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International
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International Development Department

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Annual Report 2022–24
School of Government

60th
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special edition



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Welcome to IDD's 2022–24 annual report



Welcome to the 60th Anniversary version of the International Development Department Report! Wherever in the world you are reading this and whatever your connection with IDD, I hope that you and your loved ones are safe and happy. There has been much change at IDD over the past few years – as so in the world – so we hope you enjoy this year's bumper Report, covering 2023 and 2024, our 60th Anniversary Report! And remember, we always love hearing from former students, friends, and colleagues, so please do not hesitate to get in touch with your own news and stories.

May you live in interesting times

It has been – and continues to be – an extraordinary time for the world. Having come through a once in a lifetime (we hope, but do not assume!) global pandemic, we are confronted again by the problems that never went away: of growing global inequality, debt, geopolitics and conflict, authoritarianism and populism and of course the existential threat of the climate crisis and deep unknowns of what artificial intelligence will bring. Almost sixty years since IDD was established it is striking that the questions we ask as students of international development are only getting more, not less, relevant to understanding the human condition.

This is the first IDD Annual Report after several years of upheaval. I wanted to note a very personal as well as professional thanks to Jonathan Fisher for his wonderful leadership as IDD's Head of Department from 2019–2022 – a staggeringly difficult and turbulent period. He led with determination and care. He inherited a department with excellent foundations thanks to Fiona Nunan. And, extraordinarily, despite the challenges of COVID-19 IDD is not only surviving, but is positively thriving. I also want to thank Jonathan and Merisa Thompson for their effort, time, and skill in putting this report together.

Research that matters

In this report you will read about the many and diverse activities and initiatives that IDD colleagues, students and alumni have been doing. I'm proud to see just how much of this work is right at the cutting edge of ongoing debates – and indeed actively shaping them. Please do read of Emily Scott's work on localization; Kailing Xie's '#MeToo in China' exhibition; Sameen Ali's Education, Justice, and Memory Network (EdJAM) project, and many more!

IDD: a wonderfully vibrant and diverse place to be

IDD remains a wonderfully vibrant and diverse place to study and teach. IDD is so lucky in terms of our students, whom we consistently enjoy teaching, learning from, saying goodbye to after graduation, and staying in touch with afterwards. At the postgraduate level, across our Masters, MPA, and distance learning options we have over four hundred students each year. But, and this is something I want to underline, I know that they get a highly personalised and attentive experience during their year here thanks to the personal tutoring system and the opportunities provided while here, including the MPA study tour to Dubai, France, or Berlin (this year). Which is seamlessly led by Adrian Campbell and Elena Denezhkina.

Our undergraduate programme goes from strength to strength. In this report, Claire McLoughlin tells us all about the first undergraduate study tour to Bosnia and Herzegovina – a beautiful and fascinating country that has much to teach us about post-conflict reconstruction and development.

Farewells

We said goodbye to two wonderful long serving colleagues recently – Robert Leurs and Philip Amis – who both retired after long and distinguished careers. We also said goodbye and good strength to Ellie Chowns who was elected as the Green Party MP for North Herefordshire! And finally, we were also sorry to hear about two incredibly loved and valued former IDD colleagues passing away recently: Linda Curry and Ken Davey. I thank Donald Curtis and Paul Jackson, respectively, for being so kind as to share their fond and precious memories with us. Thank you.

Please enjoy the report and stay in touch.

David Hudson
Head of Department

Marking IDD's 60th Anniversary and The Politics of Development book launch

Dr Merisa Thompson and Professor David Hudson reflect on IDD's 60th anniversary and the series of events held in 2024 to celebrate the milestone

In 2024, IDD celebrated its Diamond Anniversary with a year-long series of activities, including a celebratory event and launch of our flagship *The Politics of Development* textbook, a 60th anniversary book poster exhibition and a special anniversary seminar series.

IDD was founded in 1964, emerging from two coinciding areas of work: research on local government in the West Midlands (focused on the characteristics of local councillors) and efforts to strengthen local administrative capacity in (what was then termed) 'Third World challenges', initially in Sudan and India. Following fundraising efforts involving the UK Government's Department of Technical Cooperation, Barbara Castle, The Ford Foundation, and the British Council, the University's Vice Chancellor and Senate agreed to establish what was originally called the Institute of Local Government studies, opening on January 1, 1964. The new institute delivered training to newly independent, post-colonial, public administrators, initially via a 12-week course at Winterbourne House. Reflecting on this history, we now see this as marking a particular post-colonial moment in time.

While public administration and government remain central to our teaching and research, IDD has also evolved. Today, we are known for our focus on governance and politics across many different issues and sectors, from gender inclusion, disability, conflict and security, the environment, food, health, and institutions and democracy. Our work is now more global in scope, taking a more universal perspective, with a critical emphasis on inequalities of power and the enduring impacts of colonialism.

These shifts are highlighted in the special 60th anniversary IDD poster exhibition curated by Dr Philip Amis, showcasing key IDD publications over the decades.

IDD's reputation also stems from our strong engagement with policy and practice. We collaborate with the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

(FCDO) through seconded positions and advisory roles, serving on boards of major NGOs like Oxfam, and advise philanthropic foundations and local civil society groups. This close collaboration allows us to ensure that our research addresses real-world challenges, identified with and by stakeholders, who are also actively involved in co-designing and co-producing research and outcomes.

A major part of our anniversary year was reflecting on our future direction. As a Global North-based development studies department, we must consider (and are considering) our role, global partnerships, and the divisions of thought and labour between the North and South, including what authentic partnership means. It requires humility, a commitment to shifting power, and continued challenge to conventional notions of development.

In April 2024, we marked our anniversary with a special event co-organised with the Guild of Students' International Development Society at the Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham, attended by over 150 students, alumni, colleagues, and collaborators from across the University and beyond. The event featured a lively panel discussion on 'The Past, Present and Future of IDD and Development Studies', along with a 'Mastermind'-style grilling of the editors of IDD's new book, *The Politics of Development*, which was officially launched to coincide with the celebration.

The anniversary panel included Emeritus Professor Richard Batley (Head of



Department, 1997–2004), Dr Kamna Patel (IDD alumna, UCL Associate Professor, and Chair of Research England's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Expert Advisory Group), current colleagues and prior Heads of Department, Professor Fiona Nunan and Professor Jonathan Fisher, and Dr Zenobia Ismail, who manages of IDD's policy-orientated Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC) and Knowledge for Development and Diplomacy (K4DD) helpdesk. Professor Batley highlighted several major changes: significant growth and increased gender and ethnic balance from its predominantly white British male beginnings; the impact of digital communication on collegial collaboration; and the shift from colonial civil service roots towards cutting-edge funded research-driven activities. A key theme of the panel was the lingering influence of colonialism in the field. Professor Nunan emphasised the importance of conducting more localised research, yet addressing the challenge of funding, she identified 'who does it?' as a recurring question. She called for a re-evaluation of research practices and partnerships, especially between the Global North and South. Dr Patel raised the critical question of what we should celebrate, given the colonial roots of development studies. She suggested that rather than reinventing development, we need to think institutionally about the relationship between decolonisation and development, and critically document what development actually does and its material impacts. She raised the question

of abolition in relation to Development Studies, and what that might look like in terms of 'refusing to participate in terms of engagement, degrowth, or working down the debt?' and moving towards real solidarity.

Professor Fisher further reflected on the dramatic evolution of debates in Development Studies, stressing the need for us to confront urgent global challenges, such as ongoing conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine, the growing toxicity of social media, and to support and develop the highest quality research on the core challenges facing the planet. Dr Ismail highlighted that while efforts to include the Global South in policy and practice are increasing, meaningful inclusion often requires additional funding, which is seldom available. She noted that aid is still largely driven by Global North agendas, though development agencies are shifting towards more global perspectives in areas like gender, sexual, and reproductive rights. She also emphasised the potential of a new generation of development professionals, educated with a focus on decolonisation, inclusivity, and climate change, who are questioning whose knowledge is prioritised.

