GENDER, DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP IN LIBERIA

CONTRIBUTION À LA PAIX EN CÔTE D’IVOIRE

PACIFIC DEMOCRACY AT CROSSROADS

MIGRATION, DIASPORA, BRAIN DRAIN AND BRAIN GAIN

FILIP REYNTJENS HANDS OVER TO THE NEW IOB CHAIRMAN, ROBRECHT RENARD

LIFE AFTER IOB

KEEPING THE DREAM ALIVE
Handing over

Time flies. Filip Reyntjens became chairman of the institute in early 2001. Almost seven years later he is handing over to Robrecht Renard. In the course of these years IOB has become an important player in the field of development.

Understanding development in an international context is a priority and IOB plays a crucial part in this knowledge building and sharing. In terms of research the staff are experts in four fields: Aid Policy, Political Economy of the Great Lakes Region, Poverty and Well-being as Institutional Process, Impact of Globalization. In addition to providing expertise IOB is becoming increasingly important as an alumni network.

Professor Reyntjens launched the idea of the IOB family and Robrecht Renard will implement new initiatives. As both the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ chairman stated in the interview published in this Newsletter: “Our alumni are experts in their fields and IOB could benefit enormously from their input. Listening to our alumni is a good way of keeping in touch with reality.”

That is why we really appreciate your contributions and ask you to keep us updated on your career moves and to share your professional experience with us. Please do send us your latest contact information and help us to optimize communication.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Eva Vergaelen
continuity needed to build on what has been achieved so far. A “double interview” with Robrecht Renard and myself in which we outline our views on the past and the future will be found in this issue.

As announced in the previous issue, on 2, 3 and 4 May of this year the Institute was visited by an evaluation panel on behalf of the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO). In the new European academic landscape these assessments have become crucial in terms of quality control and benchmarking. Indeed, they are essential for the continued recognition of our Master programmes and thus for the future of IOB. Although the evaluation report is not yet available at the time of writing, the oral debriefing at the end of the visit assured us that the assessment would overall be favourable. This will enable us to look forward to the medium-term future (accreditations are valid for eight years) with confidence and encourage us to further improve our performance with regard to our triple mission of education, research and service to the community.

Our new Master programmes are now ready for implementation at the beginning of October. The fine-tuning has required a lot of work and effort, but we believe it has been a worthwhile exercise. The programmes are very innovative in terms of content, structure and teaching methods and they will be both more flexible and student-activating than in the past. In addition to offering new opportunities to future students, they will also enhance the standing of the Institute, thus increasing the value of the degrees awarded to our alumni.

Filip Reyntjens, Chairman


For the 11th year running, the Institute’s Great Lakes Centre has just published its Yearbook with L’Harmattan in Paris. The Annuaire has become a major reference tool on the African Great Lakes Region.
EtC: What is your experience as a woman working for the Ministry of Commerce?

MK: My main experience is that I am faced with a very challenging task. Owing to many years of civil crisis, there was no system at all when I arrived here. Together with my team I had to completely reform the system so as to be able to set up a finance and procurement scheme, as well as reorganise the staff. Another challenge I am facing is changing the attitude of employees towards job responsibilities. Many employees are not familiar with job responsibilities and lack the ability to understand their roles in the system. To deal with this situation I have conducted personnel development and leadership workshops for the employees and I have also organised smaller meetings to encourage employees at the Ministry to change their attitude to work. But it still remains a difficult situation. This problem of a laissez-faire attitude on the job is the result of several years of civil conflict in Liberia.

EtC: In what way does your job deal with the gender issue?

MK: My job has not directly to do with the gender issue. However, what I have done since I took office at the Ministry is to make gender mainstream, bringing qualified and competent women into senior and junior management positions.

EtC: Are women well represented in the government?

MK: I would say yes, because for the first time in Liberia the representation of women has reached 40% at executive level and 15% at legislative level.

EtC: What steps need to be taken to improve women’s development in your country?

MK: One major step to be taken in this context concerns education and adult literacy. Women make up 51% of the population, yet approximately only 15% are educated. Consequently, education for women is of paramount importance in Liberia.

EtC: What is your personal role in this?

MK: My personal role is to volunteer my services to the Women’s Development Association of Liberia (WODAL) and to assist them in undertaking activities geared towards the education of women, especially disadvantaged women.
EtC: What is the role of women’s organisations in women’s development?

MK: Women’s organisations play several roles in the context of women’s development. These include awarding scholarships at all levels of education, adult literacy and skills training, micro-credit, career counselling, advocacy, etc. A special fund for the education of girls has recently been established by the President, giving them the opportunity to study both in and outside of Liberia, mainly in the USA. Fifty girls are to benefit from the introductory scholarship and will study in various disciplines in the USA.

EtC: How significant is their policy influence?

MK: The policy influence of Liberian women’s organisations is very significant owing to the fact that women have established a critical mass over the past few years, especially during the civil conflict and at peace negotiations. They were very vocal on the issues of ceasefire, peace, disarmament and demobilisation. During the 2005 elections, the women of Liberia pushed for a 30% representation of women on the candidate lists of all political parties. This was subsequently incorporated into the electoral guidelines as a compulsory requirement for the registration of political parties.

EtC: As a member of the Women Waging Peace Network you recently attended a training course on women’s leadership. What was the course about?

MK: Women Waging Peace is a network of women campaigning for peace and security. The training course I attended was the Women in Power Executive Leadership programme at Harvard University. This programme is run by the Kennedy School’s Women’s Leadership Board and the Women’s Security Alliance and is held once a year to enhance the capacity of women in higher decision-making positions. The programme provides an opportunity for participants to address specific topics relevant to the challenges and opportunities they face. During the course we worked intensively with Howard faculty members and concentrated on financial management and leadership strategies, communication skills, personnel enhancement and networking as well as negotiation skills. My main reason for participating in the programme was to improve my capacity to design effective training programmes and to help me identify better strategies to deal effectively with the challenges I meet in my job. I also hoped that attending would help me to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and to contribute to the overall development of Liberia. During the course and through interaction with colleagues at Harvard I achieved far more than I had expected.

“The policy influence of Liberian women’s organisations is very significant owing to the fact that women have established a critical mass over the past few years, especially during the civil conflict and at peace negotiations. They were very vocal on the issues of ceasefire, peace, disarmament and demobilisation.”

