



University of Antwerp

| IOB | Institute of
Development Policy

Institute of
Development
Policy

IOB

Research and Outreach Strategy 2024-29

Research group:

"Development Processes, Actors and Policies"

Contents

Introduction.....	4
1. Exploring alternative development pathways.....	6
1.1. Academic pluralism in the field of development studies.....	6
1.2. Development: global and (unevenly) interconnected	11
2. Academic and public outreach	23
2.1 Outreach in academia	23
2.2 Public outreach	25
2.3 The road ahead	29
3. A reformed research architecture	33
3.1. Standards of academic research quality at the individual level	33
3.2. Optimising the institutional setting: new roles for the Research Commission.....	36
3.3. Changes in human resources policy	37
3.4. Policy regarding external research finance	39
4. PhD policy	41
5. IOB internal publications	44
6. Managing risks related to research	46
7. IOB, UAntwerp and partners in the Global North and South.....	51
7.1. Collaborating within the University of Antwerp	51
7.2. Partnering in the Global South.....	53
7.3. Partnering within Europe	57
References.....	58

Abbreviations

AAP	Assisterend Academisch Personeel (Assistant Academic Staff)
ATP	Administratief en Technisch Personeel (Administrative and Technical Personnel)
BAP	Bijzonder Academisch personeel (Contract Research Staff / postdoc + predoc)
BOF	Bijzonder Onderzoeksfonds (Special Research Fund)
CAP	Commissie Academisch Personeel (Commission Academic Staff)
CERES	Research School for International Development (Utrecht, Netherlands)
CREAC	Centre belge de Référence pour l'Expertise sur l'Afrique Centrale (Belgian Expertise Centre on Central Africa)
EASHW	Ethische Adviescommissie Sociale en Humane Wetenschappen (Ethics Committee for the Social Sciences and Humanities)
EADI	European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes
ERC	European Research Council
FWO	Fonds voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek - Vlaanderen (Research Foundation – Flanders)
GLAC	Great Lakes of Africa Centre
HDCA	Human Development and Capability Association
ICP Connect	International Course Programme Connect
IDC	Individual Doctoral Committee
IEC	InstituutEvaluatieCommissie (Institute Evaluation Commission)
IOB	Instituut voor Ontwikkelingsbeleid / Institute of Development Policy
IOF	Industrieel Onderzoeksfonds (Industrial Research Fund)
MiHRS	Ethische Commissie voor Misuse, Human Rights & Security (Ethics Committee for Misuse, Human Rights & Security)
PSP	Policy Supporting Programme
RC	IOB Research Commission
RDM	Research Data Management
RS	Research Strategy
SAB	Scientific Advisory Board
VABB	Vlaams Academisch Bibliografisch Bestand (Flemish Academic Bibliographic Database)
VLIR	Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad – Flemish Interuniversity Council
VLIR-IUS	VLIR Institutionele Universitaire Samenwerking
VLIR-UOS	VLIR Universitaire Ontwikkelingssamenwerking
WRA	Wetenschappelijke Raad voor Advies (Scientific Advisory Board (SAB))
ZAP	Zelfstandig Academic Personeel (Senior Academic Staff)
ZAPBOF	Research professor appointed with resources of the Special Research Fund

Introduction

In 2016, an external research audit assessed IOB as an “internationally visible player”, with the remark that a portion of its work can be considered “competitive at the international level within the field of development studies”. The aim of this new Research Strategy for 2024-29 is to both take stock of the changes we introduced since then and revisit the broader context in which these changes were introduced so as to reflect on the positioning of an Antwerp-based Development Studies Institute within such a context and to suggest actions and changes for the future.

We started this process as part of a wider effort to ‘touch base’ after the COVID-19 crisis and to ‘re-tell’ the story of IOB to new colleagues. Additionally, we felt the need to clarify the institute’s ‘DNA’ in light of increasingly scarce core financing of the institute also in a context “where North challenges and South challenges are increasingly blurred, and where the very idea of ‘development’ may need rethinking. How do we articulate our activities to the decolonisation movement? What does it mean for what we do and for how we do it?” (IOB 2022, p. 3). Although discussions about these issues started much earlier, a lot of the groundwork for this new strategy was realised during two residential seminars in Alden Biesen (March 2022 and November 2023) which brought together most academic staff members of IOB.

In preparation for the new research strategy document, we also carried out [a new benchmark study](#), comparing IOB to some of its peer development studies institutes elsewhere in Europe. Its main results largely confirm those of earlier studies. They are reported in chapter 2.

The current document is the result of a collective endeavour: eleven colleagues (almost all tenured staff members!) joined in writing and re-writing different parts of this strategy, and all IOB staff members were given (and some of them also took) different opportunities to give their comments. We sincerely want to thank both the writers and the reviewers for their valuable input. A penultimate draft was also submitted to the Scientific Advisory Board who met on the 2nd of February. We also owe our sincere thanks to them for a thorough reading of the document.

Below, we first situate IOB and our research agenda in the evolving ‘field’ of development studies. Chapter 2 reports on the academic performance of research and outreach; we also specify the seven pathways in which we have come to think about realising development impact on the basis of our research. Chapter 3 updates our thinking about the main ingredients of our human resources policy. Chapters 4 to 7 detail some further policy aspects of research and outreach, inventorying how we plan to manage risks related to research, PhD policy, internal IOB publications and, far from least, partnerships in the Global South and North.

Tom De Herdt
Chair of the IOB-Research Commission

IOB at a glance

The Institute of Development Policy (IOB) is an autonomous entity at the University of Antwerp.

IOB was set up as a multidisciplinary institute involved in academic teaching, scientific research, and service to the community in the area of economic, political and social aspects of development.

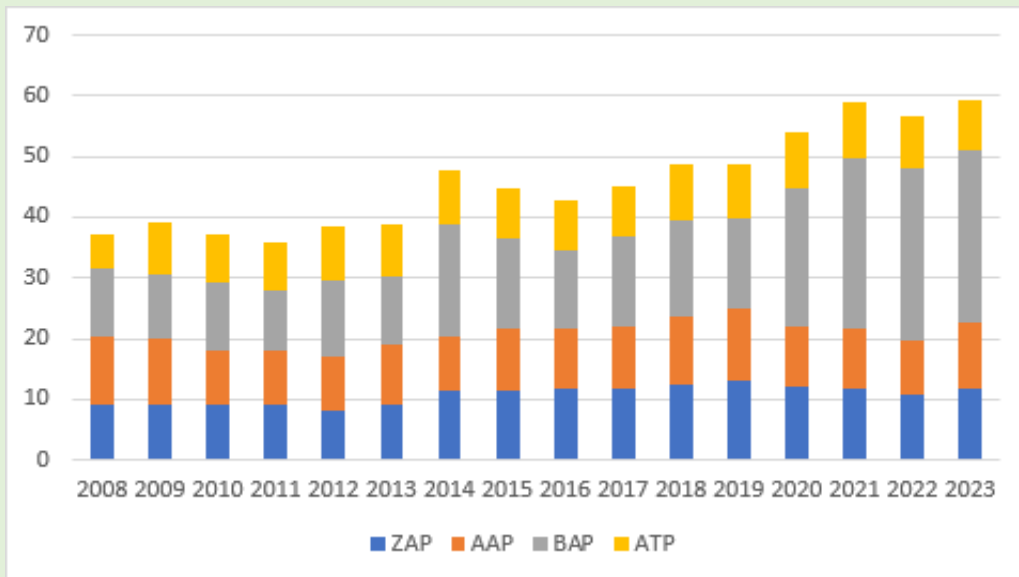
Its activities are financed by a combination of core funding provided by the Flemish government (2.5 M €) and self-generated resources (ca. 3 M €).

IOB hosts 3 Advanced Master programmes in the field of Development Studies (ca. 80 students in total) and its staff participates in several other types of academic education at the University of Antwerp and elsewhere.

Currently 35 PhD students are registered in IOB's PhD in Development Studies.

With a tenured staff of 11,7 FTEs, it housed more than 50 academic FTEs and about 10 administrative staff members as of 2023.

Evolution of IOB staff composition (in Full Time Equivalentents)



ZAP: Senior Academic Staff (= tenured staff); **AAP:** Assistant Academic Staff (= research assistants with teaching assignments); **BAP:** Contract Research Staff (= academic staff paid on external funds (postdoc + predoc); **ATP:** Administrative and Technical Staff

1. Exploring alternative development pathways

In line with IOB's vision of a just and sustainable world, we strive to help build such a world through multidisciplinary academic research, in close connection with academic education, partnerships and political engagement¹.

In this first chapter, we first situate our research expertise within the academic field of development studies and highlight the importance of cultivating diversity in, and conversation between, academic approaches and forms of societal engagement. Second, we acknowledge the worldwide interconnectedness and unequal integration of social groups and policy issues as co-shaping the development puzzle today, which allows us, thirdly, to define a three-pronged strategy of academic work in 'development'. We further focus our area of attention by defining three research lines and two transversal themes. We end this chapter by briefly pointing to both the need and the challenge of bringing together colleagues from the Global North and from the Global South.

1.1. Academic pluralism in the field of development studies

Our research group positions itself in the field of development studies—a field, not a discipline as such. This means that the 'field' of development studies is per definition quite varied and heterogenous.

At IOB, too, we put a lot of emphasis on academic pluralism. We cherish a plurality of disciplinary and methodological approaches. This vision is rooted in the idea that combining different perspectives on a particular development issue helps understand it in better ways. As expressed in a Ghanaian (Ewe) proverb: **“Wisdom is like a baobab tree: no one individual can embrace it.”** Researchers focus on different levels and actors, interface with other disciplines, and work within particular *research paradigms* that guide the type of questions they ask, the type of evidence they find valid, the type of method they prefer and, eventually also, the way in which they define their societal engagement.

From this perspective, IOB finds its preferred approach amply expressed in Jennifer C. Greene's understanding of policy-oriented 'mixed methods' research as consisting of inviting “(...) multiple 'mental models' into the same inquiry space for purposes of respectful conversation, dialogue, and learning one from the other, towards a collective generation of the phenomena studied. By definition, then, mixed methods social inquiry involves a plurality of philosophical paradigms, theoretical assumptions, methodological traditions, data gathering and analysis techniques, and personalised understandings and value commitments, because these are the stuff of mental models.” (Greene 2007, p. xii)

¹ IOB (2016) [Research Strategy 2017-2022](#), p. 2.

The academic pluralism we cherish also matches our understanding of the socially negotiated, politically contingent, and empirically situated nature of development processes, almost by definition requiring the juxtaposition, interplay, and mediation of the different ‘knowledges’ of relevant stakeholders. In the entangled policy arenas that shape the development process, there is a priori no guarantee of agreement about the specific meanings of justice and sustainability. On the contrary, there is bound to be a plurality of views on these concepts. These divergent views do not only stem from divergent interests or political agendas; they are also deeply related to the multiple ways we have of seeing and experiencing the world, of understanding how things work, and, ultimately, of how they can be changed for the better.

This **epistemic and normative plurality**—the deeply political issue of the means and ends of development itself—is a reflection of the multi-dimensional notion of development that informs current development thinking, as well as of the knowledge gaps regarding how different dimensions are causally linked to each other and, more fundamentally, of the inherent ontological and epistemological social science disputes about what is factually knowable—and how we come to know it. To this picture, we must add the principle of the durable incompleteness² of our definitions of justice and sustainability and of our understandings of how to advance them. To the extent that we are engaged in the practical exercise of promoting justice and sustainability, ‘spotless’ images of a just and sustainable world³ are less informative than the *real time- and space-specific* policy alternatives that concrete coalitions of actors provisionally and sometimes contentiously agree on—however diverse their worldviews might be in other respects. The recognition of the durable incompleteness of our ideas of justice and sustainability can also be an important ground to critically destabilise the claims of universality and consensus projected by specific actors’ views on these normative concepts.

Diversity in societal engagements

‘Development’ is not only an agenda ingrained in conventional international or development agencies; it is pushed for, resisted, enacted, pursued, and contested by all types of social actors situated in different positions of power. This implies, necessarily, that there are also different frameworks to analyse these societal debates. Conversely, it is no longer tenable to conceive of knowledge as an expert-exclusive and neutral domain restricted to university centres; in today’s (unevenly) interconnected world, we must also engage with this variety of societal actors so as to remain connected to the multiplicity of spaces and interests that can be engaged by development knowledge.

In this respect, we found valuable inspiration in Michael Burawoy’s plea for a social science that engages with different types of publics (see Box 1.1)—and that consequently also imbues different types of values and different perspectives on justice and sustainability.

² The term ‘durable incompleteness’ was coined by Amartya Sen (2006, p. 223).

³ Cf. Santiago Castro-Gomez’s (2021) critique of ‘zero-point epistemology’ as part and parcel the kind of ‘zero-point hubris’ he connected to colonialism and western enlightenment.

Box 1.1.

Burawoy’s plea for ‘provincialising the social sciences’

As president of the American Sociological Association, and drawing on his research in Global Sociology, Burawoy made a strong plea against a ‘positivist’ project of social science as accumulation of knowledge, as in his view the social sciences need to permanently feed themselves from societal engagement, either through policy advisory work or through interaction with general and particular publics outside of academia. He insists on the need for a reciprocal influence of all four types of knowledge as guarantees for a social science that is both societally relevant and self-critical—being entangled in a particular society’s political economy and also partly reflecting its values.

Knowledge for what?		Knowledge for whom?	
		Academic Audience	Extra-academic audience
Instrumental Knowledge		<i>Professional</i>	<i>Policy</i>
Reflexive knowledge		<i>Critical</i>	<i>Public (traditional/organic)</i>

While our knowledge, inevitably, reflects a particular political economy of social and economic research interests, Burawoy offers a vision of the social science as a global conversation between different traditions or ‘provinces’—without assuming, hierarchically, that the ‘more professional’ Global North holds the key to better knowledge in comparison to ‘more applied’ research traditions in the Global South. Indeed, the societally situated character of *all* types of social science research constitutes a level playing field to bring Global North academic thinking in conversation with theory from the South. Burawoy’s argument for a ‘provincial’ view of the social sciences explicitly echoes Dipesh Chakrabarty’s, for whom “European thought is at once both indispensable and inadequate in helping us to think through the experiences of political modernity in non-Western nations, and provincialising Europe becomes the task of exploring how this thought—which is now everybody’s heritage and which affects us all—may be renewed from and for the margins” (2000, p. 16).

Burawoy also spelled out the core challenge for a vibrant social science as seeking ways to make these different types of knowledge speak to each other. In practice, this implies, for us, that we cultivate ‘vibrant’ conversations at two levels: On one hand, between the different types of ‘professional’, ‘policy’, ‘critical’ and ‘public’ forms of knowing within our own Institute, and on the other, between the different ‘provinces’ with which we engage through the course of our conversations and partnerships. At the same time, we must look for ways in which these forms of knowledge overlap with each other in practice.

Additionally, we found Burawoy’s plea relevant in reflecting on how our research can engage with the debate on decolonisation, on at least three levels: first, his rejection of positivism resonates well with the “zero-point epistemology” (Castro-Gomez 2021) thought to be part and parcel of the colonial

project⁴. Secondly, his emphasis on the inevitably *provincial* character of the social sciences is both a plea to reflect on the historically contingent positioning of our work and an invitation to engage in a respectful dialogue with other ‘provinces’, fully cognisant of the power asymmetries that mark such an engagement. Third, this means that we must widen the record of what development means and for whom, by engaging with and incorporating (in our research and teaching) the variety of theories that have been pioneered in the Global South: from the dependency and centre-periphery paradigms in Latin America to debates about the origins of developmental states in Africa to the more recent kaleidoscope of post-development, anti-colonial, anti-racist, and feminist alternatives that emerge from people’s everyday struggles and embodied knowledge (Leach et al. 2024; Escobar 2020). All these approaches, with their different normative views of justice and well-being, have systematically pointed to the unequally interlinked political economy of knowledge and resource distribution and thus are key in our endeavour to reposition development studies within a global and unevenly interconnected world: one in which the asymmetries between the Global North and South are shifting, albeit still characterised by structural “relations of domination and othering” (Sud & Sánchez-Ancochea 2022).

This is an agenda we have only begun to realise.

