

EXCHANGE TO CHANGE

ECHANGER POUR CHANGER

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GHANA

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FRAGILE STATES: THE ROLE OF THE AFRICA
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LAND INFORMATION
MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
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AN OVERVIEW



INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT
POLICY AND MANAGEMENT



University
of Antwerp



Questioning ourselves

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I graduated from IOB exactly ten years ago. In September 2001, a few weeks after the dramatic events of 9/11, I obtained my Master's degree in Governance and Development. 9/11 was a hot topic among us students and discussing it brought us closer together. We were aware of the dramatic changes which the events implied at the various levels of the global structure. We were also aware of the potential dangers to international relations. Some countries were labelled as 'terrorist' or 'part of the axis of evil', while others were 'allies in the war against terror'. Despite our efforts to grasp the complexity of the situation the world scene became divided between 'Good' and 'Evil'.

Throughout this last decade IOB has assumed its responsibility by trying to show how wrong and oversimplified this way of looking at the world is. Through education, research and awareness building IOB has contributed to achieving a better understanding of the dynamics of poverty, climate change, international relations and state-building. After all, terrorism is rooted in the failure of the current world order, a global failure to meet the basic rights of people all over the world to food, health care and self-empowerment, among other things. IOB has expanded its cooperation with partners in the South based on mutual respect. It is also strengthening its relations with its alumni because it strongly believes in the value of self-empowerment. It also questions and criticises the superficial and dangerous duality between 'centre' and 'periphery', between 'Western truth' and 'the wrong way', between 'good' and 'evil'.

As an institute which greatly values being critical and asking questions we at IOB even dare to question ourselves. What is our role in the world? What is the role of a development institute? What is the future of development cooperation? We would very much like to open up this discussion to include all those involved in one way or another. Please send us your views and comments regarding these questions.

The next edition of Exchange to Change will mark the 10th anniversary of the Newsletter. We are planning to incorporate the above questions and your feedback on them. In the coming months we shall open an online forum on our website so that you will be able to discuss the topic in an interactive way. We very much look forward to hearing from you. After all, you, our alumni, are the ones who can truly change the world.

Dear Alumni

Have you explored the expanded alumni section of IOB's website yet? If not, why not try right now. You will discover that the key recommendations of the new alumni policy are being implemented. These recommendations, which were to a large extent inspired by last year's alumni survey - in which many of you participated -, were endorsed by the IOB Board and the necessary human and financial resources for the first experimental phase were made available. Some of the additional pages on the website aim to put you more easily in touch with your former colleagues. Many of you have expressed the wish to keep in touch with the IOB alumni community and we are trying to facilitate this as best we can. Of course, we encourage electronic socialising, but we try to provide other opportunities as well, as the pictures of the meet-and-greet sessions with IOB staff that took place in Burundi, DRCongo and Rwanda show. We shall organise similar sessions in other countries when staff go on missions there. Ecuador and Uganda are next. The new web pages will also help you to gather information relevant to your work and enable you to network professionally with former classmates around the globe. And that is not all. For me the most exciting part of the revamped web pages is the e-learning section. In the survey many of you expressed an interest in academic refresher courses and advanced seminars. I myself think this is a great idea and I am proud of what we have already achieved. Have you for instance taken a look at Paul Collier's conference? When the economics professor of the University of Oxford came to Antwerp to give a presentation in November 2010 we had it taped and it is now on our website. In this way it is not only the students who were in Antwerp at the time who had the opportunity to listen to him, all of you can now watch Collier elaborate on the views which he first defended in his famous 2007 book "The Bottom Billion" and see him debate with some IOB colleagues and other Belgian development experts. You can also pick up ideas from the technical workshop on Community-Based Monitoring Systems conducted at IOB a few months ago by Dr. Celia Reyes from the Philippines . By the way, please pay special attention to the contribution to the workshop by former IOB student Alellie Sobrevinas, who accompanied Dr. Reyes to Antwerp. Do not forget to listen to our former student Joseph Asunka (Ghana) who presented his research on "The impact of targeted social transfers

on cooperative behaviour in beneficiary communities: a case study of Ghana's cash transfer programme". This event was the result of a call for papers launched by IOB in April 2011 with a view to providing a platform for alumni to present their research or policy papers. Twenty-two IOB alumni submitted papers, many of which were of high quality. Joseph Asunka's presentation was selected by IOB's academic review committee and Joseph, who is preparing a PhD in the United States, was invited to come to Antwerp to make a presentation in front of a live audience of current students and IOB and UA staff. Professor Molenaers ably chaired the event. I was able to attend the presentation and was impressed by the quality of both the presentation and the ensuing debate. Many alumni followed the event instantaneously on their computer screens and sent comments and questions by e-mail. Sara Dewachter, who had organised it all, read the reactions from her laptop screen to Joseph, who addressed all the issues raised in a concise and competent manner. After the seminar Joseph took the trouble to reply by mail to the questions that had not made it to the public session. This type of event, by and for the alumni, really looks a winning formula to me.

Robrecht Renard, Chairman





On the democratisation process in Ghana

Joseph Asunka is originally from Ghana but is currently pursuing a PhD degree at the Political Science department of the University of California in Los Angeles. He participated in IOB's short programmes on PRSP and civil society participation in 2005 and was the first alumnus to present his research in the context of the new IOB Alumni e-seminars series. More on this research can be found elsewhere in this edition. In this interview we focus on Joseph's work at the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development and on his personal views on democratisation.



Can you briefly tell us more about your role at the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development?

After I had obtained my Master's degree in Economics at the University of Ghana in 2004 I started working for the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD), conducting research on democratisation, governance institutions and civil society organisations as well as social service delivery. CDD is a research think-tank which seeks to improve governance in Ghana and in Africa in general. It examines how to ensure that parliament and other governance institutions, including the judiciary and executive branches, work effectively. My specific research focus within CDD was elections, social service delivery, specifically education, and decentralised local government. I was also a lead researcher on the Afrobarometer project.

Can you give a concrete example of how CDD engages in the national democratisation process?

Within the context of the 2004 elections we looked at ways of ensuring that anti-corruption organisations would be able to oversee and enhance the political process. We collaborated with 47 civil society organisations, such as religious institutions and professional bodies, to monitor the elections. This collaborative effort resulted in the establishment of the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO). CODEO members all over the country observed the elections and reported irregularities to the secretariat as well as to the security services and the electoral commission. We covered well over 7,000 polling stations and we felt that our efforts

really contributed to improving transparency and increasing popular confidence in the outcome. The voters welcomed the observers whose advantage was that they were locals and familiar with the context and with existing issues. They were perceived as neutral and asked to mediate when problems arose.

Was this initiative followed up beyond Ghana's national borders?

Yes, CODEO was converted into a sub-regional body known as the West Africa Election Observers Network (WAEON) with its secretariat at CDD in Ghana. The member countries of WAEON include Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Every domestic unit works with local people so WAEON is more like an umbrella organisation with local election observers in the various countries. Of course, international organisations can and do observe elections but it is often convenient and cost-effective to have local people involved because they are familiar with, for example, the local context, history and language. We also send people from member states to observe elections in other member states in order to create the feeling of being part of a West-African network and also enhance the credibility of local observers. The observers receive some financial or material compensation in order to minimise the risk of compromise and corruption. The various local election observer organisations receive most of their funds from external sources such as the UNDP, the World Bank and other donors interested in election transparency. The sub-re-

Joseph Asunka is a researcher at the theme group Aid Policy. His PhD is on Chinese development aid to Africa.

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gional body WAEON receives financial support from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and technical assistance from the National Democratic Institute (NDI). The initiative has turned out to be less expensive since we work with local people and its credibility is greater because the observers cannot be accused of promoting foreign agendas. The observers are also carefully screened and must not have political links.

Back to CDD. Can you tell us more about your research on social services and education?

Our most recent work was on public expenditure tracking, more specifically leakage of public funding in the education sector. We tracked the school attendance rates of teachers in selected districts in Ghana. Over two weeks we paid random, unan-

nounced visits to selected schools to ascertain whether the teachers were at school as expected. We found that 47% of teachers stay away from school at least once a week. Approximately 15% of these do not show up for three days a week. There are several reasons to explain this absence. The major ones are the lack of transport and the long-distance education programmes for teachers. Many teachers spend Monday travelling to school and by Thursday or Friday morning they travel back in order to be able to attend long-distance classes over the weekend. These are part of a government programme aimed at updating teachers' skills, which runs from Friday afternoons to Sundays. The Training Centres are located in the larger cities so that it takes the village teachers many hours to reach them. Another reason for the low school attendance rates of teachers on Mondays and Fridays is also linked to transport. Teachers need to collect their salaries from accounts in the major cities, which again involves a lot of travelling. Of course many teachers also lack motivation because of their low salaries. As a result some teachers try to earn extra money by giving private lessons and neglect their work at school.

Based on these findings, did the government do anything about the problem of absent teachers?

Yes they did and they are still working on it. The long-distance education programme has now been scheduled for Saturdays and Sundays only and giving private classes during the school year has been forbidden by law. Teachers can now only give private classes during the long holidays. The government is still trying to solve the problem of access to salaries and to make sure that teachers can obtain their salaries without having to skip school.

This brings us to IOB. How did you get involved in the PRSP programme?

As a representative of CDD I became involved in Ghana's Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers in 2005 and I enrolled in the short programme on Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers at IOB. IOB provided

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me with the tools necessary better to monitor the incorporation and implementation of PRSPs by the various Ministries, such as the Ministries of Education, Agriculture and Finance. CDD was responsible for the good governance aspects of the PRSPs. We did a lot of research on the implementation and monitoring of Ghana's first PRSP. I also led our team when we were writing a report on how our government had committed itself to the PRSP for the Economic Commission of Africa, which produces the African Governance Report.

Was this your stepping-stone towards your PhD research?

Yes, it certainly triggered my interest in poverty reduction strategies. In 2008 I started my PhD at the University of California, in the department of Political Science. I am interested in researching governments' support for the poorer segments of their populations and the fight against poverty and vulnerability on the continent. I specifically look at cash transfers, a strategy that has become popular in reducing poverty because it targets the poor directly. My first research question is how to identify and reach the poor. The second one is how we can be sure, once we have reached the poor, whether they really benefit from the transfers. The third question is whether cash transfers change the relationships within the local community and if so, how, and how Members of Parliament are involved in this process.

What are your personal future goals?