EtC: Do you have any advice for female and male alumni concerning the link between peace, leadership and gender?

MK: My advice to my colleagues is that leadership is not about power; it is more about integration, networking, negotiation and open communication, especially in the case of countries emerging from conflict. Leadership is about totally committing ourselves to our task and re-narrating the self by adding values to whatever we do as well as internalising ourselves by assessing our strengths. By genuinely committing ourselves we bring out the good in other people around us. I think the link between peace, leadership and gender is that women in leadership positions tend to be more peaceful, democratic and participatory than men. At peace negotiating tables they are more objective and passionate about the plight of the victims of conflicts while being harsher in their evaluations.
A près avoir franchi les différentes étapes du recrutement (interview, examens médicaux), la nouvelle du succès m’avait été annoncée de manière quelque peu brutale du genre “quand es-ce que tu veux partir ?” La suite du message disait ceci : “notre souhait est que vous partiez le plus tôt possible !”


Deux semaines après la réception de la nouvelle de mon départ, j’ai débarqué à Abidjan, où des collègues m’ont accueilli et installé dans mon logement provisoire, car je devais être déployé à l’intérieur du pays. Au pas de course, formalités, brefs déplacements et déplacements ont alterné avec la procédure d’acquisition du matériel du travail. Au bout de dix huit jours, je suis finalement déployé à mon poste : Bouaké, capitale des ex-rebelles devenues Forces nouvelles, à la faveur des accords de Linas-Marcoussis.

Selon les termes de référence d’un fonctionnaire des droits de l’homme sur le terrain, mon mandat se résume en deux volets :


Ensuite, le volet promotion qui a trait à l’organisation des activités d’éducation et de sensibilisation sur les droits de l’homme, la paix et la tolérance à l’endroit des différents partenaires sur le terrain, l’assistance à la société civile y compris les organisations non gouvernementales (ONG) des droits de l’homme pour le monitoring des droits de l’homme et l’appui nécessaire dans le cadre de leur activités ; l’organisation de rencontres avec les ONG et les autres membres de la société civile pour des échanges d’informations sur la situation des droits de l’homme, la rédaction et la soumission des rapports journaliers, hebdomadaires, mensuels et autres.

Il faut noter que cette liste de tâches à accomplir n’est pas exhaustive, c’est d’ailleurs pourquoi elle contient une dernière “clause de style” qui dispose que le fonctionnaire des droits de l’homme “exécute toutes autres tâches recommandées par le Chef de la Division des droits de l’homme”.

Je dois dire que le quotidien d’un fonctionnaire chargé des droits de l’homme est fait d’enquêtes préliminaires sur des allégations de violations des droits de l’homme, de vérification d’informations et d’établissement des faits. Ce fonctionnaire visite également les cachots, les centres de détention ainsi que les lieux où les violations des droits de l’homme sont commises. Le fonctionnaire des droits de l’homme reçoit également les victimes et les témoins des violations des droits de l’homme. Dans les cas où l’état des victimes nécessite des soins médicaux, le fonctionnaire des droits de l’homme doit user de ses qualités de persévérance pour convaincre l’agent de santé, envahi par la peur de subir des représailles de...
la part de l’auteur de la violation, de les lui prodiguer. Le fonctionnaire des droits de l’homme doit, bien entendu, veiller à la protection de cet agent de santé qui pourrait être une victime potentielle pour avoir certifié la nature et la gravité d’une violation des droits de l’homme (la torture par exemple) en posant son diagnostic. Ce sont là tâches routinières en matière de protection et de documentation des violations des droits de l’homme.

En ce qui concerne la promotion des droits de l’homme, le fonctionnaire chargé des droits de l’homme profite de l’opportunité que lui offre les rencontres avec les autorités civiles, politiques, militaires voire religieuses pour faire passer le message de l’importance du respect des droits de l’homme, de la tolérance, de la justice sociale, de la lutte contre toutes les formes de discrimination etc. Le même message est adressé aux partenaires, locaux et internationaux, lors des rencontres plus ou moins formelles et au cours des sessions de formation et d’information sur les droits humains.

En effet, au terme de l’exposé d’un thème ou d’un sujet de formation, le débat se déroule à travers des questions et réponses ou au cours des travaux en atelier. Les questions délicates sont alors adressées à « l’expert » de l’ONU (c’est du moins la façon dont on me perçoit dans ces assemblées). Ces questions, comme on peut l’imaginer, ne se rapportent pas exclusivement aux droits de l’homme, elles débordent sur les sujets tels que les causes de conflits, le fonctionnement des institutions, l’interprétation des accords. Parfois, mon avis personnel est requis sur tel ou tel aspect du processus de paix que nous sommes appelé à accompagner en tant que mission des Nations Unies. Bien entendu, il est hors de question de donner mon avis personnel au risque d’enfreindre le code de conduite du casque bleu.

Il arrive parfois de faire ou de faire faire des interventions qui ne relèvent pas stricto sensu de mes termes de références : je peux citer entre autres celle de régler un conflit qui relève normalement du domaine de l’administration de la justice dans un contexte ou l’appareil judiciaire est inexistant, celle de trouver des moyens pour faire déboucher des égouts, ou encore l’exercice qui consiste à trouver les mots justes pour faire un discours à l’occasion de l’inauguration d’un centre de santé, du forage d’un point d’eau, ou encore d’expliquer tout simplement à ton interlocuteur que la mission de paix ne remplace pas l’administration de l’État. Chaque fois il faudra veiller à ce que le discours colle à la réalité du milieu et qu’il ne froisse pas la susceptibilité des populations ou de leurs dirigeants qui, dans leur ensemble, placent leur espoir dans la mission de paix en général, et dans votre personne, c’est-à-dire leur interlocuteur du moment. C’est ici que je fais appel à mes connaissances des cours suivis à l’IOB comme Anthropologie et Théorie politique, Maintien de la paix et Résolution des conflits, Droit et développement, Institutions du développement, Administration des pays en développement, pour ne citer que ceux là. Enfin, il n’est pas superflu de relever la composition multinationale de l’institut (à notre époque, outre les étudiants européens, les asiatiques et les sud américains côtoyaient leurs camarades de l’Afrique centrale et occidentale, en même temps que ceux du Maghreb). Il s’agissait d’une véritable Nations Unies en miniature qui m’avait préparé, sans que je m’en rende compte, à me baigner sans heurts au milieu multiculturel dans lequel j’exerce aujourd’hui. En somme, la formation multidisciplinaire à l’IOB m’a permis de développer une aptitude particulière à répondre aux exigences quasi quotidiennes de la fonction exaltante et stratégique qu’est celle du fonctionnaire des droits de l’homme, dans une mission de paix. Grâce à cette formation, mes collègues et mes supérieurs hiérarchiques me reconnaissent une compétence au travail que je n’aurais peut être pas acquise sans passer par une institution comme celle-ci. Il ne faut pas se lever non plus, tout n’est pas rose dans la vie d’un fonctionnaire des droits de l’homme. Cependant, je voudrais témoigner, à travers cet article, ma reconnaissance à tous ceux qui ont contribué à ma formation.