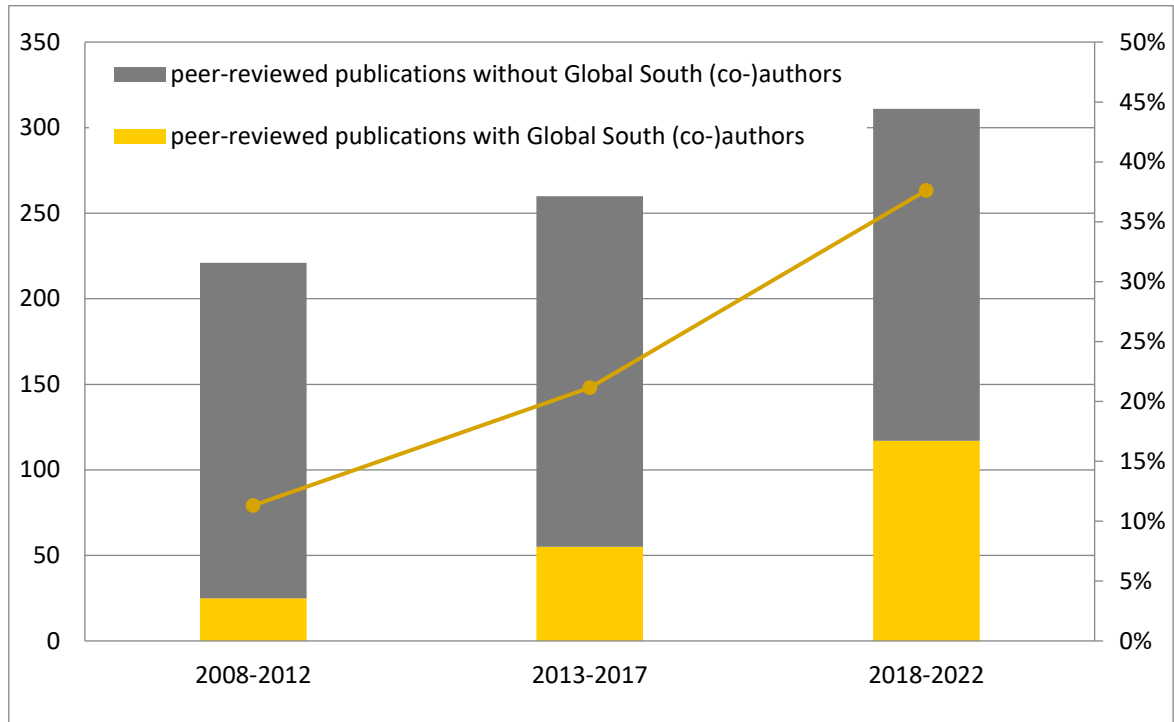
First, at the level of IOB itself, it has evidently been much easier to allow for diversity in approaches rather than cultivate a dialogue between them. Beyond the routine forms of communication of new projects (introduced and granted) and new publications (through the Board and through an IOB newsletter) to allow for sufficient internal information-sharing about what all of us are doing and planning to do, we have been experimenting with monthly ‘Fruit for Thought’ seminars (immediately preceding the IOB Board meetings) as spaces where such an exchange of perspectives can ‘fruitfully’ take place. While these seminars provide at least for the possibility of an exposure to others’ academic endeavours, in our experience attendance to them has also been highly uneven (IOB 2022). The monthly online seminars organised by the Great Lakes of Africa Centre (GLAC) have also served that purpose, and perhaps with a higher degree of success.

Second, IOB’s research connects in multiple ways to ‘academic provinces’ in the Global South, and one accurate way to demonstrate how this encounter has become increasingly intensive is perhaps by looking at the evolution of the share of peer-reviewed publications with (co-)authors from the Global South (Figure 1.1.) Over the last decade, the total number of publications co-authored by or with Global South authors quadrupled, and their weight in the total of peer-reviewed publications more than tripled. In 2022, more than half of our publications were co-authored by at least one Global South author. It is also important to note that at least as judged in terms of the number of peer-reviewed publications co-authored by a researcher from the South, there is anything but evidence of a trade-off between academic performance and the space given to researchers from the South.

⁴ Closely similar to (but different from) the concept of the ‘white gaze’, a concept Pailey (2019) traces back to Jean-Paul Sartre’s (1948) description of it as “the privilege of seeing without being seen”.

Figure 1.1.

Share of peer-reviewed IOB publications with (co-)authors from the Global South°



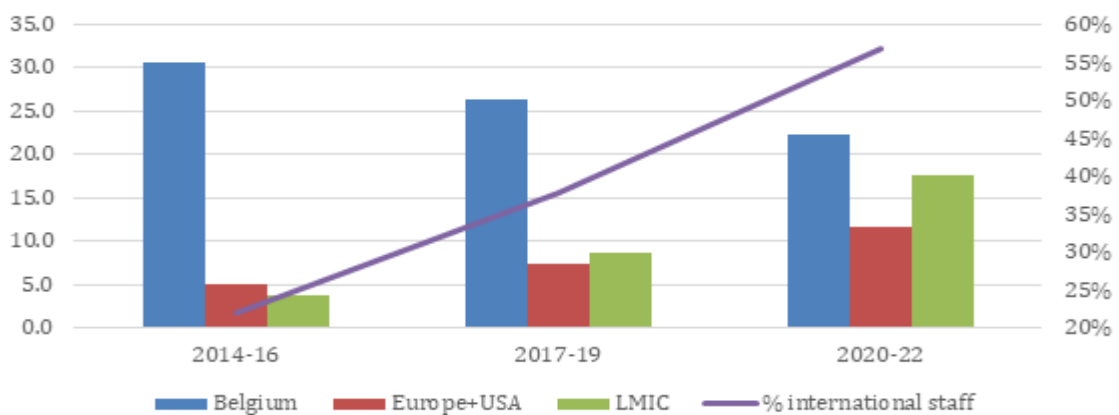
° defined as researchers with a Bachelor's degree from a low- or lower middle income country.

Source: on the basis of the UAntwerp academic bibliography

This result is the reflection of a variety of efforts at levelling the playing field of our research and outreach practices, among which a continued effort towards internationalisation of staff (see Figure 1.2.), increased investment in both research (projects, conferences) and teaching activities with our southern partner institutes, strengthening of alumni-networks, etc. In the wake of the HDCA (Human Development and Capability Association) Conference we organised in September 2022, we also organised a 'partner-week' which did also allow for an exchange of information and views about the organisation of teaching, research, and outreach between the group of partners themselves.

Figure 1.2.

Internationalisation of staff at IOB, 2014-22°



° all academic staff categorised on the basis of where they obtained their BA degree.

We are thinking about doing more, and better here. See chapter 7 of this document for further reflections on our policy of partnerships in/with universities in the Global South.

1.2. Development: global and (unevenly) interconnected

IOB has a long and internationally consolidated and recognised expertise in researching the most marginalised countries and/or regions⁵, yet Global North-based development studies institutes have also increasingly been challenged to re-imagine development beyond it being a specific Global South issue typically studied in the Global North⁶. See also how this is reflected in our own publications (Figure 1.4).

Indeed, firstly, the SDG agenda implied a recategorisation of the countries formerly called ‘developed’ as still ‘developing’, as no country in the world fulfils all criteria. Countries formerly called ‘developed’ also score particularly badly on ‘sustainability’, for instance.

Secondly, authors writing from very different perspectives have made, each in their own way, an argument of ‘convergent divergence’, i.e. that ‘developed’ countries too are grappling with increasing internal divergence and duality (Rodrik 2023), with an emerging ‘underclass’ or ‘Global South’ also in the Global North, very much in line with earlier anthropological accounts of how Euro-America is evolving towards Africa (Mbembe 2013; Comaroff & Comaroff 2015).

Third, Global North countries—and indeed many current development institutes themselves, including IOB—have increasingly been challenged to question their academic practices and societal role in light of their (or their predecessor entities’) implication, directly or indirectly, in colonial projects. Given that this history cannot be undone (indeed, ‘everything passes, except the past’⁷), the relevant question is, then, how this past translates into a project for the construction of a common future (Táiwò 2022). So we definitely have some homework to do.

Fourth, different from the 20th-century world in which nation-states remained the un-assailed kernels of power and an undisputed locus of analysis, today their agency needs to be situated within a broader network of cross-cutting, supra-national, and infra-national powers, and within a set of problematics that cut across and beyond their purviews of influence and intervention, even if this does not necessarily diminish the capabilities of states. While these new sources of power may not be harnessed for the promotion of alternative visions of justice or sustainability, they remain part and parcel of the

⁵ As per our mission statement, “IOB privileges the poorest developing countries and, in other countries, the poorest and most disadvantaged groups and regions.” Here, we re-conceptualise “the poorest developing countries” as “the most marginalised countries” in an attempt to highlight the relational and historically constructed origins of poverty.

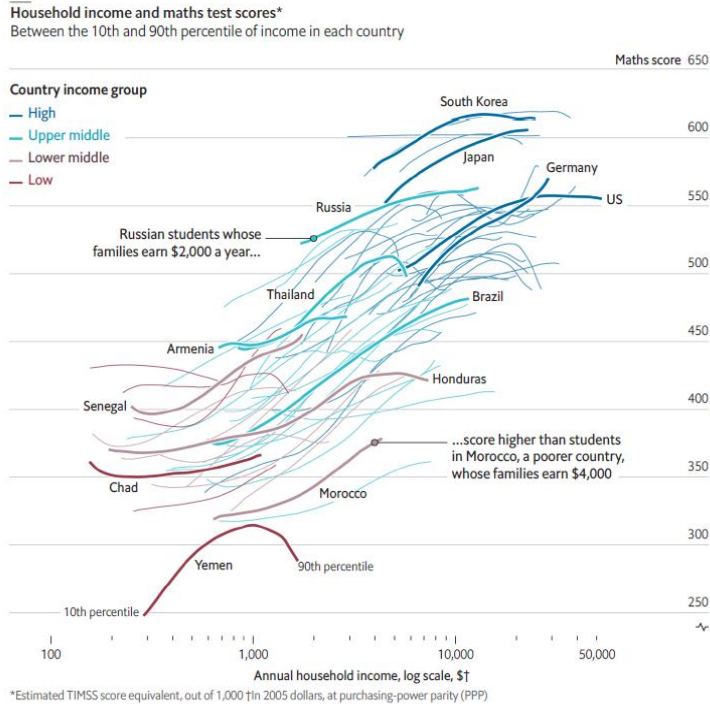
⁶ For some recent contributions, see Pailey (2019), Sumner, A. (2022), Wiegratz et.al. (2023), Leach et.al. (2024).

⁷ Expression at the entrance of the renewed Royal Museum for Central Africa.

policy arena and thus of the ways local, regional, and national actors and practices entangle with other identities and social actors.

The (unevenly) interconnected nature of development issues and processes requires indeed the complementary integration of different methodologies and approaches capable of capturing the complexity of life at the margins—where issues of space, nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, and class intersect and become integral to the embodied experience of marginalisation (e.g. Kopper & Richmond 2024; Crenshaw 2017). An important aspect of this process is the integration of Global South-based theories and methods, which not only critically reflect the differences in access and power of the margins, but also positions the periphery as an evocative epistemological nexus for theory production from the margins.

Figure 1.3. Math test scores over the whole range of within-country income distribution



Published in [The Economist](#), October 2020 (downloaded 16 January 2024)

It is, ultimately, within these contested, localised, and interconnected policy arenas that the development puzzle—and the novel alternatives for just and sustainable futures—are taking shape today. Knowledge only becomes development-relevant to the extent that it is mobilised in real *policy arenas*, where “different groups and actors interact and bargain over aspects of the public domain”⁸. This arena is becoming increasingly complex, implying a wide variety of social groups and actors from the local to the global level. Research at IOB has so far responded to this by analysing development

⁸ World Development Report 2017, *Governance and the Law*, p. 7

processes in a **multi-level** and **multi-actor governance perspective**. In light of our imperative of discerning viable alternative development pathways towards a more equitable and sustainable world, we want to **deepen research into the unevenly interconnected nature of development**.

Yet none of the former implies that the north-south distinction would lose its importance, quite the contrary (Wiegratz et al 2023); the North-South differentiation remains an important marker of difference, political asymmetry and/or economic inequality and an important determinant of real life-chances throughout. This is observable e.g. in the persistent relevance of the distinction between income-groups in the way in which these categories informed [access to COVID-19 vaccinations](#) or in the quality of education over the whole range of the within-country income distribution (Figure 1.3.). Conversely, the category of the Global South also remains an important vector of agency and political change, continuing a tradition of post-independence ‘worldmaking’ (Getachew 2019) that found its home in the field of development studies too (Mkandawire 2011; Sud & Sanchez-Ancochea 2023)

A three-pronged strategy

In response to this, we position our **research and outreach activities as a contribution to the reflection on historical and contemporary processes of marginalisation—in view of exploring the space for development alternatives**. This allows us to also study the histories of exploitation, inequality, and invisibility that crop up at the very intersection of global, regional, and local development dynamics. More importantly, by shedding light on the intricate, multi-scalar specificities and commonalities and the ways in which processes of marginalisation create their own knowledge and governance infrastructures, we can arrive at a better understanding of our own positioning and capability to engage in the development process. Specifically, and most importantly, this involves, among other elements, (re)conceptualising the global development puzzle as worldmaking (Getachew 2019), or a particular form of reparation of historically shaped patterns of accumulation of advantage and disadvantage (Táíwò 2022).

We propose to contribute to this reflection via a three-pronged strategy.

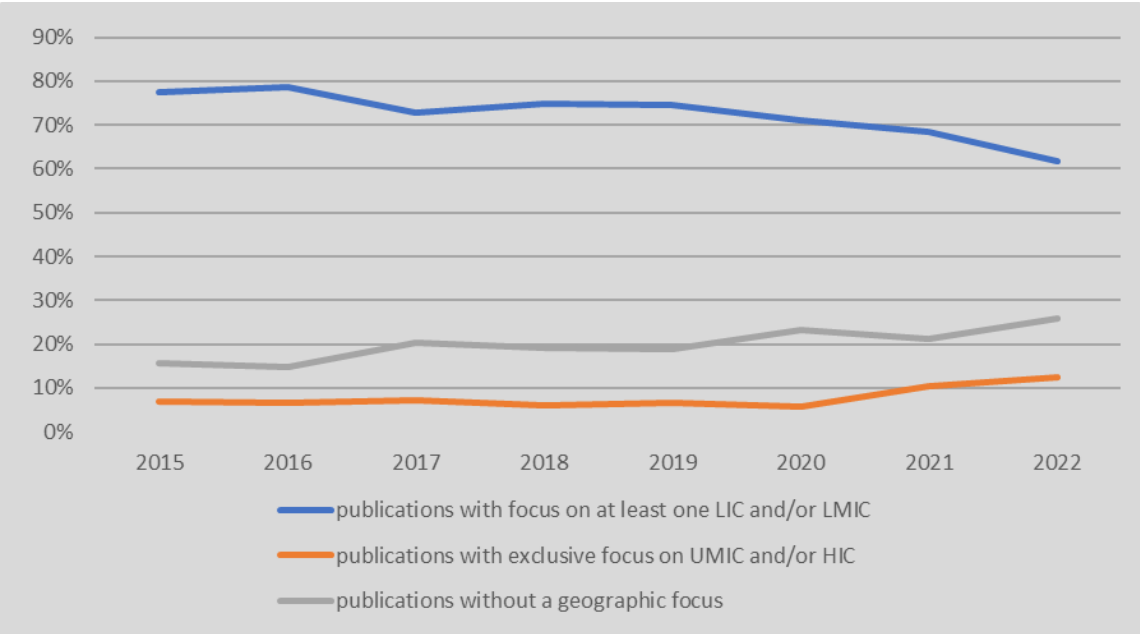
First of all, we propose to give **particular attention to the most marginalised countries⁹ and/or regions in our own research**: What mechanisms are at play in the (re-)production of the marginalisation of people in the most marginalised countries and regions and, more importantly, **what alternative development pathways** can be imagined for—and with—the people living in these countries and/or regions? The last question was proposed as one of the ‘Big Hairy Audacious Goals’ to guide research at IOB in future. Of importance to note here is the fact that, as mentioned before, within a globally

⁹ Up to now, we defined these, in case a more formal definition was needed, as both Low Income and Lower Middle Income Countries.

interconnected world, this focus of attention need not imply that we only do fieldwork in the Global South; we may also be directly engaging with international or global-level policy arenas.

But there are, of course, good ethical reasons for focusing our own research on development alternatives in the Global South. Further, the expertise we built over the years through partnerships with institutes in the Global South, as well as the network of actors we are connected with, makes us relatively better placed than other research groups *within our own university* to start exploring processes of marginalisation and development alternatives from this perspective. Whereas the Global North academic interests, publication outlets and other sources of academic repute and power rather tend to concentrate attention on issues of concern in the Global North, we continue to insist on the need to challenge this tendency and foreground academic work in and on areas not usually on the academic radar in the Global North.

Figure 1.4.
Geographic focus of peer-reviewed publications, 2015-22



Secondly, we aim to better understand how Global South and Global North mechanisms intersect in reproducing advantage and disadvantage in the Global South. To this end, we want to continue and deepen **partnerships with other corners of our university** that are much more knowledgeable on how such mechanisms work in the Global North, but do perhaps also lack in understanding how their analyses can be enriched with a Global South perspective. We refer to the chapter on partnerships here for more details about how we think this can be done.

Thirdly, for the construction of solid empirical expertise on the processes of marginalisation that are taking shape in multiple dimensions and at different scales in the Global South, standard tools of analysis are both “inevitable and inadequate”, in the words of Chakrabarty (2000, p. 16). They need to be complemented with Southern views, hence why, for us, an important aspect of our strategy is **to**

cultivate networks and partnerships in the Global South. This may also possibly imply an engagement in other countries in the Global South, not only because small-scale development processes may be linked to regional policy arenas, debates on global political goods, and the global political economy. But also because cross-pollinating best practices and experiences across these various regions can lead to valuable South-to-South learning.

This being said, we have to recognise that while the above broadly circumscribes our field of interest, in actual practice our research agenda is necessarily more limited, as our academic entity is given concrete shape by just 13 staff members with (perspective on) tenure (possibly also complemented with post-doctoral researchers), so the effective focus of our research and outreach will be given shape by only these 13 nodes. Still, we have two ways to stimulate further overlap and interaction between these nodes: research lines and transversal themes.

