years 600-900, as well as Diablada costumes from the 2000s, were among the items that caught our attention the most.

During our spare time, we explored Paris at our own pace, visiting the Great Mosque of Paris, the Louvre Museum, Notre Dame, Shakespeare and Company, Sacré-Cœur, and the Champs Élysées. We all agree that this trip was interesting, informative, and culturally fulfilling. Paris represents a world capital that is in line with modern trends in sustainable development, technology, and knowledge without losing its historical essence. This trip to Paris will remain in the memory of all of us as a highlight of our lives as IOB students.



Connecting alumni in... Bogotá, Quito, Kampala, Dar-es-Salaam & Cape Town

IOB alumni across the world have been connecting and reconnecting through alumni events as part of the IOB alumni policy. These events serve as a platform for IOB graduates to stay connected with the broader IOB community.

In October 2022, the first-ever alumni meet and greet event was held in Bogotá, Colombia. It was attended by several alumni and IOB staff, and the event marked the start of the Colombian alumni network. In Quito, Ecuador, a similar event was held earlier that month, where alumni caught up with old friends and made new contacts over drinks and food.

In 2023, two other alumni events took place in Tanzania and Uganda. IOB alumni were invited to a seminar and networking event on citizen science, co-organised by IOB and the Belgian Embassy, in February 2023. An alumni event was also organised in South Africa by UAntwerp and other Flemish universities, which was attended by IOB alumna Grace Bruintjies, who had the opportunity to meet Rector Van Goethem. Lastly, more than twenty Ugandan alumni reunited in Hotel Africana, Kampala for an alumni event where they shared their personal and professional experiences under the beautiful Ugandan sunset.

These events provide an excellent opportunity for IOB alumni to reconnect, network and stay engaged with IOB's community. We are proud of our alumni and excited to see how they are making a positive impact in their personal and professional lives around the globe.



Dinner at the alumni event in Kampala, Uganda.



IOB alumni from all over the world at the communitor event in dar Es salaam.



Alumnus William Pallangyo and Sakina Mwinyimkuu presenting the communitor awards in Dar-Es Salaam



Alumna Grace Bruintjies with Rector Van Goethem at the alumni event in South Africa



First alumni get together in Bogotá, Colombia



IOB alumni and staff reconnect in Quito, Ecuador.

Mobility Window 2023: Getting to know children as scientists?

The programme and the team

IOB's Mobility Window programme offers students the opportunity to apply their research skills during a research stay at a partner university. In 2022, several research projects in Tanzania, Uganda, and DR Congo were available to IOB students for a Mobility Window internship, and many students applied for the programme. After a joint screening of applications and selection interviews by IOB and partners based on students' profiles, including language skills, interests, and knowledge of research methods or topics, Gianella Xiomara Jiménez León was chosen for a research internship in Tanzania. However, it is worth noting that many applicants preferred to work on these projects for their dissertations rather than for the Mobility Window programme.

Meet Gianella ...

Gianella is an Ecuadorian woman who is passionate about Development Studies and holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics. Having recently moved to Belgium, just two months later, she travelled to Tanzania for the Mobility Window programme. She was excited about her six-week research internship at Mzumbe University, where she would join the research team working on the Women Water Watch (wWw) citizen science project.

"I was thrilled about this academic opportunity to meet and interact with children and women monitors from villages in Bagamoyo. I had many expectations of being able to connect with those kids and women monitors. I was also interested in meeting students and academic staff from Mzumbe University to share experiences and knowledge together."

The Women Water Watch project, which is jointly organised by Aqua-Farms Organisation (AFO, Tz), Mzumbe University (Tz), and IOB, aims to co-create knowledge on water access and quality and disseminate it in rural communities around Bagamoyo, Tanzania. Besides water, the research project studies how women monitors experience being involved in a citizen science project and explores involving children as citizen scientists. For the latter, different tools - a water song, a game, drawings, presentations, science activities (e.g. water testing) - were jointly designed with the wWw team. Through these tools, children were invited to share their concerns, needs, and hopes regarding water (drawings and surveys) and learn more (game, song, presentation, etc.) about the topic and even contribute to science (activities) themselves.

The research internship focused on capturing the children's perspectives and experiences. During the first week, Gianella joined the team of Mzumbe researchers, teachers, and women monitors to visit six schools and organise the different activities. After this first intensive week, the Mzumbe team (including Gianella) returned to Mzumbe University, which would be her home for the next five

weeks. The research then zoomed in on the study of the almost 500 drawings made by the children to visualise their challenges with water in their everyday lives as well as their vision of what the 'ideal' water situation would look like. With the support of other Mzumbe researchers, Gianella delved into the classification, coding, and interpretation of the children's narratives and drawings concerning water issues. Gianella was able to build on her previous knowledge and experience with coding of narratives and qualitative research. The team worked hard and presented the first interim results during a live-streamed presentation for the Mzumbe academic team as well as the IOB team on 21 December 2022.

Challenges

When asked about her experience, Gianella highlighted the weather as the most challenging aspect. She was not accustomed to high temperatures of 38°C, which pushed her out of her comfort zone. In addition, during the school activities organised in the first week, the schedule was very tight, and the team worked diligently. Differences in working approaches and eating habits could sometimes be an issue, but the team was understanding and supportive. Gianella described the week as intense, as collecting primary information required a lot of effort. She also stressed the importance of maintaining a positive attitude and finding solutions when faced with challenges.