En janvier 2007, je suis passé de statut de volontaire des Nations Unies à celui de professionnel. Cerise sur le gâteau, j’ai été en même temps promu chef d’un bureau de terrain. Il s’agit, certes d’une promotion personnelle mais je la perçois comme celle de toutes les structures qui ont contribué, d’une manière ou d’une autre, à me former tant du point de vue théorique que pratique. En dédiant cette promotion à toutes ces structures, je voudrais renouveler ma disponibilité à partager mes expériences avec les professeurs, les anciens camarades de promotion à l’IOB, les anciens collègues de travail ainsi que les étudiants des promotions à venir.
For all that, the region is not in total despair since each country has unique problems that have to be solved differently. It cannot be denied that there are problems and there is a lot of work to be done. Yet, while the Pacific is facing enormous challenges, they are not on the scale of those we see in Africa. There has been a tendency to see the Pacific as descending into chaos as countries struggle with independence. However, their economies have grown and declined. A while ago, Samoa and Tonga were considered as desperate cases, but they have turned themselves around, showing signs of growth and development, and are relatively peaceful and prosperous now.

Democracy is rarely easy to implement, particularly in situations where people are confronted with considerable economic difficulties. Tonga is struggling with an internal move towards democracy, while countries like East Timor and French Polynesia are weakened by factionalism. Although each of these countries has specific problems, a feature which they share with Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands is that of a large population of young unemployed men with nothing to do and with few prospects.

Another problem, in addition to unemployment, is governance. Weaknesses with regard to governance, development and security manifest themselves in many ways in the Pacific – drugs, the proliferation of small arms, organised crime, people trafficking and smuggling, illegal fishing and compromised sovereignty. An example of this is the number of modern weapons that have found their way into the hands of people who should not have access to them. In Papua New Guinea, tribes are fighting with high-tech guns instead of traditional spears and in East Timor stores of military weapons tend to disappear, only to be used later against security forces.

Across the region, development assistance has become an increasingly important part of the diplomatic toolbox. New Zealand and Australia are putting aid dollars into trying to maintain peace and safeguard the future of Pacific countries, while military support has helped in many of the trouble spots. In 2006-2007, New Zealand committed NZD166 million via NZAID to address key Pacific development challenges. Australia has spent considerable sums on the Pacific, and other players such as the European Union, China, Japan and the United States are paying greater attention. The World Bank believes that countries such as Australia and New Zealand need to do more and advocates labour mobility as a means of solving the Pacific problems of isolation and limited opportunities. In essence, Pacific countries should be able to export their people and to treat remittances as income. While New Zealand has agreed to implementing a scheme to allow seasonal workers into the country, Australia is not moving on the issue.

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Pacific politics follow developments within society, as they do anywhere in the world. Democracy always needs to take into account local culture and local culture inevitably shapes the form that democracy will take. The countries in the Pacific have occasionally gathered to attempt to solve their problems. The Pacific Islands Forum recently defused a threat by the government of the Solomon Islands to get rid of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI), which is believed to be keeping the peace there. Whether such institutions as well as the powerhouses Australia and New Zealand can make a difference in the years to come remains to be seen. However, we should not take a pessimistic view of democracy in the Pacific. In Fiji, democracy will continue to be adversely affected by the existence of a strong military but another coup would not be the end of the world.

Thomas Gowa
(Governance and Development 2005)
Senior Programme Officer
Australian Agency for International Development
IOB and the Flemish Centre for International Policy

Since 2001 the Flemish government has recognised centres for policy-oriented research. Such centres consist of one or more research groups from one or more universities which collaborate in order to offer scientific support to the Flemish government. The main tasks of these centres are: scientific research concerning issues that are relevant for the Flemish government, knowledge transfer, data collection and data analysis.

In its decree of 12 May 2006 the Flemish Government redefined its approach to the financing of scientific research with regard to policy support and development. The focal objective is the establishment of policy research centres relating to 13 priority themes and areas of competence of the Flemish Community.

The Flemish Centre for International Policy is one of these centres and was established by an agreement (involving the period from 1 January 2007 until 31 December 2011) between, on the one hand, the Flemish government and, on the other hand, a consortium consisting of the University of Antwerp, the University of Ghent and the Free University of Brussels. In addition, the consortium has a partnership with ‘Clingendael’, the Netherlands Institute of International Relations in The Hague.

The foreign policy of a subnational state such as Flanders must anticipate developments in the international context of the European Union and the other players in world politics. The Flemish government needs insight into the most important social, political and economic developments of globalisation with a view to developing the most appropriate instruments for effective policy.

As a result, the FCIP will undertake a number of long-term projects with considerable relevance for the development of a fundamental Flemish foreign policy. There are four main research domains: (1) European and global relations, (2) Cultural diversity and subsidiarity, (3) Effects of globalisation, (4) Development cooperation and human rights. On the other hand, the FCIP will undertake some short-term projects in close consultation with the Flemish government. For example, a nine-month research project on the geopolitical role of South Africa will start in October.

The FCIP wants to develop data collection and data analysis and to determine policy indicators for the Flemish government. The FCIP also plans regular evaluations of the results and the effects of Flemish policy options and international programmes. The initiative is designed first and foremost to support the Flemish minister in question, Mr. Geert Bourgeois, and his administration with regard to the design and implementation of foreign policy.

The indirect beneficiaries include a wider circle of individuals, organisations and governments which may not benefit directly from the centre’s activities but which may nevertheless benefit from the successful performance of the centre through the sharing of experience, participation in workshops, publication and dissemination activities and many more.