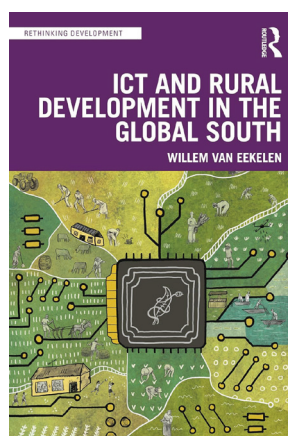
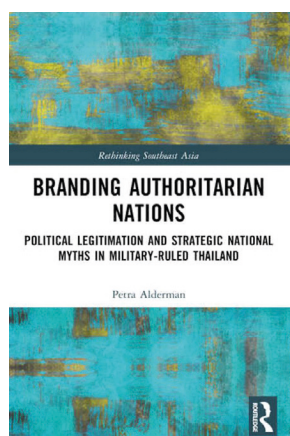
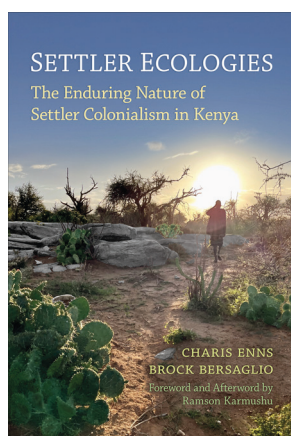
After the panel, the International Development Society launched IDD's pathbreaking new book, *The Politics of Development* (see page 6 for more detail), with a 'Mastermind'-style interview of the editors. Sadie Singer, Oliver Cotena and Madison Hamblin, asked questions

on topics such as the book's purpose, the writing process, the link between politics and development, the role of identity in development, and the book's key takeaways. Madison described it as a valuable opportunity to connect students and lecturers, exploring the roots of the department and development itself, with key insights including, the 'inherent nature of relationship between politics and development', the recognition that 'while development studies has come far, we still have a lot way to go' and the 'importance of transparency and accountability'.

The *Politics of Development* was not the only significant book published by IDD recently. Dr Kailing Xie organised an IDD 60th Anniversary Special Seminar Series to showcase recent books, including: Brock Bersaglio and Charis Enns' *Settler Ecologies: The Enduring Nature of Settler Colonialism in Kenya*, which explores how settler colonialism is memorialised through ecological relations; Petra Alderman's *Branding Authoritarian Nations: Political Legitimation and Strategic National Myths in Military-Ruled Thailand*, which argues that nation branding plays a key role in state legitimation, particularly in authoritarian regimes; and Willem Van Eekelen's *ICT and Rural Development in the Global South*, which assesses the opportunities and risks of the impact of ICT on rural areas in the Global South (for a list of our other latest publications see pages 38).

What does the future hold? This year, we launch a new programme in Sustainable Development and AI. Meanwhile, long-standing questions – such as how to organise political authority, promote inclusion around the axes of gender ethnicity, race, disability, and ensure that the future is sustainable – remain pressing. As the world rapidly embraces AI, challenges of climate change, conflict and migration will continue to demand our attention. As David commented in his opening remarks, IDD is one of the most collegial, creative, interesting, and special places to work and our students and alumni are truly our ambassadors, champions, and the future of international development research, policy, and practice.

A special thanks to: IDD's 60th Anniversary Organising Committee (Professor David Hudson, Dr Merisa Thompson, Dr Kailing Xie, Dr Sameen Ali, Professor Fiona Nunan and Emeritus Professor Richard Batley); our wonderful panellists and the International Development Society; Inderdeep Shambi and the COSS Communications team; to Gareth Wall for his tireless work with our alumni; and to many others who have made IDD a success over the years.



Why, and how, we must contest ‘development’

Dr Claire McLoughlin reports on IDD’s flagship new textbook, *The Politics of Development*, which tackles global inequality and injustice from the ground up.

Sometimes we assume that people everywhere want the same thing. We project our versions of a ‘good’ life onto the lives of others who surely, like us, aspire to a certain status, wealth, well-being, or set of worldly possessions. These egocentric tendencies underlie how the discourse and practice of ‘development’ became synonymous with the ‘one-size-fits-all’ pursuit of modernization – a Western-centric recipe for ‘progress’, the key ingredients being industrialization, capital investment, technological advancement, and institutional development.

The temptation to homogenize human wants and needs is not just naïve but harmful. It leads us to assume that development is everywhere desired, and desirable, when in reality there are always winners and losers. When the Western project of ‘development’ promotes universal endpoints, it denies the myriad ways in which colonial injustices ensured that there could never be a level playing field for countries to reach them, even if they wanted to.

But what is development for, then, if it isn’t ours – or even someone else’s – pursuit of the good life? The answer, of course, is that there can never be one answer. But this isn’t just another (typical) academic cop out. More deliberately, the answer actually lies within this somewhat unsatisfactory, non-answer. In practice, development is fundamentally about contesting different answers to this question of what is good, or bad, about the way social life is organized.

People answer differently because of the inevitable diversity of wants, needs, and preferences of individuals, groups and nations, each with divergent identities, lived experiences, mindsets and worldviews. Development can only happen by confronting, negotiating, and (more or less fairly) reconciling these differences. It is, in the real world, the unavoidable process of contesting alternative desired futures.

This is the core claim we advance in our new book where we unpack the what, where, why, and how of this ubiquitous

process of contestation. Drawing on a range of lived experiences from around the world, we shine a light on how it underlies progress in tackling some of the most intractable challenges we face – including poverty, inequality, exclusion, the climate crisis and protracted conflict.

But what does the process of contesting alternative desired futures look like, in practice? And why is contestation a better starting point for studying and researching development than ‘everyone wants the same thing’?



In short, it encourages a more grounded analysis. It enables us to do justice to the diversity of desired futures while studying them through a common comparative lens. Examining the contours of contestation in situ can reveal what ‘development’ means locally (if it has any meaning at all) and, crucially, who decides. It allows us to reveal how historical legacies of colonial injustice have (re)-produced the gap between people’s lived realities and desired futures.

Rather than reducing the study of development to a narrow focus on end goals, studying contestation also urges us to interpret development outcomes as products of unequal power relations. Because contestation, like power, is universal, it does not confine us

geographically to outdated binaries between the ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ worlds.

Contestation is possible wherever alternative desired futures exist. It isn’t limited to ‘traditional’ political arenas like global summits, legislative assemblies, town councils or village gatherings. It thrives in the micropolitics of everyday life: on street corners and shantytowns, where goods and services are traded for political favors, in the digital sphere, where opinion becomes a hashtag phenomenon, or in homes, where everyday decisions affect opportunities and freedoms to exercise agency over life choices.

A sharper focus on contestation brings us closer to these active and often catalytic sites of development. To better uncover the inner workings of contestation, our book deploys a simple but powerful framework of three ‘I’s:

Institutions, or formal and informal rules, norms and customs

Being contested by more (or less) rational actors with competing **interests**.

Holding a range of **ideas** about what is right and fair.

These analytical props offer a window to complexity. They motivate why people choose to challenge or accept the status quo. They are how people contest it. And ultimately, they become the outcomes of this process of contestation. In other words, institutions, interests and ideas are the ends of means of contestation.

This is why understanding contestation matters. It is, ultimately, the process that determines whose version of a desired future becomes lived reality. And we must study it regardless of our own pre-conceptions about what that future should look like.



IDD research

The latest Research Excellence Framework (REF) results – published in 2022 – confirmed IDD's position as one of the top development studies departments in the UK.