Three Research lines

For the coming years, we opt to continue structuring our work along the **three research lines** we defined in 2017, as we think this has been an appropriate way to stimulate internal conversations and external communication of our research output.

Table 1.1.
Research lines for allocating junior staff members, 2017-2022

Name of research line	Core Sustainable Development Goals they speak to	ZAP currently involved	AAP currently involved	
			Central Africa	Other
Environment and Sustainable Development	6 Clean water and sanitation 7 Affordable and clean energy 11 Sustainable cities 13 Climate Action 15 Life on Land	Bossissi Cassimon Ferrando Geenen Molenaers Titeca Van Hecken Verpoorten	Ivan Ashaba	Baudoin Koussognon Juan Sebastian Velez Triana Alder Contreras Hernández
Global Governance and Inclusive Development	5 Gender equality 8 Decent work and economic growth 10 Reduced inequalities 12 Responsible consumption and production 17 Partnerships for the goals	Cassimon De Herdt Ferrando Geenen Holvoet Kopper Molenaers Sterck	Mark Kadigo Cassandra Vet Divin-Luc Bikubanya	Hanne Van Cappellen Stephanie Garcidueñas Nieto
State Formation and Resilient Societies	16 Peace, justice and strong institutions	De Herdt Holvoet Kopper Molenaers Titeca Vandeginste Verpoorten	Denis Augustin Samnick	Diana Tiholaz

All three research lines give **concrete shape** to the multi-level governance perspective we want to cultivate at IOB, reaching from the global to the local and vice versa. We can also further stimulate the clustering of the academic research at IOB around these three lines by explicitly tailoring new academic **vacancies** for junior staff members to one of them. A further explanation of the research lines follows below.

Box 1.2.

Research Lines

Environment and Sustainable Development

The increasing recognition of the negative social and ecological side effects of different types of 'development', has led to environmental/climate change and poverty/inequality concerns occupying an ever-more central position on the international policy agenda. The urgency of the challenges we face has also provoked heated debates on the appropriate (multi-level) governance structures to secure both poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. While a range of different state-led, community-led, and market-led approaches have been proposed and tried over the past decades, we note how sustainable development is increasingly being framed in terms of a 'green economy', and reliance on market-based conservation mechanisms and conditional finance instruments, such as (voluntary) carbon markets, Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES), biodiversity derivatives, and payments for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+).

This research cluster focuses on actors, policies, technologies, and instruments that aim at making visible and tackling climate change and ensuring the provision of 'global public goods', and the kind of socio-political dynamics and interactions they trigger at and between multiple levels. At the global level, it analyses the main trends, actors, and factors in the evolving and ever-more complex environment and climate governance landscape. At the national level it analyses the dynamics of the policy cycle (identification, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) surrounding the translation of global commitments into national policies. At the local level, it analyses the (non-)implementation of the environmental/climate change agenda and how it interrelates with local dynamics and struggles of (unequal) access to natural resources.

Within this broader framework, topics for research include the examination of climate aid funding; socio-political dynamics triggered by environment and climate change governance instruments, such as carbon and biodiversity markets, Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) and green microfinance; community-based monitoring of natural resources and service delivery; climate change vulnerability and resilience from a gender/intersectionality perspective; 'green criminology' with a focus on ivory poaching and trade; and climate change as a push factor for migration.

State Formation and Resilient Societies

Processes of state formation and the evolving role of states in the post-colony form the background against which this research line examines situations of state under-reach (as in fragile or failed states), state reach (as in developmental states) or state overreach (as in state crime or structural violence). The research activities aim to understand how state attributes such as government, territory, law, nation, or power are articulated, or not, and how state actions such as legitimization, economic accumulation, or security and service provision take shape, or not.

The research activities avoid a unitary conception of the state by taking into account a wide spectrum of actors (formal and informal) and factors (ideational, institutional, structural) at different levels (local, national, international). Such a focus on the effects, processes and dynamics of state formation – the changing patterns of tightening and loosening state reach across space and time – implies attention to societal resilience, namely the ability of societies to resist, adapt to or recover from (the consequences of) a lack of state presence and/or performance, sudden man-made or natural shocks, or long-term social exclusion and adverse incorporation. Particular attention is paid to these issues in connection with the cycle of violent conflict, peace-making and efforts to achieve state reconstruction and renegotiate the social contract and the citizenship link.

Within this broader framework, topics for research include the examination of mechanisms of political and administrative accountability; the technopolitical role of materiality, bureaucracies, and infrastructures;

processes and mechanisms of decentralisation and the governance of public services; the evolution of power-sharing arrangements and their impacts on the nature and experience of political representation and decision-making; the evolution of relations of trust or feelings of security; the role and practice of societal groups and street-level bureaucrats in negotiating and implementing public policies and services; the role of external actors and aid in strengthening or weakening state formation and regime transformation or consolidation.

Global Governance and Inclusive Development

Facing the apparent limits to (hyper)globalisation, which are revealed in growing inequalities, socioeconomic and digital-technological exclusion and adverse incorporation, the research aims to study processes of exclusive/inclusive development and the role of governance and data therein. The global economy is increasingly concentrated at the top and fragmented at the bottom, which justifies IOB's focus on the most marginalised countries and processes, as well as on people excluded from global development processes, or adversely incorporated in them. Rather than treating them as victims of globalisation, the research activities study small-scale producers and workers as agents navigating local-to-global dynamics. Special attention is paid to women, migrants, children and people with disabilities as the human faces of this globalisation paradox involving both inclusion and exclusion.

Global governance (both public and private) in such a context should – in theory – be able to solve part of the paradox; it should not only facilitate market transactions, but also regulate negative externalities and compensate for unequal outcomes. Failures to do so warrant a more critical study of the political processes and the normativity underlying the current global governance and aid architecture. Research activities will therefore focus on how policies and programmes aimed at reducing poverty and inequalities, at promoting gender equality, equity and decent work, first of all reflect political struggles in the policy arenas they emanate from, and second, interact with socio-political dynamics at the local level.

Specific topics for research include the provision and financing of global public goods, the regulation of international trade and finance, Corporate Social Responsibility and Codes of Conduct, gendered labour and labour under natural resource regimes, the politics of poverty and inequality knowledge and data, inclusiveness and impact of evaluation processes, and migration dynamics and impact.

Two Transversal themes

Central Africa

If researching the most marginalised countries in the world remains vital, we also want to give privileged attention to Central Africa¹⁰. During the last decades, we have built up a critical mass of expertise on the DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda which is probably unique in the world¹¹. This expertise is partly also founded on a heritage that can be traced back to Belgium's colonial past—see also the brief overview [on our website](#) of the continuities and ruptures through which the current IOB can be traced back to the 'colonial college' whose doors were closed in 1960. We think there is also an important reason to maintain this particular geographic focus: such a valuable research expertise

¹⁰ Defined in IOB's Research Strategy 2012-2017 as comprising Burundi, the DRC, Rwanda, and Uganda. We acknowledge that 'Central Africa' means different things to different people, depending, among other things, on the colonial history of the countries or regions they have been working in or on. The alternative term of the 'Great Lakes Region' is less ambiguous, but (therefore perhaps) also less accurate, as the overlap between that region and the four aforementioned countries is only partial. At IOB, we use both terms interchangeably, but the flagship-publication we publish each year carries Central Africa in its title from 2018 onwards.

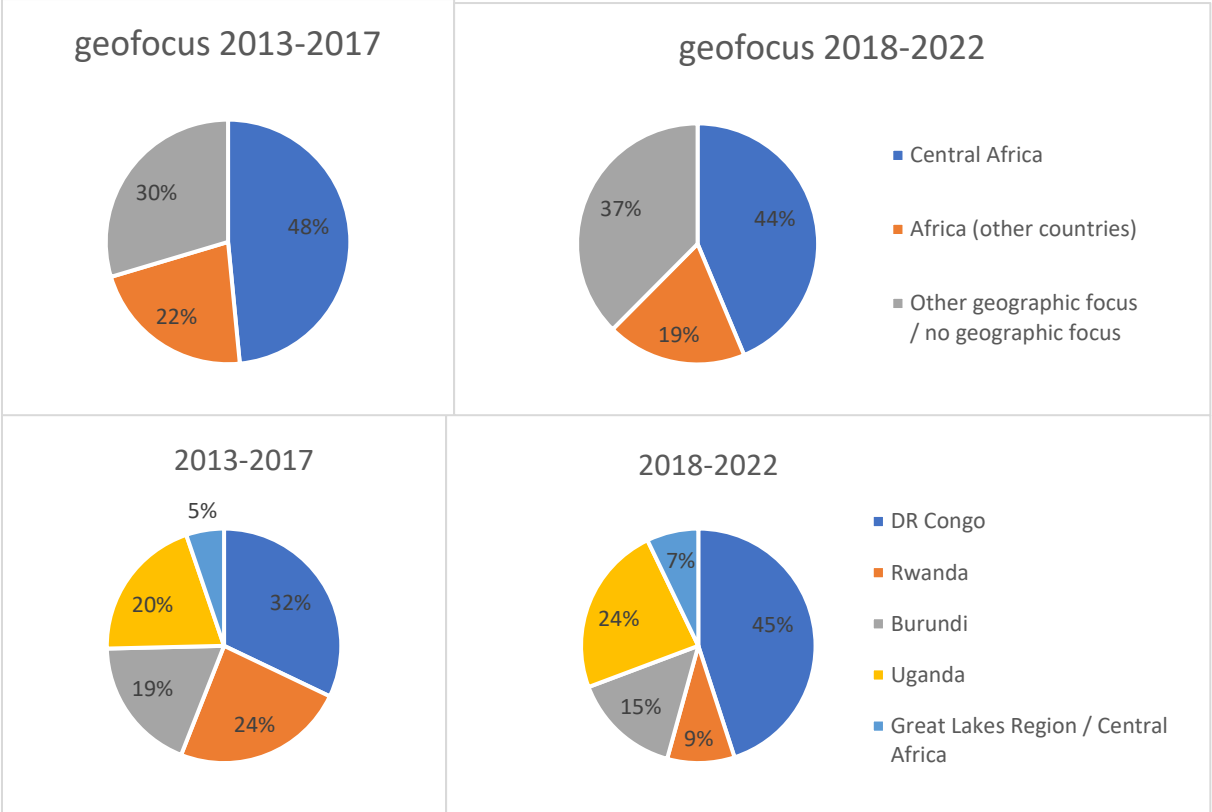
¹¹ The 2011 research audit, chaired by one of the former directors of the African Studies Centre, University of Leiden, put this even stronger: "[t]here are a number of high-quality individual researchers on the GLR elsewhere in Europe and perhaps especially in the United States (...), but Antwerp can justly claim to have the greatest collective impact" (2011, p. 23)

allows us to play an important role in a region that will continue to face major development challenges in the years to come.

A research focus on Central Africa comes, however, with its own challenges. *To begin with*, it is important that, at the level of IOB, we strive towards *a healthy mixture of expertise on the three regions of recruitment of most of our students*: Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia. In our previous policy plan, we secured the presence of IOB staff working in/on the Central African region by dedicated vacancies for assisting and teaching staff. However, colleagues whose main focus is *not* on Central Africa have also at times contributed to the stream of Central-Africa focused publications. This has guaranteed a continued stream of research output on Central Africa: comparing 2006-2010 and 2012-2016, one can note a slight decrease in Central-Africa publications but a substantial increase, too, in ‘other Africa’ publications (Figure 1.5). Given our emphasis on ‘the eyes of the rest of mankind’ as an important vantage point to define justice and sustainability, the possibility that IOB becomes an ‘Africa institute’ is also **a risk**, in the first place for academics and students from the Central African region itself.

Figure 1.5.

Geographic focus of peer-reviewed publications (co-)authored by IOB staff members.



Source: on the basis of the UAntwerp academic bibliography

A second challenge is how we engage with the agenda of the **decolonisation of the university**. In other words, how can we harness the expertise available on the Central African region to create spaces for alternative development?

This question extends **beyond the Central African region** as such as it overlaps with more general questions around research carried out in the most marginalised countries/regions (see above). Particularly, we conceive the activities of the Centre as an opportunity for internationalisation of academics working *in* (and not just *on*) the Central African Region. With such an important critical mass of researchers, we should also play our role in creating more opportunities for the presence of local academics in international workshops and conferences (including in the region itself), in international policy debates, in international research projects, and in international publication outlets.

Up to now, these activities have been taken up under the umbrella of IOB's own **Centre for the Study of the African Great Lakes Region (GLAC)**. The Centre has provided (even before the formal foundation of IOB itself) a public window of academic research on the region: besides the organisation of several conferences and seminars in Antwerp and in the region itself, it publishes a yearly edited volume on the contemporary political economy of the region (from 2017 onwards this activity was integrated in the Belgian Expertise Centre on Central Africa (CREAC) so as to share the editing of the *Conjonctures de l'Afrique centrale* with UCLouvain and the Royal Museum for Central Africa – and to edit the companion volume *Political Chronicles of the Great Lakes Region*). Since 2021, GLAC also organises a series of monthly online seminars to present research on the region from both IOB staff members and other researchers.

The concentration of GLAC scholars at IOB also helps to attract human and material resources (e.g. international project finance) and reproduce the research expertise in and on the region. In this way, we also secured a new **FED-tWIN arrangement**, through which Belgian Science Policy will finance (for a period of 10 years) a position for a professor to be affiliated to, in casu, the Royal Museum for Central Africa and IOB¹², and IOB will function as the lead in a Policy-Supporting consortium on Social Protection, Inclusive Growth and Inequality on Central Africa. Further, we co-operate with the Department of History in opening a vacancy for a **research professor on the Social and Economic History of Africa**. Together with a vacancy for a postdoctoral researcher on this theme¹³, this initiative should lead to building up expertise that may usefully be mobilised in materialising further steps for [global engagement](#) of our university.

¹² <http://www.presscenter.org/nl/pressrelease/20161110/fed-twin-programma-voor-een-duurzame-samenwerking-op-onderzoeksvlak-tussen-de->

¹³ In the framework of the 'post-doctoral challenge' opportunity opened by the UAntwerp Research Council.

Table 1.2.

Cross-Cutting Research Themes (a non-exhaustive overview)

Environment and Sustainable Development	State Formation and Resilient Societies	Globalisation and Inclusive Development
<i>Theme 1. Great Lakes of Africa Centre</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environmental and social effects of mining in DRC - Environmental conservation and natural resources governance - Clean energy transition and their impact on local actors in DRC - Water governance in DRC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Governance and armed conflict in the region - The aftermath of genocide in Rwanda: institutions, trust and representation - Public services, public administration and (hybrid) governance in DRC - Post-conflict state-building in Burundi - Ethnicity, conflict, gender and politics in Rwanda and Burundi - Politics, conflict and migration in Uganda - Collective action, cash transfers and governance in Uganda - Conflict and mineral resources Eastern DRC - Community based monitoring and citizen science in Tanzania 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social protection in informal economies - Ethical supply chain regulation (private and public regulation, legitimacy, participation) - Governance of battery mineral supply chains - Decent work - Refugees and governance in Uganda
<i>Theme 2. The Politics of Data and Digital Development</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The technologies of tracking climate change - The knowledge politics of climate action - The instruments of digital governance - The financialization and marketization of conservation - Citizen science & community-based monitoring - The datafication of environmental justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring state (in)action - State surveillance & biopolitics - Algorithmic governmentality - Accountability, benchmarking & auditing - The datafication of conflict and peace - The digitization of public service delivery - Public policies for digital and technological inclusion - New forms of digital societal resilience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The economics and indicators of development - The politics of inequality/poverty measurement - Monitoring and Evaluation - Data for development / SDGs - The Digital Divide/Exclusions - Citizen-centered data - New grassroots digital activisms - New technologies for social inclusion - Data and due diligence in ethical supply chain regulation

The Politics of Data and Digital Development

A second transversal theme we want to focus on and advance over the coming period relates to the politics of data and the new affordances and challenges of digital development. It concerns itself with how top-down and bottom-up forms of datafication and quantification assess and enact development in practice. This focus reflects the fundamental paradoxes and dynamics of development (knowledge) in the 21st century described above. With the increasing digitisation of the economy and society, so too is data—in its multiple forms and vectors—becoming critical to the promotion and contestation of different varieties of development. Data, “now bigger and better” (Boellstorff & Maurer 2015) is indeed to be found everywhere. Within the development puzzle, we observe the growing interest of donors and multilateral organisms in promoting data ‘for development’ and ‘for social good’, which some describe as the much-needed ‘data revolution’ necessary to implement the SDGs. Yet we also witness the ways data engenders new bottom-up spaces and infrastructures for contesting, displacing, and navigating (sometimes beyond the confines of) development. From concerns about the digital divide, algorithmic surveillance, and socio-cultural-racial profiling, to new digital tools co-produced by engaged citizens to track climate action, monitor state (in)action, and counter structural invisibility: data weaves together the technical, the social, and the imaginative, and thus represents a critical arena for present-day and future development thinking and engagement.