Mission

In the long term the Flemish Centre for International Policy aims to:

- become the knowledge centre par excellence for the study of Flemish foreign policy, the foreign policy and the international legal position of non-state entities and the special role that these can play in the field of development co-operation (bilateral, European and multilateral);
- develop activities of scientific assistance, such as the organisation of seminars, training programmes for the government and for Flemish representatives and foreign diplomats;
- be a think-tank by stimulating reflection on Flemish foreign policy through the organisation of symposia and conferences for the general public;
- grow into an information centre via the development of databases, a website and a yearbook.

The Belgian federal structure is quite unique in the world. As a result of the agreement known as the Sint-Michielsakkoord (1993), the Flemish government became competent for foreign policy in all domains where it already had competence at the Flemish level. This principle is called ‘in foro interno, in foro externo’. For the Flemish government to be able to develop a comprehensive and integrated foreign policy, it must have a clear overview of Flanders’ external relations. In addition, the various Councils of Ministers of the European Union are increasingly prescribing the obligations of the various EU states. This is called ‘the internalisation of foreign policy’. The scope of the field is characterised by the wide variety of project themes. Moreover, the study of foreign policy is itself interdisciplinary in nature since it impacts on various other fields of competence / research areas. This is why the the Flemish Centre for International Policy has opted for the challenge of a broad and multidisciplinary approach to the study of international policy and development co-operation.

Dr. Annick Schramme, Director FCIP
As an African who has been living in Europe for several years, the ongoing international debate on the impact of migration, remittances and brain drain on developing countries is of particular importance to me. For me, development is a process that is meant to improve the quality of life of people in developing countries. They should feel the impact of this process in their daily lives. Development should go beyond economic growth and poverty reduction. It should result in broad and equitable access to food, work, education, healthcare and leisure. Every individual has a role to play in contributing to this process, both in his/her private life and in the public arena. This is our responsibility as human beings, even though one person’s individual impact is not easily perceived and the opportunity to play an active role will not necessarily arise.

I studied at the University of Antwerp’s IOB in the hope that my studies would enable me to secure a job that would contribute to the development of my country, Ghana. Following jobs with international development NGOs and consultancy work with international organisations, I feel that I have been able to contribute in a small way to the quest for sustainable development in Africa. However, as one who has settled in Belgium, I am also conscious of the damage that the brain drain of university graduates from Africa has inflicted on the continent.

The statistics on African migration to developing countries are startling: it is estimated that, excluding African students who leave to study abroad, up to 70,000 highly qualified Africans leave their home countries every year. According to the UN’s Economic Commission for Africa and the International Organisation for Migration, there are 30,000 Africans with PhDs living outside the continent. Very often, these thousands of well-trained Africans, including lawyers and doctors, are reduced to doing menial jobs in developed countries. African countries now spend an estimated USD 4 billion annually to recruit about 100,000 skilled expatriates. It does not take much to see how damaging this process has been for Africa. The health sector has been particularly hard hit in some countries. As Africa continues to ‘lead’ world figures in child mortality rates, doctors and nurses continue to pour out of the continent. According to the Ghanaian government, in the 1999-2004 period 54 % of the doctors trained in these five years left to work abroad. There is, however, a more positive side to migration, i.e. remittances. In 2006, the World Bank estimated that the total amount of recorded remittance flows amounted to about USD 167 billion. In Africa the amount of money remitted by diaspora workers is estimated at between USD 17-45 billion per year. This is more than the amount of foreign direct investment to the continent and may exceed official development assistance - USD 25 billion per year. In some African nations, remittances represent as much as 27 % of the gross domestic product. It goes without saying that remittances are now considered as an important part of the development and poverty reduction equation.

Many development analysts still hold the view that this flow of resources does not adequately compensate for the social costs and adverse effects on developing economies resulting from the outflow of skilled personnel from many developing
A better understanding of the potential of skilled migrants to contribute towards development in their home countries has led the UN to support the establishment of numerous so-called expatriate knowledge networks around the world, with the explicit purpose of interconnecting expatriates with their country of origin.

In my view, an important contribution to the development of diaspora programmes and knowledge networks could be made by international programmes in development studies and their alumni associations. Over the years, the University of Antwerp’s IOB has attracted and trained hundreds of skilled migrants from developing countries. Its alumni association could help connect many of its skilled graduates still living in Belgium and in other developed countries with other graduates from developing countries who have returned home with a view to exploring how these graduates could foster development in their countries. The University, with the help of its graduates from developing countries, could also devote some of its research capacity to examining how migration and remittances could optimally benefit development. Such an exercise could be beneficial not only for developing countries but also for some of the highly-skilled graduates from developing countries who are struggling to make the most of their skills in the job market in Belgium. Let’s think about this...
In September we shall say goodbye to Filip Reyntjens (FR), the current chairman of IOB, and welcome Robrecht Renard (RR) as the new chairman.

Time to sit down together and talk about the role of chairman and the place of IOB at international level.

Filip, what will be your feelings when you leave?
FR: I’ll be happy (laughs)! It was a very interesting but tough job because over these years IOB has seen many changes. And we can’t put our feet up yet. For example, we have new programmes that have to be implemented during the next academic year. The administrative structure is also quite complex. I’m pretty happy about what the institute has achieved thanks to all the people who work here and I’ll be very happy to hand things over to Robrecht. I think that almost seven years of being chairman is enough.

Robrecht, what will your priorities as chairman be?
RR: Well, this was not a traditional election in which voters were able to choose between significantly different policies. I therefore feel, just as my predecessor does, that I only have a mandate to implement consensual policies in an open manner and with everyone’s full participation. As regards content IOB has become an important player and we have to build on this success. We are heading towards a phase of consolidation. Consolidation doesn’t mean that you stop what you’re doing and are content with what you have accomplished. While many recently decided reforms still have to be implemented, we shall indeed be exploring new ideas. In terms of education, we are about to launch a new master’s programme. Although this is not a personal achievement of mine, I shall be implementing it and ensuring that it runs smoothly. One point that I would like to pay particular attention to is the improved integration of the various education products that we are currently offering or may offer in the future, such as our short-term training courses and distance training. Bringing people all the way to Antwerp from different continents rather than offering better local training is something that must be justified. We can only cater for a highly selective group because of the high cost of such programmes. The market for distance learning is evolving so we will have to ask ourselves what mix of educational products we should offer. We should also seriously consider regional education.