Added value

First and foremost, Gianella emphasised the warm welcome and inclusion in the team offered by her Mzumbe colleagues. During the fieldwork and afterwards on campus, Gianella felt very welcome. Additionally, the close working relationship with some team members led to mutual learning. Tackling the research question of what the added value of working with drawings could be for evaluation studies was a new, innovative topic for all team members involved. As a consequence, the exploration was done jointly, building on all the different perspectives present in the team, while the presentation for the Mzumbe staff elicited interesting contributions.

Not "all work, no play"

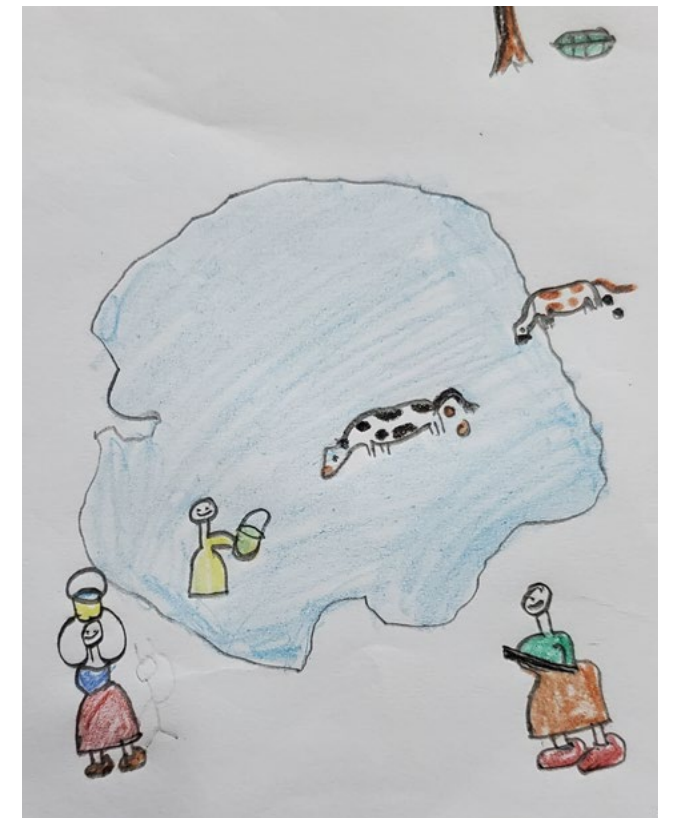
Despite the enormous amount of work done by the team, Gianella appreciated that an academic opportunity like this also brings other positive externalities, such as exploring and enjoying the beauty of Tanzania. For example, a trip to Zanzibar and connecting with a friend of a Tanzanian classmate was really valuable and a very welcome break in-between the coding work. A trip to Mikumi National Park where she was able to see the big five - elephant, buffalo, lion, leopard, and rhino - was also certainly a highlight and a new experience seeing wild animals free in their environment.

"I met amazing people in Tanzania and made some new friends. In sum, I have built so many memories in this short time, including the value of water, its sources and resources. I have appreciated life from a more genuine and uncomplicated point of view, the value of sharing, the laughter of a child, the music, the food, the customs, and a bit of Swahili. In short, there are so many memories that will remain in my heart."

What is next?

When asked whether, with the benefit of hindsight, Gianella would make the same choice to go to Tanzania, she responded:

"Yes, I would certainly go again. It is a trade-off; at some point, you miss your comfort and classes here, but you gain many more experiences and new skills. If we want to think about development, if we want to be agents of change, how can we do this without knowing different contexts, without serving for development, without doing these types of experiences to gain new ideas and perspectives?" ■



Where the rubber meets the road: Transformative research and the decolonial futures of the University of Antwerp

The University of Antwerp was set, on 31 March, to solemnly name one of its historic lecture halls after the first Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Patrice Emery Lumumba (1925–1961). The ceremony was to take place in the presence of his children and grandchildren (University of Antwerp, n.d.a). The rector of the university, Herman Van Goethem, called this act a tribute to the Congolese Prime Minister, a catalyst of communication about the university's colonial heritage, and a "beacon of reflection on the world we want" (University of Antwerp, n.d.b). Moreover, the University will organise events debating decolonisation and promoting inclusion and diversity on a continuing basis, once a year in March.

What follows is a synthesis of information taken from reviewed literature, discussions with IOB researchers Sara Geenen and Catherine Windey, and a focus group discussion with IOB students Naomi Nabami Muheme, Hannah Downes and Valensiya Dresvyannikova. In this article, therefore, E2C highlights the University of Antwerp's colonial past, the decolonial efforts that have taken place so far and where exactly transformative research falls into the mix.

Written by Diana Tiholaz and Mark Kadigo



About Lumumba and Belgium's "moral responsibility"

Patrice Lumumba is one of the most well-known African leaders and a symbol of the anti-imperialist struggle. He was born in Kasai province. With only some primary education, in his teens he left for the regional capital Stanleyville (now Kisangani), where he became a post office clerk. There, Lumumba intensified

his efforts to improve his education and, in just a few years, became an established writer (with regular contributions in both Congolese newspapers and Belgian publications) and a prominent representative of the 'évolué'¹ (Zeilig, 2008). During the 1950s, Lumumba underwent an incredible transformation, from praising the Belgian civilisation's mission to becoming a radical nationalist

and freedom fighter who condemned colonialism. His move to Leopoldville took him to the heart of political life. Lumumba became the leader of the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC), and the 1959 rebellion transformed the MNC into an important political player (Zeilig, 2008).