At IOB, our research group will host the European Research Council (ERC) project ‘InfoCitizen’ from 2023-2028 (see box 1.3 below). While the ERC data lab will concentrate a significant part of the efforts on this new research front, transversal efforts, activities, and events will take place throughout the period. We see this as an opportunity to bring together a number of other researchers within the institute and find ways to realise synergies between them and the ERC project researchers. These broader efforts at integrating research on data and development include research currently being done by IOB staff on the economics of development, the ‘data revolution’ and its application in development, monitoring and evaluation of development delivery, the political economy of data and development, ethnographies of datafication processes, and decolonial critical data studies. Key areas of study that emerge as transversal foci at IOB are migration, borders, social media, artificial intelligence, the quantification of everyday life, grassroots data initiatives and impact monitoring, the politics of inequality and wellbeing measures, new forms of digital activism and data justice, the commons and data sovereignty, the digital divide, and the novel arenas of digital development afforded by the data revolution.

Box 1.3.

ERC Project '[InfoCitizen](#)'

Informational Citizenship: Toward a Global Ethnography of Practices and Infrastructures of Datafication in the Global South

Data has been extolled as the new frontier of development. Whereas western elite actors have contested big data for its flattening of social life and information extraction, grassroots initiatives have been championing big data to promote citizen rights, improve state accountability, and reduce inequality. InfoCitizen will:

(1) study the citizenship practices and technologies coalescing around model initiatives to produce and circulate data in the Global South. We contend that for favela residents in Brazil, ethnic minorities in Portugal and Germany, and poor citizens in Tanzania and Kenya, far from splintering and prying, data has the potential to promote cultural change, political identity, and economic wellbeing via 'better', 'faster', and 'more reliable' public and private statistics.

(2) blend insights from the social studies of quantification, the anthropology of data, and citizenship studies to grasp data produced by experts and citizens across top-down and bottom-up data ecosystems. Via the concept of informational citizenship, we will illuminate the politics (infrastructures, epistemologies, visibilities) and poetics (experiences, socialities, and affects) of datafication, their impacts on law- and policymaking, and their effects on individuals, communities, and institutions in Brazil, Portugal, Germany, Tanzania, and Kenya.

(3) combine archival, digital, audiovisual, and quanti-qualitative methods to unpack the tools— censuses, smartphones, policy reports—and actors—NGOs, data labs, legal commissions—crystallising in the wake of grassroots numbers. We propose a global and comparative ethnography of datafied subjectivities and their interplay with transnational networks of expertise—such as think tanks, governments, and businesses.

(4) generate applied and analytical research and an interactive database to critically probe the imaginaries, contingencies, materialities, and spaces of data for radical democratic change today.

2. Academic and public outreach

Outreach and interaction with different types of stakeholders and audiences is an **intrinsic part of conducting research**. Not only at the level of outputs and the dissemination of research results, but also -and especially- at the level of the research design and throughout the research process. There can be different levels of engagement and participation of stakeholders and audiences in the research process, but it is clear that research –especially in development studies– does not take place in a societal void¹⁴. This is then linked to questions (without a unique answer) of who the research should be visible for; who defines its scope and relevance; and what ‘uptake’ means. This ‘uptake’ of research and the extent to which our research, education and outreach are considered societally relevant and impactful indeed depends on the interaction throughout our research with societal actors and stakeholders.

At IOB, through our research, we aim at **contributing to the academic literature**, but also at **informing societal debates with academic reflection**. As mentioned in the previous chapter, we are doing this in several ways: by targeting the general public, development actors, policy makers, partners and academics in the South, and students and colleagues at UAntwerp. Also, we make efforts to make our research visible, relevant, and more **impactful from the design stage onwards and throughout the research process**. This also means that we have to understand research and its impact to be an interactive and complex process, which stands in contrast with a view of a process of ‘detached’ research which is then fed into policy arenas.

In this chapter, we first discuss how IOB’s output for academic audiences compares with that of similar institutions in Europe. We then discuss the strategy developed by IOB to reach broader audiences to extend our impact. We conclude by discussing concrete actions that IOB has taken or will take to strengthen our ability to reach these multiple audiences and generate impacts.

2.1 Outreach in academia

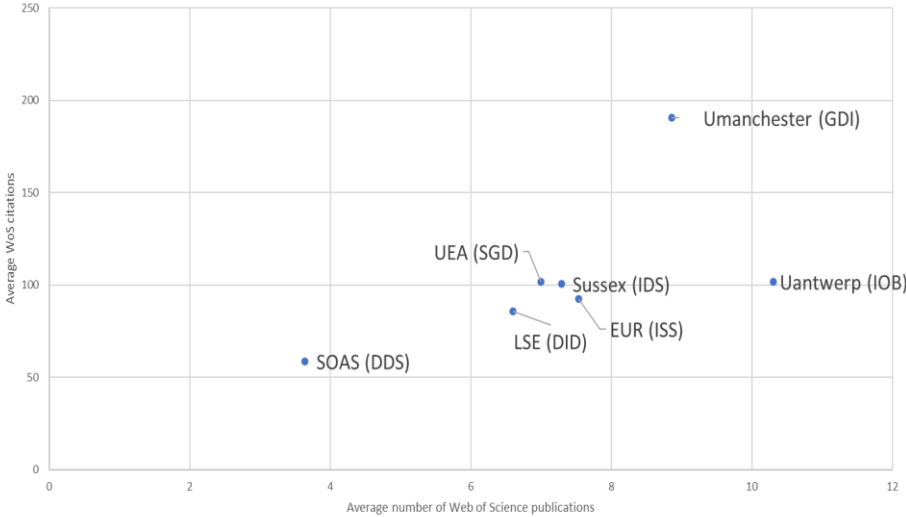
One crucial ingredient for realising good academic and societal impact is indeed that there is excellent and relevant research and education being done at IOB. Good academic quality research is evidently a sine qua non in informing societal debates with academic reflection. Figure 2.1. reports on the results of [a study to benchmark](#) our publication output vis-à-vis the output of 7 other European institutes operating in the field of development studies¹⁵. Looking at publishing performance of tenured staff members in journals ranked in Web of Science between 2018 and 2022, IOB staff members on average realised a publication *output* of more than 10 manuscripts per year, which is more than any other institute in our field. Our publications may, *per publication*, however be a bit less visible than others’

¹⁴ De Herdt & Olivier de Sardan 2023; see also the reflection on Burawoy referred to in chapter 1.

¹⁵ See the details and methodological choices made [in the report itself](#).

output. Yet tenured staff members harvested about 100 citations per year on average for their yearly publications output, which makes the academic *impact* of IOB comparable to institutes like SGD (University of East Anglia), IDS-Sussex and ISS (Erasmus University). These figures are broadly confirming the results of the benchmarking exercise we realised in 2017.

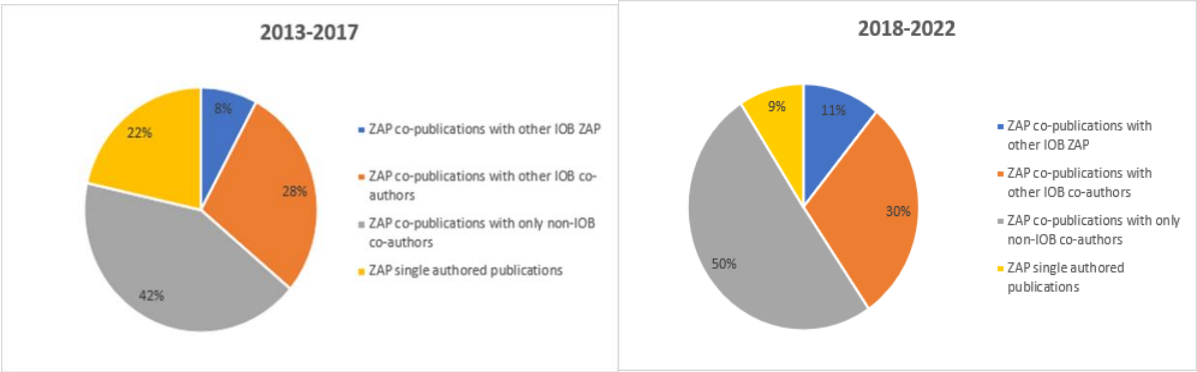
Figure 2.1.
IOB and its European peers: Web of Science publications & citations 2018-22



Source: [Benchmark Study 2023](#).

We conceive of the quality of our academic output also in terms of *who we publish with*. First, figure 2.2. reports on the evolution of **co-authored** publications by ZAP staff members (senior academic staff) in-between 2012-2016 and 2018-22. The percentage of single-authored papers by ZAP staff members considerably declined from about 1/4th to less than 10% in this period, which is probably reflecting a broader shift in publication culture in the social sciences. This decline was mirrored in an increasing importance of papers co-authored with non-IOB authors (increase from 42% to 50%), and in an increase in papers co-authored with other ZAP staff members (increase from 6% to 11%). We interpret the first increase as an indication of **increasing international visibility** of IOB staff.

Figure 2.2.
Single-authored and co-authored peer-reviewed papers by IOB ZAP



Source: on the basis of the UAntwerp academic bibliography

Second, earlier in the report, Figure 1.1. also showed that the total number of publications co-authored by or with authors of the Global South authors quadrupled over the past decade, with more than half of publications co-authored by at least one author with a Bachelor's degree from the Global South in 2022. This trend reflects our ambition to internationalise our staff and co-produce academic knowledge with authors from the South.

In the future, we aim to maintain our high productivity while further increasing quality and expanding partnerships with academics and actors from the South.

2.2 Public outreach

I/OB aims to realise actual 'impact' through communication, societal engagement, and interactions with a wide range of actors throughout our research activities.¹⁶

In order to structure I/OB's outreach efforts and to improve them in the future, I/OB has elaborated a set of **seven 'impact pathways'** on which to focus to make our **research visible, accessible, and impactful**. The pathways are based on I/OB's ambition to generate (development) impact by improving the information and knowledge available to a wide variety of policy makers, influencers, and stakeholders, and making it readily accessible to **improve the quality of decision-making and development actions**. I/OB as an institute also acts as a knowledge broker, creating (social) networks for both dissemination and exchange of knowledge between researchers, policy makers and stakeholders, thus also improving the quality and relevance of our scientific research by drawing in information and experience from policy makers and stakeholders into our research activities.

Note that these pathways tend to focus on communication and interaction on the basis of particular research results; yet these results in themselves should of course also emerge in interaction with relevant stakeholders to assure uptake, relevance and impact, which makes it less linear than the concept of 'pathways' might suggest.

Further, change can come in many different shapes and sizes. Generally speaking we can consider four dimensions of impact: conceptual changes (changes in ways of thinking about a topic); capacity building (building capacities of researchers and research users to increase uptake); instrumental changes (concrete changes to policy, interventions, practices...) and changes in networks and connectivity (building and strengthening networks) (Corbett & Georgalakis, 2016). Depending on the pathway, one of these dimensions is likely to be more crucial, but undoubtedly there will be times when multiple dimensions are part of one pathway, at different stages of outcomes.

¹⁶ Here, we will not look into the impact of our research through our teaching activities (for education-related impact see Casten et al. 2021; Van Hecken 2023).

The seven impact pathways are represented in Figure 2.3 and described in Table 2.1. This includes: (1) contributing to public debate e.g., through engagement in media, blogs, and events for the general public; (2) providing external expertise to development actors e.g., through evaluations, reports, and expert advice; (3) actively shaping or managing development programmes or policy as internal expert e.g., as board member of development institutions; (4) strengthening institutional visibility e.g. through the organisation of events; (5) cooperating with South partners e.g., through capacity building, voice amplification, PhD projects, and academic and non-academic outputs; (6) cooperating with UAntwerp e.g., through teaching, events, expertise, and collaborations; and (7) contributing to development spin-offs e.g., through the development of external organisations or initiatives.

The impact pathways are also guiding the public outreach part of this research strategy, with the objective that they become our common framework on how to structure and inspire outreach activities. The variety of impact pathways is aligned with IOB’s recognition that development is a complex, multi-layered and politically contested process that includes a wide variety of actors. Our institute cherishes diversity and embrace many different (mainly social) scientific disciplines and a diversified ‘mixed-methods’ approach in our research, and of necessity it impacts our communication and impact strategies. Simply put, an impact pathway that works for one particular topic may not make any sense for another. To create a one-size-fits-all strategy is not feasible to address the complexities of development processes, nor do we find it desirable as an Institute. While the diversity of our research and its related impact strategies can be challenging, it is at the very heart of our discipline, and we embrace it. The impact pathways in this strategy are hence not meant to be constricting – as their variety indicates – but rather to offer guidance to researchers and support staff on how to proceed with their project-specific impact planning.

Figure 2.3. Graphical representation of the 7 impact pathways

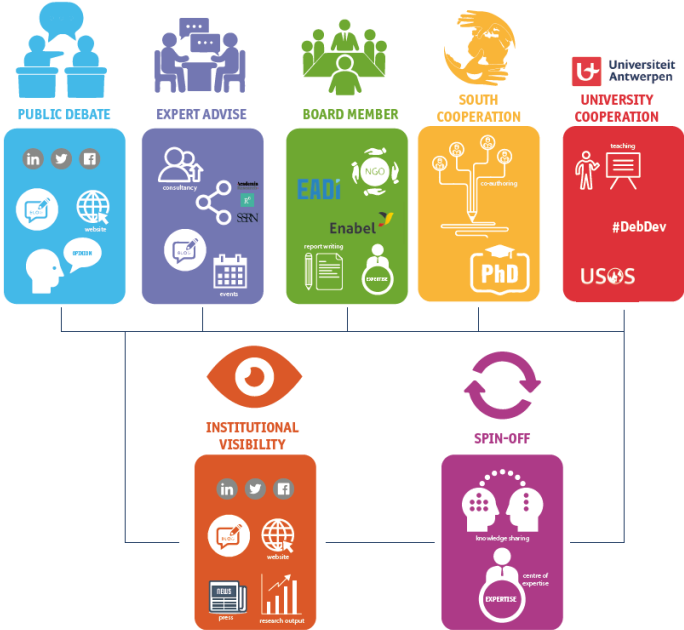


Table 2.1. Overview of impact pathways

	Impact Pathway 1: Public Debate	Impact Pathway 2: Specialised Development Actors – External expert	Impact Pathway 3: Specialised Development Partners – Internal Expert	Impact Pathway 4: Institutional Visibility	Impact Pathway 5: Academic Cooperation with South Partners	Impact Pathway 6: Cooperation with UAntwerpen	Impact Pathway 7: Contribution to Development Spin-Off
	<i>Substantial and high-quality contributions to public debate in media, based on academic expertise</i>	<i>Development/policy-relevant reports, evaluations and expertise for specialised development institutions (government, NGOs and other civil society organisations, international institutions) as external expert</i>	<i>Contributions to management or policy for cooperation with development partners (as internal expert)</i>	<i>Organisation of events (presentations, debates, exhibitions, etc.) or other initiatives that contribute to the visibility and reputation of IOB with a broader audience</i>	<i>Cooperation with South partners and/or academics from the South and/or supervision of PhD projects with candidates from the South</i>	<i>Contributions to the cooperation between IOB and UAntwerp</i>	<i>Active contribution to a relevant 'development spin-off'</i>
Purpose(s)	To contribute to critical public debate on North-South relations To influence policy makers responsive to public opinion	Increase quality of actionable knowledge, necessary for policy-making and interventions/actions in short term	To create a medium- to long-term policy impact by providing sustained improved quality of knowledge base within organisations	To establish IOB as a centre of expertise in its field with a broad spectrum of social and political actors	Increase individual academic capacity Increase institutional academic and organisational capacity for education, research and outreach Increase visibility of pre-existing capacity in Global South Amplify voices from the Global South on development issues	To strengthen the University of Antwerp as a development actor through IOB teaching/training and joint research To recruit students from adjacent UAntwerp faculties	To create a medium- to long-term policy impact by providing sustained improved quality of knowledge base within a development organisation or initiative generated by IOB and its partners (e.g. governmental or non-governmental expertise center, developmental service enterprise)
Input	Research activities and output	Research activities and output	Research activities and output	Research activities and output	PhD supervision Institutional capacity building projects Cooperation in academic research and societal outreach in partner countries (and possibly beyond)	Expertise	Research activities, research output, organisational expertise

Output	<p>Earned or paid media: opinion articles, blog posts, social media (shares)</p> <p>Owned: social media, vlogs, blog posts</p>	Development/policy-relevant reports and expertise	<p>Informal expertise-lending (informal internal networks); Formal expertise-lending (e.g. board member); Internal reports, briefs, etc.</p> <p>Participation in organisation-internal (research) activities</p>	Presentations, debates, exhibitions, visibility on social media	<p>Institutional cooperation</p> <p>PhD projects</p> <p>Cooperation in outreach activities</p> <p>Co-authored articles/books/papers</p> <p>Non-academic output (blogs, video, social media, events)</p>	<p>Teaching ('korfvak' & development courses)</p> <p>Debating Development USOS (exposure visits, masterclass, etc.)</p> <p>Expertise (e.g. travel experience, expertise for development projects)</p> <p>Cooperative research projects, international conferences, etc.</p>	Internal expertise (e.g. members of board, etc.), access to IOB network Reports (internal or external)
Outcome	Engagement with public opinion 'in the Global North'	Improve knowledge base at specialised development actors	<p>Long-term improved knowledge base at partner;</p> <p>Creation of knowledge network, with increased access to organisational expertise for IOB</p>	Increased visibility (measured through increased engagement)	<p>Increased visibility of Global South partners</p> <p>Increased individual capacity (PhD)</p> <p>Increased institutional capacity (e.g. VLIR-UOS)</p>	<p>Increased number of students</p> <p>Increased demand for expertise</p>	<p>Long-term improved knowledge base at the spin-off;</p> <p>Creation of knowledge network, with increased access to organisational expertise for IOB</p>
Impact	Improve quality of debate by providing high-quality expertise in an accessible manner	Improved policy-making quality and development strategies	Decision-making based on better info; Better info for IOB research through network and organisation expertise	IOB is known as a centre of expertise on development issues	Increased attention in academia and policy for voices from the South	IOB is more broadly recognised and more functional within the University as a centre of expertise	Decision-making based on better knowledge; Better info for IOB research through network and organisation expertise
Support available	<p>Technical support: Graphic design (infographics, lay-out, etc.)</p> <p>Language support (language check, effectiveness, ...)</p> <p>Network support: press network maintained at institutional (and university) level</p>	<p>Technical support: Graphic design (infographics, lay-out, etc.)</p> <p>Language support (language check, effectiveness, ...)</p> <p>Network support: press network maintained at institutional (and university) level</p> <p>Process support (e.g. for consultancies): assist in writing impact section of project proposals/applications</p>	<p>Language support (language check, effectiveness, ...)</p> <p>Training? Persuasive communication</p> <p>Network (mapping) support</p> <p>Tech and language support for expert profiles</p>	<p>Language support (language check, effectiveness, ...)</p> <p>Training: media training, video-making training</p> <p>Network (mapping) support</p> <p>Tech and language support</p> <p>Event organisation; expertise</p> <p>Press network support</p>	<p>Network (mapping) support</p> <p>Tech and language support</p> <p>Event organisation expertise</p> <p>Internal network: creating links with other university staff</p>	<p>Network (mapping) support</p> <p>Tech and language support</p> <p>Event organisation expertise</p>	

2.3 The road ahead

In this section, we (1) describe current support offered by communications and outreach staff for academic and public outreach, (2) identify gaps in outreach, and (3) propose a concrete action plan to address these gaps.