What accomplishments are you particularly proud of?
FR: Firstly, the institute itself! This was not a given. When we started we had to bring together different company cultures. This was a major achievement for everybody at the institute.
Secondly, IOB is now firmly on the European map thanks to the fact that we have been able to bring together previously dispersed expertise and increasingly to obtain financial means. We don’t have to be a large institute to be a visible player at the European level.
What is the role of a chairman?
FR: I would say that he or she is a facilitator, someone who keeps the ball rolling. I always wondered, “If I don’t do it, who will?” And if there’s no answer to that question, you have to do it yourself. You needn’t do everything but you have to keep things moving. That’s why I use the word “facilitator”. A chairman in this institute may not be an enlightened despot, because things don’t work without involving other people. It has to be a horizontal organisation. The staff work very hard because they want to. You can’t force them. It takes time and it’s costly to involve people as much as possible but it’s the only way to make this institute work. People have to be happy. And we need their experience. So the main job of the chair is to keep everybody on board and to defend the institute’s interests at the bureaucratic and policy levels. This requires a lot of time and an assertive attitude.

RR: Universities in Belgium are bureaucratic. A chairman can’t act as a company manager who can hire and fire people as he wishes and has sole responsibility for his policies. Nevertheless, there’s room for manoeuvre. This institute is still young; it’s expanding and there’s room for creative thinking about how we are going to use the space that is becoming available. A chairman can at least ask the question, “What do we want to focus on?” In addition to what Filip has said, I think a chairman should think more about the long term, beyond what’s happening now, and be aware of the challenges that we might face and try to move the institution in a consensual manner towards a way of dealing with those challenges.

How do you combine all these responsibilities with your own research?
FR: The quality of my research isn’t what it was eight years ago because I hardly have time to write new things. Basically, I’m often recycling former work. That’s why I have asked for a sabbatical year because it’s necessary to keep in touch with the field. As chairman, everything is always more important than research. You can always postpone research but you can’t postpone the institute’s administrative jobs. However, if by paying that >>
price you give your staff time to focus on their own research, it’s worth it. The staff feel pretty relaxed because they know that the institute is being taken care of so they don’t have to worry all the time.

RR: This is the sacrifice that comes with being chairman. You reduce the research time of one person in order to leave other staff more time for their research. This delegation of tasks is necessary in order to improve collective research time. Having said that, I don’t want to become completely disconnected from the research that my team is carrying out. It’s very important to keep in touch with current research as a chairman.

FR: Exactly, the institute’s core business is research and education so as chairman, you must not become a bureaucrat otherwise you can’t properly protect its interests anymore.

What does IOB stand for? And what should it stand for?
FR: In terms of research we have identified four themes: Aid Policy, Political Economy of the Great Lakes Region, Poverty and Well-being as Institutional Process, Impact of Globalisation. In these fields we have a great deal of expertise and we have achieved international recognition. However, we still need to become more visible and improve even further in these domains.

RR: One of our advantages is that we are in Belgium, i.e. at the crossroads of two different intellectual cultures, namely the Anglophone and the Francophone cultures. IOB has a long tradition of teaching in both languages and consequently we have many links with research in both cultures. Even if we’re not going to continue teaching in both languages at the same level, we’ll still be interested in both cultures. We also have a particular interest in what’s happening in Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America. This provides us with horizontal input from different types of intellectual cultures and geographical areas. At the same time we have to specialise and that’s why we have formed our four theme groups. What we should do is further increase our expertise in these domains and identify ourselves more with these areas.

FR: We need to be more attractive at international level. We already have the advantage of being able to offer 30 scholarships every year. We have to promote ourselves better and demonstrate clearly that we are among the best in the world in these four fields. We should also become more of an international institute in terms of staff. However, this is not always easy in a context where Dutch has to be used at all bureaucratic levels. Legally speaking, you have to at least understand Dutch to be a member of the board.

RR: In addition, we aren’t internationally competitive in terms of pay owing to educational regulations. However, if we promote our attractiveness in other fields, this should not be an issue. It will be interesting to learn how other institutes promote themselves.

How important are alumni for IOB?
RR: I think they’re very important given the fact that we operate at international level. They’re not only a major source of advertising but also a major source of feedback. We can only adapt our programmes if we know what students need. Has the education we provided helped alumni in their careers? Can we collaborate with them on short-term courses or distance learning? Having alumni reflect on these issues will help us to decide on the best way forward. Listening to alumni is a good way to keep in touch with reality.

FR: I agree. I think we haven’t been as successful as we could have been in terms of collaborating with our alumni.

What I think we should do is ask some alumni to come over here in the context of a course or organise some form of contact somewhere in a region. We should make our alumni network more effective and we have to learn from the experience of other institutes. Our alumni are experts in specific fields and their input could be of great value to IOB.

Filip Reyntjens

They are a fantastic resource. We have about 800 students from 40 countries with whom we keep in touch. Exchange to Change is one of the tools to foster this relationship. I have also tried to set up regional sections but they didn’t seem to come off the ground. I think students need other ways. We need to be able to keep in touch in a more structural way than simply through Yahoo groups in order to progress as a development institute. What I think we should do is ask some alumni to come over here in the context of a course or organise some form of contact somewhere in a region. We should make our alumni network more effective and we have to learn from the experience of other institutes. Our alumni are experts in specific fields and their input could be of great value to IOB.

RR: Exactly. If possible, I would like to experiment with distance learning with our alumni. Offer them a kind of refresh-up regional sections but they didn’t seem to come off the ground. I think students need other ways. We need to be able to keep in touch in a more structural way than simply through Yahoo groups in order to progress as a development institute. What I think we should do is ask some alumni to come over here in the context of a course or organise some form of contact somewhere in a region. We should make our alumni network more effective and we have to learn from the experience of other institutes. Our alumni are experts in specific fields and their input could be of great value to IOB.

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What is development? And what is development co-operation?