According to Ludo De Witte, author of the book "The Assassination of Lumumba",

the rapid radicalisation of the Congolese society and insistent demands for immediate independence which came from many political actors, including Lumumba, pushed the Belgian elite to satisfy these demands in the hope that 80% of the Congolese Parliament would be docile pro-Belgian members (Zeilig, 2008). But they proved to be wrong. After Lumumba's imprisonment and the Round Table Conference in Brussels in 1960, where Lumumba rejected the idea that Belgium would retain some powers after independence or that the King of Belgium would remain the Congolese head of state, the decision to eliminate him had already crystallised in Brussels. In 1960, Lumumba led MNC to victory in the DRC's (back then, the Republic of Congo) first elections after independence from Belgium was declared. He had been Prime Minister for less than three months before being ousted by a coup led by Mobutu and supported by Belgium and the USA. Next, Lumumba was arrested, tortured, and shot to death by his political opponents in the secessionist province of Katanga. His murder took place in the presence of Belgian officials. We cannot know what kind of prime minister Lumumba would have become and what path Congo would have taken if he had not been killed. Given his achievements and sense of commitment, there is every reason to believe that Congo would have taken a better path under Lumumba's rule than that of Joseph-Désiré Mobutu. With the support of Belgium and the USA, Mobutu took power in 1965, ruled as a dictator, and installed a kleptocratic regime that looted the country for 32 years (Schipani, 2023).

A failure to acknowledge the implications of their colonial past and involvement in Lumumba's assassination foreshadowed years of denial in Belgium, and it has only begun to come to terms with these events in recent years. Not long ago, Belgian Prime Minister De Croo handed over a gold-capped tooth belonging to the first leader of the former Belgian colony to Lumumba's descendants and DRC. It is believed that this tooth is all that is left of the Congolese leader. It was kept for a long time by a Belgian

policeman who oversaw and participated in the destruction of the body, before being seized by the Belgian police at his daughter's home in 2016 (Stroobants, 2022, June 21). The burial of the tooth coincided with the 62nd anniversary of Lumumba's famous Independence Day speech and offered an opportunity to revisit the past (Zane, 2022, June 22; Schipani, 2023).

After the publication in 1999 of Ludo De Witte's book, a ground-breaking account of Lumumba's murder, a parliamentary inquiry into the independence leader's death was set up. The inquiry found no document proving that the Belgian government gave the order to kill Lumumba (Zane, 2022, June 20). It did find that the Belgian Authorities and the then king knew about the assassination plans and did not act on the information. The Belgian parliamentary investigation eventually concluded that the government was "morally responsible" for Lumumba's death (Gijs & Faris, 2022, June 2).

Formal acknowledgments and apologies for a country's contribution to its colonial past are needed. In both former colonizing and colonised countries there are voices arguing that apologies should be followed by more substantial compensation, including material compensation. Others, however, fear this possible outcome, considering that hefty retributive payments will place undue financial burdens on potential culprits. This could be the reason for the politically correct acknowledgments by former colonial masters, which fall shy of accepting the aggrieved states. Moreover, such discourse can be used as a vehicle for demands which would result in an inequitable distribution of funding to particular states in the Global South. Such perspectives reflect the debates that are going on today. A similar conclusion, or rather impasse, was reached by the special committee on Belgium's colonial past after more than two years of work on the matter (Chini, 2022). For a country like Belgium, acknowledgment is the first – difficult for some – step. Material compensation might then follow. As we wait to cross that bridge in Belgium, the University of Antwerp is moving towards

fully addressing its colonial legacy.

The University of Antwerp and its decolonial futures

The auditorium to be inaugurated as the Patrice Lumumba lecture hall was chosen for a reason. It is located on the Middelheim campus, in the main building that served as the Colonial College until 1962, one year after Congolese independence. The purpose of this College was to provide elite education to the young Belgians who were to run the colonies. Since the Belgian state (cl)aimed to "bring civilisation" to its colonies, the College's programme revolved entirely around the so-called "civilizing mission" by imposing Western civilisation principles in the colonised territories and treating the people there as "adult children" (Hoog Tijd, 2021). In a seminar on the colonial past of the University of Antwerp, the historian Bas De Roo underlined how the inheritance of this College has lived on in many forms right up until the present day (Hoog Tijd, 2021). The most visible representations are its former building, which hosts several of the University of Antwerp's administrative departments, and the sculptures expressing colonizing ideologies scattered around the former College building and nearby Middelheim park. The worst aspects of colonial heritage and the most difficult to unroot are the fragments of colonial ideology concealed in the racist biases, prejudices, stereotypical imagery of Africa, and invisible racist and exclusionary structures of power. Commendably, in light of its perceived contribution to the colonial past of Belgium, the University of Antwerp has started to take steps towards a decolonial turn.

Attempts to decolonise universities have been going on for a while in the countries of both the ex-colonised and the colonisers. In recent years, the number of such initiatives has dramatically increased, opening up more space for societal debate on this topic. The universities' structures and curricula have come under scrutiny as a result. There has been increasing criticism of the limited inclusiveness of those constructed as 'other' based on race,

gender, or ethnicity (Withaecx, 2019). Some groups within Belgian universities are slowly joining this movement.