After my PhD I intend to go back to Ghana to continue my research at CDD and to lecture at the University of Ghana. At CDD I would work on the Afrobarometer project, a public opinion study about people's perception of politics, governance and economic issues. I am proud to be part of CDD because I feel it has made and continues to make a substantial contribution to the democratisation process in Ghana and sub-Saharan Africa in general.

“... I enrolled in the short programme on Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers at IOB.

IOB provided me with the tools necessary better to monitor the incorporation and implementation of PRSPs by the various Ministries, such as the Ministries of Education, Agriculture and Finance.”

How do you see the future of democratisation in Ghana and sub-Saharan Africa?

In terms of political democratisation we have improved a lot. It is getting more and more difficult for politicians to hijack the political process because people will no longer accept this. It has also become more difficult for governments to change the constitution in order to stay in power; again, because people would object and react. People have started to realise that they do have a voice. As a result politicians have to prove themselves in order to be re-elected. The military too is learning to interact more with civil society. In this respect we at CDD offer training with regard to democracy and the role of the military and we also provide input with a view to modifying the curriculum of military training. We have noticed an improvement in the relationship between the military, the citizens and the government in Ghana. In general, I am optimistic about the future of democracy in Ghana and in sub-Saharan Africa. We have started moving away from our colonial history. Fighting for freedom is part of human nature and thus freedom will prevail.



in Fragile States: the Role of the Africa Capacity Indicators (ACI)

By Kwabena Agyei Boakye*

Much has been written about the causes of conflict in many African countries and the measures needed to promote peace and security. What is missing, however, is a discussion of the role of capacity development and related initiatives in the reconstruction process in the period after disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR). Issues pertaining to capacity development, which includes the reconstruction of physical infrastructure, the provision of social services, support for public sector institutions, training institutions, civil society and think-tanks which are crucial to formulating and implementing government priorities and policies, are often relegated to the background when designing and implementing post-conflict reconstruction efforts because of the emphasis placed on disarming and demobilising the warring factions.

In other words, because the first and foremost objective is bringing conflict or civil war to an end, capacity development and other long-term initiatives, which are critical to ensuring stability in a post-conflict environment, are often assumed to be of secondary importance and are thus only incorporated into the peace-building and reconstruction process at a later stage. However, this is a risky assumption since without capacity development there is a serious danger that the conflict will re-emerge and long-term socio-economic development and reconstruction will continue to stagnate.

Considering the nature of fragility, putting capacity development at the top of Africa's development agenda is crucial to fostering long-term stability and achieving the MDGs. Many countries have undertaken reforms to enhance their governance frameworks. But across Africa these goals and other benchmarks of real progress towards reducing poverty, sustaining peace and promoting economic growth and development can be met only if development partners act jointly, decisively and forcefully to build the capacity of fragile states.

The vision for Africa of the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), Africa's premier capacity development institution, is that of a continent recognised by its global partners for its socio-political and economic capabilities and for the opportunities it affords; a continent that has effective institutions and policies thanks to sustained investment in people and institutions with a view to delivering development results for poverty reduction. The Foundation's flagship publication, Africa Capacity Indicators Report (ACIR), is therefore a tool that builds on the body of knowledge already amassed by development partners and other key stakeholders in Africa's future. By augmenting that body of knowledge the ACBF hopes to contribute to optimising the use of capacity development strategies in order to aid fragile, post-conflict African states in their advance from poverty to prosperity.

This is why the ACBF aims to be the leading African institution, in partnership with all stakeholders, in building sustainable capacities with the objective of achieving good governance and poverty alleviation in Africa.

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Kwabena (IOB 2000-2001) is a monitoring and evaluation expert with the African Capacity Building Foundation

CONCEPTUALISING CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Capacity comprises the ability of people, organisations, and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully; capacity development is the process by which people, organisations, and society unleash, strengthen, create, adapt, and maintain capacity over time. Capacity is conceptualised better when answering the question: what sort of capacity? The capacity of individuals, organisations, and societies to set goals and achieve them; to budget resources and use them for agreed purposes; and to manage the complex processes and interactions that typify a working political and economic system. The ACBF's notion of capacity development focuses on the abilities embedded at the individual, organisational, and institutional levels to achieve particular results in six core competences: implementing economic policy analysis, enhancing public administration, strengthening national statistics and statistical systems, strengthening the voices of non-state actors, improving financial management and accountability, and strengthening governance through enhanced parliamentary institutions.

WHY THE AFRICA CAPACITY INDICATORS REPORT (ACIR) ?

Owning the process of defining capacity indicators, designing the data collection instrument and being involved in collecting the data leads to ownership of and commitment to the process of improving the outcomes of capacity development. The rationale is to encourage policy-makers and practitioners in the various countries to own the process of assessing their capacity for delivering such services.

It examines key issues and challenges confronting in-country and cross-border developments in capacity in Africa with a view to promoting ongoing efforts to support regional cooperation. It also serves as a tool to galvanise capacity development and poverty reduction actions in Africa by providing research-informed data on capacity from across the continent.

The ACIR composite index - ACI is a group measure of capacity development that offers a different approach to the common practice of measuring and evaluating a country's progress in capacity and development.

“Successful capacity development in fragile states must be responsive to the context and priorities of the countries concerned.”

ACI measures relevant factors that make for a successful and thriving society thanks to enhanced capacity since Africa needs a common denominator for all countries that serves as a starting point for capacity development so that progress can be tracked over time.

THE ACIR AND STATE FRAGILITY IN AFRICA

The period 1990 to 2000 can be described as the lost decade for the African continent. This is partly because of the precipitous economic decline coupled with conflicts and wars in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Somalia, and Rwanda. State fragility related to post-conflict situations is particularly challenging for policy-makers in that it represents a situation that needs to be managed cautiously. Fragile states face a variety of situations from post-conflict reconstruction to political tensions and weaknesses and thus capacity development provides a starting point for donor engagement with fragile states as such interventions, especially in fragile environments, require a sound understanding of the country context.

The ACIR highlights the fact that the quantity and quality of human and financial resources devoted to capacity development need to be increased. Capacity development interventions in fragile states need to be better focused on how resources, skills, and knowledge are used in order to optimise the potential benefits and achieve the desired results. Equally important is the political commitment to capacity development and here it is essential that countries not only focus on reconstruction and on the disarmament and demobilisation of ex-militias but also

establish systems that ensure effective policy formulation, implementation and management, including monitoring and evaluation.

The report also reveals that most of the countries do not have an effective mechanism for engaging development partners on capacity development. Most of them lack formal mechanisms of engagement with the development community and as a result the dialogue is conducted in the broader context of development support.

Furthermore, the fact that the majority of countries surveyed were ranked in the “very low” segment of achievement with regard to development results indicates that a lot of work needs to be done to strengthen the translation of development priorities into actual results in a sustainable manner. This underscores the importance of investing further in capacity development.

RESPONDING TO CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT IN FRAGILE STATES

Successful capacity development in fragile states must be responsive to the context and priorities of the countries concerned. In addition to addressing post-conflict societies’ immediate humanitarian needs in areas such as conflict-related emergency relief and related social services, capacity development must be aligned with national priorities, strategies and systems. It must also focus on enhancing the states’ core tasks, particularly those with a direct bearing on state collapse/failure or further conflicts.

Development partners and other stakeholders can play a key role in strengthening capabilities in fragile states by ensuring that capacity development planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation strategies are integrated into the good governance agenda as well as by supporting the enhancement of stakeholder consultation and engagement both at national and local levels.



The Egyptian revolution: towards a real regime change?

The 25th of January 2011 is a date which is engraved in the memory of people all over the world as the start of the Egyptian revolution that overthrew President Hosni Mubarak.

Hosni Mubarak resigned on the 11th of February 2011, a mere 18 days later. IOB alumni Yasmine El Rifai* and Eva Vergaelen** were, and still are, involved in the revolution. In this article they give their personal insights into what triggered the revolution as well an overview of the highlights of the ongoing process and an analysis of the challenges that Egypt is still facing.

COUNTRY PROFILE

The Arab Republic of Egypt has a population of almost 85 million. The majority of the people are Muslim and there is a Christian Coptic minority of more or less 10 percent. While almost everyone is Arabic-speaking some ethnic groups also have their own languages such as Nubian, Bedouin and Tamazight. There is a huge gap between the rich and the poor, with over 23 percent of Egyptians living below the national poverty line (according to UNDP). Over the past decades the unemployment rate among young people has steadily risen to reach 43 percent in 2010. 44 percent of the adult population is illiterate.

WE ARE ALL KHALED SAEED

Despite what most people think, it is not poverty that causes revolutions. The famous Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky once remarked that if this were the case the world would be facing revolutions all the time since most people in the world are poor. So what does trigger a revolution? Of course every revolution is different, but most do have something in common. An innocent death caused by state violence which subsequently becomes a symbol of the state's failure to protect its citizens has been the most common catalyst sparking revolutions throughout history. In the case of Egypt the innocent death was that of Khaled Saeed, a middle-class young man from the city of Alexandria, who was beaten to death in the street by Egyptian police in June 2010. Photos of his disfigured body were soon circulating widely and the middle class realised with a shock that they were no longer safe from state brutality. When a Facebook group called 'we are all Khaled Saeed' was created it quickly attracted hundreds of thousands of members. Thanks to the internet the largely apolitical middle class finally joined in the subtle resistance to the state, which had been started years before, in 2005 to be exact, by political activists of the Kefaya movement and had been gathering momentum slowly and with difficulty. One of the key players was the workers' movement, which had been engaged in a real power struggle with the state since 2008, constantly exerting pressure through strikes, sit-ins and various types of legal action. Young people started to get involved in support of these workers, sometimes in very well-organised ways, and this resulted in the "6th of April Movement", one of the groups drumming up support for the demonstrations. The return to Egypt last year of Mohamed el Baradei, former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency and Nobel Peace Prize winner in 2005, and the launch of a massive campaign for change spearheaded by him was also a crucial factor in the mobilisation of Egypt's middle class.

Coming back to innocent deaths, the violent death of the Tunisian vegetable seller Mohamed Bouazizi and the subsequent success of the Tunisian revolution of January 2011 has contributed considerably to emboldening a large number of Egyptians who would not otherwise have considered taking part in political action.



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****Eva Vergaelen** obtained her Master's degree in Governance and Development at IOB in 2001. She lives both in Egypt and in Belgium and has both nationalities. She is a writer and the editor of 'Exchange to Change'.