The past couple of years have been notable for IDD research. The department has continued to produce high quality research across a range of key development issues. This was recognised in IDD's excellent performance in the Research Excellence Framework 2021 (REF2021), the periodic review to assess excellent in research in the UK. For the first time, the department entered a separate submission for REF2021 as part of the Anthropology and Development Studies unit of assessment. The results of REF2021 were published in 2022, and recognised the excellent research being produced by IDD staff. The department finished fifth overall in development studies, and was ranked third for its research impact. IDD's impressive research impact performance was based on the impact case studies submitted, which included the Development Leadership Program (DLP) and its impact on Australian aid policy and strategy led by David Hudson and Claire McLoughlin, and the Development Engagement Lab's (DEL) impact on how policymakers and development organisations present aid to the public led by David Hudson. IDD's Nic Cheeseman also submitted an impact case study on combatting electoral manipulation and strengthening legislative scrutiny in Africa to the REF2021 Politics and International Studies unit of assessment.

Beyond the REF2021 results, 2022–24 has seen IDD staff publish important research across a range of development issues – from the unintended consequences of anti-corruption messaging to the effects of wartime legacies on electoral mobilization after civil war. This includes Jonathan Fisher's new book, *African Peacekeeping* (co-authored with Nina Wilen), published with Cambridge University Press. You can read more about some of the exciting research being done in IDD, including the research conducted by new IDD staff members later in the report. The various research centres and projects in IDD also produced some important work in 2022–24. The work produced by long-standing centres such as DLP, GSDRC, and DEL are discussed in more detail later in the report. The past year has also seen the emergence of new centres and projects involving IDD staff. This includes the Centre for Elections, Democracy, Accountability and Representation (CEDAR) a cross-School

of Government initiative, which is directed by IDD's Nic Cheeseman; the FCDO-funded Serious Organised Crime Anti-Corruption Evidence programme led by Heather Marquette; the European Commission-funded Climate Action to Advance Healthy Societies in Europe (CATALYSE) involving Niheer Dasandi; among others.

In addition to producing new research, the past year has seen IDD staff involved in a range of policy impact and public engagement activities. Examples include Kailing Xie consulting on a BBC documentary on 'Chinese beauty' based on her work on gender representation and nationalism in China, Sameen Ali being interviewed by NPR about the political crisis in Pakistan, and Danielle Beswick convening a cross-legislature workshop to discuss findings of her research on barriers to engagement with select committees. The policy impact work of IDD research centres and projects is discussed in more detail later in the newsletter.

2022–24 has also seen some notable achievements by IDD's doctoral researchers. Jasmine Burnley and Jingwen Jiang undertaking research placements at the World Bank and Lenova, China respectively. Molly Atkins received a Slawson Award from the Royal Geographical Society to support her fieldwork on the use of information and communication technologies by women in small-scale fisheries in Uganda. In addition, 2022–24 saw some impressive publications by IDD's doctoral researchers.

5TH in the UK for research in development studies*

3RD in the UK for research impact on society*

*REF2021



Find out more

Read more about IDD's research and to subscribe to IDD's newsletter, visit <https://bit.ly/4lbcpO9>





Chevening Scholarship Programme

Dr David Cobley, Director of Teaching and Learning, welcomes four new Chevening Scholars as part of the UK Government's global scholarship programme.

IDD has a long association with the Chevening Scholarship programme, which supports young scholars from around the world to study in the UK at the postgraduate level. Chevening Scholars are selected based on their potential to become future leaders and to contribute to the future development of their own countries. In 2024, we welcomed four successful applicants: Munkhjargal Munkhbat from Mongolia, Ribal Azzin from Turkey, Zelia Ximenes Vital from Timor-Leste and Khurshid Botirov from Uzbekistan.

It was a great pleasure to meet with Munkhjargal, Ribal and Zelia for a welcome chat over coffee at the start of the year.

Munkhjargal, who graduated in Law from the National University of Mongolia and had been working as a lawyer and advocate for 13 years, was excited to join a warm family of students from different countries and looking forward to learning more about their diverse cultures. He was also excited about the opportunity to participate in a Dubai field trip later in the year. Ribal had led numerous initiatives, advocacy campaigns and research projects focused on youth political leadership and inclusion in public affairs in Syria. He was attracted to IDD by the diverse range of module offered in IDD, especially those relating to policy-making and post-conflict reconstruction. Zelia was looking forward to gaining academic

knowledge and exchanging insights with fellow students and lecturers from different parts of the world. She felt that the modules on offer in IDD would be invaluable to understanding the context of development from different perspectives, and would have great significance to her career and personal development.

We are very honoured to be hosting our four Chevening Scholars this year and wish them every success in their programmes and future careers.

New staff

Introducing some of the fantastic colleagues who have joined IDD in the last two academic years.



Dr Christian Arnold, Associate Professor in Government and Artificial Intelligence

I am delighted to have joined IDD as an Associate Professor in Government and Artificial Intelligence. My work sits at the crossroads of political science, computer science, and statistics. I explore how our increasingly data-driven world reshapes governance, democracy, and development.

The digital transformation of society offers extraordinary opportunities but also comes with its share of dilemmas. Open data initiatives, for example, can empower citizens but might also provoke existential crises for privacy advocates. Social media platforms can rally grassroots political movements while simultaneously testing democratic institutions. My research focuses on understanding such dualities and finding ways to navigate them sensibly--ideally with fewer crises and more constructive outcomes.

Before joining Birmingham, I was a Senior Lecturer in the School of Law and Politics at Cardiff University and a Departmental Lecturer at Oxford. I also had a stint in the private sector as a Data Scientist, during which I learned how to efficiently wrangle data and deploy production level data analytics pipelines. My academic journey began with a PhD in Political Science from the Graduate School of the University of Mannheim.

At Birmingham, I am particularly looking forward to collaborating with colleagues on teaching and research initiatives that tackle the challenges of AI and sustainable development. The University's lively academic community and commitment to impactful research make it the ideal place to delve into these topics. I look forward to contributing to our shared mission.



Dr Maurice Beseng, Assistant Professor

I joined IDD as Teaching Fellow in March 2023 and later as Assistant Professor in September 2023. I obtained my PhD in Development Studies from Coventry University (CU) in 2019. Prior to joining IDD, I gained varied valuable postdoctoral experiences. Firstly, as the ACU Blue Charter Fellow at CU's Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations (CTPSR) where I examined fishing gear management in Cameroon's small scale-fisheries, and later as Research Assistant where I co-developed and obtained funding for an AHRC research grant on conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Cameroon. Thereafter, I worked as Postdoctoral Research Fellow in African Politics and Economics of Wildlife Trade at the University of Oxford Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU) and later as Research Associate at the Institute for Global Sustainable Development (IGSD), University of Sheffield on the AfriCultuReS project, focusing on end-user engagement and capacity development in the development and use of remote-sensing applications to combat food insecurity in selected African countries.

My research interest is in environmental politics and sustainability with a particular emphasis on marine environmental crime (fisheries crime), fishing gear management and justice issues in blue economy development. My other research interest is in civil society participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

My ECR publications reflect my multidisciplinary background and interdisciplinary research experience. I have published in Marine Policy, Conflict, Security & Development, Conservation Science and Practice, Africa Spectrum and African Security.

Joining IDD in an education-focussed role has enabled me to draw from these experiences to convene modules in Development in Practice, Development Cooperation Beyond Aid and Understanding Development Assistance. I am grateful to IDD's collegial atmosphere and the continuous support from colleagues which has been very instrumental in enhancing my learning and academic development.