Universities, which have historically been significant players in the 'colonial matrix of power' (Quijano, 2000), also have a responsibility in forging decolonial pathways. Through research collaborations with policymakers, NGOs, and CSOs, university researchers have the opportunity to advocate for specific projects and drive social and political change. Given their esteemed position in society, universities possess the potential to leverage their influence to contribute to decolonisation efforts in countries, much like how they have played a pivotal role in shaping critical perspectives on gender within academia and society.

Notably, the University of Antwerp is taking proactive steps towards constructing a decolonial future for the institution. One significant measure is the establishment of the Global Engagement Advisory Group, whose mandate includes guiding the University in embracing global diversity and promoting equitable, decolonised knowledge exchange. This journey has been outlined in the University of Antwerp's 'Action Plan for Global Engagement and Cooperation with Africa, Asia, and Latin America'.

The Institute of Development Policy (IOB) plays an active role in the decolonisation process of the University of Antwerp. Given IOB's mission, the institute

recognised the need for decolonisation early on and has undertaken internal initiatives to reevaluate its core values. IOB's contribution extends to its significant representation in the Global Engagement Advisory Group, as well as engaging in research practices related to decolonisation. Recently, IOB spearheaded a research study on this issue as part of its commitment to transformative research.

Enter, transformative research

Transformative research is a paradigm not limited to topics or quantitative versus qualitative methods. Instead, what matters in transformative research is the approach and goals of the research. Transformative research mainly entails using mixed and participatory methods for data collection, though its goal is not simply to accumulate (new) knowledge but to foster societal empowerment and transformation. This type of research, therefore, lends itself to policy-oriented research. However, unlike lobbying for change through writing policy briefs and papers, transformative research allows for change to take place throughout the research process. In this process, the research participants (the target community representatives) are actively involved in identifying their needs and discussing solutions. The researcher, therefore, doesn't start the research with predefined goals. The researcher has to engage with the participants, value their knowledge and experiences, facilitate

addressing power inequities, and plan for sustainability (Mertens, 2021). In this process, the researcher acts as a social change agent rather than a knowledge creator.

Some IOB master students were involved in a research exercise around the colonial past and decolonial futures of the University of Antwerp. These students followed the course subunit "Transformative methodologies in development" under the research methods II course in the first module of their Master programme. Armed with predefined research questions and an array of nine participatory action research methods to select from, the students contacted various stakeholders within the university, including teaching and non-teaching staff, to participate in the research. Notably, the participants in the research were of diverse backgrounds both in terms of ethnicity and academic orientation. This highly motivated group of students faced head on the challenges that came with the execution of the research process, which entailed knowledge and experience sharing, and allowed each of the participants (students, researchers, and university staff) to develop new and divergent perspectives on the topic of decolonisation and the University's past and present. As the participants came from different parts of the world, each having faced different forms and consequences of colonisation, the exchange of knowledge and viewpoints facilitated a constructive reflective exercise. Not only that, but since the research was very hands-on, the students who had previously studied or heard about decolonisation could obtain some returns from the practical engagements. The research has likely contributed to increasing awareness of the University of Antwerp's colonial past; for instance, some students learned, for the first time, about the colonial past of Belgium and the University of Antwerp, and how this past is concretely linked with Congo. The research output was also considered key to the discussions to take place during the academic event linked to the inauguration of the Patrice Lumumba Aula, where two of the students were to

present their work.

Transformative research may constitute an important and relevant tool in the process of decolonizing the University of Antwerp. By design, transformative research is more open to epistemic disobedience and the inclusion of alternative perspectives. Moreover, some of the action research methods employed offer an effective and inclusive way of directing attention towards a particular topic of interest. However, the implementation of some methods can be time-consuming and costly, and some others can be difficult to implement on a large scale. Also, action is an integral part of participatory action research. So, in light of this research on the decolonial futures of the University of Antwerp, key questions remain: "What happens after the research is done?" and "What tangible change could take place next?"

Additionally, there are other challenges related to the use of transformative research focused on the decolonisation of the University of Antwerp. It is likely that one specific group, usually the same university staff, would be interested in participating in such research, leading to possible participation burn-out if the research is done multiple times and over a long period of time, and if they feel that their contributions do not make a difference. Furthermore, engagement in such research would imply an extra workload for those involved. The question of "who would be in charge of doing this research?" is one that would have to be answered, too. Currently, there are calls for the institutionalisation of the University of Antwerp's decolonisation efforts in order to avoid scattered, discontinued or atomised efforts and duplication of tasks. What remains to be seen is the position of the University of Antwerp vis-a-vis this demand.

The diversity of the participants determines how they engage with the exercises and research questions, making this a key consideration when identifying participants for inclusion in the research. While considering diversity in participation and how to increase interest and participation in such research, it is crucial to appreciate



the influence of power on the research process. Power imbalances among the research participants can influence discussions around decolonial initiatives and the outcomes thereof. The effectiveness of transformative research on the decolonial futures of the University of Antwerp is also affected by the participants' expectations. If participants are disillusioned by the current decolonial efforts of the university, then the effectiveness of this kind of research would be left hanging in the balance. Notwithstanding, it would be interesting to make the findings from recent research available to the general public to determine, to some extent, its effectiveness regarding the decolonial futures of the University of Antwerp.