THE REVOLUTION'S CRUCIAL DAYS

When Egyptian activists from various groups called for a mass demonstration against police brutality on the National Celebration Day of Egyptian Police Forces on January 25th, only few people expected that that day would be the start of a real revolution in Egypt. In the early hours of the demonstration only a few hundred people showed up. Egypt had a very repressive and violent history of dealing with demonstrators and many people were simply too scared to join. However, the demonstrators' strategy of starting in poor areas and marching through residential neighbourhoods chanting the slogans "Bread, Freedom and Social Justice" succeeded in attracting more and more people until thousands were filling the streets of Cairo and other main cities all over Egypt. Whereas the day ended with police violence as expected, the vast numbers of people who had shown up clearly indicated that it was time to seize the momentum and call for greater action. This resulted in a call for mass demonstrations on Friday the 28th, which has become known as the "Friday of Anger". It was a day of extreme police brutality, which caused more than 300 deaths and thousands of injuries. Yet at the end of the day the people had "conquered" the police forces, which

withdrew from all public places. The army took control of the streets, while the demonstrators victoriously started their first Tahrir sit-in, which would continue for 18 days. Throughout the 18 days President Hosni Mubarak made three TV appearances in which he refused to resign and instead tried to pacify the demonstrators by promising some minor regime changes and by stating that neither he nor his son would be candidates in the next presidential elections planned for September 2011. This only added to the anger of the masses in the street, who felt that their demands were not being taken seriously. By early February millions of people were marching all over the country to demand the resignation of Hosni Mubarak as well as free and democratic elections, among other things. By the time that the president had actually been overthrown on February 11th, over 900 citizens had lost their lives despite the fact that the protesters themselves had been mostly non-violent in their actions.

ORIGINAL DEMANDS

What were the demands of the Egyptian demonstrators? The anger that started the revolution was of course not only caused by police brutality, but was also the result of social exclusion, growing un-



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The central square of Cairo, the Midan Tahrir or Liberation Square, became the epicentre of the revolution

employment, rising prices and the corruption that was rife among the political elite. **Putting an end to 30 years of the authoritarian regime** of Hosni Mubarak was of course the first and foremost goal. People also voiced their desire for **free and democratic elections and a new constitution** to limit the powers of the president.

Another demand was **the end of the state of emergency** that had been imposed in Egypt after the assassination of the previous president, Anwar Sadat, in 1981. The state of emergency had paralysed political and societal life for decades. Thousands of people who had dared to criticise the regime had been arrested and imprisoned without fair trials. Political opposition parties were banned and there was no freedom of speech.

The latter, **freedom of speech**, was another demand of the protesters.

They also demanded **free and independent labour unions** to protect the rights of workers. In a country with a very high unemployment rate it was easy to keep the wages of ordinary people extremely low - so low that it was impossible to survive on them. Another major demand of the revolutionaries was an increase in the minimum wage.

The last major demand was **justice**, meaning that those responsible for corruption and for the assas-

sination of citizens should be brought to trial, including members of the presidential family, wealthy business people and top politicians.

HAVE THESE DEMANDS BEEN MET?

The central square of Cairo, the Midan Tahrir or Liberation Square, became the epicentre of the revolution, bringing together hundreds of thousands of people from diverse backgrounds but with the same demands day after day. The square witnessed the establishment of Local Community Councils and other groups, which began discussions about politics and societal restructuring. It was amazing to see how so many and such diverse people were able to work together to achieve the same goals within a framework of dialogue, peace and mutual respect. For many activists the 'Tahrir experience' or the "Tahrir Utopia" proved that there was hope for Egypt and that the country could at last become a democracy. Even now, in the heat of the summer, Tahrir is still proving to be a major instrument for change. At the time of writing this article, thousands of activists are still occupying the square in order to have their demands heard. After all, only a few demands have been met so far, reflecting a lack of political will to implement real changes. What

follows is an update of the demands, some of which have been met whereas others have not:

The objective of overthrowing Hosni Mubarak has been achieved, but not that of putting an end to the 'Mubarak regime' since many members of the old regime are still in place. At the moment the country is being governed by the State Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), headed by general Tantawi, who was a close ally of Mubarak.

Curbing the power of the State Security forces; none of those responsible for the abuses of the security apparatus and/or the killing of peaceful demonstrators have yet been brought to trial. Police officers charged with crimes are still in their jobs. Moreover, recent events show that state security is being managed with exactly the same brutal, sinuous and destructive logic as before.

The promise of free democratic elections. However, there is no consensus yet about the procedures to be followed to determine the rules for the participation of political parties and for monitoring these elections.

The old constitution will be changed. A referendum on constitutional amendments entrusted a council of 100 people to be chosen by the new parliament with this task, but many details remain unclear, which raises the spectre of having a non-representative body drafting the constitution. As a result of national dialogue the SCAF has recently agreed to recognise a document laying down "pre-constitutional principles", a sort of social contract that is to be respected by whoever will be in charge of drafting the new constitution.

A promise was made to put an end to the emergency law, but thousands of people are still under arrest and are being tried by military courts. Moreover, the SCAF has imposed a new law outlawing demonstrations and protests that 'endanger national unity'. The protesters demand the annulment of this law.

The former heads of the state media have resigned and the media now try to present a greater diversity of views. However, there is no real freedom of expression yet. Journalists and bloggers who are too critical of the SCAF are facing the risk of being tried by military courts.

Labour unions are organising free elections and are playing a major role in the ongoing process of revolution.

The minimum wage has increased from 350 to 730 Egyptian pounds, but the amount is still insufficient to pay the increased food and commodity prices, estimated at EGP 1200.

The trials of the Mubarak family, the former Minister of the Interior, El Adly, and the policemen who ordered the killing of demonstrators keep on being postponed. While some of the regime's allies - mainly business people - are being tried for corruption and abuse of public goods, Mr. Mubarak remains in hospital and there is no news of Mrs. Mubarak. Their sons are supposedly in prison, but no news about their trials has yet been released. The only police officer who was convicted of murder has escaped from prison. However, due to Tahrir pressure the SCAF has agreed to public trials for the leading figures of the old regime, which will also be broadcast on radio and TV.

The protesters demand the sacking of some prominent figures in the judiciary who are accused by the revolutionaries of deliberately bungling the prosecution of key figures of the Mubarak regime and of the Mubarak family itself.

MAJOR CHALLENGES

As the above list shows the revolution is still facing major challenges. There are many players involved and many of them do not share the same agendas. The major challenges come from both within the revolutionary movement and outside, as will be explained below.

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The stained monument of Hosni Mubarak

Internally, various groups are fighting each other over power. The SCAF wants to protect the army's privileges as well as its allies who have been accused of corruption by the revolutionaries. The army is huge and forms the epicentre of power within Egypt. Although some low-ranking officers have publicly claimed to support the revolutionaries' demands, the high-ranking officers want to protect their power. The role played by the army during the days of the revolution remains ambiguous. Although most will agree that the army did play a major role in overthrowing the president by refusing to crush the demonstrators it cannot be said that it took the side of the revolutionaries. It did not interfere when protesters were being slaughtered by the police and thugs, but then neither did it try to protect the Mubarak clan. It just opted for the strategy that would safeguard its own assets. Later on, after Mubarak had been overthrown, the army intervened violently to disperse the second sit-in at Tahrir. The most important question now is whether the SCAF, which is heavily subsidised by the US, will allow the implementation of a new system that puts very considerable power in the hands of civilians. Another group that wants to retain its power is made up of those related to the former Mubarak regime. They still dominate the country at all levels although the revolutionaries are exerting increasing pressure to have them dismissed and little by little their demands are being met.

A group that hopes to be able to gain influence is the Muslim Brotherhood. The group is especially popular with the lower middle class because it offers good and free health care and other social services. The Muslim Brotherhood is very well organised and can easily mobilise its members, which makes it a force to be reckoned with. Despite the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood was outlawed under the Mubarak regime and was not allowed to form a political party, many of its members represented the group's ideology as independent members of parliament. The Muslim Brotherhood felt quite comfortable in this position, which was the main reason why it did not at first support the revolution. According to many activists the SCAF and the Muslim Brotherhood are now working together behind the scenes to divide power among themselves. However, this cannot be confirmed. Although the West has repeatedly expressed its fear of the Muslim Brotherhood, it is unlikely that the Muslim Brotherhood would want to jeopardise any current agreement with the West.

Amidst the chaos some small extremist groups are being formed, mainly on the basis of dogmatic religious interpretations. These groups tend to fight each other over 'The Truth' and do not – as yet – represent a substantial part of the Egyptian population. During and in the wake of the revolution sectarian violence has increased in some parts of the country although the revolutionaries always try to counterbalance this by publicly overcoming divisions and by stressing that all those involved in the

revolution share one and the same Egyptian identity. It is the secular groups which started the Egyptian revolution, many of which had already been active for decades as critics of the neoliberal and corrupted regime of Mubarak. They now face the challenge of forming political parties and of drafting political programmes in a very short time, which puts a lot of pressure on their members and causes friction. Both the SCAF and the Muslim Brotherhood tend to portray the secular groups as agents of the West despite the fact that most of them are very critical of the imperialist world order.

The silent majority is another key player. Its members may not be active players, yet all the others are trying to lure them to their side - the revolutionaries in Tahrir speaking in the name of the Egyptian people, the Military Council presenting itself as the final guardian of Egyptian security and unity, the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist movements capitalizing on Egyptians' natural religiosity, and even the members of the old regime who keep stressing the threat of economic crisis and the urgent need to regain stability. One wonders if the "silent majority" is really a majority at all, given that there are so many differences within the group.

As has already been mentioned above, externally the US exerts great influence in Egypt in the form of military subsidies and development aid. As is well known, the US is the protector of Israel. Despite the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel there remains considerable anger in Egypt about the colonisation of Arab land and the continued killing of Palestinian civilians. Whereas the Mubarak regime agreed to sell Egyptian resources to Israel – in the form of, for example, export of gas under the international market price – and hermetically closed the Egyptian border with Gaza, the Egyptian people support the Palestinians' fight for independence. Many Egyptians were angry with the West for supporting the Mubarak regime and for ignoring its violation of the human rights of both the Egyptians themselves and their Palestinian brothers and sisters. They doubted, and still doubt, whether the West really wants democracy in Egypt. Apart from 'the West' and Israel some other players also tend

to be afraid of democracy in Egypt. Many other Arab countries are authoritarian and lack democracy. Since Egypt could trigger – and is already doing triggering – popular protests within these countries against their own regimes, their rulers do not welcome the Egyptian revolution. Some rich Gulf States try to 'buy' the revolutionaries by promising huge financial aid if Egypt pardons its former president. Until now the revolutionaries have not yet accepted any foreign aid, either from any of the Gulf States or from the IMF or the World Bank.