FR: Of course, these are two different concepts. Development is the evolution towards a situation where people’s lives are improved. It’s about well-being, which is a complex feeling. Development co-operation is everything that can contribute to this process. I am becoming increasingly sceptical about development co-operation. Actually, we don’t call it co-operation anymore, but aid. We have a theme group called ‘Aid Policy’. My way of looking at the issue is political and has been informed by profound conflicts, especially in my area of study, the Great Lakes Region. Development is change. Inducing change from outside is extremely difficult. Look at Palestine – an absolute disaster. We, the West, the donor community, are in favour of democracy. They elect the “wrong guys” and then we decide that we won’t help them any longer. Surely there is something profoundly wrong with that. I don’t want to sound too pessimistic but if you look at things from the angle of political development – part of well-being is political development, like freedom of speech, participation, safety – donor-driven democracy doesn’t work. Development is an elusive aim.

RR: Development is all about enhancing human capabilities. This goes beyond subjective elements of well-being because these are difficult to define. Objective standards are crucial when attempting to define development. As for the theme group on Aid Policy – which is my area – we didn’t name our team ‘Development Co-operation’, because this is donor talk. We called it Aid Policy because the policy of aid is about giving, which immediately creates a very unbalanced relationship. Whatever donors say, aid is a top-down relationship. It is, by definition, a donor-driven relationship. Interestingly, the perception of development co-operation is slowly changing in the West. It’s no longer a moral imperative in the sense that “we are human beings and we have to help each other out of solidarity”. No, the perception now is that development in the South is in our own best interests in the long term because of the threats of climate change, migration, terrorism, diseases. The lack of development in the South is the major threat to our overall well-being in the long term. We need it for our own survival. This offers interesting and far more balanced perspectives because we need each other. That’s real co-operation: development co-operation based on effectively securing one’s own future through the future of others. This provides IOB with a solid basis for exchanges with people from the South. Robrecht Renard

RR: It isn’t the West versus the South anymore. Increasingly, new major players are arriving on the scene, such as China, India or non-state players. So I think the time of morally-driven aid is over. We’re in a new game. As a development institute we are not the soft side of the university or of foreign policy; our concern is international survival. Understanding development in an international context is becoming increasingly important. IOB is part of this knowledge building and sharing.

FR: Why do we – by ‘we’ I mean the West – make this enormous effort not only in terms of money but also in terms of lives? Not because we like the Afghans or the Arabs so much but because we know that it is also a threat to us to have rudderless societies and black holes there. It’s not just terrorism, it’s also drugs, money laundering, weapons. We like to control these things. We don’t have a problem with weapons, we have a problem with weapons that we can’t control. The US is the largest arms producer and trader in the world. This explains our concerns about Somalia, Lebanon, Iraq, Central Africa, etc.; we simply don’t like black holes.

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Life after IOB

What projects are our alumni engaged in after their Master’s at IOB?

There are very unpredictable answers to this question.

Franklin Amato (Governance and Development 2004-2005) was granted US citizenship last year after having served with the US Army in Iraq.

Here is his story:

“I arrived in the United States on the 10th of October, 2005, immediately after having completed my studies in Belgium. I was granted an immigrant visa by the US Embassy in Brussels by virtue of having been selected for the US Diversity Visa Programme. This is a programme run by the US State Department whereby a certain number of immigrant visas are granted to nationals from developing countries in Africa, Eastern and Central Europe, Asia, the Caribbean and South America. What makes the whole scheme more interesting is that it is organised in the form of a lottery in which applicants are selected on a random basis. The winners are then informed that they are required to undergo further processing at the nearest US Embassy or Consulate. During this time, their educational, medical and possible criminal backgrounds are evaluated with a view to determining their eligibility for entry into the US. If the consular officer is satisfied a visa will be issued. If he is not, a visa will be denied. As a result, the fact that a person has been nominated does not necessarily mean that he or she will be issued a visa.

As soon as I arrived in the US, my mind went into full gear to determine how best to integrate into society. I finally decided to join the US Army. My decision to join the army was influenced by several factors. The first is that I wanted to thank America for opening its doors to me. When I set foot on American soil, I knew I had put behind me a life of poverty, frustration and deprivation and was now faced with a life full of opportunities, hope and freedom. Secondly, joining the army would enable me to acquire my citizenship very quickly, that is within a year. Otherwise I would have to wait for at least five years. Thirdly, a job in the army has several benefits; you get a regular pay check every fortnight, free medical and dental care for the soldier and his or her family, an educational package, life insurance and several other benefits which are unavailable in the civilian world. The army might not make you filthy rich, but it will make you comfortably off. Fourthly, I felt that the army would offer me the opportunity to prove my manhood. I originally come from Ghana in West Africa. This is a very macho and male-oriented society where men earn respect and recognition by taking bold and socially inspired decisions. Joining the army therefore would elevate my status and social standing as a man.

Providing information with regard to joining the army is a task assigned to the US Army branch of recruiters. They are expected to tell you everything about the army and what is required of a prospective soldier. My recruiter took me to the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) at Fort Meade, near Baltimore, Maryland. After going through the necessary entrance procedures, which included taking an academic test in Maths, English Language, Mechanics, General Science as well as a medical examination, I was flown to the US Army Artillery Training Center at Fort Sill, Oklahoma to begin my training. Training in the US Army is divided...
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into two parts, each about two months long. The first is called Basic Combat Training (BCT). As the name suggests, this is where you learn the basic skills of soldiering. This is the most stressful and intense part of the whole training. This is where we were taught basic rifle marksmanship, hand-to-hand combat, drills and ceremony, US Army values and code of conduct, tactical road marches, basic combat techniques, physical exercise, first-aid, many survival techniques in combat and above all, discipline. The second part of the training is called Advanced Individual Training (AIT). This is where soldiers learn their Military Occupational Specialties (MOS). My MOS was Field Artillery, code-named 13 BRAVO in US military terminology.

In the US army military training is provided by Drill Sergeants. They are the most skilled and professional soldiers I have ever known. They are ‘universal soldiers’ who are skilled in almost every facet of the military profession. They are experts in physical training, drills, weapons handling, hand-to-hand combat and maintenance of discipline. They are physically very fit. They hardly sleep and yet they never lack the energy and motivation necessary to accomplish a task. Above all, they are the funniest and most humorous people I have ever known. Military training was hard, stressful and at times very depressing but at the same time it can be interesting and invigorating. The US army frowns on and has zero tolerance for racial prejudice, sexual harassment and the use of illegal drugs. Punishment for these offences under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) is very severe.