Concluding remarks

Evidently, the University of Antwerp is making strides in the search for sustainable transformations which encompass active acceptance of global diversity and equitable decolonised exchange of knowledge. Still, we must ask: can more be done? Being a place of knowledge creation, the university should critically consider the knowledge being produced and reproduced within its walls. It should be ready to ask itself whether, based on the education it provides, it is producing critical thinkers who see the world in alternate ways or is merely reaffirming hegemonic strands of knowledge in those we hope will be change agents in the society we wish

to influence. For instance, the content of the curriculum should integrate more alternative perspectives, not only the dominant ones. Furthermore, the university should always be sensitive to the power dynamics at play in the partnerships they have with stakeholders, especially in the 'Global South'.

In addition, to augment the current decolonial efforts of the University of Antwerp, additional steps could be taken to decolonise the Middelheim campus itself. This could be seen as the next logical step following the inauguration of the Patrice Lumumba lecture hall. For instance, one option to consider is reversing the order of representation of power by housing classrooms instead of the Rector's office in the main colonial building at the Middelheim campus. It has also been anecdotally reported that some faculties or professions may struggle with seeing the need to and way to decolonise. Increasing awareness of the colonial past of Belgium and the university's role in this, while clearly highlighting the link with Congo, could go a long way. Of key importance is to ensure that all the decolonial efforts of the University of Antwerp integrate the voices and perspectives of the target parties. Transformative research can thus play a key role in the decolonial agenda of the University of Antwerp. For instance, in addition to the conversations and critical debates that are likely to emerge from the presentation the students



were to make at the academic event, the Global Engagement Advisory Group of the University of Antwerp has also expressed interest in the results from the transformative research process in which the students were engaged. Several action points could be taken into consideration while thinking about the decolonial future of the University of Antwerp.

The inauguration of the Patrice Lumumba lecture hall is a symbolic event that highlights the university's acknowledgment of its colonial past, and could represent a statement of intent to realise a decolonial future. Some people are justifiably concerned about such actions being tokenistic. On the one hand, all actions, whether

symbolic or not, have a collective relevance and importance. On the other hand, a symbolic gesture should not replace tangible action. It is imperative that we appreciate that decolonizing a university is a process done by actors who are at different stages of the process. Nonetheless, more action towards a decolonial turn for the University of Antwerp is indeed envisioned. One point that should be carefully considered is the issue of the economics of decolonial care. This term has been borrowed from the debate on the economics of care. There is a glaring need for awareness raising and the recruitment of a critical mass in the journey towards a decolonial future for the University of Antwerp. Otherwise, as it stands, the responsibility might

continually fall on the shoulders of the few who recognise the need, those who are most impacted by unequal power structures, and those who have least access to a voice or effective leverage. This may quickly become a burden, as others will expect them to find time to dedicate to the decolonial efforts of the university.

<https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/projects/aula-lumumba/globalengagement/>

NOTES

- ¹ Gaining 'évolué' status implied passing through a deeply humiliating process. Someone had to visit the 'candidate's' house to check if there was an inside toilet, if the children wore pyjamas and whether a knife and fork were used for eating ... only then could the person in question receive 'évolué' accreditation (Zeilig, 2008).

DISCUSSIONS WITH:

- Sara Geenen (Ph.D) – Associate Professor, IOB
- Catherine Windey (Ph.D) – Post-Doctoral Researcher, IOB

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH:

- Naomi Nabami Muheme – Master of Governance and Development, IOB
- Hannah Downes – Master of Globalisation and Development, IOB
- Valensiya Dresvyannikova – Master of Globalisation and Development, IOB

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Debating Development 2022

People on the move: leaving no one behind?


The 20th edition of Debating Development brought together academics, activists, and policy practitioners for a series on the relationship between migration and sustainable development. Seven panels examined, each from a different perspective, how migration is related to social justice issues. In doing so, it was shown that migration can provide protection for those fleeing conflict, that it can be an adaptation strategy for those affected by climate change and it can be an important lever for those seeking a better life. Several panel discussions also explored the conditions that need to be met for migration to also benefit communities left behind.

Against the obvious opportunities offered by migration, reception policies stand out as harmful. Many panels referred to empirical research showing that the reception of migrants is often accompanied by processes of othering, stigmatisation and even dehumanisation. A disconcerting session on the detention of undocumented migrants painfully demonstrated how detention is an assault on migrants' dignity.

One of the conclusions of this series was that more attention should be paid to communities denied mobility. Political scientist and IPCC

author François Gemenne expressed concern about subsistence farmers trapped in poverty for whom climate change threatens not only their lives but also their ways of living. In doing so, IOB alumna from the Philippines Mary Ann Manahan highlighted the vulnerable position of indigenous communities and demonstrated how governments have the power to deprive them of their rights and further marginalise them, without necessarily involving any active form of displacement. In this sense, this series was a plea to look at the nexus between migration and development from a broader lens, adding a particular focus on the real left behinds of globalisation.

The series was attended as an elective course by 200 students, coming from all nine faculties of University of Antwerp. For each session, there was also interest from academic staff and from the wider civil society. ■

 More information can be found on the USOS website: <https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/centres/usos/debating-development/edition2022/>



Alumni panel

Reynaldi Istanto GLOB 2021 | Indonesia

Where are you currently living? Currently, I am living in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Where do you work? I work as the Secretary-General for the FIFA U-20 World Cup Indonesia 2023. My role is to ensure that the organisation's administration is accountable and follows good governance principles. I also monitor each division's progress and provide strategic leadership for the organisation.