EVOLUTION OF THE REVOLUTION

What has become of the Egyptian revolution now that the world's attention is no longer focused on Tahrir Square? The revolutionaries are determined to keep up the momentum as new parties play the power game and the old guard tries to preserve its influence. There are ongoing protests at Tahrir over the slow pace of reform and discussions about over the future of Egypt can be very fierce. Every night documentaries are shown and people are encouraged to voice their views. But also elsewhere in Cairo and in the rest of Egypt the revolution is still alive. All over the country people engage in discussions about the role of the military in politics, about the economic model that can save Egypt from poverty and about the best strategies to achieve justice, security and stability. Although some critics claim that what is happening in Egypt cannot be called a revolution (yet) because no real regime changes have occurred (yet) the authors of this article dare to state that the Egyptian revolution is very revolutionary indeed. It is true that the old regime is trying to hold onto power, but it looks as if the people will not let that happen. The main revolutionary goal that has been reached so far is that people are claiming their rights again after decades of repression. Even if it cannot yet be called a political revolution, what has happened and is still happening in Egypt can definitely be called a revolution in people's minds, hopes and actions. Will the revolution achieve its main objective, real regime change? We do not know how long it will take, but we believe it will.





Stage rural à Kasangulu: Une occasion de reprendre

l'ancienne ambition?

Par Wim Marivoet*

Il y a plus de 25 ans maintenant que l'Université Catholique du Congo (UCC) a acheté un terrain de plus de 400 hectares dans le territoire de Kasangulu, au sud de la capitale Kinshasa. A cette époque, cet achat cadrait encore dans le programme de Sciences Techniques du Développement (STD), programme offert par la faculté du même nom, et procurerait aux étudiants un vrai laboratoire rural pour rendre leur formation plus pratique. En effet, l'objectif de ce programme à ce moment était de former des futurs cadres, capables d'informer la politique de développement en formulant des recommandations fondées dans la réalité vécue au pays.



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Cependant, après la réforme de la faculté en 2000, où une vision moins technique et plus générale a été adoptée, ce terrain a été largement négligé en faveur d'un agenda plus théorique. En effet, la décision stratégique de se conformer plus au paysage académique classique a permis à la faculté, désormais rebaptisée Faculté d'Economie et de Développement (FED), d'attirer plus d'étudiants au détriment d'une approche pratique et orientée vers le développement du pays.

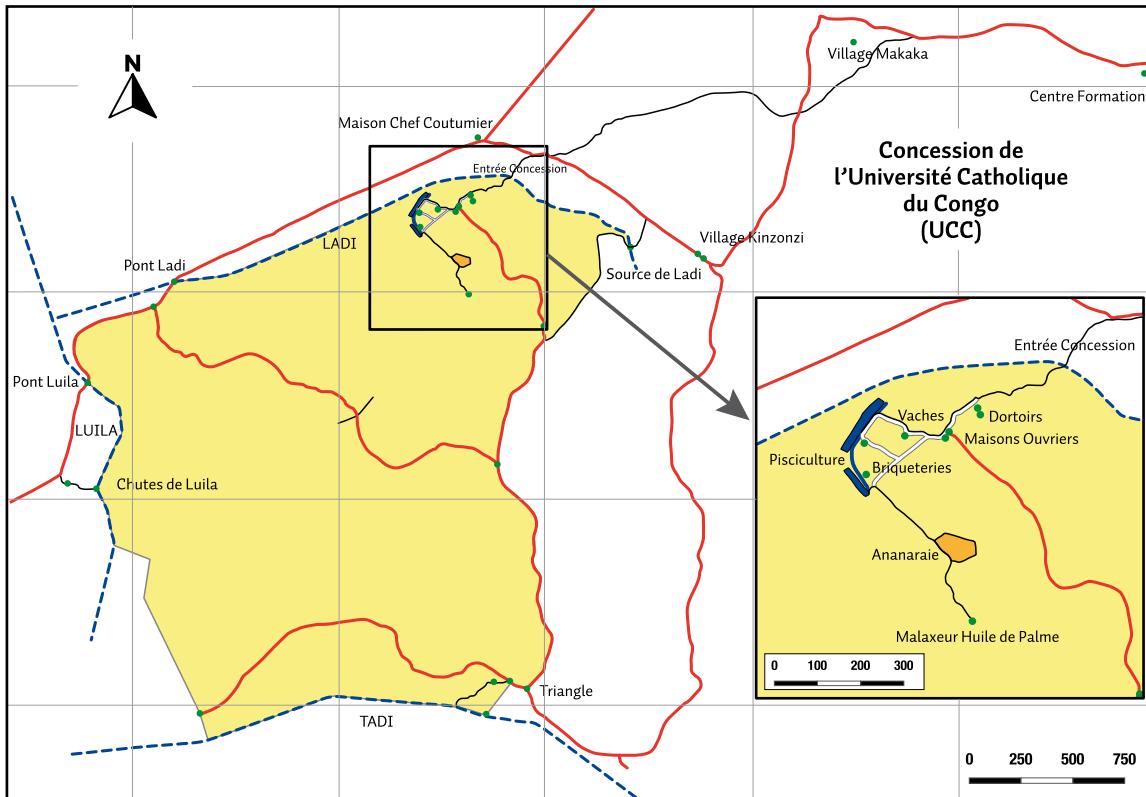
Au fil des années, différentes initiatives ont davantage caractérisé les activités au sein de la faculté. Parmi les plus importantes, il y a eu le financement reçu de la fondation allemande Konrad Adenauer, qui a permis à la FED de renforcer son Bureau de Professionnalisation (BuProf). Conforme à la vision initiale de la faculté, ce bureau avait comme mission de créer des liens plus étroits avec la société congolaise en organisant des stages dans le monde rural et dans des entreprises urbaines. Ainsi, et suite à cette coopération allemande, plusieurs étudiants de l'option Gestion des Projets et Développement Rural ont pu suivre un stage à Mampu, sur le plateau de Batéké à l'Est de Kinshasa, où une autre organisation allemande gérait un grand projet de carbonisation.

Malheureusement, le nombre et l'intensité des activités ayant lieu pendant ces stages à Mampu ont diminué chaque année, surtout après le recul financier et opérationnel de ladite fondation allemande. En fait, les activités des dernières années se sont

principalement limitées à l'expérience de « vivre les réalités rurales », ce qui en soi constituait déjà un vrai défi pour une jeunesse de plus en plus urbanisée. Néanmoins, la faculté était à la recherche d'autres opportunités, éventuellement plus proches de Kinshasa, et c'est ainsi que le terrain à Kasangulu est de nouveau rentré en vue.

A ce moment, les autorités centrales de l'UCC avaient déjà embauché un agronome pour relancer les activités agricoles existantes sur le terrain et pour en suggérer d'autres, afin de mieux rentabiliser le terrain. Ensuite, la sollicitation d'un financement auprès de la fondation universitaire pour la coopération au développement (USOS-UA) pour construire quelques dortoirs sur le terrain, a ajouté une perspective pédagogique à cet objectif de rentabilisation. En effet, ces dortoirs finalisés en août 2011 permettront d'accueillir désormais 40 stagiaires de la FED à la fois.

Ces dernières évolutions dans le renforcement de la ferme de Kasangulu semblent donc constituer une excellente occasion de revisiter l'ambition initiale de former des futurs cadres à l'intersection de la théorie et de la pratique. En effet, vu l'ampleur de la terre arable en RDC ainsi que de la population qui vit du secteur agricole, une connaissance fondée de ce secteur, connaissance qui dépasse d'ailleurs largement la technicité purement agronomique, se révélera essentielle pour les futurs responsables du développement du pays.



Cette carte a été produite en août 2011 pendant le stage rural à Kasangulu des étudiants de la première licence (FED-UCC), en utilisant le logiciel géographique Quantum GIS (www.qgis.org).

Dans cette optique la FED-UCC peut même ambitionner le développement d'une vraie ferme d'expérimentation à Kasangulu, où différentes formes d'exploitation et de commercialisation seront testées chaque année académique par une batterie d'étudiants sur leur faisabilité, leur rentabilité et leur viabilité relative. Ainsi, les meilleures idées pourraient être retenues et mises en application afin d'assurer un certain surplus pour le budget général de l'UCC, avec éventuellement aussi des retombées positives pour le secteur privé dans les environs de la ferme.

La clé du succès d'une telle ferme dépendra largement du degré auquel les étudiants sont motivés pour trouver des solutions pratiques et créatives à la multitude de problèmes réels auxquels la société villageoise est confrontée. Ainsi, il va de soi qu'un simple séjour au milieu rural n'est pas suffisant à cette fin, et qu'une approche pédagogique plus substantielle s'impose. Cette approche doit es-

sentiellement relier la théorie à la pratique, tout en stimulant la créativité et le sens de l'entrepreneuriat auprès des étudiants.

Au fond, différentes formules peuvent être proposées pour concrétiser cette approche synergétique entre les objectifs de pédagogie et de rentabilisation. Ici, on pourrait par exemple imaginer d'organiser un grand travail pratique pour les étudiants de la FED, qui engloberait même toute une année académique, et qui aurait son point de culmination pendant le stage rural à Kasangulu. D'autres exemples pourraient être des cours d'été ou des chaires spéciales, qui essaieraient de formuler des stratégies de développement pour une vraie relance du secteur agricole.





Land Information Management System (LIMS) Reforms in Kenya:

An Overview

In what is being described as 'a new dawn in Kenya' major reforms are being undertaken in all sectors of the government under the new constitutional order. This need for reform is mainly premised on the need to curtail the reoccurrence of violence in Kenya as witnessed in the 2007/2008 post-election period. Under the Agreement on the Principles of Partnership of the Coalition Government - signed on 28 February 2008 - Agenda Four platform, land reform was recognised as one of the critical issues which the country needs to address so as to be able to guarantee long-term peace and sustainable development. The importance attached to land reform can be explained by the fact that in Kenya land interlinks with political, economic, social and cultural issues.

In addition to the above imperative and in the pursuit of economic development and poverty reduction Kenya is in the process of "structural reforms of property rights to create land markets" where "emphasis is being placed on the need to establish the basic legal and institutional framework that would facilitate a land market takeoff" (Sethi M. 2006). In this undertaking the government is reforming its Land Information Management System (LIMS) with a view to fully modernising it.

This article summarily discusses the problem necessitating the LIMS reform as well as initiatives being undertaken at the Ministry of Lands.



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This article is based on Dr. Winnie N. Mwangi's research for the Kenya Land Alliance.