Professor Rachel Gisselquist, Professor in Governance and Development and Director of the Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC)

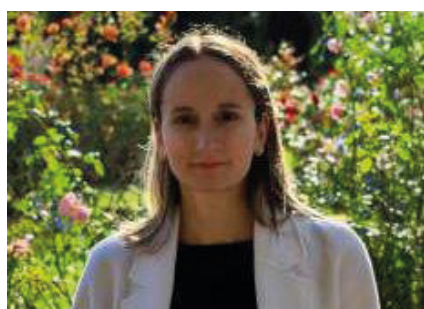
I joined the University of Birmingham in September 2024. Previously, I was a Senior Research Fellow with the United Nations University, World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER) in Helsinki, Finland. During 2019–23, I served as a member of the institute's Senior Management Team and as a co-lead on its South Africa research programme, one of its two in-country programmes. I hold a PhD in political science (MIT, 2007).

My research addresses issues of state capacity and governance, aid and development cooperation, inequality, ethnic and identity politics, and democratization. I have published 30+ articles and chapters and edited/coedited over a dozen journal special issues and sections in outlets such as *World Development* and the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. Among other work, I have two edited books forthcoming in 2025 with Oxford University Press, *How States Respond to Crisis: Pandemic Governance across the Global*

South (with A. Vaccaro) and *Fragile Aid: Development Cooperation in Weak States and Conflict Contexts* (with P. Justino and A. Vaccaro). In 2007–09, I co-authored the first two editions of the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, which has become a standard reference on governance.

Currently I am a co-PI for the '@EQUAL' project on inequality, which is supported by the Novo Nordisk Foundation and carried out as a collaboration of the University of Copenhagen, UNU-WIDER, the Central Institute for Economic Management in Vietnam, and Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique. I also serve on the editorial boards of the Cambridge University Press Elements Series in Development Economics and Policy Studies.

I am simply delighted to join IDD's excellent research community and the GSDRC's important work in bridging research and policy on development and governance.



Dr Dafni Kalatzi Pantera, Postdoctoral Research Fellow

I am a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the School of Government at the University of Birmingham since March 2023. I am also affiliated with the Centre for Artificial Intelligence in Government (CAIG). I obtained my PhD in 2023 at the University of Essex. My interests lie between comparative politics and the political economy of climate. I focus on environmental behaviors of various societal actors, such as individuals, political elites, and corporations.

My thesis concentrated on the debate around environmental salience. I have approached this issue by analyzing environmental salience of two different social actors: the public and political parties in the European context. In the first part of the dissertation, I examined the influence of different international

forces (i.e., global integration, natural disasters abroad, the COP) on people's environmental preferences. In the second part of the dissertation, I focused on political parties and I disentangled the salience of environmental issues among them.

Currently, my research on environmental political behavior has taken two forms. On the one hand, I expand my interest on the role of societal actors by examining corporations' engagement – or not – with environmental issues. On the other hand, as a member of the CATALYSE project, I focus on the health impacts of climate change and try to understand whether information about them helps close the knowledge-to-action gap for accelerating climate change action.



Dr Ezana Haddis Weldeghebrael, Research Fellow, FCDO Research Commissioning Centre, IDD

I joined IDD, the University of Birmingham, in January 2024 as a Research Fellow for the FCDO Research Commissioning Centre. Before my current role, I worked as a postdoctoral research associate at the University of Manchester in the FCDO-funded African Cities Research Consortium (ACRC).

My research focuses on the political economy of urban transformation and urban citizens' struggle for the right to the city, mainly focusing on urban redevelopment and informal settlement improvement issues. For my PhD research, I investigated how the Ethiopian aspiring developmental state framed inner-city slum redevelopment for its political and economic objectives and how affected residents navigated their citizenship within a repressive political context. Building on my PhD, in collaboration with local research partners, I facilitated the mobilisation of women in one of Addis Ababa's informal settlements into saving groups and co-produced knowledge about their settlements using community-led

mapping and participatory photography to enhance their negotiation capability with authorities and other development partners. Expanding my research while working at ACRC, I have also conducted a comparative analysis of the politics of informal settlement consolidation in Harare, Zimbabwe, and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. At ACRC, I have also analysed urban reform coalition-building initiatives in multiple African cities. In addition to my research experience, I also convened postgraduate Urban Development Planning course units at the University of Manchester.

In my current position at the FCDO-Research Commissioning Centre (RCC), I am tasked with delivering high-quality, policy-relevant research and supporting the academic function of the Centre under the supervision of the centre's academic co-directors, Professor Paul Jackson and Professor Dina Kiwan. I am also responsible for acting as a research technical manager for RCC-commissioned research projects, ensuring the timely delivery of high-quality and impactful outputs.



Dr Sandra Pertek, Senior Research Fellow, UKRI Future Leaders Fellow

I joined IDD as Senior Research Fellow and UKRI Future Leaders Fellow, jointly affiliated with the School of Government and the School of Social Policy. Previously, I held posts as a Teaching Fellow at POLSIS and Lecturer at Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh. I was also an ESRC Postdoctoral Fellow in the Sociology, Social Policy, and Criminology Department at the University of Birmingham, where I completed my PhD Studentship exploring women's experiences of displacement, vulnerability, and resilience.

My work focuses on the intersection of gender, violence, religion, forced migration, and humanitarianism. I adopt intersectional and ecological approaches to enhance outcomes for displaced populations. I have led several studies across the Middle East, Africa, and Europe, including projects such as "Ukrainian Refugees at Risk" and "Protecting Forcibly Displaced Women and Girls in the Muslim World."

At IDD, I am delighted to find a new academic home to lead an interdisciplinary and policy-oriented, £1.3m UKRI-funded research initiative, "Making Aid Work for Displaced Women". This project explores the role of Islamic philanthropy in the

international humanitarian system and seeks to develop innovative and inclusive solutions to global forced displacement.

I am passionate about bridging the gap between research, policy, and practice. Thus, my work is collaborative, engaging with organisations such as the IFRC and UNHCR. I also provide consultancy support to various stakeholders, including the European Commission.

My publications focus on gender, religion and forced migration, often with particular attention to Muslim-majority contexts. For example, I have co-authored the monograph, 'On the Significance of Religion in Violence Against Women and Girls' (2022, Routledge), and my new monograph, 'Violence against Women, Religion and Forced Displacement: Experiences and Humanitarian Responses', is underway.

I am excited to become part of IDD, an intellectually vibrant environment where I engage with outstanding scholars and experts. I look forward to growing here as an academic by driving a new research agenda and forging new international collaborations to advance responses to global displacement challenges.



Connecting people with parliaments

Dr Danielle Beswick discusses her research findings on public engagement with the UK Parliament, and sharing these with a Scottish Parliament citizens' panel.

2022 was a year when many activities that had been forced online by the Covid-19 pandemic returned to being held in-person, providing a real opportunity to push forward knowledge exchange activities which had effectively been paused. My own research on public engagement with parliaments benefitted greatly from this shift.

In late 2019, I began a project with the UK Parliament's Select Committee Engagement Team to research barriers that prevent people from engaging with committees and how they might be overcome. Select committees are cross-party groups of MPs that review government spending, policies and performance. They hold public hearings to question witnesses, ministers and civil servants, making recommendations across areas ranging from international development to environmental affairs and education. To do this, they rely on people sharing experiences of how policies have affected them, mainly via formal hearings

in parliament, surveys, or outreach events in communities. My research found that barriers to public participation included not only well-known practical issues (venue accessibility, transport costs, caring responsibilities, lost earnings) but also knowledge gaps (uncertainty about what committees do and the difference they can make) and psychological barriers (lack of confidence, mistrust and scepticism). Practical barriers were most acute for those with limited resources, particularly carers, people with disabilities and those with low incomes

Psychological barriers were particularly high among communities that feel parliament does not represent them or care about their concerns; this came through strongly in my interviews with British Caribbean community organisations following the Windrush scandal. My recommendations addressed each of the barriers while acknowledging that for some people these are layered in complex ways.

Among the recommendations, I proposed that parliaments pay direct costs for participants, develop case studies showing impacts of public participation, and work more closely with the processes and timelines of organisations who have already built trust and can provide support for participants.