I also work as an expert staff for the Minister of State-Owned Enterprises for Global Value Chains, where we are responsible for the SOEs Go Global programme. This programme aims to enhance Indonesian SOEs' competitiveness and participation in GVCs. It is closely related to my specialisation at IOB.



How did your IOB experience affect your career and life?

The theories I learned at IOB have been valuable in my professional development, especially in the international relations field. Additionally, studying at IOB gave me a multicultural perspective in understanding phenomena, which has been beneficial in my career. I appreciate the experience and welcome any potential collaboration with IOB.



Annette Kyakuwa ECD seminar 2019 | Uganda

Where are you currently living? I am currently living in Kampala, Uganda.

Can you tell us about your current job and responsibilities?

I work as the Technical Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist in the Budget Monitoring and Accountability Unit at the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in Uganda. My main responsibility is to undertake evidence-based monitoring and evaluation of the Human Capital Development Program, which includes tracking government and donor-financed projects in areas such as health, education, water and sanitation, and social development.

From 15 April 2023, I will be joining UNICEF in Zanzibar as a Social Policy Specialist/Public Finance Management. In this role, I will be responsible for monitoring government initiatives and spearheading the development of evidence-based evaluation in both Zanzibar and three regions in Tanzania.

How did your IOB experience impact your career?

My IOB certification in Evaluation Capacity Development, specifically in the area of Strengthening National Evaluation Capacities, enabled me to actively participate in the government's development agenda and provided me with the knowledge needed to undertake private consultancies. This helped me to become a suitable candidate for the job opportunity at UNICEF, as I was confident in my skills and knowledge.

Kinkino Kia Legide GOV 2019 | Ethiopia

Where are you currently living? I'm living in Melbourne, Australia.

Where do you work? After finishing my Master's at IOB, I returned to my home country of Ethiopia and resumed my work as a lecturer in the College of Law and Governance at Hawassa University. I returned with a lot of experience and some new perspectives.

Can you tell us about an exciting project you're working on?

Currently, I'm pursuing a PhD at The University of Melbourne School of Law, where I'm affiliated with the Centre for Comparative Constitutional Studies. My research focuses on the law and politics surrounding the constitutional regulation of the quest for self-rule, internal secession, and conflicts in the Ethiopian federation. Specifically, I'm examining the case of the Sidama people's quest for regional statehood and the referendum for internal secession in Ethiopia. The work aims to shed light on the management of diversity in Ethiopia and how the constitutionally sanctioned institutions approach and address quests for autonomy or self-rule. It also draws on my previous studies at IOB, such as political economy of state, violent conflicts, and state rebuilding efforts, and seeks to inform political and policy choices and engage with dialogues within comparative federalism.



African countries force a global breakthrough in international tax!

Are they taking back their taxing rights?

In December 2020, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on the “Promotion of inclusive and effective tax cooperation”, an essential step to “Rescue the SDGs”¹. The Africa Group at the UN, under Nigerian leadership, spearheaded the draft resolution in November and managed to rally up approval despite resistance from the OECD and the United States². Whilst this call for UN over OECD tax leadership is not new, it is exceptional that this resolution got approved. Countries worldwide count on coordination and reform to tax multinational enterprises and close down loopholes at the basis of recurrent tax avoidance scandals. After the global financial crisis in 2007, the G20 mandated the OECD – the most powerful governing body in international taxation – to redraw the global design. And it did so, with extensive working groups, a multilateral instrument to amend existing bilateral tax treaties, and pillars 1 and 2, while experimenting in more inclusive governance-making. But, even though the dust of these reforms has not settled, voices mumble that these reforms are not inclusive, equitable, nor comprehensive enough, and finally African countries said ‘enough’ during last December’s General Assembly meeting. Is this a sign that African countries are done being norm-takers in international taxation? And does this resolution set the stage for more just global tax rules? We asked these questions to Professor Tarcísio Diniz Magalhães, an expert in international taxation at the University of Antwerp, and Richard Kweitsu, an IOB alumnus, previously employed by the Ghana revenue authority and currently writing a PhD at the University of Florida.