Current support for outreach activities

In a self-evaluation exercise in 2016, IOB considered itself “very competent” in its information literacy and ‘networks and partnerships’, but formulated a need to work on other outreach activities such as communication with non-academic audiences, and especially the monitoring and evaluation of outreach activities. “IOB may well need to respond by investing in its communications, knowledge exchange and monitoring and evaluation capacity” (Corbett & Georgalakis, 2016, p. 14) was a key takeaway from that study, and also was a key goal from the previous research strategy. IOB already had some in-house expertise on communication, but decided to further invest in staff to support research communications and outreach strategies.

Today, there is a **communications commission** (COMCOM) that is currently composed of IOB’s communication’s officer, librarian, research coordinator and staff member involved in the promotion of the Master programmes and the alumni network. This COMCOM focuses on the management of all IOB communication channels (website, newsletter, Analyses & Policy Briefs, social media, blog, etc.); the elaboration of a strategic communication plan considering new tools and strategies of communication in function of targeted audiences; and reporting of activities of outreach, including in the IOB annual report.

A lot is already being done. In terms of **communication channels**, for instance, IOB is present in several relevant social media channels; liaises with the University of Antwerp communication department; has its own website, blog, newsletter and institutional publications; and produces a thorough annual report. The communications staff also support IOB in the organisation of network events, seminars and conferences (most notably with the successful HDCA conference in 2022) and has some in-house expertise with regards to making infographics and video-editing.

Gaps and challenges

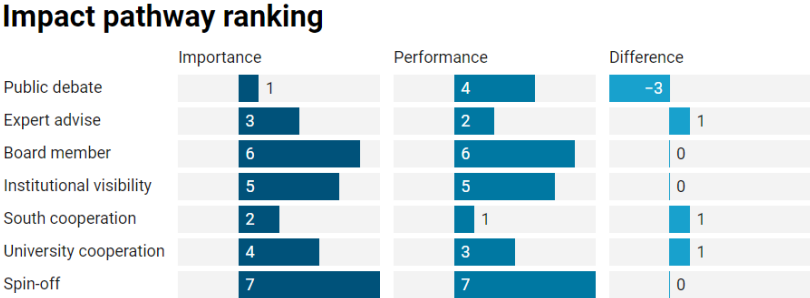
While a lot is already being done by academics and by communications and outreach staff, gaps and challenge may exist, and improvements are always possible.

Section 2.1 highlighted IOB’s excellent relative performance in terms of academic outreach; if anything, it shows that there might be some scope to improve quality, as measured in terms of citations per item.

About public outreach, a session was organised during the Alden Biesen retreat of November 2023 to reflect on the pathways’ relevance and priorities. Participants were asked to order the seven impact pathways according to (1) their importance and (2) how well IOB is performing on them. The distribution of answers is shown in Figure 2.3.

Results highlight that **public debate, South cooperation, and expert advice are seen as the three most important pathways** according to participants in the poll. When it comes to performance, **IOB is seen as performing very well in terms of South cooperation and expert advice**, but **IOB’s contribution to public debate is judged as relatively less performant**. The discussion that followed aimed at explaining the gap between the considered importance of participation in the public debate and the impression that performance is lagging on that front. Different elements of explanations were discussed during the brainstorming, including the **difficulty to find time** for engagement in the public debate, the lack of **incentives** as compared to academic output, and the fact that it is often **invitation-dependent** and **event-driven**. It can sometimes also be an active choice *not* to participate in the public debate, for instance as a matter of (self-) protection on particular topics.

Figure 2.3 – Importance and performance relative to the seven impact pathways



(Graph created with DataWrapper)

Action plan

IOB will aim to **improve quality over quantity** in its outreach activities. Through academic outreach and through the seven impact pathways, we will not necessarily seek to do more, but rather to improve the quality and reach of our activities, within the financial and time constraints that all research institutes face.

In line with this, **the ZAP evaluation procedure was revised** to encourage quality in academic research and encourage public outreach. IOB adopted the CERES/EADI system for assigning publication points to academic publications, as described in detail in Section 3. These publication points determine basic and excellence criteria for tenure and promotion. In parallel, the impact pathways have been adopted in 2019 and have been included in the ZAP evaluation procedure for the part on service to society.

An important activity in terms of institutional visibility will be the 18th EADI (European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes) Conference in July 2026, which IOB will host in Antwerp at the occasion of IOB’s 25th anniversary.

We will also implement actions to **improve existing communication channels**, including through the following changes:

- The impact pathways will also be actively incorporated into our external communications (e.g. in the annual report).
- There is an ongoing overhaul of the **website** to increase its accessibility and clarity (e.g. reviewing the navigation structure; updating the list of projects; have a more attractive overview of active staff; making separate project pages; improving the presentation of the news and events page;...).
- The **blog** will also be revived. We will use it also as a space to publish the articles that feature in our alumni magazine *Exchange to Change*, to re-publish blogs published on other websites (e.g. *The Conversation*) or translated opinion pieces. It will also be a possible output for students who write excellent papers or assignments. The blog is in the process of being re-structured to make the blog page better structured and visibly more appealing.
- There will also be a more interactive and visual annual report.
- For the management of the **social media** channels, the COMCOM aims to elaborate a clearer communication planning.
- In relation to communication planning: whether research results or events are communicated through institutional channels often depends on the willingness of the researchers to contact the communication team. The procedures therefore need to be clarified, to have a combination of 'push' and 'pull' approach, with the COMCOM actively harvesting news and communication among researchers and fostering researchers' habit of sharing news and updates.
- It is not only the communication channel that matters, but also the **contacts and networks through which the message circulates**. The COMCOM aims to put together a list of relevant (media) contact people for different types of communication. The list will be especially interesting when a message has to move fast (e.g. in terms of opinion pieces on recent news) or far (e.g. reaching particular influential practitioners or policymakers).

On top of the main existing communication channels, there is scope for **exploring more innovative and creative avenues**. This can either be done with the support of in-house communication expertise or by contracting external support. There is demand for looking into podcasts, for instance; a medium with which several IOB colleagues are already experimenting. Workshops on story-telling, video-editing, linking research and photography, data visualisations, comics or on how to improve presentations are other useful suggestions. These are also activities that several colleagues are already experimenting with, so these workshops can also be moments for colleagues to share their experience and insights on how to apply these techniques/communication activities. In the end, it depends on what expectations exist at the level of IOB researchers and other stakeholders. The COMCOM should therefore regularly check with researchers about their goals and expectations in terms of outreach activities (for instance yearly, at the moment of harvesting stories for the annual report asking for goals for the next year).

The plans for improvement will require resources, which is why researchers will be encouraged to **include funds in their grant applications for support in terms of outreach**, especially in larger projects (like ERC, Policy Supporting Programmes but also of FWO grant proposals). The funds could be used to finance communications and outreach staff at IOB or finance innovative ways for international collaboration on outreach activities (e.g. artists or content makers, as e.g., the Global Minds project).

3. A reformed research architecture

The options made above concerning the (diversity of) expertise we want to cultivate at IOB also translate into some changes we would like to introduce in the management structure and instruments of the research group. Firstly, an important instrument in this regard is a standard of **evaluation** of the research performance of individual ZAP members. Secondly, we discuss the overall management **structure**. Finally, we discuss some elements of a **human resources** policy.

3.1. Standards of academic research quality at the individual level

In IOB's research strategy 2012-17 we defined a common standard of performance in research for all academic staff of the research group. In line with the 'generic profile' of ZAP defined at the level of the University of Antwerp as well as with the ZAP statute at UAntwerp, we differentiated between 'basic criteria' and 'excellence criteria'. The former are used in case of evaluations. But in case of promotions and in case of evaluation of Tenure Track ZAP, candidates must fulfil, besides the 'basic criteria' of the next grade, at least some 'excellence criteria'.

In general, the experience we have with this new evaluation grid has been positive. Together with the practice of the goal-setting interviews, it makes ex-post evaluations of academic work by peers much more predictable. This increased predictability also has reduced negative stress, a benefit that was far from outweighed by the increased administrative burden that came with it. The newly introduced possibility, at the university-wide level, for ZAP staff members to enter into a non-competitive track for promotions adds to a less competitive environment and invites for more cooperative strategies towards research excellence. The tables below specify the basic and excellence criteria for different types of researchers in use since 2019 – when we decided to adopt some changes in line with 'sustainable excellence', i.e. (i) giving a higher incentive to publications in high-quality journals while (ii) also slightly lowering some other criteria.

As regards publications, at IOB we decided to refer to the [CERES/EADI system for qualifying publications](#) since 2012. We are aware of old and new debates regarding all types of ranking exercises in the field of academic publications, but, for now, we think the CERES system provides for a pragmatic intermediate solution¹⁷. There is a correspondence between CERES/EADI A/B publications and Web of Science papers, so the fundamental idea to measure quality in terms of citations, but CERES reduces impact measurement of WoS-rated papers to just two categories, A (i.e. top third) and B (bottom two thirds of WoS journal papers). Additionally, the CERES system also includes (edited) books and book

¹⁷ We regularly track the rapidly evolving landscape of rating systems and publication practices (e.g. open access; ethical standards); and, if need be, discuss potential implications of alternative rating systems in the IOB Research Commission. See also the debates, since Merton's early insights on Matthew effects in science (Zuckerman 2011) on how rating systems play a role in reproducing inequality in academic performance – and Kolinjivadi et al. (2023) for an application to the current hype in Payments for Environmental Services.

chapters. There is also a correspondence between CERES/EADI A/B/C publications and the VABB list of peer-reviewed publications used by the Flemish government as one of the criteria to finance universities, but the CERES system has the additional advantage of being more transparent and predictable for individual researchers.

Table 3.1
Criteria for evaluation of (senior) lecturers and post-doctoral researchers per 5 year period°

	Basic criteria	Excellence criteria
Scientific publications	8 publication points as (co-)author of CERES-rated papers, where A=2, B=1,5 and C=1°°	4 additional publication points
Top publication		Paper in top-10% journal, top-10% paper in career, highly (google) cited paper in period
PhDs*	Supervisor of 1 PhD trajectory	Supervisor of 2 or more PhD trajectories
PhD defence		1 successfully defended PhD
External finance*	(co-)promoter of 3 project proposals or 2 if successful >100k € project(s)	>250k€ effectively obtained
International research finance		as judged by IEC/CAP
Active conference participation	7 active contributions	3 additional contributions, with peer review or on invitation
Research and Outreach plan	Validated during goal-setting interview	

* not applicable to post-doctoral researchers

° fixed in function of 40% research time.

°° the CERES/EADI valuation system counts authored books > 100 p. as 3 papers.

A comparison between the publication criteria and the results of the benchmark study (Table 3.2) is instructive: even assuming tenured staff would only publish in B journals (and not publish book(s) (chapters)), 5-6 papers would be the minimum to reach basic criteria and 8 to reach the excellence criteria (in case of 40% FTE research time). 69% of tenured staff published however more than 7 papers and 62% published even more than 10 papers in WoS-rated journals.

Table 3.2
Number of publications (2018-2022) in Web of Science in development studies institutes

Entity	2013-17	2018-22				
	Average	Average	Gini	% >median	% >30%	% >10%
Cut-off				7	10	16
Sussex (IDS)	5.6	7.3	0.43	48%	31%	9%
UAntwerp (IOB)	6.4	10.3	0.27	69%	62%	8%
EUR (ISS)	6.2	7.5	0.50	37%	29%	8%
LSE (DID)	6.4	6.6	0.39	33%	17%	7%
SOAS (DDS)	5.6	3.6	0.45	18%	4%	0%
UEA (SGD)	9.6	7.0	0.50	44%	24%	10%
UManchester (GDI)	6.3	8.9	0.46	50%	34%	19%
Total	6.5°	7.3°				

° average for the total sample

In the case of **(full) professors**, the excellence criteria for evaluation of (senior) lecturers become basic criteria as concerns PhD output and external finance. The latter is in line with the policy to achieve a substantial increase in internal and external finance.

Table 3.3.
Criteria for evaluation of (full) professors per 5-year period[°]

	Basic criteria	Excellence criteria
Scientific publications	8 publication points as (co-)author of CERES-rated papers, where A=2, B=1,5 and C=1 ^{°°}	4 additional publication points
Top publication		Paper in top-10% journal, top-10% paper in career, highly (google) cited paper in period
PhDs	Supervisor of 2 PhD trajectories and at least 1 successful PhD defence	Supervisor of 4 PhD trajectories, at least 2 successful PhD defences
External finance	(co-)promoter of 3 project proposals or 2 if successful >100k € project(s). Minimally 300k€ effectively obtained	(co-)promoter of 5 project proposals, the total value of successful projects >1000k € and with at least 2 internationally financed projects
International research finance		As judged by IEC/CAP
Active conference participation	7 active contributions	3 additional contributions, with peer review or on invitation
Research and outreach plan	Validated during goal-setting interview	

[°] fixed in function of 40% research time.

^{°°} the CERES/EADI valuation system counts authored books > 100 p. as 3 papers.

Together with basic and excellence criteria for education and internal and external service delivery, these elements will serve as a basis for evaluation during performance assessments and promotions of tenure track and tenured staff members.

In the past, these criteria have also been made to use in the selection of new ZAP staff members as well as post-doctoral researchers (cf. infra). We will continue to do this, alongside attention to issues of diversity (gender, but also, more importantly, diversity in initial Global North/South origin).

In the case of **pre-doctoral researchers**, basic criteria to evaluate and renew mandates of AAP will be applied. The excellence criteria, duly corrected to take into account periods of academic inactivity (e.g. because of maternal leave) and diversity in study backgrounds, will be used as benchmarks for allocating bridging funds towards post-doctoral positions (cf. infra).

Table 3.4.
Criteria for evaluation of pre-doctoral researchers per 4-year period

	Basic criteria (to evaluate initial 4-year mandate AAP)	Excellence criteria (to evaluate bridging funds after PhD)
Scientific publications	1 publication point as (co-)author of CERES-rated papers, where A=2, B=1,5 and C=1°	6 publication points with at least 3 publications in A or B°
External finance		Active participation°° in writing project proposal(s) with someone of IOB (if submitted while under contract at IOB, and with the starting data falling in the evaluation period)*. Both accepted and rejected proposals will be considered, with weights of '1' and '0,5' respectively. (Accepted) + (0,5*Rejected) >100k€
Active conference participation	3 active contributions	5 active contributions
Performance on societal outreach	1 contribution in the form of a non-peer reviewed publication (e.g. blog, policy paper), or another outreach activity (e.g. poster, video, exhibition, etc)	3 significant contributions

° the CERES/EADI valuation system counts authored books > 100 p. as 3 papers.

°° Active participation will be acknowledged when project applications are mentioned at the IOB Board, i.e. the name of the student should be mentioned in the minutes of the Board meeting.

* Applications for FWO predoc fellowships by AAP mandate holders will be considered, but there will be no double-counting of resubmissions of the same FWO proposals. When such an application is successful, the AAP transits to a BAP status, and the start of the predoc fellowship will fall within the 4-year evaluation period.

3.2. Optimising the institutional setting: new roles for the Research Commission

The continued functioning of IOB as one research group and the strategic identity focus wrapped around the three research lines called for a **strengthened role** of the IOB Research Commission (RC). While up to 2017 the RC took up a regulatory role, in the new architecture, the RC would assume prime responsibility in safeguarding the implementation of the proposed thematic focus in function of a more coherent research agenda. This also implied e.g. a role in in quality assurance of **internal publication outputs** (such as working papers and discussion papers) (see chapter 5), the **organisation of internal seminars** and taking responsibility for the reporting of research in the annual report.