Dr. Winnie N. Mwangi, is a Land Administration and Management expert and a Senior Lecturer in Land Economics at the University of Nairobi

LIMS IN KENYA: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

LIMS is an information system that helps to gather, assemble, process, store, retrieve, analyse and disseminate geographically land-related data to facilitate the processes and functions of land administration and management. The system can be either manual or computer-based and its effectiveness is dependent upon its being up-to-date, accurate, complete and accessible.

The manual LIMS that has been in operation in Kenya since independence and which is currently under reform has widely been blamed for, or has resulted in:

- Inefficiency in service delivery in terms of time taken to complete transactions, which are at present slow, cumbersome and lengthy.
- Low output in terms of tasks completed by the officers.
- Loss of records as it is difficult to track files since most are scattered and hard to locate.
- Manipulation of records as it is hard to secure manual systems.
- Expensive cadastral surveys since there are no geo-reference points.

- Secrecy and mystery surrounding land records due to restrictions in access resulting in high-level corruption and land seizure.
- Duplication of work as the various departments are not linked through a network system.
- Lack of institutional strengthening and capacity building since the manual systems do not require the provision of continuous training.
- Loss of information due to disasters such as fire as the existing manual system is insecure, not easily updated and susceptible to destruction.

The above problems which were also specified in the National Land Policy (Sessional paper no.3 of 2009) have provided the impetus for the LIMS reform implemented by the Ministry of Lands in Kenya.

LIMS LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK IN KENYA

Land administration and management in Kenya operates within a well-structured system of legislation and institutions. Activities relating to land administration are regulated by the laws that govern the processes and are implemented by institutions. In Kenya the relevant legislation includes: the Con-

stitution, the National Land Policy (Sessional Paper No 3 2009), the Government Lands Act (CAP 280), the Trust Land Act (CAP 288), the Registration of Titles Act (CAP 281), the Registered Land Act (CAP 300), the Land Control Act (Cap 302), the Land Adjudication Act (Cap 284), the Survey Act (Cap 299), the Physical Planning Act 1996 and the Valuation Act and Valuation for Rating Act, amongst others.

Land management and administration in Kenya rest with the Ministry of Lands and the local authorities under whose remit the various departments that administer land fall. Local authorities in Kenya are mandated and administered by the Local Government Act, Cap 265 of the laws of Kenya.

The current organisational structure of the various bodies which have land administration mandates as stipulated by the laws mentioned above is presented in Figure 1.

The land administration process starts with the alienation of land and ends with the post-title land transactions long after the title has been issued. In each of the departments a lot of data is generated. Figure 2 shows the data generated in the land administration and the way in which it is currently managed.

LIMS REFORM

The initiatives regarding LIMS reform are part of ongoing public sector reforms based on the following elements Result Based Management (RBM) as implemented through Rapid Results Initiatives (RRI); the need to comply with the long-term issue requirements of Agenda Four of the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation Accord; implementation of the National Land Policy; the Vision 2030 flagship projects; public sector performance contracting; Constitution implementation and the need to deliver efficient services.

The Ministry has for quite some time been attempting to implement a computer-based system by

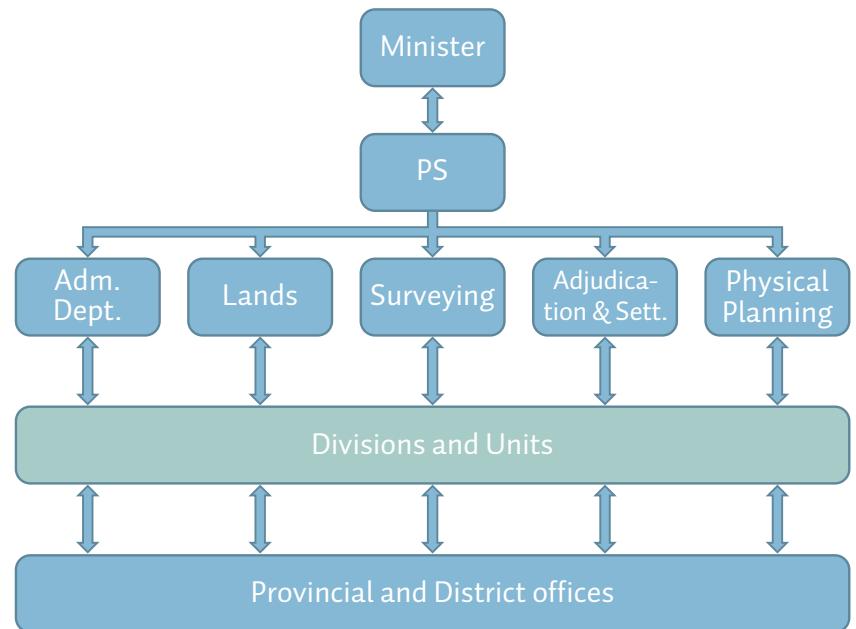


Fig 1. Ministry of Lands Organisational structure

Source: Mwangi 2011

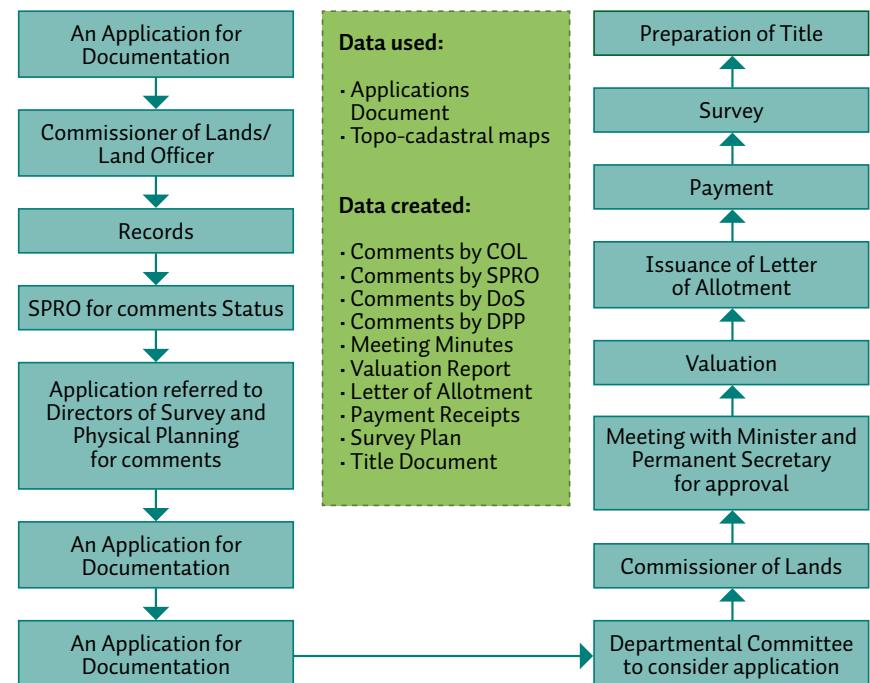


Figure 2: Current Processes and Practices in Land Administration

Source: Mwangi 2011

means of isolated initiatives (as shown below) in a number of departments. The impact of these isolated initiatives has barely been felt by the public as land issues cut across several sections within several departments.

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CURRENT STATUS OF LIMS REFORM AT THE MINISTRY OF LANDS

This section briefly outlines the various LIMS reform initiatives being undertaken at the Ministry of Lands and across the country.

Component 1: Safekeeping of Land Paper Records

This LIMS initiative was started in the year 2009 so as to have in place a state-of-the-art Record Management System that will improve record-keeping facilities and procedures. It has three phases, which are all underway: **1st Phase:** Sorting of records and creation of a Model Analogue Archive; **2nd Phase:** Creation of a Model Digital Archive and setting up of a Land Records Conversion Centre; **3rd Phase:** Nationwide implementation of phases one and two.



Left: Sorting of records
Right: Unnecessary records awaiting destruction

Component 2. Development of a Business and IT Architecture

This component forms the strategic framework for the development of land administration systems that will provide support for the many land administration processes. It will ensure that systems and sources of information are compatible and follow the national objectives of the e-government initiative. It is designed to provide information and IT security for a reliable, well-functioning and sustainable land information system.

This component is currently being implemented, the present results being:

- Completion of the mapping of land administration processes.
- Mapping of the LIMS project within the e-government framework.

- Ongoing staff training during the development of an information and IT security policy.

Component 3. Modernising the Geodetic Framework

The National Land Policy recommends the establishment of a unitary and homogeneous network of control points of adequate density, preferably using dynamic technology such as the Global Positioning System (GPS). The development of a LIMS requires this system to be in place to speed up surveying by means of GPS and for geo-referencing land parcels. A project to modernise the Kenya Geodetic Reference Framework (KENREF), which was started towards the end of 2010, is one of the key components of national LIMS reform.

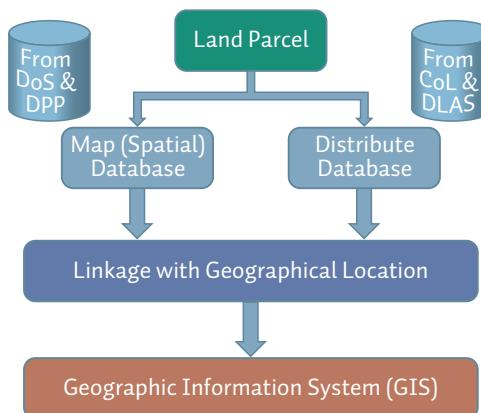
Component 4. Development of Land Rent Collection System

The objective of this component is the improvement of land rent collection through the installation of an e-payment system. In ordinary circumstances this should have been undertaken after the computerisation of cadastre and land registries. However, due to public pressure and the expectation of results arising from the much-hyped computerisation of LIMS, this component has been fast-tracked. In addition:

- About 150,000 land rent cards have been scanned, which has resulted in faster payment procedures.
- The issuance of land rent demand notices has also been fast-tracked.
- An on-line enquiry system regarding rent has been introduced which provides for mobile electronic money payment by means of the popular M-Pesa facility. However, this is work in progress as the Ministry's customers have reported difficulties in accessing land rent accounts through M-Pesa.

Component 5. Parcel Identification Reform

To prepare for the computerisation of land records and the easy exchange of information between the various system modules a standardised parcel identification system is necessary. This component has already been completed. A standardised system for the unique referencing of land parcels has been developed and documented and is awaiting implementation.