written by Cassandra Vet

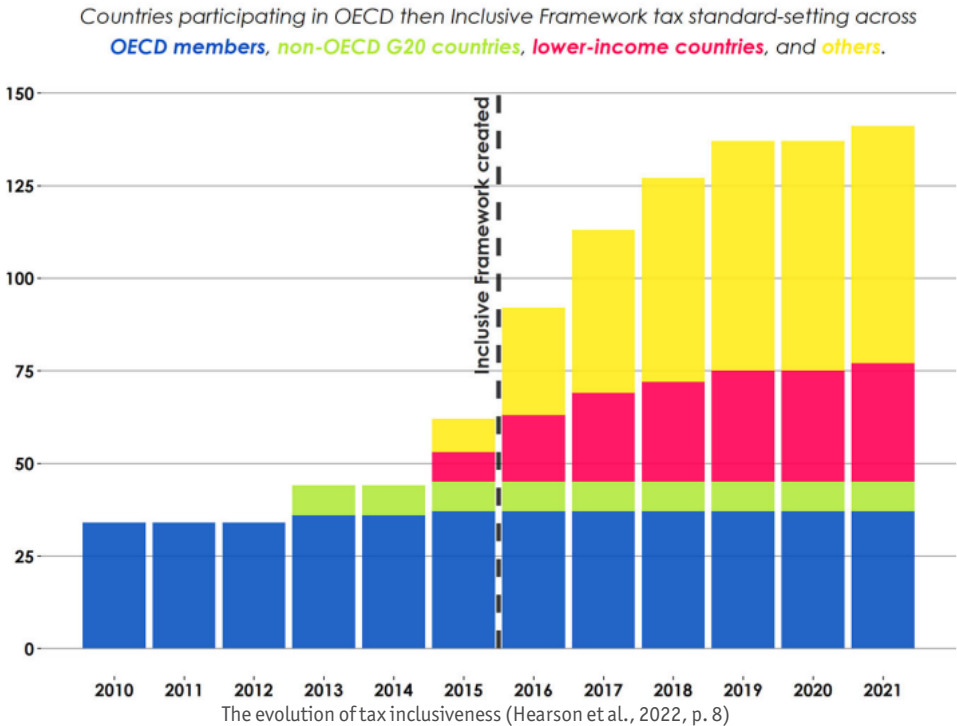
Looking back: why has it been enough?

International taxation has never been a level playing field. Developing countries entered the policy game when most of the rules were set – not surprisingly in favor of capital exporting countries –, and when reform became inevitable, the OECD stepped in to move beyond distributional

conflicts at the UN. Tax touches upon the essence of sovereignty – a state’s right to tax –, and states are reluctant to restrict their freedom to tax through international agreements. Nonetheless, the OECD is a powerful norm-setting body worldwide and its soft law instruments shape the global regime. The OECD model double tax treaty serves as the basis of

most bilateral tax treaties, and the OECD transfer pricing guidelines form the global benchmark to split international profits over tax jurisdictions. Yet, the rules, along with their bias towards capital exporting countries, as well as the position of the OECD itself, politicised over the last decade.

The evolution of global tax inclusiveness



Legitimacy constraints

Prof. Magalhães explains that: “in international tax is, and especially in international business taxation, that one institution, the OECD prevails over others worldwide. Yet, membership to the OECD is limited compared to the UN which includes almost all the countries in the world. The OECD claims to be the authority in terms of tax policies because of the expertise that is behind the organisation, and this discourse seemed to convince almost everyone.” He further criticises the hypocrisy of the OECD where it on the one hand remains a club of countries that only allows countries in when living up to its expectations, but on the other hand, because it needs – wants – to be the global tax center, it invites other countries to participate and creates things such as the ‘Inclusive Framework’. Previously, low-income countries in Sub-Saharan Africa were largely excluded from OECD-centered norm-setting platforms (see Figure 1), and Richard Kweitsu notes that international taxation for long gathered limited attention within domestic revenue administrations. But nowadays, “tax multilateralism [...] offers [...] an overnight experiment in mass integration of developing countries into historically Northern-led global governance” (Hearson et al., 2022, pp. 8-9). In 2010, the OECD allowed developing countries to attend global tax meetings as an observer, but from 2015 onwards, countries could participate ‘under equal footing’ through the Inclusive Framework and membership within the framework increased to 135 members³. Yet, the legitimacy of this framework is debated. Prof. Magalhães calls it frustrating that “the OECD hangs onto this idea of an ‘Inclusive Framework’ despite lacking common understanding on how it works in practice. Participants even question its inclusiveness as they often do not get a voice, or get to decide. Initial outputs of this framework generally fail to take developing country interests into account, and these end up being criticised, and later on amended.” This process shows a lack of inclusivity, and there is a gap between formal and effective participation as meetings take place in Paris, are highly technical, and

preparatory work is performed without the Inclusive Framework (Hearson et al., 2022). Richard Kweitsu therefore anticipates that African countries have a better chance of real representation within the UN. The work of this ‘Framework’ perversely added to the momentum of the Africa Group. Prof. Magalhães clarifies that: “once the OECD started opening up, it lost a bit of power. Not completely – because the framework is not truly inclusive – but it did lose some power as the discourse became relevant to others and countries started to complain. Finally, we got to a point where there was enough political momentum to make this United Nations proposal. It is also remarkable to witness how the discourse on developing countries and international taxation changed in the last decade. Where no one talked about developing countries in global tax debates in the past, you now cannot not talk about developing countries when discussing international tax”. **Taking back taxing rights** Next to expectations for a more legitimate tax regime, there is hope that a shift towards the UN would readdress current disadvantages of developing countries in international tax. Research highlighted how developing countries “negotiate their taxing rights away” through bilateral tax treaties (Hearson, 2018), struggle to administrate transfer pricing rules (Vet, 2023), and loose scarce resources through profit shifting behavior (Cobham & Jansky, 2019). According to Prof. Magalhães, developing countries tried to change some of these inequities before, and previously pushed for ideas such as exclusive source taxation within the UN Tax Committee. This proposal did not move forward because high income countries opposed this idea, and wanted to keep things at the OECD. However, Richard Kweitsu stresses how the rise of big tech companies in Sub-Saharan Africa increased their awareness about the distribution of taxing rights, and Prof. Magalhães notes how this rise pushed the OECD towards reopening the discussion on taxing rights. In his view, the OECD, by doing so, created opportunities for