In 2022, I shared my research and recommendations with UK Parliament officials within their ongoing training programme and contributed to a bank of in-house guidance provided to staff undertaking public engagement activities. I also organised an event to discuss findings with officials from Scottish and Welsh Parliaments and the Northern Ireland Assembly. As a result, I was delighted to appear in November as an expert witness at the Scottish Parliament, answering questions on enabling meaningful public engagement from a Citizen Panel on Public Participation.



The Education, Justice, and Memory Network (EdJAM)

Dr Sameen Ali reports on a project supporting and developing new ways to teach and learn about violent pasts.

Sameen Ali is a co-investigator on the Education, Justice, and Memory Network (EdJAM) project, a Network Plus initiative funded by the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Global Challenges Research Funding (GCRF) Collective Programme based at the University of Bristol and led by Professor Julia Paulson. EdJAM is a multi-country network of researchers, educators, artists and civil society organisations working in the arts, education and heritage committed to creative ways to teach and learn about the violent past in order to build more just futures, contributing to SDG target 4.7: equipping learners with the tools to promote a culture of peace and non-violence.

In Pakistan, EdJAM has been working with partners such as Engage Pakistan and Shehri Pakistan since 2019 on projects to provide accessible, creative alternatives for learning about violent pasts. Hashiya is a platform for sharing creative content to address topics often absent in mainstream curricula or cultural discourse: colonialism, state violence, the treatment of religious minorities, and broadly speaking, critical approaches to history and politics. These include animated shorts that are available online and have been screened at Pakistani universities. They have also been used in online dialogues organised by EdJAM - the first between university students in the UK and Pakistan to reflect on the ways they learned about Empire and colonialism in school and via lived experience, and the second between secondary school teachers in Cambodia and Pakistan to reflect on their approaches to these topics in classrooms. The videos have also been screened at virtual seminars organised by DOMUS, School of Education, University of Birmingham (March 2022) and by the SAARE network at the University of Cambridge (October 2022) with discussions of production processes and creative pedagogical approaches for breaking silences and injustices in education. Sameen has just received an AHRC IAA grant to bring the Shehri Pakistan team to the UK for a series of events in 2023.

In 2021, Sameen (along with Dr Tania Saeed) worked with undergraduate students based at the Lahore University of Management Sciences in Lahore, Pakistan and visual artists to develop a collection

of illustrated books for children. The books highlight historical and contemporary narratives that are missing from textbooks in Pakistan. Undergraduate students and illustrators were hired to work together to develop each script and illustration. Students engaged in research to produce narratives that were then illustrated by six early-career artists from Pakistan. These illustrations are in English, Urdu, Sindhi and Balochi. They are designed for children, helping parents and teachers talk about topics related to identity(s), rights and the environment. The books are free to download on the EdJAM website.

In 2022, EdJAM opened a call for funding projects supporting and exploring creative approaches to teaching and learning about the violent past. Applications were received from around the world, and 17 projects are currently being funded by EdJAM and mentored by project investigators. Sameen mentors a project based in Palestine focused on mapping and writing about the lived reality of Palestinians in Jerusalem.



Women in Public Service in Pakistan Oral History Archive

Sameen Ali is co-Director, along with Professor Sana Haroon (UMass Boston), of the Women in Public Service in Pakistan Oral History Archive. The Archive project, started in 2019, is an effort to document the contributions of women in public life in Pakistan. The project collects and preserves professional life histories of women, serving and retired, who have served as officers in the Pakistan Civil Service, as officials in departments and in the field, and as members of other institutions, autonomous organisations, or corporations which provide government services.

The archive is the product of the collective efforts of the project leaders, affiliated faculty, research assistants, transcribers, and students. With funding from the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) for 2021-22 and with the support of Dr Saba Pirzadeh, the co-Directors worked to expand the archive, set up its physical infrastructure, and to train twelve upper-level undergraduate students majoring in the humanities and social sciences in interview and project methods. This cohort met online once a month in spring 2022 to discuss progress and challenges and submitted recordings, transcriptions and consent forms for review and addition to the archive during the summer.

Over 65 interview recordings and transcripts are currently being archived at the LUMS Library and will be made available to faculty, students, researchers, and visiting scholars. To expand the reach of the work beyond academia and to think through the ways in which women occupy public space in official settings, Sameen received an ESRC IAA Mentoring grant to develop visual outputs based on these interviews. This work is currently ongoing, with a website due to go live in 2023.

Taking learning beyond the classroom: Undergraduate study tour to Bosnia and Herzegovina

Dr Claire Mcloughlin, Associate Professor (and former Undergraduate Programme Lead), reports on IDD's first student study tour to Bosnia and Herzegovina.



When we were designing our first ever undergraduate programmes in IDD, we knew we wanted to give students the chance to see how some of the things they learn in the classroom work in the real world. Teaching development is about encouraging students to think critically about the social and political dynamics that underlie people's lived realities – and there is no better way to do this than through a first-hand, immersive experience.

With this guiding ambition, we took our first cohort of 23 undergraduate students on a study tour to Bosnia and Herzegovina in the early summer of 2022. Exams complete, assignments handed in, safety briefings done, passports checked, we set out on a cultural and educational experience that would leave a lasting impression on students and faculty alike.

On arrival in Sarajevo, a little bedraggled but happy to have everyone present and accounted for, we were greeted by our fantastic guide, Lorenc, who quickly demonstrated that he would, at every opportunity, impart some of his formidable local knowledge of Bosnian politics, culture, clouds, wildlife, history and of course, food. During the short bus ride to our hotel in the centre of the beautiful city of Sarajevo, nestled between the Miljacka River and the Dinaric Alps, we learned how to respect Bosnian culture and customs, and were given a brief language course in some key Bosnian phrases. Over the next ten days we experienced the cultural vibrancy of Sarajevo, the tranquillity of an overnight stay in a

mountain hut, Mostar's stunning 16th Century bridge, a UNESCO world heritage site, and a breathtakingly scenic train journey from there back to Sarajevo, snaking through mountains along the way. But we had chosen Bosnia not for its beauty, but its complexity. Ravaged by civil war and a genocide that left an enduring legacy of collective trauma, politically unstable and socially fragmented, Bosnia provided an opportunity to learn about post-conflict reconstruction and development in divided societies.

One of the highlights of the trip was the hospitality shown to the group by the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, who organised a special session to brief students on the key development priorities and challenges. Being the first group to visit them since the COVID-19 pandemic, they were incredibly generous – inviting a panel of experts from the Resident Coordinators office, UN Women and the UN Population Fund to enthusiastically share their knowledge with us.

Here and in other meetings with officials and academics, whether the OSCE or the University of Sarajevo, our students proved themselves to be great ambassadors for the department, impressing our hosts and invited speakers with their analytical skills and their seemingly unbounded curiosity. When we arrived at the mountain hut owned by Green Visions – the sustainable tourism company that had expertly planned the tour with us – it immediately poured with heavy rain, but students nevertheless volunteered to walk with Lorenc to fetch the eggs for breakfast the following morning.

So, what did we learn? Well, each student went on their own learning journey, and the post-trip feedback tells its own story. For many, it was their first time overseas. For others, their first experience of a post-conflict country still bearing the physical scars, including Sarajevo's poignant 'Rose's' – the concrete indentations made by mortar shells, filled with red resin to memorialise the war.

For all of us, it was a chance to appreciate both the enduring effects of conflict on people's lives, but also the resilience of the human condition. As we lined up for a photograph in the graffitied ruins of Sarajevo's 1984 Olympic Bobsleigh and Luge track, pocked with bullet holes, we could feel the weight of history on the city, but also its promise.