At our graduation, friends and relatives attended and this day was one of the proudest days in my life. At our graduation ceremony, one of our Drill Sergeants advised us to be ‘mentally prepared to fly east’. This simply meant that we should be prepared to deploy either to Iraq or Afghanistan. After graduation I was posted to the 4th Infantry Division, 42nd Field Artillery Battalion at Fort Hood, Texas as my first duty station.

On arrival at Fort Hood, I realised that the unit I was about to join was already serving in Iraq. Preparations were therefore immediately initiated for me to join them. On the 12th of May 2006, I embarked on my journey to Iraq in order to start fulfilling my obligations as a soldier to my new country. The journey was a long but a comfortable one. We left from Fort Hood Airfield by a commercial airliner and flew to Bangor International Airport in Maine. From there we flew to Shannon Airport in Ireland and later to Kuwait City International Airport. Under heavy armed escort we then took a bus to Ali al Salem Air Base where we took a US Air Force transport plane popularly known as the C-130 to Baghdad Airport in Iraq. From there we flew by helicopter to Taji, a town about 10 km north of Baghdad. This was our permanent base. My unit was tasked to provide security for the base and its immediate surrounding areas. This involved manning all the access and exit points at the base as well as several observation towers surrounding the base. Our stay in Iraq was basically uneventful except on the 18th of August 2006, when my roommate, Cpl. Russell Makowski was killed by an improvised explosive device when on regular patrol around the base. This period was very depressing for me because he was a very good soldier and much liked by everyone. This incident also opened my eyes to the fact that people can make the ultimate sacrifice in the service of their country.

On 28th August, 2006 I was granted US citizenship at Camp Anaconda, Baghdad, Iraq. At the ceremony, the officer in charge praised us for serving our country and added that if there is any category of people who deserve US citizenship, it was us because we were willing to bear arms and fight for a country of which we were not yet citizens. This was another proud day in my life because I was now a citizen of the most powerful nation on earth, the United States of America, and had earned the right to enjoy all the privileges, rights and protection that come with citizenship. My stay in Iraq has also made me understand the problems and the dynamics influencing events in that country. I am of the opinion that Iraq is a beautiful country with charming and peace-loving people, and that the many negative events we see on TV do not reflect the totality of what Iraq actually is. The insurgents, the terrorists and the killers are a small minority. Most Iraqis are kind and straightforward people who just want to carry on with their lives in peace. I therefore hope that every effort will be made by the international community to bring peace and stability to the country.”

Franklin Amato, Fort Hood, Texas
An important weakness identified in many of these countries is their inability to consistently monitor projects and programmes. This weakness typically makes it difficult for problems/challenges and bottlenecks to be identified during implementation, which is necessary to ensure timely remedies that will ensure the survival and success of the project/programmes.

It is clear that in many developing countries the majority of politicians and public servants do not understand the concepts of monitoring and evaluation. In many situations, these politicians and public servants confuse monitoring with supervisory activities, such as routine visits to project sites. In most cases, project leaders from the various ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) in these states routinely follow age-old working patterns, thus failing to adapt to the changing times and to the need to apply new and improved strategies. These project leaders often attach significant importance to planning and implementation but fail to make a critical analysis of their strategies beforehand so as to ensure that the appropriate approaches are adopted. Furthermore, the attainability of the expected outcomes is often not carefully thought through.

In view of the above observation, I fully support the opportunities that IOB provides to enhance the capacity of scholars from selected developing countries. Over the years, this institution has trained a large number of development practitioners from many different countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia. The wide-ranging benefits created by the IOB programmes are evidenced by the contributions that alumni have made to development processes in the various countries where they are located.

The majority of IOB graduates are currently occupying key positions in the development arena. Predictably, some of the alumni have risen to occupy strategic and influential positions in their country of origin or in international organisations. Obviously, the achievements, experience and lessons learnt by such individuals can help strengthen IOB programmes over time.

This short summary is an attempt to encourage a discussion on the possible ways in which IOB can be strengthened so that its name and what it stands for will be respected well beyond the borders of Belgium and IOB will become a model institution for others to emulate.

To ensure its continued relevance, the institute has to improve the process of incorporating the feedback and experience of its alumni into its planning and training programmes. Below are a few examples of ways in which this can be done:

1. Periodic organisation of alumni sessions (regional and general) involving all alumni or alumni from selected regions.
2. Identifying experienced alumni and involving them in conferences, short courses or seminars.
3. Promoting in-depth discussions via the internet. For instance, the e-groups should be strengthened to make it more effective and interesting. Moreover, other internet-based forums should be created to enhance group discussions.

In my opinion, the alumni can make a considerable contribution to making IOB the leading development institution in Europe as well as the institution of choice for developing countries. I would like to call upon all alumni to rise to the clarion call and keep the flame of IOB burning.

Let’s talk again.

Kwabena Agyei Boakye
(Project Evaluation and Management - 2001)
Evidence Based Policy Making Programme
Office of the President
Ghana
Henry Mbawa (28), Sierra Leone
Governance and Development

“R”ecently we had a discussion in class about freedom of speech. I believe that as responsible citizens, we should find a sensible equilibrium with regard to exercising our freedom of speech. Academics and also journalists have a duty to themselves and to the general public in that they should ensure that, in a multicultural setting, freedom of speech should not endanger the peaceful and harmonious co-existence of the many groups that make up a society. We have a responsibility to reduce, not to fuel tribal or nationalist tensions. I assume that responsibility whenever I can.

My country, Sierra Leone, is facing a post-conflict situation of democratic institution building and socio-economic reconstruction. Thanks to my degree in Political Science and my experience in running the National Union of Students in Sierra Leone, I was soon offered a job with the Campaign for Good Governance (which still plays a key role in ensuring democratic good governance) in Sierra Leone. I spent some time at CGG doing advocacy work and keeping the young democratically elected government on the straight and narrow of democracy and preventing it from sliding back into dictatorship.

A year later I realised that another way to help sustain our young democracy was to join the newly established Governance Reform Secretariat responsible for Public Service Reform. Here I was intensely involved in the task of putting back on track a civil service that had been complicit in the decade-long civil war but was at the same time a victim of its terror. We needed to review the mandates, structures, organisation and staffing of Ministries, Departments and Agencies in line with new, democratic priorities - a tough job in an institution that cherished the old ways of doing business.