other countries to launch complaints on the distribution of taxing rights, while they nevertheless tried to control the discourse. Still, Prof. Magalhães emphasises, “taxing rights, especially legally speaking, come from countries’ sovereignty, and are not given by treaties, or institutions, let alone the OECD that has no power to legislate, or even the UN. The debate on global rules is a debate about whether there are any limits to taxing rights, and so far we agree that limits are those that countries impose upon themselves and they do that through tax treaties. Therefore, if the system is flawed and does not allow you to tax enough, it is either because you signed a treaty that restricts you, or because other countries are pressuring you to tax in a certain way. The reason why the OECD opened the discussion on taxing rights in the digital economy is because European countries have a lot of treaties as they were capital exporters and these treaties work in favor of capital exporters. But what happened over the years, when the global economy changed, is that a lot of European countries became source countries, mostly to the US, and therefore wanted to get out of their treaty obligations.” **Looking forward what is the potential** One UN tax expert, Mr Rasmi Das⁴ claimed that adopting this UN resolution is the “most significant event ever towards making the international tax system fairer, more equitable, and sustainable in the long run.” Prof. Magalhães used to have a rather skeptical outlook on the UN’s potential to take on global tax leadership, and was influenced by literature portraying the UN as a weak institution, dominated by some players that achieved little for developing countries. Instead, his conclusion was that developing countries should have their own institutions regionally, and he rather incentivised pluralism in tax design, have coordination first at the regional level before taking things up to the next level. Richard Kweitsu underlines how African countries initiated more regional cooperation through the Africa Tax Administration Forum and the subcommittee on illicit

financial flows within the African Union, and how this increased regulatory capacity, and global representation. Regardless, Prof. Magalhães realised that it is not evident for developing countries to roll out regional regimes, and African countries are reluctant to break away from global standards as they fear that this would hurt their investor attractiveness (Vet, 2023).

Thus, both Prof. Magalhães and Richard Kweitsu felt excitement when reading about this UN resolution mandating the UN to design a plan to take up global tax leadership. Prof. Magalhães mostly because of his frustration that the OECD “continues to insist on a single discourse, and proposed ideas that have little to

do with developing countries”. His preferred solution lies regionally, but regardless he believes: “that pushing things towards the UN, could be a tipping point”. However, countries also restrict their taxing rights because of power, and we should therefore not be naive in expecting a level playing field for developing countries when renegotiating taxing rights at the UN. First of all, high income countries are part of the UN, and although there will be more voices in decision-making processes, these countries will also try to keep what they have. Secondly, this resolution authorises the Secretary General to come up with a plan but remains vague on the practicalities of the further process. How will future plans for instance connect

and integrate the work of the OECD? Prof. Magalhães gives us a few things to look out for when looking for real change. First, a restructuring of the tax committee of the UN, and an extension of their work is an important indicator. Because if the UN wants to compete with the OECD, their real challenge is that there are a lot of people working on tax at the OECD as it is a tax norm producing machine. Secondly, a positive indication would be if the UN would put governance, legitimacy and institutions explicitly on the agenda. Something that has hardly been done within the OECD process.

NOTES

- 1 Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, deputy secretary-general to the UN, made this statement during the UN Tax Meeting on the 31st of March 2023. Special meeting on international cooperation in tax matters - Economic and Social Council, 16th plenary meeting | UN Web TV <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1w/k1wsianfx9>
- 2 UN resolution for an intergovernmental tax framework: What does it mean, and what's next? - Tax Justice Network <https://taxjustice.net/2022/12/15/un-resolution-for-an-intergovernmental-tax-framework-what-does-it-mean-and-whats-next/>
- 3 About - OECD BEPS: <https://www.oecd.org/tax/beps/about/>
- 4 Mr Rasmi Das made this statement during the UN Tax Meeting on the 31 March 2023. Special meeting on international cooperation in tax matters - Economic and Social Council, 16th plenary meeting | UN Web TV <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1w/k1wsianfx9>

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In the meantime...



Informational Citizenship

Prof. Moisés Kopper will be leading an ERC Starting Grant from July 2023. The research lab will focus on grassroots initiatives in Brazil, Germany, Kenya, Portugal, and Tanzania, exploring how datafication impacts law-making, policies, and citizen rights.

We are excited to be recruiting five scholars to join the team in October 2023 from the fields of anthropology, sociology, history, geography, and related areas. If you want to improve your academic or applied career in a cutting-edge and interdisciplinary research environment, come join us on this global journey to reduce inequality and increase state accountability!

<https://www.uantwerpen.be/infocitizen>



Mining Technologies

Exciting research on mining technologies and techniques has been conducted by a multidisciplinary CEGEMI team in South Kivu's artisanal and small-scale mines. From hand-held tools to mechanised ball mills, the team examined the impact of technological transformations on labour organisation, productivity, environment, health, and taxation. Check out their conference, webinar, seminar, and publications in French and English on their website. **Don't miss their captivating photo essay either!**

<http://cegemi.com/index.php/technologies/>

FWO Instagram takeover

Our colleague Lara Collart took over the FWO Instagram account last month! Lara is a PhD candidate, focusing on the intersection of Environmental and Development Economics. Her research examines cooking habits and charcoal consumption in Eastern DR Congo. Read the insights from her fieldwork in Goma on FWO's instagram page.

<https://www.instagram.com/fwovlaanderen/>



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