The chair of the Research Commission would also play an important role in the selection of new academic staff members: determining the profiles of vacancies of all staff categories will be done at the level of the RC indeed, with ultimate vetting by the IOB Board. Since 2017, the RC also plays an enhanced role in follow-up, specifically with respect to the identification and the choice of the supervisor of the PhD research trajectory for AAP, and new AAP present a preliminary research proposal to the RC in the first months of the mandate, to assure good matching of the proposal with the institute's research policy.

All of these changes have been made operational and have been evaluated to ‘work well’ from different perspectives.

3.3. Changes in human resources policy

The human resources policy will be informed by the currently agreed-upon budgetary framework explained in IOB’s general [policy plan 2021-5](#).

1. ZAP (*senior researchers, tenure track or tenured*)

The previous RS focused on the aim to consolidate the level (13 ZAP members, of which 12 FT) and the expertise then present at IOB, and the creation of additional synergies among that present ZAP staff. It also committed to participate in the FED-tWIN project as an extra opportunity to embed activities of research and outreach concerning the Great Lakes Region in a wider institutional setup. Looking back, consolidation has largely occurred in terms of the number of staff (11.7 FTE at the end of 2023), but its composition and status has gone through more changes than anticipated. During the period, three ZAP positions have become vacant and were filled by new staff. Most importantly from a research perspective, starting 2023, 2 of these ZAP positions are now in the form of temporary research professors (ZAPBOF, for a period of 5 to 10 years) paid by university research funds (BOF), one of them on the basis of the acquisition of an ERC starting grant; another temporary half-time ZAPBOF position (10 years) was secured through a shared ZAPBOF position with the Law Faculty from 2019 on¹⁸. Another major achievement during the period was the acquisition of a FED-tWIN mandate shared with the Royal Museum for Central Africa, that started at the end of 2023; at the IOB level this research position will allow for someone to combine a 40% postdoctoral position with a 10% ZAP position for at least 10 years. Furthermore, deliberate attempts to diversify the ZAP composition by explicitly targeting Global South profiles, provided only partial results.

The current RS already integrates these 3 new research professors and their expertise into the new configuration. Finding new synergies with existing staff will again be a major focus and challenge. Another one will be to prepare their (re-)integration as ‘normal’ ZAP when their temporary period of research professorship ends, towards the end of the RS period.

2. AAP (*research and teaching assistants*)

We already hinted above at the crucial role of AAP members in supporting the backbone of teaching activities, but also our research and outreach activities. Since 2017, we decided on a new AAP allocation policy, with these objectives:

1. Matching of AAP to a PhD supervisor from the vacancy onwards

¹⁸ In the vacancy transition periods and as ZAPBOF has a reduced teaching workload, the transitory additional teaching needs were a.o. met by engaging an additional temporary (2021-2025) fulltime Guest Professor, who also provided additional research capacity.

2. Strengthening IOB's research agenda and research lines through AAP selection policy
3. Guaranteeing the 50% allocation of staff to the Great Lakes region
4. Facilitating ZAP research agendas by clear match to AAP (or postdoc)
5. Developing a fair and clear system for allocation of AAP

In terms of its operationalisation, it led to the following concrete allocation principles:

- Priority will go to the ZAP who has been the longest time without a dedicated AAP every time an AAP vacancy will be opened.
- What is considered as a 'dedicated AAP': an AAP that was matched with the ZAP from the vacancy onwards
- If ZAP have been without AAP for the exact same period, priority is given to the ZAP in function of the highest need to guarantee support of ongoing research agendas.
- The RC will monitor the division of AAP between research lines.
- The RC will monitor the allocation of 50% of AAP to the Great Lakes region.

Over the past research strategy period, the number of AAP increased to a total of 11. In 2021, in the light of signals of tightening future budgetary spaces, a proposal to reduce the amount of AAP to 8, with the teaching workload consequences being absorbed by hiring one additional FTE of full-time teaching-only support staff was endorsed. As the pandemic period caused several AAP PhD trajectories to be delayed, for which transitory measures in the form of compensatory extended contract periods (7th years) were granted, actual implementation of this strategic option was postponed to 2024. In the meantime, the idea of engaging a full-time teaching-only support staff as a trade-off to a reduced number of AAP was further investigated but was finally abandoned. Hence, the exact number of AAP will be adjusted each time an AAP mandate ends on the basis of a balanced decision based on the interplay between the workload support needs and the IOB budgetary space.

3. Post-doctoral researchers

Since 2013 IOB has been defining a policy to maintain a category of post-doctoral researchers at IOB, with the objectives (1) to attract more external finance and (2) to mobilise a pool of excellent post-doctoral researchers in a context of limited availability of tenure track positions. In 2019, the policy was updated, expanding the set of options including a stretching fund possibility, a facility to support the research and teaching performance of the IOB Chair, and a window for 'mini-sabbaticals' (see box 3.1.).

Our post-doc policy has helped us in creating room for post-doctoral researchers at IOB who can play a useful intermediary role between undergraduate researchers and senior researchers and also support our teaching activities. The instrument also served us well in inviting international (lecturing) staff from the Global South to work at IOB. Most of the post-doctoral researchers initially invited on the basis of core funding can also stay longer at IOB on the basis of external project finance. In all

these senses, our post-doctoral policy worked reasonably well. On the other hand, the policy evidently doesn't create new room for tenured positions and in that sense a position as post-doctoral researcher always implies a limited time horizon – both from the perspective of the post-doctoral researcher and from the perspective of IOB. Further, while the support position of the IOB Chair has been fully used, no requests have so far been submitted to activate the mini-sabbatical option.

Box 3.1.

IOB's post-doc policy 2019-22

- (1) a 50% ZAP appointment focusing on 'excellent' research performance, to be extended every 3 years.
- (2a) a 1-year bridging credit position for 'excellent' IOB PhDs, aiming to bridge them to a fully-(externally) financed post-doc position at IOB.
- (2b) a 1-year bridging credit position for 'excellent' PhDs through an open vacancy procedure, aiming to bridge them to a fully-(externally) financed post-doc position at IOB.
- (3) 1-year 50% stretching credit for 'excellent' post-docs (financed under 2a or 2b) aiming to bridge them to a likely start of a fully-(externally) financed post-doc position at IOB.
- (4) a 50% post-doctoral position in support of the research activities of the IOB Chair (during the mandate period as chair, with the chair assuming being responsible for both appointment as well as performance).
- (5) temporary, specific postdoctoral appointments to meet the educational and other related duties of IOB ZAP staff on mini-sabbatical (with the particular ZAP staff member again being responsible for both appointment as well as performance).

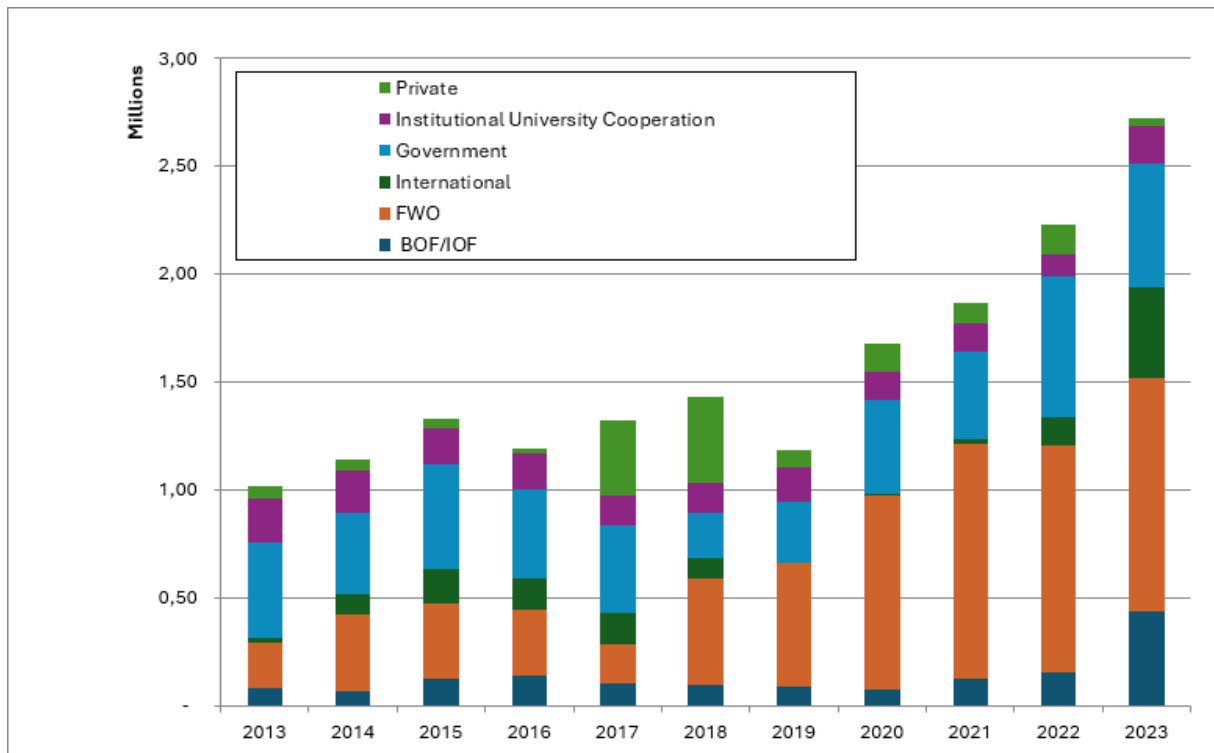
Since 2023, the budget for option (1) has been used to make temporary appointments to fulfil IOB's teaching commitments awaiting the integration of research professors as ordinary ZAP members (until 2028). We also envisage to only open a new external vacancy for post-doctoral researcher (option 2b) only every other year (2025, 2027, 2029), so as to be able to co-finance a post-doctoral fellow with the special assignment to attract finance for scholarships at Master and PhD-level (see also ch7 on the blended Master initiative). We also hope that option 2b can in part be financed (again) with a new round of BOF-PhD Challenge.

3.4. Policy regarding external research finance

Figure 3.1. presents the current evolution in research finance (which includes funding of projects carried out by our academic staff members within the framework of VLIR-IUS programmes managed by other Flemish universities). Overall, one can observe a significant increase, mainly due to a rise in standard academic sources of research finance, while our access to funding specific to the field of (academic) development continued at the same level.

Another important evolution is the increase in international research finance. We think that we need to further target this source of funding, as it usually allows to combine high-quality research with considerable means for activities of societal outreach (see also chapter 3).

Figure 3.1.
Evolution in externally financed research, 2010-2022 (euro)



Source: based on figures from the Department of Research & Innovation, corrected with data on VLIR-UOS-IUS-funding managed at other Flemish universities.

4. PhD policy

Though ZAP members of IOB act as supervisor for PhDs in other faculties and universities, IOB also runs its own programme leading to a PhD in Development studies. The first PhD in Development Studies was defended in 2011, and in 2022, 35 students were enrolled in this programme. Nine other students have an IOB supervisor, but pursue a PhD in a related social science discipline, 6 of them at the Faculty of Business and Economics. On average, IOB organises 4 to 5 public defenses per year.

Table 4.1.
Overview PhDs in Development Studies at IOB.

	Bachelor diploma	2014	2016	2018	2020	2022
AAP (payroll UAntwerp)	North	7	6	7	5	3
	South	1	2	3	5	6
PhD grant on payroll UAntwerp	North	8	7	3	5	5
	South	8	3	1	4	4
PhD grant not on payroll UAntwerp	North	0	0	4	3	2
	South	5	5	5	8	6
Self-financed	North	7	6	4	2	4
	South	1	2	4	6	5
TOTAL		37	31	31	38	35
% Project funding		57%	48%	42%	53%	48%
% Self-financed		22%	26%	26%	21%	26%
% South PhDs		41%	39%	42%	60%	60%

Source: SISA and PhD secretariat

While the number of PhD students in Development Studies remained more or less stable over the last decade, the trajectory becomes increasingly attractive for students from the Global South -which is driven mainly by an increase in appointments of research and teaching assistants (AAP) from the Global South.

Over the last years, we built further on the PhD programme by adopting a number of changes, we'll discuss these in what follows:

Definition of PhD in Development Studies

In November 2019, the IOB Board decided to specify the definition of a PhD in Development Studies (see Table 4.2.): Explicating the criteria helps aligning expectations across the student, his/her supervisors, and committee/jury members, which can be especially useful given the proliferation of double PhDs, which often combine a 'disciplinary' PhD title (e.g. in Economics) with a 'multidisciplinary' PhD in Development Studies. At the same time, it also aligns our PhD programme with the wider

research strategy and vision of IOB, which assumes an explicit engagement with normative concepts like justice and sustainability, and with a variety of disciplinary and methodological models.

Table 4.2.
Criteria of an IOB PhD in Development Studies

CRITERIA	
1	Of sufficient originality, coherence and contributing to the field of development studies.
2	Thematically integrated in (at least) one of the three research lines: Environment and Sustainable Development Global Governance and Inclusive Development State Formation and Resilient Societies
3	Presented as a monograph, or as a series of chapters with a general introduction and conclusion in which the PhD candidate engages with the common theme of the chapters.
4	In line with IOB PhD Regulations
	Required Recommended
5	Policy-relevant Providing concrete policy recommendations
6	In line with IOB’s vision of a just and sustainable world Applied to the poorest and most fragile countries/regions in the world
7	Demonstrate awareness of the particular disciplinary and methodological model used ¹⁹ Engaging with more than one disciplinary and methodological model

PhD training initiatives and training on a PhD in Development Studies

Related to the former, one of the outcomes of the first Alden Biesen seminar (2022) was to make progress in setting up a training initiative for PhD students on the specificity of development studies: Various policy documents do indeed mention the multi-disciplinary and multi-method character of our research as well as the multiple levels of governance that we find relevant in studying development processes, but these elements need further reflection, especially if we want to emphasise the value-added of a PhD programme in development studies, next to ‘disciplinary’ PhDs. Such a training also provides for the opportunity to (self-)reflect on how to engage with the decolonial agenda in development studies – a question with potential implications varying from the practical ways in which we, as northern-based researchers, *do* research, up to a reflection on the way in which the existing literature in development studies possibly also reflects epistemic injustices.

In answer to this, we decided to actively engage in the [PhD training](#) already set up by CERES, the Dutch-Flemish Doctoral School in Development Studies. One of IOB’s staff members is now co-coordinating a 4-week residential training on the themes mentioned above, also giving beginning PhD students the opportunity to hone the design of their enquiry in interaction with different lecturers and their peers. In future, this training can also serve as one of the ingredients of a PhD network, that is a network that

¹⁹ This implies that it is possible to do a PhD in Development Studies with a main focus on one specific disciplinary and methodological model, provided that the research demonstrates awareness of the particular approach used, i.e. explicitly positions the approach chosen (its ontology, epistemology, ‘mental model’ of the research framing, theoretical-conceptual choice, etc.) within the ‘Mixed Methods’ approach of DS in IOB (in line with Green, et al. as described in Research Strategy 2017-2022). This positioning includes showing an effort to review other disciplinary/conceptual approaches to the research topic and relating those to the approach used. At IOB it is recommended to actually use and integrate different approaches in the research, but the minimum is to do the effort to review and relate to other approaches about the research topic that are not actually used.

seeks to implement doctoral programmes via consortiums of academic partners. This idea was formulated as a 'Big Hairy Audacious Goal' in the Alden Biesen 2022 residential seminar. Financing for such a doctoral network could come e.g. from [MSCA funding](#). To build the consortium, we would look at the network of partner institutes in the Global South currently engaged in ICP Connect (International Course Programme Connect) and extend our collaborations from the level of the Advanced Master to the doctoral level, on the theme of governance of natural resources²⁰.

Managing risks related to fieldwork in 'hostile environments'

The majority of IOB PhDs involve some fieldwork by the PhD student, often taking place in 'the most marginalised countries/regions in the world'. As such field work can pose additional risk, this prompted IOB to issue a 'safety policy' on top of what is required at the UAntwerp central level. By December 2023 - also self-financing PhD students are considered in the IOB safety policy. For more details on the management of risks related to research and outreach, see chapter 6.

Monitoring and evaluation of the PhD training

While the essence of the PhD trajectory takes place within the bilateral relationship between a student and her/his supervisor(s), this also has implications for the way in which the quality of the training can be monitored. Since 2020, IOB students organise an annual PhD focus group so as to make sure concerns can be voiced in a safe space. Concomitantly, a number of other measures have been taken to manage the risks related to the asymmetrical relationship between PhD student and supervisor, see chapter 6 (circle 2) for more details.

In addition, the following due diligence measures have been put in place:

- PhD students are provided with a 'PhD roadmap' that pools all relevant information for them, going from the administrative PhD requirements to supportive measures in place. In addition, reminders and information is posted in an MS Teams environment for IOB PhD students.
- To help find their way in the IOB house, AAP PhD students have an intake meeting with the Bureau, and all PhD students have an administrative take-in meeting with the administrative officer of the IOB PhD programme.
- The University of Antwerp has a code of practice regarding the relation between supervisor and PhD student, and how to handle conflicts in this relation. In addition to this, IOB – in the PhD roadmap – clarifies what a supervisor can / cannot ask from a PhD student.
- During the self-evaluation of supervisors - in the regular goal-setting meetings, supervisors are requested to report on their relation with their PhD students, this to also actively – from the supervisor side - detect problems early on.
- The PhD representatives coordinate a monthly informal PhD seminar series and can decide with PhD students on the format. A yearly budget of 1000 euro is allocated.