Integration of Land Registration Maps & Land Ownership Records.
Source: Mwangi (2011)

Component 6. Systematic Conversion of GLA and RTA records to RLA

The aim of this component is to have one land registration system under the Registered Land Act (RLA). The process will involve the development of a systematic conversion procedure which will first be tested in one district. Government Land Act volumes are currently being prepared for conversion and subsequent scanning

Component 7. Other ongoing initiatives to support service delivery

- i)** File tracking and record management systems such as the Valuation Database and Record Management System.
- ii)** Settlement Fund Trustee (SFT) Billing System – a system intended to automate the billing and accounting processes for all settlement schemes in the country.
- iii)** Land Information for Informal Settlements (LIIS) – This is a GIS-based methodology for the mapping of informal settlements.
- iv)** Production of Digital Topographical Maps – Digitisation of existing Topographical Maps (1:50,000 and 1:250,000 scales) to create a National Digital Topographic Database.
- v)** Establishment of Kenya National Spatial Data Infrastructure (KNSDI) – the KNSDI website has been established and KNSDI Standards are being developed.
- vi)** Improvement of the work environment. This includes initiatives such as the completed refurbishment of the banking hall at Ardh House, Nairobi

Component 8: Public Awareness

The current practice is to provide information to the public only when there is a major event with regard to land. To increase public participation in and support for its reforms it is very important for the Ministry of Lands to make the public aware of its LIMS reforms on a regular basis. This should go a long way in helping the Ministry to increase public confidence in an institution which was in the past often regarded as a hive of mega-corruption.

Conclusion

The aim of this brief article is to introduce, define and illustrate current reform initiatives with regard to land information management systems in Kenya. With the recognition by the National Land Policy of the need for an efficient, sustainable and equitable land management system, a modern computer-based LIMS at the Ministry of Lands which handles the bulk of the land administration services is indispensable.

The basis for the current LIMS implementation project consists of various sub-projects or components which are meant to complement and inform one another with a view to establishing an integrated system. While land information system development is a technical process, for the whole process to be effective it is essential to include all stakeholders from the very beginning and to provide as many opportunities as possible for their involvement, inspection and coordination. This participatory process will go a long way to ensure that the LIMS reform yields far-reaching results well beyond the mere creation of land markets for profit.

In conclusion, Robert F. Kennedy once said “there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.” The envisaged LIMS reforms constitute such a new order of doing things which will definitely be demanding as well as difficult to undertake. Strong willpower will also be required to guide the country in the direction of efficient, sustainable and equitable use of land for prosperity and posterity.

“There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.”

Robert F. Kennedy



Portrait

Tomupeishe Maphosa does not really need an introduction. She is. She knows. She shares. Be prepared for a revolutionary and feminist approach to development. And remember her name, for Tomupeishe will become a key personality in the fight against the patriarchal politics that dominate the global scene.

Tomupeishe Maphosa, Zimbabwe,
Master in Development Evaluation
and Management



“**D**uring my studies in English literature and communication I had the opportunity to work for a number of development organisations in Zimbabwe. First I worked for a Christian governance organisation that looked at how Christians can contribute to governance. Later on I moved to World Vision, an international humanitarian organisation working with children, and I worked in rural areas. I started a children’s magazine about HIV/AIDS and education for rural children, which turned out to be a great success. The children contributed and loved seeing their names on paper. It actually increased their self-confidence and emancipation process, which is especially important to HIV orphans, who are still stigmatised. World Vision continued this project even after I had left so I gave them something back in return for all the experience that I was able to obtain thanks to them. Having grown up in an urban setting I have learned so much from working in a rural area and contributing to its development. As a city girl I always looked at education as something I was entitled to whereas in rural areas education is not taken for granted. Through the magazine we were able to encourage parents and foster parents to send their children to school.

Perhaps as a result of my experience with disrupted families I developed an interest in gender issues. I wrote my dissertation on feminist perspectives on marriage in literature. Literature is a window on the world, a window on reality, and it helps to clarify how culture and society see this perceived reality. After graduation I worked for a number of women’s

organisations and for a consultancy firm dealing with gender issues called Hope Africa. It is a feminist gender and development consultancy which provides consultancy services regarding evaluation, feasibility studies and strategic planning to women’s organisations in eastern and southern Africa. I worked really closely with the director, who encouraged me to be the person I wanted to be and to learn as much as possible. This is one of the reasons why I decided to enrol for the Master in Development Evaluation and Management at IOB. Previously it felt more like common sense to promote stakeholder participation, but now I understand the theoretical validation and the broader framework. Experience is very useful, but it is even more valuable if it is grounded in, and backed by, theoretical knowledge. I also feel that I am now able to better understand the powers underlying development, such as the influence of the donor community.

During my last consultancy assignment I carried out a feasibility study on women and peace, looking at how women in Zimbabwe had been excluded from the whole peace-building process although they are very active and aware of what goes on within society. There has been a tendency within the donor community and the women’s organisations alike to focus the work of the latter on so-called safe issues, such as violence within the household, but not on strategic and more political issues. We need a real feminist movement in order to engage women in the political sphere and to enable them to free themselves from the neutral concept of ‘gender’ and embrace the more activist concept of ‘femi-

nism'. When taking the feminist stance, things progress much faster since this includes taking a more political stance. By identifying ourselves through the element that is the source of our discrimination we strengthen our impact. The feminist identity is a challenge to the world because it means true change. This approach is totally different from that of gender mainstreaming. I sometimes feel that gender is a tool to pull women down, whereas feminism is more liberating. It makes me truly happy to see that feminist movements are growing across Africa.

I have had the privilege of taking part in the African Feminist Forum. Every two years we meet to share experiences and insights and to strengthen networks. The first meeting was held in Ghana in 2006. For a young woman like me the forum is a wonderful place to re-energise and to clarify certain questions. It also provides opportunities to interact with powerful and influential women from all over Africa. One such woman who inspires me is Leymah Roberta Gbowee from Liberia who stood up against the former Liberian president Charles Taylor. Her actions, combined with women's increased involvement in the Liberian peace process, paved the way for the first female African president. This is proof that women can, and do, have political impact.

The feminist movement also provides room for minorities such as ethnic minorities, lesbians, refugees and sex workers. These will only be heard if they manage to create a political forum to discuss their lived realities. Feminists work within the framework of human rights in general, not just of women's rights in the narrow sense. It seems to me that African men try to hide behind issues of culture and tradition, but of course it all depends on how the latter are interpreted. Reinterpretation and knowledge generation are sound feminist approaches because they work within the framework that enjoys credibility within a certain society. Every context differs. It is like food. You have to adapt your menu to the local ingredients and use what is right for you. It is nevertheless not the only approach. We also have our work cut out in other areas such as universal rights. You have to be able to adapt and be flexible in order to obtain true equality at all levels.

African feminism is underestimated in the West. I consider some of the African feminists to be divas - they can move mountains. Maybe the West has the tendency to define and label too much and by doing so you lose meaning. African feminists do not operate within one box, actually for them there is no box. Of course, African feminism is diverse by its very nature because we have our different ways of looking at things and our priorities may differ. But this diversity enriches rather than paralyses us. In the end we form a united front against the forces that want to break us.

Knowledge is power. That is also why I want to learn more about feminist research and share my knowledge with others. I would love to embark on a PhD and for me this Master at IOB is an important stepping stone that can lead to an academic future. However, I want to be able to combine research and activism. I have missed the latter a little at IOB. It has been a very theory-based year and I have sometimes felt detached from activism. We have hardly discussed the role of women in development, in governance or in conflict prevention, whereas we as women form half of the world's population. We have only addressed gender in microfinance, but personally I do not believe this is a strategy to obtain gender equality. Studies about microfinance have shown that women are held back as a result of their stereotypical roles in the 'soft' and vulnerable areas of the economy. They receive finance for growing vegetables or sewing clothes. This does not empower them. It is the role of the feminist movement to take the fight to other levels of society, to politicise the struggle for equality. Many people are afraid of the F-word because they are still deluded by the misconception that feminism is about burning bras and hating men. At the same time we as feminists also have to explain feminism and reach out to society. We have to share our knowledge.

I feel that my future lies in active research on knowledge generation and in contributing to the growing importance of women at all levels of society. I want to write about this and to engage in a dialogue about the need for a more feminist approach to development."

“I feel that my future lies in active research on knowledge generation and in contributing to the growing importance of women at all levels of society.”

Portrait

Joy Lopez is yet another strong, female IOB student with her own clear views on, and personal engagement in, the development process of her country. Or is it global development?

Joy Lopez studied International Studies and is an Economic Development Specialist with the National Economic and Development Authority in the Philippines. She is part of a team that undertakes the monitoring and evaluation of development policies, programmes and projects pertaining to the Trade, Industry and Utilities sectors. In view of this she decided to enrol for a Master's degree in Globalisation. She opted for IOB because it offers a one-year intensive programme for which she could take time off from work and also because she had heard from other Filipino alumni that the teaching at IOB is very interactive. Joy finds the interaction with the highly experienced staff members and with the very diverse student population very inspiring indeed. "Globalisation", she says, "is not only about products, but also and mainly about human beings. IOB brings together people from a wide range of countries and backgrounds to address global problems. It has been an eye-opener for me to realise that my friends from Africa or Latin America face the same challenges despite our different contexts. Globalisation is great, but development should also be addressed globally. Poverty is the downside of globalisation and everyone should take up his or her responsibility and attempt to remedy it."

"The Philippines is one of those countries which have been greatly affected by the negative effects of globalisation in terms of climate change, poverty and migration. We have one of the largest populations of urban slum dwellers. Data from our National Statistics Office reveal that over 5 million people live in urban slums, with an annual growth of almost 4 percent, and that in Manila almost 40 percent of the people live in urban slums. Slum poverty cannot be solved by cash transfers alone. It needs a holis-

Joy Valerie Lopez, the Philippines,
Globalisation and Development



“I do not want to fall into the migration trap. I want to go back to my former job as a civil servant and contribute to the development of my country in a structural way.”

tic approach and an effective slum development plan. After all, not all slum dwellers live below the national poverty line in terms of income but they all face the same problems when it comes to quality of life. On a daily basis, slum dwellers are confronted with pollution, health problems, poor housing, lack of infrastructure (such as roads, hospitals, schools) and lack of services (such as the provision of water, drainage, electricity). They actually pay much more for basic services than people living in serviced neighbourhoods. They are very vulnerable to crime, natural disasters and health risks. Their poor quality of life also affects family relations, resulting in the desire of many people to migrate.