We were sad to leave, but not before the final night's awards ceremony – 23 prizes for 23 students, each of whom had excelled in their own way during the trip. And as we look forward to the next one, and the many more after that, we can confidently tell future cohorts that while they may find the travel and pace a little exhausting (an understatement on the part of the faculty!), but they will leave with a better connection to their topic, and a stronger community of students to explore it with.





MPA programme and travel

Dr Adrian Campbell reports on the exciting study trips that form a core part of our MPA programme.

For many students on IDD's three MPA programmes the one-week study trip abroad is one of the highlights of the year and one of the features that makes IDD unique. The annual trip, which has been an integral part of the MPA since its foundation, has played a role in the ever-growing popularity of the MPA programmes and are frequently cited by applicants as a factor in their choosing IDD/Birmingham. As the programme has become more popular, so the study trips have multiplied. Since the launch of the MPA programme in 2010 there have been more than forty MPA study trips.

This year we will be doing five trips for a total of over three hundred students: three groups will travel to the University's Dubai campus and one each to Paris and Berlin. In the past we have taken the MPAs to Marrakesh, Baku, Bucharest, Istanbul, Budapest, Berlin, Vienna, St Petersburg, Moscow, Ekaterinburg, Hong Kong, Macao and Guangzhou. The aim of the MPA study tours has been to promote team building and reflection while analysing each city visited as a case study in policy, strategy and institutions. Study tours have

typically involved meetings with agencies of local, regional and central government, academics, civil society representatives, as well as visits to cultural events and historic sites.

The Dubai trips have involved analysing and presenting on the development strategies of the Emirates, together with visits to examples of wider relevance, such as the International Humanitarian City (a logistical centre for use by international organisations responding to global emergencies), and Sustainable City, a self-contained built environment designed for Net Zero. We also use the campus facilities for organising extended activities which are not possible within the usual class schedule, but which can build employability skills – for example role plays involving group negotiations over budgets and policy goals, with as many as 80 participants. In this respect the Dubai trip helps students to make the transition from theory to practice.

Berlin as a destination offers a unique combination of recent history that can be literally read from the fabric of

the city, but also detailed insights into policies and government processes at local, state and federal levels. This year we visited both federal and regional parliaments, the Federal Ministry of Economic Development, the City Hall, the Senate Finance Ministry, the city's Digital Berlin partnership for the promotion of e-governance, the Paper Planes environmental NGO promoting cycleways, and the Humboldt Forum and City planning Museum, and the Humboldt University public administration department. Last but not least, Elena Denezhkina and myself, have known Berlin since the days when it was still divided into East and West by the Wall and we are able to give students a first-hand appreciation of the city's social, political and economic evolution since then. The MPA study trips offer an immersive learning experience that will stay with students long after graduation.

The Developmental Leadership Program (DLP): Exploring leadership, coalitions, and change in the Indo-Pacific

The latest from the third phase of the Developmental Leadership Program.



The UK-based DLP team

DLP gained momentum throughout 2022, with research papers starting to be published and the team making the most of opportunities to share research insights and learning both online and in-person. DLP published six new research papers, five journal articles and 21 blog posts, and hosted or participated in more than 10 workshops, panel discussions and briefings for academic and policy audiences alike.

DLP III (2019 – 2023) explored:

- perceptions of leadership
- where leadership comes from
- how leaders collectively change institutions, and
- the role that external development agencies can play in supporting developmental leadership.

Publishing new research

DLP published more than 10 pieces of new research including research briefings on the motivations and characteristics of leaders for WASH in Cambodia, women's leadership in the Pacific and inclusive development in Solomon Islands, as well as journal articles on local leadership development and WASH systems strengthening in Cambodia (H2Open); the role of money in women's political representation in Northern Sumatera (Politics, Groups and Identities) and the relationship between Pacific community and school leaders' understandings of leadership (International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives).

Welcoming new people and projects

Two new postdoctoral fellows joined the DLP team in Birmingham: Kate Pruce and Petra Alderman. Kate researched the role of social protection in building state legitimacy in Timor-Leste. Petra Alderman penned a paper based on her research into how legislatures have protected the environment by passing key environmental legislation. Petra's work is part of DLP's ongoing partnership with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) and IDD colleague Nic Cheeseman.

Sharing research insights and findings

DLP participated in conferences, seminars and featured in responses to consultations and inquiries about democracy and development policy. Claire McLoughlin chaired a panel at the DSA Australia conference on leadership in hidden spaces with researchers from the disability leadership in Indonesia project and DLP welcomed Tanya Jakimow to Birmingham for an IDD guest seminar on the difficulties of women moving from grassroots to representative politics. Other DLP researchers shared insights based on their research at CGD seminars on adaptive management, and research participants featured on the DLP blog including an interview with the first woman Director-General of one of the Pacific's most important regional agencies, the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency.

In addition, the DLP blog spotlighted research from postgraduate researchers in IDD and the College of Social Sciences: Mia Hyun on eliminating violence against women in South-East Asia; Resya Kania

on what motivates policy actors to push for change; and Justin Williams on how development interventions can undermine local leadership.

The DLP team also convened space online and in-person to share research insights across project teams and to reflect on the programme. This culminated in a collaborative DLP III synthesis and an evaluation of this phase of DLP (2019 – 2023), published in 2023.

A return to travel

In July, David Hudson and Claire McLoughlin travelled to Indonesia for a series of presentations with colleagues from DFAT based at the Australian High Commission in Jakarta and meetings with some of our research partners, BILiC and Cakra Wikara Indonesia (CWI). Indonesia was a case study in a piece of DLP research looking at scholarships and developmental leadership.

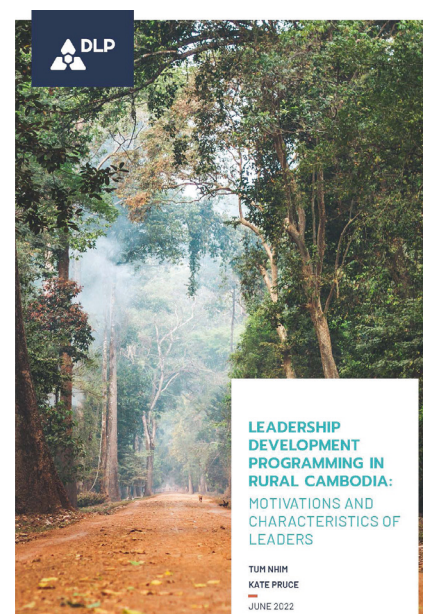
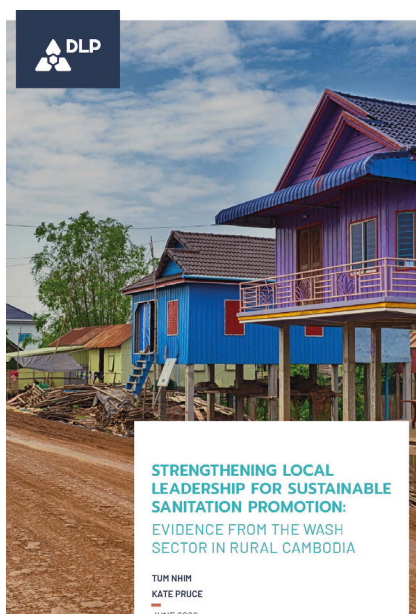
Kate Pruce spent six weeks in Timor-Leste doing fieldwork before joining DLP colleagues in Canberra (Australia) for

the Australasian Aid Conference (AAC). There, she presented preliminary findings on a panel about social protection and participated in a pre-event roundtable with DFAT colleagues who support education and scholarships.

DLP published more papers, including a collaborative research synthesis reflecting on the past four years as part of our programme evaluation. We also hosted briefing workshops, to discuss the implications of DLP research for policy and practice.