²⁰ In the meantime, one of our colleagues (prof. S. Geenen) already participated as one of the members in the consortium JUSTBAT led by University of Agder (Norway).

5. IOB internal publications

IOB staff's publications also include papers published 'in-house' via a series of publication outlets from the institute such as the IOB Discussion Paper series (IOB DPs), the IOB Working Paper series (IOB WPs) and the IOB Analyses & Policy Briefs (IOB A&PBs). Although overall a relatively good number of publications emerge every year, under all the above series, the final output per year has the potential to be much higher in view of the substantial number of IOB staff members involved in research. In view of this, IOB organised a discussion at the level of the IOB RC in order to reflect on the above IOB publication outlets and encourage more active participation by staff members in the series.

Regarding the current output of the IOB WPs & DPs, it seems that, at least on the basis of what has been published in the above series in the last 6 years, compared to the totality of our output for an academic audience (see chapter 2), our 'internal' output is rather small, with only 22 DPs published so far, and 41 WPs in total. This may partly reflect some possible misunderstandings (of relevance to those mentioned above) and a priori perceptions regarding publication of papers in the WPs and DPs within the Institute which call for further discussion.

Against this background, some of the key points discussed at the IOB Research Commission Meeting of December 2022 (following also a preliminary RC group formed at IOB in preparation for the RC meeting of 6 December 2022) were as follows:

- Asking input on key reasons why publish (or not) in our WP and DP series
- Keep the series (and revive it)?
- Bring together WPs and DPs or keep the series separate?
- Open it up to the broader IOB community or not? Current 'rule' is that the author/s is a staff member or that the research is closely linked to an IOB staff member. Opening it up (and communicating) the series to IOB broad network and/or alumni?

If we consider the series useful, we may have to revive the series in view of the current status in terms of output (see again Table 1 for details):

- What does the vetting of the WPs and the peer review of the DPs mean?
- If we keep them separate, we need to know how the different types of papers can have different roles (e.g. WPs are useful to have something out quickly; and e.g. as part of a project output series. DPs are useful in providing publication points (Ceres C) and as a stepping stone towards other publications.
- Advantages of the peer review process in DPs: The author/s can make suggestions of who can possibly review the submitted paper.
- Important also to discuss the question of plagiarism. In case you can still publish afterwards, it's very useful to have a first round of review and refine your argument. How open are journals to 'republish' (see also the relevant discussion of the paper "In defence of WPs" on this issue)? Any good/bad experiences with this?

Box 5.1. IOB Working and Discussion Papers and Analyses & Policy Briefs

IOB Discussion Papers

- Length: min. 10.000 – max. 20.000 words
- Peer reviewed
- Series launched in 2002 (105 papers)
- Editor-in-chief: currently George Mavrotas (since January 2023)
- Peer review by one external reviewer and one internal reviewer. Both reviewers will receive an evaluation form to formulate their remarks. Due date for the reviewers is one month after submission. External reviewers can request a 100 € fee.
- Estimated time for producing a DP: 3 months

IOB Working Papers

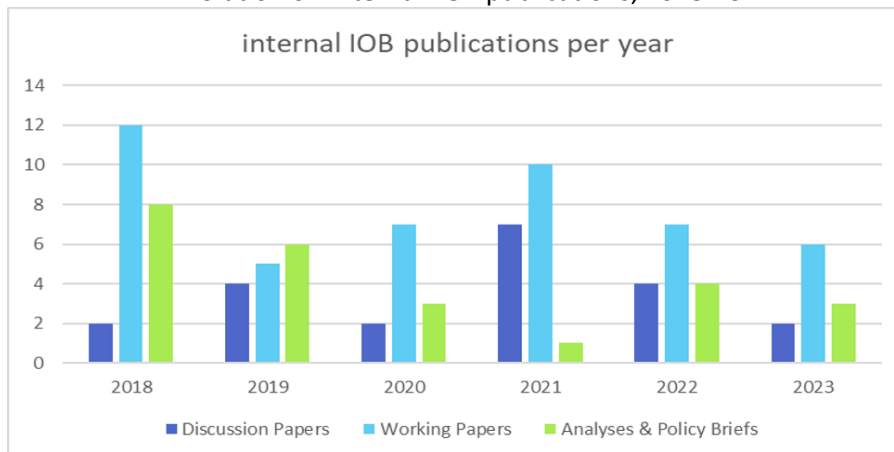
- Length: min. 10.000 – max. 20.000 words
- Not peer reviewed
- Series launched in 2005 (154 papers so far)
- Published under the responsibility of a research line
- Vetted by the editor-in-chief (currently George Mavrotas, since January 2023)
- After approval, it will be published on the IOB website
- Estimated time for producing a WP: 1 week

IOB Analyses & Policy Briefs

- Length: min. 1.000 – max. 3.000 words (2 to 4 pages)
- Series launched in 2013 (53 papers so far)
- Crisp and sharp briefs that offer analysis and/or policy recommendations
- Vetted by the editor-in-chief (currently George Mavrotas, since January 2023)

<https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/about-uantwerp/faculties/institute-of-development-policy/development-research/publications/>

Figure 5.1.
Evolution of ‘internal’ IOB publications, 2018-23

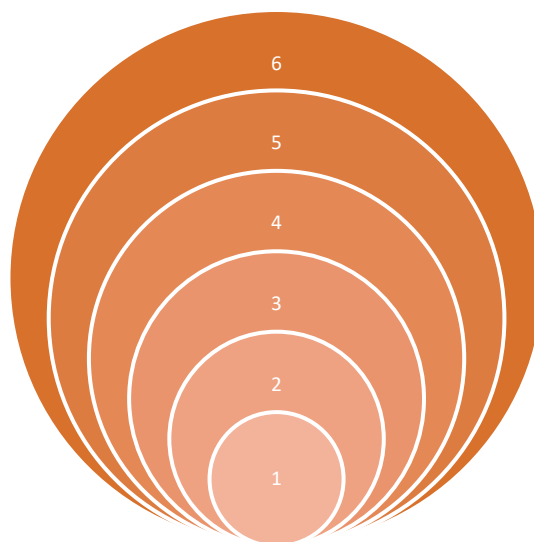


At the IOB RC meeting of December 2022 reflecting on the above issues, it was decided that there is a clear scope for keeping and strengthening further the IOB DP and WP series without merging them, and also encourage staff members (including PhD students) to submit more papers for publication in the series following the standard peer review process (in the case of IOB DPs) and vetting process in the case of IOB WPs and A&PBs. The topic also triggered further discussion and ideas in the subsequent IOB DNA meeting in Alden Biesen in November 2023, where it was decided to bet in the first place on a policy to improve communication of the possibility to publish ‘in house’, as a complementary strategy for publications eventually finding an audience in international peer-reviewed publication outlets.

6. Managing risks related to research

IOB has become increasingly aware of – and confronted with – a variety of risks that are associated with academic research. This applies in particular to field research, whether or not carried out in collaboration with IOB institutional partners, but also to desk research. The risks are very diverse and affect various aspects of the research process.

In the past years, efforts have been made – both at IOB level, as well as at central UAntwerp level (with active IOB involvement) – to come up with institutional responses to prevent those various risks and, if prevention fails, to reduce the harm caused by such risks occurring. Evaluating and strengthening this institutional response will remain a key area of attention during the period covered by this new research policy plan. For the purpose of structuring this section, we can – admittedly somewhat artificially – situate and visualise research related risks in concentric circles. For each of the circles, risk mitigation efforts (both past and upcoming) are briefly presented.



Circle 1. Personal safety and security of researchers

In 2020, the University of Antwerp established a **High-Risk Destinations Committee (HRDC)**. The High-Risk Destinations Committee assesses applications from employees (and students, including PhD students) who, in the context of their UAntwerp assignment, wish to travel to a country that is on the UAntwerp list of high-risk destinations. The committee weighs the security risks against the importance of the trip for education, research and/or services to the university. Taking into account the specific circumstances and the preventive and mitigating measures, the HRDC will issue a binding decision about the application. The official travel advice of the FPS Foreign Affairs serves as a reference for the assessment of 'risk destination'. In addition, other available data (from other authorities, embassies, the Institute of Tropical Medicine Antwerp, NGOs, own expertise) are taken into account. On behalf of IOB, Tom De Herdt, Johan Bastiaensen (until his retirement) and Moisés Kopper (to replace Johan Bastiaensen) have been a member of the HRDC. Since the establishment of the HRDC

and as of October 2023, 126 applications have been submitted by IOB staff (in addition to 26 applications submitted by IOB students).

Also in 2020, IOB adopted a policy around **hostile environment awareness training** (HEAT). As an employer, IOB and its staff in executive positions have a responsibility for the safety and well-being of its employees. A specific circumstance for IOB is that many of its staff conduct their activities (education, research, outreach) in countries (or regions within countries) that pose additional risks. Since 2020, HEAT training is mandatory for all AAP and pre-doc BAP who face such additional risks during their academic activities abroad. As of October 2023, 4 AAP, 2 ZAP, 12 BAP staff members and 1 self-financing PhD student have followed either the HEAT training at the Centre for Safety and Development (the Netherlands) or the Safety and Security for Fieldwork / In Situ Research at the CERES Research School for International Development (the Netherlands). For AAP, financial support has been – and will continue to be - awarded by the IOB budget. For BAP and ZAP, safety training is supposed to be funded by project budgets. In the future, the necessity of a safety training will also be assessed for PhD students who are not employed as AAP or (remunerated or non-remunerated) BAP staff members. All new candidate PhD students will be asked to include a security risk assessment and risk mitigation plan as part of their doctoral research proposal. All PhD students can valorise their safety training as part of their doctoral training (0.5 credit).

Another kind of personal risk relates to the *outcome(s)* of the research activities. The findings and their publication may not be appreciated by some of the actors mentioned. IOB staff have been the subject of threats (on behalf of companies, government supporters and intergovernmental organisations) that **legal action** – based on libel, slander or other criminal offences – may be undertaken against them. This raises the question what can be done – at central level or at IOB level – to mitigate such ‘legal backlash’ risks, for instance by providing expert legal advice. Possibilities to mitigate this risk will be further explored as part of the implementation of this research strategy.

Circle 2. Safety of PhD researchers in their relationship with their supervisor(s)

The relationship between a PhD researcher and their supervisor is often characterised by a certain degree of asymmetric power. To ensure a healthy and productive relationship, it is essential for both parties to maintain open communication, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to the PhD researcher's academic and professional development. The University of Antwerp has developed a **code of practice** regarding the relation between supervisor and PhD student, and how to handle conflicts in this relation. In addition, at the central UAntwerp level, there are [confidential counsellor](#) focused on PhD researchers as well as a [central ombudsperson](#). Furthermore, in 2023, UAntwerp stipulated that every faculty and research institute should appoint a [‘faculty ombudsperson’](#) for PhD researchers.

Hence, in 2023, IOB appointed an **ombudsperson** for PhD researchers. As mentioned in the draft new IOB Additional Doctoral Regulations, the ombudsperson serves as the point of contact for PhD students who, during their PhD studies, encounter problems that could adversely affect their progress and

cannot be resolved with the supervisor or their individual doctoral committee (IDC). Such problems may include conflicts with the supervisor of the IDC, or the composition of the IDC. The ombudsperson listens to concerns and provides advice. Upon request of the PhD student, the ombudsperson can also mediate between the parties involved. The ombudsperson is appointed by the IOB Board for a period of 3 years, renewable after a positive evaluation by a body that includes representation from PhD students. The ombudsperson is a UAntwerp staff member with an appointment of at least 80%. The ombudsperson cannot be a part of an IDC or a doctoral jury. If desired, the PhD student can also seek assistance from another UAntwerp-affiliated ombudsperson for PhD students or a UAntwerp-appointed confidential counselor.

In addition, IOB has **complementary policies** in place to promote a healthy balance of power and ensure the protection of the rights and interests of both the supervisor and the PhD researcher. In particular: **(1)** In order to pro-actively detect problems, the (two) PhD student representative of the IOB-DC invite all PhD students to raise points prior to the IOB-DC meeting; **(2)** At the occasion of ZAP goal-setting meetings with the IOB *Bureau*, supervisors self-report on, and self-assess their relation with their PhD students; **(3)** A PhD focus group takes place each year; and **(4)** the PhD roadmap details what a supervisor can and cannot ask from a PhD student.

Furthermore, the draft – yet to be adopted, at the time of writing of this research strategy - new IOB Additional Doctoral Regulations include two (modest) reforms in terms of the composition and the functioning of the **IDC**. The IDC is responsible for annually monitoring and assessing the progress and quality of the doctoral research. The IDC mediates, if necessary, between the supervisor(s) and the PhD student. The IDC members are appointed by the IOB Board. The IDC is composed of the supervisor(s) of the PhD student, one external (non-UAntwerp staff) member and one additional internal (IOB ZAP staff) member, who also chairs the IDC. In order to give more explicit attention to the ‘referee’ function of the IDC, the IDC chair will in future be nominated by the IOB-DC. Also, the IDC must henceforth meet once per academic year of the PhD studies together with the PhD student. The IDC evaluates, among other things, whether its composition still ensures sufficient guidance for the PhD student. Additionally, the IDC can be convened at any time upon request by one of its members or by the PhD student.

Circle 3. Research ethics

The University of Antwerp has established an **Ethics Committee for the Social Sciences and Humanities** (EASHW). This committee is interdisciplinary, and screens applications on their ethical character (in particular those involving research concerning high-risk groups). On behalf of IOB, Kristof Titeca (IOB ZAP staff) is a member of the committee. He sees to it that themes, subjects or research methodologies related to development studies are screened according to the appropriate ethical standards. His presence has allowed to ‘mainstream’ these screenings in the day-to-day work of the committee.

Since 2023, doctoral students also have to take an online course on Good Academic Practices. **‘Mind the GAP’** is an online training tool on scientific integrity, introduced in Flanders under the impulse of the Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR). Exercises and an extensive test provide material for self-reflection and greater awareness of all aspects of integrity, going from experimental design and research data management to reporting results.

Circle 4. Risk mitigation and data management

Data is central to research, but also holds risks. Which data can be shared (privacy, security)? How can data be collected and reported on (ethics)? How should data be stored and backed up (access)? The **UAntwerp Research Data Management Policy** indicates how these questions can be addressed in order to support efficient data management, as well as the integrity and credibility of the research findings. An RDM plan often is an integral, and compulsory part, of grant proposals. Researchers can rely on an online planning tool which provides templates for all funders who require a plan. In addition, UAntwerp has an RDM support team that provides feedback on researchers’ RDM plans. IOB also shares internally examples of RDM plans with its staff (on the shared network drive).

Circle 5. Risk mitigation in research collaboration and institutional partnerships

There has been an ongoing conversation and reflection about IOB’s research collaboration and institutional partnerships. This happened in a variety of ways and fora, but most concretely through the discussion of the **ICP Connect programme**, in which institutional partnerships are central. This led to a series of outputs, of which most notable are (i) an IOB working paper on the ethics of North-South partnerships, which was based on a literature review on this issue, but more importantly on individual and collective discussions at IOB (Titeca 2023); and (ii) the 3 ICP Connect proposals, which laid out a series of key principles on this issue – for example on the importance of solidarity in collaboration, and against extractive research. All of this also takes place in the frame of the new **[Global Engagement policy](#)** at UAntwerp level, in which Johan Bastiaensen has taken the lead (to be replaced by Tom De Herdt in 2024) (see also chapter 7)

For field research, IOB staff often rely on **local research collaborators** (for transport, for interpretation, for data collection, etc.). These collaborators are only exceptionally hired as staff (namely of local partner institutions) on project funding generated by the IOB staff member (or by IOB as a whole). In most cases, for a variety of reasons, they render their services on a ‘consultancy’ basis. As a result, they lack the protection (in terms of insurance for research activity related risks, job security, minimum wages, etc.) which IOB staff themselves or – to a lesser extent - local partner institutions’ staff enjoy. This raises the question what can be done – either at central UAntwerp level or at IOB level – to mitigate the risks incurred by those local research collaborators. This issue will be further taken up as part of the implementation of the current research strategy (see chapter 7).

Circle 6. Risk mitigation and the wider global society

Research may also generate risks beyond the persons or institutions involved in (all or some of) the research activities. The last circle therefore relates to risks situated at the level of society.

In 2014, in order to mitigate some of the wider societal risks, the University of Antwerp adopted a policy - and established an ethics committee - on science and technology, focusing on the prevention and mitigation of risks of military use or dual use of scientific research. In 2023, this policy was extended to cover other aspects related to the university's position in society and the potential risks associated with academic research. Accordingly, an institutional reform resulted in the creation of a new **Ethics Committee for Misuse, Human Rights and Security (MiHRS)**. Apart from a continued attention for risks associated with dual or military (mis)use of research, the new committee covers two additional risks: First, the committee assesses whether international partners and/or activities of international academic collaboration (in terms of research, but also education and social service delivery) pose certain risks in terms of *gross and systematic violations of human rights*. In doing so, the committee is guided by the 2019 VLIR *Recommendations for implementing a human rights assessment at the Flemish universities*. Secondly, the committee assesses risks in terms of *knowledge security*, which – in addition to human rights related risks – is defined as the unwanted transfer of sensitive knowledge and technology as well as the risk of foreign interference with and covert influence on research and education. The committee started investigating its first cases in June 2023. On behalf of IOB, Stef Vandeginste is a member of the committee.