After almost four centuries of colonisation - by Spain, the US and Japan successively - the Philippines has become one of the main suppliers of all kinds of workers to the world's more developed regions. Nearly 10 percent of the country's 85 million people are working abroad. This has resulted in a culture of migration despite the risks and vulnerabilities which migrant workers are likely to face. The main reason why people want to migrate is the high unemployment rate. Our economic growth cannot keep up with the population growth. Women are very visible in this international migration stream. The majority of them work in the domestic sector, one that is not at all well-protected. Many Filipino women's organisations are raising questions about

how to protect the rights of female migrant workers better. Quite apart from the usual problems which migrants face, their domestic jobs largely keep them in 'private' contexts, making them even more vulnerable. I personally feel very strongly about this issue and would love to explore the problem in greater detail. That is why I once enrolled for a Master's degree in Women and Development but unfortunately it proved to be impossible to combine it with my job. Nevertheless, since women make a very substantial contribution to our economy in the form of remittances, I think this topic should receive higher priority at both the national and international levels.

Our dependence on the foreign labour market also has its disadvantages. While remittances boost the country's economy, the development impact has been minimal. Our society easily adapts to changing global demands but without paying sufficient attention to its own needs. We have state schools and hospitals but our underpaid teachers and doctors migrate in the hope of earning more abroad. At the moment we even have a shortage of doctors and nurses. Moreover, there is a tendency among doctors to enrol in nursing programmes to raise their chances of finding jobs abroad. We cannot stop people from migrating but our government will have to explore how migration can be an instrument for development.

As for myself, I do not want to fall into the migration trap. I want to go back to my former job as a civil servant and contribute to the development of my country in a structural way.”



Partnership IOB - University of Kinshasa

By Prof. Tom De Herdt

How does one go about founding a Centre for Applied Research in Decentralisation and Local Development in Kinshasa?

I do not know. What is more, I do not know anyone who does. And it was not my idea to start with. What I do know is that I am not the only one who has embarked on this project. We are in fact quite a large group of people, both in Belgium (should I say Flanders?) and in the DRC. Our group also brings together three Flemish and at least one Congolese university, and the Flemish Interuniversity Council will commit approximately 4 million Euros. Actually, we have a very long period of twelve years to turn the idea into practice. Below, I will first tell you how we managed to get to the present point., then, I will explain what we are planning to do.

Where did it start?

That is a difficult question in fact. One thing is certain: it did not start with a Big Plan. The plan came much later, in fact it was only approved a few months ago. Drawing up the Plan was a little like a collision of several trains. I can only tell you about the train that I jumped on and about some other trains that I have been able to identify in the meantime, but not all of them. I first went to Kinshasa in 1993 within the framework of a partnership, set up some years before by Stefaan Marysse, between the Centre for the Third World, one of the predecessors of IOB, and the Faculty of Development Science and Techniques of the "Université Catholique du Congo" (UCC). UCC was the small university which had established this new faculty. Both partners were interested in organising staff and student exchanges and I was one of the young researchers involved. Our partnership survived the break-up of bilateral cooperation between Belgium and Zaire between 1990 and 1997, the year in which Zaire became Congo. Five years later the Flemish Inter-university Council (VLIR-UOS) was established. Belgian universities have traditionally been quite

actively engaged in cooperation with Congolese universities, in fact, many of the older generation of professors in development studies in Belgium had links with our former colony in one way or another. Congo was not the only but certainly the most important window on the South for Belgium until the 1990s. Of course, 21st-century cooperation will not take the form of the collaboration in the past, but it may be wise to bear it in mind while going our own way.

More in particular, the VLIR has selected the DRC for its first-ever development of a country strategy in which intensive long-term partnerships involving the three universities with the strongest track record in the field will be complemented by smaller-scale cooperation with four other universities as well as a number of inter-university activities involving all seven of them. The strategy is meant to be "demand-driven", that is to say, a match was sought with Northern partners on the basis of proposals elaborated by the Southern universities. This is also why, eventually, the theme of Decentralisation and Local Development was proposed by UCC. One of the important elements here was the presence at UCC of Jean-Pierre Mbwebwa, who was adviser to the President at the time that the new "decentralised" Constitution for the DRC was drafted in 2004-5. The fact that UCC eventually opted for a member of IOB as the Northern coordinator had probably quite a lot to do with both the 20-year partnership we had enjoyed since then and our expertise regarding development issues in general as well as the social, political and economic evolution of the Central African region in particular.

What is the plan?

The backbone of the plan was drawn up last year when we all met in Kinshasa, the two coordinators together with six project managers and an additional group of experts. We proposed three sub-projects. The first will focus on the process of

Tom De Herdt is lecturer at the Institute of Development Policy and Management, University of Antwerp

“The fact that UCC eventually opted for a member of IOB as the Northern coordinator had probably quite a lot to do with both the 20-year partnership we had enjoyed since then and our expertise regarding development issues in general as well as the social, political and economic evolution of the Central African region in particular.”

decentralisation and analyse the opportunities and challenges involved in translating the Constitution into reality. This project will also entail close cooperation with local-level political leaders, particularly for specific topics of the political decentralisation agenda. A second project will consider public services and examine whether decentralisation impacts on the way in which they are organised in practice and, if so, how. Sectors such as education, fiscal organisation and security will be among the first to be investigated. Both projects will be research-based but we also intend to involve key players at crucial points in the research process since the development of training modules for local civil servants is also one of the envisaged outputs. A third project will focus on setting up a digital library and other activities that should make it possible for the UCC to become the hub of a research and policy network with nodes in various parts of the country. Congo

is a territory the size of Europe, which is why decentralisation is a necessity. In fact, irrespective of whether or not the country's structure will formally be decentralised, it is already de facto decentralised. On the other hand, it is clear that there are numerous caveats and imponderables that make one wonder whether the process of political decentralisation will be more than yet another attempt at reform which will merely add another institutional layer of government and taxation.

What will be the next step?

The plan which we have drawn up will be revised after three years. It is indeed not impossible that we will have opted for an entirely different approach by then if our current plan should have turned out not to be feasible. Moreover, the total programme will go through four such cycles of planning-execution-evaluation. Twelve years is indeed an eternity in the world of development action as well as in terms of people's professional careers. I wonder, for instance, how many of the current team members will still be actively involved in 2023. On the other hand, twelve years is actually not at all long when the goal is cultivating more inclusive development practices in northern and southern universities and beyond.





Alumni news

MEET-AND-GREET SESSIONS

As part of its new alumni policy IOB has started meet-and-greet sessions which are organised when an IOB staff member visits a country where many IOB alumni reside. The meet-and-greet session is hosted by an IOB professor and is open to all IOB alumni living or working in the area. IOB covers the costs of the get-together (drinks), but not the costs of transport. The IOB professor can bring some promotional / information material if so desired.

The following meet-and-greet sessions have already taken place:

Rwanda

On Sunday the 5th of June 2011 Prof. Holvoet hosted a session in Hotel Mille Collines in Kigali.

Democratic Republic of Congo

On Tuesday the 7th of June 2011 Prof. De Herdt and Wim Marivoet hosted a session in Café 'Halle de la Gombe'). A more detailed report of this session can be found below (in French).

Burundi

On Friday the 10 th of June 2011 Prof. Filip Reyntjens hosted a session at the Hotel Amahoro in Bujumbura.

In general the participants were positive about the sessions. They found it interesting to network with other IOB alumni of other academic years and to exchange professional experience. More pictures can be found on the IOB website (picture gallery).

More meet-and-greet sessions are planned over the next few months in Ecuador and Uganda. The meet-and-greet session in Ecuador will be organised in Quito on October 8th 2011 and will be hosted by Professor Calfat (see box below). The date and place for Uganda will be specified as soon as possible and will be posted on our website: <http://www.ua.ac.be/dev>. Click on the link alumni networks.

Meet-and-greet session in Ecuador (Quito), 08/10/2011:

from 4-5 pm: information session on IOB's educational programmes (open to everyone)

Address:

Universidad Católica del Ecuador,
12 de Octubre, entre Patria y Veintimilla.

from 5.30 pm:

IOB alumni meet-and-greet session (only for IOB alumni)

Address:

Tapas y Vinos,
Reina Victoria y Mariscal Foch,
La Mariscal



Meet-and-greet session in Rwanda
on June 5th, hosted by prof Holvoet



Meet-and-greet session in DRC on
June 7th, hosted by prof De Herdt
and Wim Marivoet



Meet-and-greet session in Burundi
on June 10th, hosted by prof Filip
Reyntjens



LES “ANCIENS D’ANVERS” RASSEMBLENT –DE NOUVEAU– À KINSHASA

par prof. Tom De Herdt

Depuis le fondement de l’IOB, 37 étudiants de notre Institut viennent de la République Démocratique du Congo. La plupart ne vivent cependant pas dans la capitale. Toutefois, il suffit de mobiliser le carnet de quelques anciens pour compléter la liste, et voilà, nous nous trouvons ensemble avec un groupe d’une quinzaine de personnes. Il faut dire que les histoires qui se racontent autour de la table datent d’une époque révolue, celle de la Ruca, celles des professeurs Vandenbulcke, Kennes (père) et Van Herbruggen.

En effet, bien que sous l’angle de l’IOB c’était la toute première rencontre des anciens de l’Institut, à Kinshasa cette rencontre s’inscrit dans une trajectoire historique beaucoup plus ancienne. N’oublions pas que, vu à partir de Kinshasa, l’IOB n’est que la dernière casquette d’une tradition d’échanges intellectuels entre Anvers et notre ancienne colonie, commençant avec l’Ecole Coloniale fondée en 1923, et passant par l’Institut Universitaire des Territoires d’Outre-Mer avant de se convertir en Collège des Pays en voie de Développement en 1965. A Kinshasa même, le nom de «l’Association des Anciens d’Anvers» existe, bien que l’association est en veilleuse déjà quelque temps.

Est-il temps de la réveiller ? Large consensus autour de la table. En plus des idées que nous avions déjà nous-mêmes, trois arguments circulent. D’abord, l’association peut servir comme réseau de contacts à Kinshasa même. En effet, on remarque que ce réseau rassemble une diversité d’activités et de professions intellectuelles, y compris des hauts cadres de l’administration, des professeurs de différentes universités et même des (anciens) ministres.



Les Anciens d’Anvers, Kinshasa

Deuxièmement, avec l'initiative de coopération institutionnelle à long terme entre l'IOB et l'Université Catholique du Congo, les contacts existent pour faciliter l'organisation d'une rencontre annuelle, par exemple en invitant un conférencier sur un thème politique ou économique actuel. Troisièmement, les anciens souhaiteraient aussi exploiter ce réseau comme un tremplin pour se (re-)connecter avec la Flandre ; en fait, pour la plupart parmi eux, les études à Anvers ont marqué le début d'un réseau international de connaissances, un réseau qui mérite d'être cultivé davantage. L'intérêt pour cette initiative signifie qu'il y a une base sur laquelle on pourra bâtir le futur de l'Association des Anciens d'Anvers.