About DLP

DLP is an international research initiative that explores how leadership, power and political processes drive or block successful development. We are based at the University of Birmingham in partnership with La Trobe University and partners across seven countries in the Indo-Pacific region, and funded by The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).



Some recent DLP research papers. Find them and more at www.dlprog.org

CEDAR news

Dr Petra Alderman reports of the latest news from the Centre for Elections, Democracy, Accountability and Representation (CEDAR)

The Centre for Elections, Democracy, Accountability and Representation (CEDAR) was established in late 2022 to draw together, inspire, and communicate the work being done at the University around democratic politics and the factors that threaten to undermine it. This includes research on elections, legislatures, political parties, policy processes, corruption, political inclusion, women's political representation, disinformation and the impact of new digital technology across these areas.

This work is urgent and important beyond academia, because the world has experienced twenty years of democratic decline that has undermined the rights and liberties of billions of citizens and in many countries has rolled back the hard-won rights of women and historically marginalized communities.

CEDAR's response to this global political crisis is to bring together researchers, policy makers, civil society groups and activists across borders in a common quest to understand the factors that promote and undermine accountable and representative government around the world. We understand and study democracy in the broadest sense, including the authoritarian practices that pervade many "democratic" states, and the public participation and checks and balances that exist in some "authoritarian" states.

Our team – which brings together leading figures from across departmental lines, including IDD – is united by an interest in the distribution of power within and between countries, and a commitment to working in true partnership to produce data and analysis that illuminates the biggest political challenges facing our societies today. Our vision is to produce world class research that reshapes the policy debate and positions the University of Birmingham as the "go to" institution for those interested in how policy makers can protect political rights and civil liberties around the globe.

From October 2023, this included an annual Democracy Lecture held in the Houses of Parliament in Westminster.

CEDAR is led by Nic Cheeseman (Director and Professor of Democracy and International Development), Tim Haughton (Deputy Director and Professor of Comparative and European Politics) and Licia Cianetti (Deputy Director and Lecturer in Political Science and International Studies). Between 2022 and 2024, it was supported by two Research Fellows, Petra Alderman and Manoel Gehrke.



Check out our latest publications – including our flagship report

The Community of Practice on Democratic Resilience

In order to bring together like-minded people from different backgrounds – practitioners, civil society, decision-makers, activists, researchers – to identify the most effective ways to defend democracy, CEDAR has formed a Community of Practice on Democratic Resilience. The CoP brings together our key partners such as the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) of the UK and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada along with a wide range of leading organizations including the OECD, International IDEA, the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Carnegie Europe, the European Partnership for Democracy, the Batory Foundation, Prague Civil Society Centre and Birmingham's own GSDRC.

Our latest CoP held in Birmingham on 11 and 12 June 2025 was one of our largest and most vibrant to date. It addressed many of the key issues of our time, including how to "future-proof" democratic institutions, the role for aid and research "after the cuts", whether we need a new theory of change for a new world, and a fascinating panel that brought together speakers on five current sites of democratic resistance to share both lessons and solidarity. One of the papers presented at the CoP by IDD's own Professor Nic Cheeseman highlighted worrying new findings that suggest cases of democratic "bounce back" – i.e. a return to democracy after an authoritarian episode – are often fragile, partial and short lived. This argument, which has serious implications for countries such as Bangladesh, Brazil, Poland, and many more, has since been published by the Journal of Democracy.



Read more on this topic
journalofdemocracy.org/articles/the-myth-of-democratic-resilience/

People, Power, Politics

In July 2023, Petra Alderman launched CEDAR's bespoke podcast series called People, Power, Politics (PPP) where she and her CEDAR colleagues discuss all things democracy with leading academics and policy makers from around the world. Some of the key episodes include 'The Politics of Development' with IDD's Claire McLoughlin and David Hudson, 'How have Bureaucratic Politics Undermined Pakistan's Prospects for Democracy?' featuring IDD's Sameen Ali, or 'Is Democracy in Trouble?' with CEDAR's own Nic Cheeseman. Part of the New Books Network, an established academic podcasting platform, PPP released 26 episodes by the end of 2024, generating more than 40,000 downloads across the series with listeners in more than 160 countries. Recent topics include "The attack on democracy in the United States, and the new resistance", and "How Do Autocrats Stay in Power?".



Listen on your favourite platform or visit <https://bit.ly/4muEscm>

CEDAR highlights from 2022

Democracy Lecture with Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Houses of Parliament.

On 17 October 2023, CEDAR held its inaugural Democracy Lecture at the Houses of Parliament. Co-organised with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, the lecture was delivered by Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, a Belarusian opposition leader, political activist, and 2020 presidential candidate. She highlighted the dangers facing democracy around the world and made a heartfelt appeal for rejecting dictatorships and authoritarianism, drawing on her experience of being an opposition leader and political activist in President Lukashenko's Belarus.

CEDAR's Nic Cheeseman moderated the discussion that followed the lecture, drawing on CEDAR's cutting-edge research and work in the areas of democracy and democratic resilience.



Watch the lecture wfd.org/annual-lecture/2023-lecture-sviatlana-tsikhanouskaya





GSDRC: K4DD and new opportunities

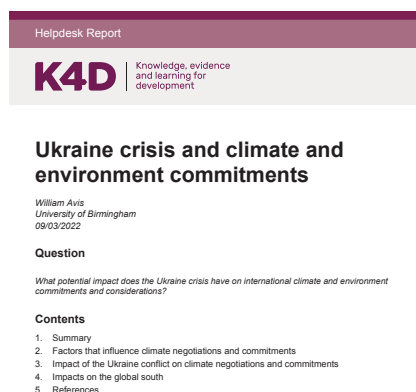
The Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC) is a research centre within IDD that provides applied knowledge services for development agencies.

Since its founding in 2001, the GSDRC has worked closely with international development agencies to inform policy and practice. Known in its early years as the Governance Resource Centre, it expanded in 2005 to become the Governance and Social Development Resource Centre. In 2012 it gained additional partner organisations and further support from UKaid: GSDRC expertise today includes humanitarian as well as governance, social development, and conflict issues. It is well known for its 'Research Helpdesk', which provides rapid-response research and synthesis on questions posed by donor agencies and partner governments.

In 2016, the GSDRC became part of FCDO's 'Knowledge for Development' (K4D) programme, which ended in September 2022. Through K4D the GSDRC supported the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) with research on, for instance, the impact of COVID-19 and the conflict in Ukraine. Sian Herbert pioneered an approach for producing rapid evidence summaries on the impact of COVID on conflict and governance on a weekly basis. William Avis, Sian Herbert, Iffat Idris, and our associate researchers Huma Heider and Kaitlin Ball produced rapid evidence reviews on topics ranging from the Ukraine conflict, political settlements, and gender issues, to the political exclusion of ethnic minorities in the Eastern Neighbourhood region to conflict and migration in West Africa.

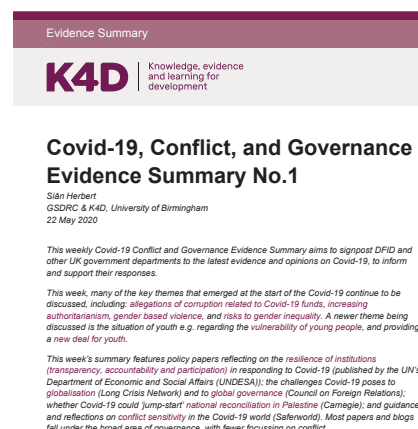
The K4D programme celebrated its legacy on 21 September 2022 at the Institute of Mechanical Engineering in London. K4D completed over 1,300 rapid evidence reviews, 56 emerging issues reports and 45 learning journeys.

The GSDRC is currently a member of the 'Knowledge for Development and Diplomacy' (K4DD) programme, which builds on the work of its predecessor K4D. K4DD is delivered by a consortium led by the Institute of Development Studies, joined by the University of Birmingham, the Humanitarian and Conflict Research Institute (HCRI), the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM), the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), and the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU). It is funded by the FCDO and will run until March 2027.