7. IOB, UAntwerp and partners in the Global North and South

IOB is and has been walking with partners both in the Global North and in the Global South.²¹ In the previous research strategy we provided answers to a research audit asking us to “critically evaluate our partnerships in terms of both societal and academic impact”. In terms of partnerships in the North, the previous strategy proposed to focus on supporting a Global North - Global South Central Africa platform as well as platforms within the University of Antwerp. As for the partnerships with our southern partners, we insisted on the importance of ‘benefit-sharing measures’, and the focus on a ‘limited set of long-term partners’, referring to what was then called the Going Global Strategy (funded through a VLIR-ICP project (2017-2022)).

In the meantime, the world is evolving, with discussions around decolonisation, social and environmental justice, human rights, and solidarity, transpiring into academia and particularly into the academic field of development studies. This has led us to rethink the way we have been working with our partners, a process which has mainly taken place in the scope of our own internal ‘DNA discussion’ (see also Titeca 2023). Concretely, these internal discussions have shaped the content of a new ICP Connect project to work with our long-term partners (2022-2027) and through active engagement in a UAntwerp-wide process to rethink partnerships (see [Strategic Framework on Global Engagement](#)).

7.1. Collaborating within the University of Antwerp

At the level of the University of Antwerp, IOB plays a key role in internationalisation policy and actions and is recognised for its expertise and experience. After the adoption of an updated vision text on Global Engagement and Cooperation with Africa, Asia, and Latin America in 2020, the University of Antwerp organised a participative, institution-wide reflection on how to implement this vision. Based on input from more than 150 students and staff, among whom many IOB members, a Strategic Framework for Global Engagement was adopted in 2023. The **Strategic Framework for Global Engagement** is coordinated by the Working Group for Global Engagement, presided by an IOB professor and with the IOB Chair as an ex officio member. In the Strategic Framework, the earlier approach of ‘development cooperation’ has shifted towards a ‘global engagement’ approach with updated perspectives on international partnerships, decolonisation, and critical global citizenship. As will become clear below, this is in line with the path that IOB is following.

The **Global Minds programme**, which channels VLIR-UOS funding to the Flemish universities, provides support to the implementation of the Strategic Framework. IOB is taking the lead in several Global Minds activities, such as the organisation of two ‘basket courses’ on Global Justice and on Debating Development, and research through a Global Minds-funded postdoctoral position. Outside the Global Minds programme, IOB members are also very active in academic cooperation projects funded by

²¹ We use these terms similar to DSA (2019: 3), which state that “North and South are used as shorthand. Both are of course internally diverse, and their polarity is contested”.

VLIRUOS (Flemish Interuniversity Council – University Development Cooperation). Increasingly, these collaborations are also funded by other funding agencies, such as FWO or ERC.

The University Foundation for Development Cooperation (USOS) is an independent association that supports partnerships at the University of Antwerp and links this to student and staff exchanges and awareness-raising activities on campus. Also within this organisation IOB is well represented, with currently the Chair and several Board members, among whom two IOB members who are responsible for the USOS partnership with universities in Nicaragua and the Democratic Republic of Congo. USOS is an important vehicle that allows for long-term engagement with partners and strengthens academic projects while aiming for a broader societal impact. It is partly funded by the Flemish-Dutch Region of the Jesuit order, partly by the University of Antwerp through Global Minds.

In the previous research strategy, we highlighted the possibility for GLAC to “connect our academic research and outreach with other institutes (both academic and non-academic) active in and on the region” and do “co-branding”. The **Belgian Expertise Centre on Central Africa (CREAC)** and the federal government’s FED-tWIN programme were mentioned as two examples. A series of policy-talks were organised by CREAC in the federal parliament, until COVID ended this, and an internal reflection process started at CREAC. The publication *Conjonctures de l’Afrique centrale*, supported by CREAC, IOB, UCLouvain and the Royal Museum for Central Africa, continues to be published every year though. Irrespective of the future of CREAC as an association, IOB and GLAC commit themselves to continuing the publication. It not only provides an important publication outlet for mainly young scholars based in Central Africa (with an associated system of small research fellowships), but also a platform for collaboration with the Royal Museum for Central Africa, UCLouvain, and potentially other universities in the future. As for the **FED-tWIN programme**, in 2023 a position was opened on a project on access to water in the Congolese Copperbelt, based at IOB and at the **Royal Museum for Central Africa**, but with a collaboration with the ECOSPHERE research group at the Department of Biology of the University of Antwerp.

Other interfaculty cooperation projects are being implemented with the Faculty of Law (on a position for a research professor in the area of Sustainable development and environmental justice) and with the research groups on Social Policy (Faculty of Social Sciences) and Urban History (Faculty of Arts) to constitute the Antwerp Interdisciplinary Platform on Inequality (AIPRIL) – also extended, recently with a Policy Supporting Programme on Social Protection, Inequality and Inclusive Growth.

Finally, IOB maintains an active role both in the Institute of the Environment and Sustainable Development (IMDO) and in MIGLOBA (Network on Migration and Global Mobility).

7.2. Partnering in the Global South

Much of our internal reflection has focused on **partnerships in the Global South**. These have been channeled in the evaluation of the first ICP Connect project and the preparation of a new phase, and in our internal DNA discussion. An important handle has been a paper written by one of the IOB colleagues on Global North-Global South partnerships (Titeca 2023). This paper has been part of an internal discussion process, and highlights how international partnerships, which are an important component of IOB's DNA, are taking place in a context of global inequalities – affecting these partnerships in a number of ways. Concretely, the paper highlights a series of attention points for North-South academic partnerships in general, which it labels as 'frictions':²²

- Asymmetries between Global North and Global South partners. The asymmetry of collaboration and dominance of Northern partners has been widely shown; as well as the longstanding call and need for collaborative relationships which benefit both sides (Gaillard 1994).
- The tension between the academic and developmental nature of these partnerships. While development studies treat development aid as objects of critique, it now also has to treat it as a frame of action (Kontinen et al 2015: 160).
- The tension between international standards and local needs. How to measure success in collaboration and whose standards are being used? What counts as research, and what counts as output? How to reconcile 'foreign' academic standards of academic research and teaching with 'local' ones (Whyte and Whyte 2016)?
- The political economy of research and teaching. The political economy of university funding does exert a strong pressure on space for research given the reliance on teaching, or consultancies, as primary source of income (Olivier de Sardan 2005: 139). Many Global South-based partners operate in a context with insufficient or inexistent research funding and inconsistent or insufficient salaries. Collaboration projects may be an important source of funding for individual academics and institutions in such contexts, and hence partnerships may be primarily driven by financial incentives. On the other hand, funders' regulations often do not allow to offer sufficiently stable payments and commit human and institutional resources. Different modes of governance challenge partnerships too.

Frictions exist in a context that is shaped by historical and enduring power imbalances, rooted in colonisation and persisting coloniality, epistemic injustices and material inequalities. They translate into inequalities in terms of agenda setting, in terms of the valuation of knowledge, and in terms of material conditions (such as access to research funds, working conditions for academics, remuneration). IOB acknowledges that these frictions exist, and that rather than rendering partnerships impossible or doomed to fail, they can actually also drive them forward in constructive and creative ways. While power inequalities can impossibly be completely flattened (as they predominantly reflect the power inequalities between the Global North and South contexts in which

²² The paper relies on Tsing's (2005: 5) notion of 'friction' as the "awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference" (Tsing 2005: 4).

universities are working), this doesn't mean that we cannot explore strategies to rebalance the relationship.

Opting for long-term partnerships provides for a context for this. In the Strategic Framework for Global Engagement, it is noted that “time is of utmost importance to enable such a strategy, as it requires a deep understanding and the creation of mutual trust based on loyalty among institutions and academics. More opportunistic, instrumental short-term partnerships do not have to be excluded (they can always be the start of longer-term relationships), but should be handled with care to avoid unacceptable instrumentalisation of Southern partners and/or academics.”

IOB has a tradition of **long-term institutional partnerships** with a limited number of academic institutes in the Global South. In all these partnerships, research, education, outreach and societal engagement operate in synergy. They provide a strong foundation for joint research and publications (which is also partly reflected in figure 3 on publications co-authored with Global South partners), for the training of PhD students coming from our southern partners, for joint education programmes, for deeper engagement with societal stakeholders, and for more impactful research.

An important lever for education has been the ICP Connect project, which started a first phase in 2017 and a second phase in 2022. One important objective of the project is to more deeply engage IOB's Global South partners in co-creating joint teaching initiatives in an effort to evolve from a Northern-based institute toward a networked, diversified, multi-epistemic, 'decolonial' knowledge co-creation and policy dialogue institute. Concretely, IOB and its partners are working on the transformation of the current Master in Globalisation and Development offered by IOB into a collaborative pilot blended Master including more diverse knowledges and more collaborative teaching methodologies and where students of diverse backgrounds, experiences, and ways of knowing can thrive. The idea is to build a programme that moves beyond conventional practices of transferring skills and expert knowledge towards a learning environment which stimulates potential change agents (researchers, development practitioners, government officials, policy makers, civil society actors, activists, private sector actors, etc.) to navigate, unpack and critically reflect on different coexisting epistemologies and value frameworks, as a key condition to co-create and envision alternatives to the challenges the world is facing. The implementation of this pilot blended Master should allow IOB to increase the participation of its Southern partners in their education and research programmes as well to embed IOB's research, education and outreach activities in its partners' specific contexts. It should also allow to bring insights into the current reflections IOB is having to develop innovative governance and financial structures where IOB and its partners participate in a more equitable way.

We are very aware of the fact that all partnerships are different, also given the political, socio-economic and cultural **context** in which they develop. For that reason, we do not want to establish fixed rules on how partnerships should function in practice. Working with partners in a context of political instability or conflict, for instance, requires a different strategy and places particular limits on

what can be achieved. Our long-term partnership with the Universidad Centro Americana of Managua-Nicaragua (UCA) has for instance been put at risk by an extremely harsh authoritarian turn in Nicaragua which is silencing any kind of critical voices in the country, arbitrary closing and confiscating the assets of non-aligned NGOs (several thousands) and universities (26 in total). In this context, on 15 August 2023, the Nicaraguan government has confiscated UCA under the false accusation that the university was being a centre for the planning and implementation of terrorist activities. Despite the fact that a new university was created that will supposedly maintain some of UCA's activities, IOB has decided not to work with this new institution which will certainly become, as all Nicaraguan public universities, another place for the indoctrination of the Nicaraguan youth. However, IOB remains committed together with the colleagues and processes it has been working with for decades in Nicaragua. With the elimination of our institutional partner, the challenge there is to find new institutional and/or individual arrangements that could allow to continue IOB's long term collaboration process.

Nevertheless, throughout all our discussions, **three important principles** have emerged, which we think should be at the basis of our partnerships: solidarity, acknowledgement of unequal material conditions, and acknowledgement of unequal power in agenda setting. Following these three principles, there is no clear roadmap to establish a 'perfect partnership', but there are guidelines to follow.

The term **solidarity**, first of all, risks to be used as a *passe-partout*. For us, solidarity should not merely be considered in its ethical dimension, as an obligation to help other human beings. It should start from the question of how actors with less privilege envisage their future or their development, and how more privileged actors can help to move towards that aspired future. In that sense, it must take into account different worldviews and epistemologies. Accepting solidarity as the basis of our partnerships means that we join our partners in the Global South in their struggles and support these in concrete ways. Often, these struggles are embedded in broader claims for justice, a more equitable distribution of resources, and reparations of the damages done by colonialism and enduring coloniality. This obviously has implications for the way in which we do research and engage with societies. It is also closely connected to the time dimension: the longer duration of partnerships can help to better identify these struggles and aspirations, and to go beyond agendas driven by short-term project outcomes. Embracing solidarity does not mean bracketing differences between IOB and its partners, or within these partners. Differences in visions, positions and power will always exist and the challenge remains how partnerships can be actual platforms for dialogue in designing and implementing common strategies, instead of places of reproduction of unequal relations.

Yet, an important question arises when struggles and aspirations do not, or no longer, align with the values and the mission of IOB. In other words: how to decide on who to include as 'partners'? And under which conditions existing partnership need to be suspended or stopped (by IOB or by its partners)? At the level of UAntwerp, an "Ethics Committee for Misuse, Human Rights and Security" has been set up to deal with such questions and on whose expertise IOB will rely (see chapter 5). The

Strategic Framework on Global Engagement also proposes a screening tool for new and existing partnerships.

Second, the **acknowledgement of unequal material conditions** should lead to efforts to reduce such inequalities. Very concretely this can be about transferring funds to southern partners and finance activities with a longer-term horizon, such as investments and scholarships, or institutional financial support. It is also about acknowledging differences in time, access to information and access to communication technologies, and building that into project planning and implementation. At the level of our individual collaborators, we often work on the basis of consultancy contracts. Some of our collaborators are employed by the partner institutes, but the specific tasks they engage in may not fall within the scope of their employment contract, or might not be covered by their salary. In that case we need to pay a fair remuneration for the work they do. Other collaborators do not have an employment contract and, hence, no social protection. In such cases, and if the project budget permits, we will encourage project supervisors to pay for health insurance during the contract period. Yet the issue of financial power definitely remains one of the most difficult and sensitive frictions.

Discussions about financial flows are also closely intertwined with the issue of **power imbalances in agenda setting and decision making**. The extractive nature of academic research is increasingly being denounced, rightly so. We need to become more aware of how the 'value chain of academic production' functions (Marchais et al. 2020), what our place is in this value chain and where power is located. Yet to move from 'being aware' to taking concrete actions, is not so evident. It is about opening even more the decision-making process about planning, budgeting and reporting to partners in order to slowly move towards a system in which both IOB and its partner are fully co-responsible for the elaboration and implementation of projects.

This implies looking for a relationship based on synergies and mutual support in which no partner takes advantage of the other and in which they mutually reinforce each other, taking due account of the differential conditions and resources of the partners. Since recently, the ethical screening of the Social and Human Sciences does include an obligatory reflection on this. Within the Strategic Framework on Global Engagement a chapter on global engagement will be added to the standard ethical screening, including safeguards against extractive research and pushing for reflections on societal value, joint agenda setting and epistemic justice.

At IOB, we try to involve our partners as much as possible in the project design. In the preparation of the second phase of ICP Connect, for instance, representatives from all existing and new partners were invited in Antwerp for five days of discussions and a specific Task Force where IOB and its partners participate was created. The objective of this Task Force is to discuss strategic aspects of the projects in order to inform IOB decision making allowing for a gradual, incremental approach toward more joint-decision-making. Other attempts to increase and improve the participation of IOB partners in IOB decision-making can be highlighted, like the participation of partners in the selection of new staff or in

a benchmarking exercise on the way IOB is grading the Master dissertations. But, mainly because of the abovementioned material differences, this is not always easy.

7.3. Partnering within Europe

At the European level, the **European Association of Development and Training Institutes (EADI)** brings together more than 100 universities and departments, research institutes, NGOs and think tanks in the field of development, from more than 25 countries. IOB is an active member, participating in EADI's Directors meetings, in EADI's International Accreditation Committee (IAC) and EADI's working groups.

EADI provides an important platform to interact with peer institutes, especially around the key question of the continued relevance of development studies institutes located in the Global North. EADI has been active in these debates, for example through its book series, or its blog series, to which some of the IOB staff members have contributed.

IOB will also act as host for the next EADI conference, planned for 2026, on the theme of "Shaping a sustainable future: global challenges, local solutions?", on the occasion of IOB's 25th anniversary. At least 8 out of the 13 ZAP members already committed to organise a panel on that occasion. This conference also builds further on the experience we gained with organizing the Human Development and Capability Association Conference in 2022, another international conference embodying the field of development studies.

In the last years IOB has also taken up a more active role in the Dutch **Research School for Resource Studies for Development (CERES)**. Apart from IOB, CERES has 5 institutional members based in the Netherlands. It provides training for PhD students, organises events, and provides tools to measure and evaluate research output in the specific field of development studies. The CERES valuation system for journal and book publications is recognised in the IOB evaluation criteria. It builds on the Web of Knowledge ranking but also tailors this to the multidisciplinary and plural nature of development studies. The doctoral training programme has been redesigned, and many IOB PhD students now participate in the flagship CERES doctoral training course in the first year of their studies. IOB co-ordinates this training and hosts part of the training in Antwerp.

Finally, IOB wants to maintain its **Scientific Advisory Board (SAB)**. It provides for a handy way to have an external perspective in-house, which in most cases closely overlapped with suggestions made by audit panels. The direct interface of the SAB allows for a deeper and more intensive discussion about our strengths, weakness, opportunities and challenges. Current members of our SAB are Geske Dijkstra (Erasmus University Rotterdam – The Netherlands), Melissa Leach (Institute of Development Studies – United Kingdom) Kate Meagher (London School of Economics and Political Science – United Kingdom), Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (Bayreuth University - Germany), Mateo Porciúncula (ICTJ – United States), Heidy Rombouts (DGD – Belgium) and Annelies Zoomers (Utrecht University).

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