Toutefois, on remarque également que deux contraintes sont à prendre en compte pour rendre cette renaissance effective. D'un côté, il y a une barrière linguistique qu'on ne saurait pas ignorer. Bien que tout le monde est d'avis qu'un étudiant de maîtrise du 21^{me} siècle devrait profiter de son séjour pour se brancher sur le monde intellectuel anglophone, il est évident que nous nous trouvons pour le moment dans une période de transition sur ce plan.

Comment est-ce que l'IOB s'y prend pour mettre sur pied une communauté d'alumni qui n'exclut pas les francophones ? De l'autre, on remarque que l'internet ne joue pas encore, en RDC, le rôle qu'il joue en Europe. Même le courrier électronique n'est pas maîtrisé par tout le monde –et encore, il faut l'électricité !

Après trois heures de conversation, d'échange d'idées et d'échange de coordonnées (n'oublions pas de prendre des photos !), les Anciens rentrent chez eux. C'est le « doyen » du groupe qui a eu l'honneur de clôturer cette rencontre. Nous avons appris que ce n'était pas sa première rencontre. Et si cela dépend de lui et de nous, ce ne sera pas sa dernière non plus.



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ALUMNI SEMINAR

Another novelty of the IOB alumni policy is the provision of a platform where alumni can present their research or policy papers. A first call for papers was launched in April 2011. Twenty-two alumni submitted high-quality papers. IOB's academic review committee subsequently shortlisted six of them. The winning paper was presented at the alumni seminar. It was written by **Joseph Asunka** and entitled "**The impact of targeted social transfers on cooperative behaviour in beneficiary communities: a case study of Ghana's cash transfer programme**". The article can be found below.



Joseph Asunka: presenting the winning paper at the first alumni seminar

As was mentioned above, IOB's academic review committee shortlisted five other excellent papers:

■ '**Transboundary dialogue and cooperation: first lessons from starting up negotiations on the joint management of the Mayombe forest in the Congo Basin**', by **Tata Precillia Ijang**. This paper

examines the crucial role of high-level government authorities in the preliminary agreements regarding transboundary dialogue and cooperation. The conclusion of the research is that negotiation schemes regarding protected areas should not be limited to technical expertise, but rather be inclusive of politics at both the national and regional levels. Tata Precillia Ijang has already contributed an article on the same topic to Exchange to Change : 'Management and restoration of the Kivu watershed: win-win institutional agreements regarding conservation and livelihoods?' (Exchange to Change, March 2009)

■ '**Devolution and local governance in Sierra Leone**', by **Henry Mbawa**. This paper explores the parallel relations between local councils and chieftaincy, and its implications for post-war political and economic governance in the wider arena of local governance in Sierra Leone. Henry Mbawa has already contributed an article on the same topic to Exchange to Change : 'Decentralisation, local governance and ethnic conflicts in Sierra Leone' (Exchange to Change, September 2010)

■ '**Policy advising: reflecting on the relations between Ethiopia and its donors and the experience of Irish Aid Ethiopia**' by **Rebecca Yohaanes**. This paper examines the relations between Ethiopia, a highly aid-dependent country, and its donors since 1990, focusing on how donors have attempted to influence Ethiopia's politics. The paper finds that development donors may be able to influence the politics of recipient countries to some degree, but only when there is domestic commitment to the policies proposed. Moreover, the donor community is often unable to convey one consistent and coordinated message, which greatly reduces its potential influence. In the case of Ethiopia the paper states that donors have been relatively powerless to influence Ethiopian politics. Rebecca Yohaanes is considering writing an article on this topic for the next edition of Exchange to Change.

■ '**Africa capacity indicators**', by **Kwabena Agyei Boakye**. This paper sheds light on some of the key theoretical underpinnings of capacity development

in fragile states across Africa. It is argued that sustainable development in fragile states requires a clear understanding of both the dynamics and the capacity need. An article written by Kwabena on this topic can be found in this edition.

■ ‘The impact of water supply and sanitation on the prevalence of diarrhoea among children under the age of five: evidence from Cameroon’, by **Debazou Y.Yantio**. This paper discusses the two main types of intervention aimed at reducing the prevalence of diarrhoea, the second most common cause of child mortality under the age of five in the South. Surprisingly enough, the paper shows that access to improved sources of drinking water does not have a significant positive effect on reducing the prevalence of diarrhoea whereas access to improved sanitation facilities does. When children have access to improved sanitation facilities the prevalence of diarrhoea is indeed significantly lower.

The seminar was held on June 23rd and was attended by a broad-based audience of IOB staff members, students, alumni and interested professionals. The seminar was also broadcast live on the internet and almost 50 students and alumni participated online by posting questions and comments.

THE IMPACT OF TARGETED SOCIAL TRANSFERS ON COOPERATIVE BEHAVIOUR IN BENEFICIARY COMMUNITIES: A CASE STUDY OF GHANA’S CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMME

This was the winning paper in the first edition of the new IOB alumni e-seminar series. The paper was written and presented by IOB alumnus Joseph Asunka, who is currently a PhD student at the University of California, Los Angeles, Department of Political Science. An interview with Mr. Asunka can be found in this edition. What follows is an abstract of the paper that he presented.

Community-based targeted social transfers are increasingly popular among donors and the governments of many developing countries as effective tools for poverty alleviation. However, some scholars argue that targeted social transfers, especially those that involve local intermediary groups in the selection of beneficiaries and delivery of benefits, have the potential of creating divisions, social tensions and conflicts, thereby undermining cooperative behaviour within beneficiary communities. At the same time recent empirical research has found higher levels of cooperative behaviour in beneficiary communities than in non-beneficiary communities. In his PhD research - and in this paper - Joseph Asunka looks at both sides of the story.

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Participants in the alumni seminar



Alumni news

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There is a clear logic behind moving away from a universal targeting approach to an individual one in the context of aid. In general the rich tend to hijack the benefits of services offered because they already have greater access to resources. The poor often lack such access and should therefore be targeted directly. Joseph Asunka quotes Amartya Sen here: "If antipoverty policy is to alleviate poverty most effectively, then – on the basis of this argument – it is obvious that we have to ensure that the subsidies reach the poor and only the poor." However, according to Joseph the problem is how to determine what constitutes "poor" and how to reach the poor.

There are several methods of determining who is poor: the category-based approach, self-defining and individual assessment. The first of these approaches is more or less objective in nature, for example, you are either female or not. Governments and donors tend to prefer the third approach, which lets local programme agents determine who is to benefit. The advantage of this method is that these agents are more familiar with the local context, can easily verify and monitor the process and are cheaper than external ones. Of course this approach also poses some dangers, such as disinformation, corruption and political manipulation.

During his fieldwork in Ghana in 2010 Joseph Asunka examined both the advantages and dangers of community-based targeted social transfers, known in Ghana as Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP). He found that social capital can mitigate the potentially negative effects of community-based targeting. Two elements are crucial here: trust and expectations. Firstly, when people trust the community leaders they are more willing to cooperate regardless of whether they are beneficiaries or not. Secondly, when people can reasonably hope that in the future they may benefit as well they tend to be more cooperative. After all, they regard the process as ongoing and are thus motivated to cooperate. They may not benefit now, but there is a good chance that they may in the future. On the basis of his research Joseph Asunka concludes that it is likely that the levels of cooperation in beneficiary communities are higher than in non-beneficiary ones. This is definitely a topic which requires further research.

If further studies should suggest that the LEAP is more likely to enhance cooperative behaviour within beneficiary communities, the Ghanese government will undoubtedly achieve positive results if it extends coverage in more areas in order to reduce poverty and boost the development of currently deprived communities. The research carried out by Joseph Asunka already constitutes an important step forward on the road to community-based targeted social transfers.



Participants in the alumni seminar

PhD RESEARCH FARID SOBHANI: CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY DISCLOSURE PRACTICES IN BANGLADESH: A COMPARISON OF TWO BANKS FROM AN INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Dr Farid Sobhani (IOB Governance and Development, 2000-2001) has been awarded his PhD degree by the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). His field of research is Corporate Governance (specifically CSR/Sustainability Disclosure). His supervisors were Prof. Dr. Yusurrie Zainuddin, Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP) and Dr. Azlan Amran, Universiti Sains Malaysia. It took Farid some four years as a full-time research student to complete the programme. What follows is an abstract of his PhD thesis.

Sustainability is now a global concern because of the effects of climate change, social unrest and economic depression. This has encouraged corporate bodies to be accountable by disclosing their sustainability activities that may affect the earth and society at large. The study focuses on the extent of corporate sustainability disclosure (CSD) practices and the identification of the factors underlying the disclosure and nondisclosure of CSD information by two selected banks in Bangladesh. More precisely, it compares the CSD practices of a conventional and an Islamic bank. The two banks, "Sun" and "Moon", were selected for a number of reasons. "Sun" is a pseudonym for a conventional bank, whereas "Moon" is a pseudonym for an Islamic bank. The study applied the "sequential explanatory mixed method" in data collection. In addition to annual reports, corporate websites and other mediums of disclosure, such as newspapers, corporate brochures and magazines, were used in content analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior bankers to ascertain their views regarding CSD practices. The study applied the principles of Neo Institutional Sociology (NIS) to explain the findings. The research revealed that the coercive, normative and cultural-cognitive mechanisms of NIS influenced the banks' choices in favour of isomorphic disclosure of sustainability practices. According to recent critics of NIS organi-

sational heterogeneity leads to practice variation. However, the findings confirm that there is no significant difference between the disclosure practices of Sun and Moon. Isomorphic practices may thus exist even though organisations are heterogeneous in nature. The factors that lead to isomorphic practices are supported by the coercive, normative, and mimetic mechanisms of NIS. From an institutional perspective the reasons underlying the nondisclosure of crucial CSD information include the strategies implemented with a view to rationalising the avoidance of disclosure. It is obvious that the role of professional accountants as key personnel is crucial to accepting, avoiding or resisting institutional forces in the process of adapting CSD practices. The study has contributed significantly to the body of literature dealing with both theory and practice. The discovery of new forms of institutional dynamics, such as the fear of an omnipotent force underlying CSD practices, seems to be a vital theoretical contribution. Above all, the comparative study of the two banks has generated new insights within the field of sustainability accounting research.



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