As in most post-conflict countries, our democratisation process goes hand in hand with a decentralisation process, which is regarded as a means to achieving both increased democratic good governance and rapid post-conflict economic reconstruction since it will bring government closer to the people and will raise the level of local participation, which is a must if services are to be improved and local accountability enhanced. But decentralisation and all it entails is not having a smooth ride in Sierra Leone. Because our decentralisation process aims to be democratic it is thwarted by the age-old institution of chieftaincy. The chiefs are not publicly elected but have immense power and influence regarding issues such as local natural resource management. Of course everyone knows Sierra Leone for its minerals, in the first place its diamonds. Newly elected councils believe that the industry falls within their remit and they should therefore have exclusive control not only over its management but also over all forms of local revenue generation. Democracy entitles them to this privilege. But according to chiefs and some other Sierra Leoneans this demand is not fuelled by democracy but simply constitutes an attack on the country’s cherished traditions. This growing suspicion and misunderstanding between chiefs and elected local councils in my country has induced me to further explore the debate in my dissertation. I think it is important to highlight the problem before it gets out of control and has to be solved by Western consultants.

The opportunity to exchange ideas has been the key asset of the master’s programme for me. In particular, trying to find solutions for major governance and development problems in the Third World with colleagues from various cultural and academic backgrounds has sometimes made me feel as if I was at the UN. However, I regret that we had too little time for non-academic activities, such as sport. Sport not only helps to fight obesity, but also to overcome the sense of isolation and the homesickness characteristic of foreign students. It promotes active communication. Although my contacts were wide-ranging, I would have liked to establish closer contact with Belgians. This would not only have helped me to understand Flemish culture better, but also Flanders itself. My only Belgian fellow student (Guillaume) has become a true friend. After all these months I still do not know the Belgium of ordinary Belgians. I do not even have a clear opinion on it!”
It is often said that only 35 per cent of communication consists of the spoken message and no less than 65 per cent of body language. Well, Natalia is living proof of this theory! Her hands, her eyes, her face, even her feet talk and express an opinion. “I am like a machine, always moving and working.” She surely is!

Moreover, the exchange of ideas with other students from different backgrounds and with diverse perceptions is extremely enriching. I have noticed that African and Asian cultures are much more collective than mine. In Colombia conflict has undermined confidence and mutual trust, which has resulted in a fragmented society. Trust is a key word in development, not only because it reduces transaction costs but also because it acts as a catalyst for social cohesion and economic growth. After many difficult years committed national and regional governments have given the Colombian people a renewed sense of trust. This has triggered human investment and as a result more tourism and foreign direct investment, leading to more development. Colombia is changing now. It is opening up and people feel confident enough to make long-term investments.

Networking is another keyword in the context of development. Trust and networking go hand in hand. They facilitate negotiations and access to resources. Networking is also one of the reasons why I decided to study for my Master’s abroad. I wanted to widen my horizons and establish relationships with people from diverse countries, cultures and backgrounds, but who shared a common aim: to contribute to development! I do believe that a strong alumni network benefits all of us. IOB should facilitate this. At the moment we are students preparing ourselves for challenging career paths. I am sure that in the future we will become leaders in our spheres of action and will help each other by sharing experiences of successful practices in different countries. When I have achieved my goal, I would love to come back to IOB as a guest speaker and inspire new students!

She punches the air, eyes shining, and laughs: ‘I am so much looking forward to resuming work! My head is cramful of ideas. Latin America, get ready for some real action!’
A TASTE OF “DUTCHLAND”!

STUDENT TRIP

“Dutchland” was our destination on a beautiful, sunny day in May. You might wonder where Dutchland is. Well, it is the beloved country of the Dutch. They speak Dutch, but their country is referred to as The Netherlands or Holland. And they have sweet pancakes for dinner – yes, funny people indeed. IOB students from 19 different countries were curious to see what Dutchland is like. So on the 31st of May, we set off in a coach, 46 good-humoured students all geared up for a one-day tour of the province of Zuid-Holland.

First stop: Kinderdijk, a small village known for its 19 windmills that date back to the 17th century. All of the students were surprised by the calmness and the attractive scenery of the place. We visited one of the windmills and were told about the importance of the windmills for water management in The Netherlands. Many of us were surprised to hear that about 30 per cent of The Netherlands is situated below sea-level. A windmill in Dutchland is not complete without a Dutch miller on Dutch clogs, or wooden shoes, and there he was – on his odd-looking Dutch bike! Unfortunately, he had to disappoint us because there was not enough wind to operate the windmill that day.

Second stop: Scheveningen, Holland’s most famous beach. It took an hour’s drive, some of it in the rain, but when we got off the bus the Dutch version of Utopia stretched out before our eyes: a golden beach and a sunny blue sky! We enjoyed a tasty lunch on the beach although some students who had never seen the sea before were too excited to think about food. Two students even braved the cold sea water and took a swim!

Last stop: The historic city of Delft. Here two city guides showed us the “New Church”, the canals and some beautifully preserved buildings and then took us through quaint little alleys. Of course, we all enjoyed the free time we were given to further explore the city on our own. Afterwards we had dinner together at a pancake restaurant in the centre. The owners faced the daunting task of having to prepare a three-course meal for 46 people in 1½ hours. The students, hungry and tired, did not mind the speed with which the courses were served. The Dutch-style pancakes were wolfed down in no time.

On the way back to Antwerp we looked back on a beautiful day during which the sun had appeared in all its glory at just the right time. And lo and behold, at that very moment, the heavens broke and the rain started coming down in buckets. Satisfied we all ensconced ourselves in our seats. Windmills, canals, pancakes and the sea: a successful mix for a visit to the country we named Dutchland. We warmly recommend it!

Jessica Hartog & Karin Wilms, ‘The Dutchlanders’

FAMILY NEWS

Quang Nguyen (DEM 2004-2005) and his wife Minh share with us their joy and happiness on the occasion of the birth of their little princess. Ngoc Khanh safely came into the world at 1:50 am on 4th June, 2007. She weighed 3.84 kg and was 50 cm long.

Born on May 14th: Era! Daughter of Filip De Maesschalck (EGD, 2006)
IOB’s new premises: the main patio
IOB’s new premises: a cloister indeed
Practical information on IOB:
Master programmes:
1 Globalisation and Development
2 Governance and Development in Sub-Sahara Africa
3 Development Evaluation and Management
More information can be found on the institute’s website:
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