GSDRC actively engages with and supports interdisciplinary research programmes across the University of Birmingham, leveraging the centre's experience of working with policy makers. This includes leading research, supporting policy engagement and research uptake and supporting project management. Examples of project engagement include:

- **Climate resilient sustainable road pavement surfacing (CRISPS):** The aim of this 18-month project funded by FCDO is to achieve an affordable high-volume road resilient to climate change and traffic demands, by assessing the suitability of three global best practice types of road surfacing technologies. The principal investigator is Dr Michael Burrow in the Department of Civil Engineering. William Avis supported the policy engagement elements of this project, including running workshops in Ethiopia and online policy dialogues.
- **A Systems Approach to Air Pollution (ASAP):** The aim of this programme is to enhance local decision-making abilities to improve urban air quality, reduce the effects of air pollution upon human health, and allow for sustainable development to proceed without further deterioration in air quality. The principal investigator is Professor Francis Pope in the Department of Geography. William Avis led work packages on vulnerability and air pollution and supported the management of the project.



- **Serious Organised Crime & Anti-Corruption Evidence (SOC ACE):** research programme aims to help unlock the black box of political will for tackling organised crime, transnational corruption, kleptocracy and illicit finance through research that informs politically feasible, technically sound interventions and strategies. The programme director is Professor Heather Marquette in IDD. The GSDRC supports SOC ACE with programme management and research. Iffat Idris has authored two evidence reviews on how political will affects interventions to tackle serious organised crime and the nexus between crime and conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Zenobia Ismail is the acting programme manager for SOC ACE and leads a study on the impact of state capture on the South African Revenue Service.

The GSDRC has also been part of a consortium headed by Montrose International for lots 1 and 3 of the Global Evaluation and Monitoring Framework (GEMFA), as well as the consortium led by DAI for lot 4 on climate change, nature and global health for the Expert Advisory Call Down Service (ECADS). In September 2024, the GSDRC welcomed a new Director, Professor Rachel Gisselquist, who joined UoB from the United Nations.

Civil society engagement: Learning through participation

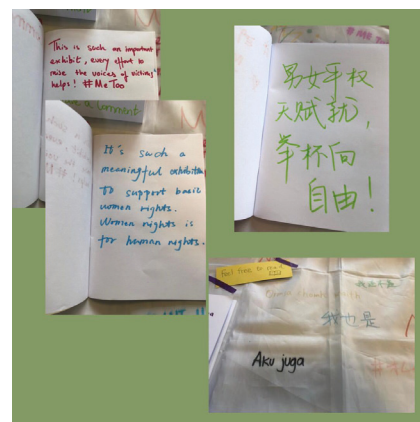
Dr Kailing Xie worked with student volunteers and Chinese diaspora feminists' communities based in the UK to curate the #MeToo in China exhibition (6-21 June).

From May to June 2022 Kailing Xie worked with student volunteers and Chinese diaspora feminists' communities based in the UK to curate the #MeToo in China exhibition (6th - 21st June) at IDD.

The free exhibition was hosted in Muirhead Tower Foyer to facilitate easy student access and engagement. The exhibition charts the history of the Chinese #MeToo movement since 2018 and seeks to resonate with people beyond and across borders. By using a variety of visual, audio and textual materials, this exhibition presents the personal struggles of sexual assault survivors and collective feminist actions against sexual violence in the Chinese context. It is inspired by the #MeToo in China exhibitions held in Chengdu, Guangzhou, New York in 2019. Besides bringing the highlights of these previous exhibitions to the UK, this exhibition possesses new elements and perspectives. Particularly, it presents the Chinese feminists' activities in support of the Chinese #MeToo movement in the UK. Birmingham is the second stop of the #MeToo in China exhibition 2022 tour in the UK, after its first successful stop at Cambridge. Given the shrinking space for civil society movements within the Chinese border since the recent government crackdowns, this exhibition

offers an invaluable space to preserve and consolidate the momentum of China's burgeoning civil societies. Through (re-) telling the stories of the #MeToo movement in China, this exhibition hopes to heal and empower sexual violence survivors and feminist activists from different racial, gender, sexual and social backgrounds, building solidarities in an increasingly divided world.

At the end of the exhibition, Kailing offered an interactive workshop 'Sexual Assault', an act from 'Our Vaginas, Ourselves: Screening & Workshop' bringing together activities, artists and academic alike into contact with many students from the 'Gender and Development' module she teaches. It provides our students valuable first-hand experience to learn about the struggles and strategies used by civil society groups in advocating for changes in a repressive political context. This popular exhibition received a sizable number of visitors each day during the week with many left their personal reflections and encouraging comments on our banner, which drew attention and support from the Vice-Chancellor of Birmingham. The whole event led by Kailing highlights the innovative approach IDD took in teaching our students that emphasis on democratising learning space



through boundaries breaking and gaining real-life experience through participatory method, as well as inspiring students with real-life examples of society groups in advocating for changes in a repressive political context.

This popular exhibition received a sizable number of visitors each day during the week with many leaving their personal reflections and encouraging comments on our banner, which drew attention and support from the Vice-Chancellor of Birmingham.



Building Adaptive Fisheries Governance Capacity in Malawi and Uganda

Professor Fiona Nunan reports on research into identifying how capacity for adaptive fisheries governance, which better protects biodiversity, builds climate resilience and improves livelihoods, can be assessed and developed

Why adaptive fisheries governance?

Small-scale fisheries in many countries face challenges of under-resourced management and high levels of fishing pressure due to the importance of the sector for local livelihoods. At the same time, these fisheries also contribute to aquatic and onshore biodiversity loss and are experiencing the effects of climate change through changes in rainfall patterns, increasing extreme weather events and changes in water temperature affecting fish behaviour and availability.

Having a management approach that can respond to these multiple challenges in an integrated way has the potential to build climate resilience, whilst also bringing greater protection to biodiversity and improving livelihoods.

This is the aim of adaptive fisheries governance. This kind of approach to decision-making means that there should be greater capacity in the system to be flexible, responding to new information and change in a timely and effective way. Whilst adaptive governance has been discussed and debated for decades, uptake has been limited and, where countries have taken an adaptive governance approach, this is often partial.

Researching adaptive fisheries governance capacity

At the end of 2023, research funding was secured from the Global Centre on Biodiversity for Climate (GCBC), a programme managed by the UK Government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), under the International Climate Finance commitment. The aim of the project is to strengthen the adaptive governance capacity of inland fisheries in Malawi and Uganda to deliver positive impacts on biodiversity, poverty alleviation and improved ecosystem resilience.

The University of Birmingham is working with partners in Malawi, Uganda and South Africa to assess the potential capacity for adaptive fisheries governance and identify

how challenges to adaptive fisheries governance could be overcome. We are working with the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies, University of the Western Cape, South Africa, the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Malawi, and the National Fisheries Resources Research Institute, Uganda, as well as the departments of fisheries, NGOs and fishing communities in Malawi and Uganda.

Both Malawi and Uganda have substantial inland fisheries, including within the African Great Lakes of Lake Malawi and Lake Victoria. We are conducting research on both lakes, as well as on Lake Chilwa in Malawi and Lake Kyoga in Uganda. By collecting data in different social and ecological contexts, we hope to build a more informed picture of the challenges to, and opportunities for, adaptive fisheries governance.



The research involves:

- Assessing the capacity for adaptive fisheries governance at community, district and national levels.
- Studying information generation, flows, use and gaps, given the importance of information and knowledge to adaptive governance.
- Studying changes in fishing practices and whether and how management measures have responded to those changes.
- Piloting and monitoring interventions to protect biodiversity and increase climate resilience.
- Studying networking between neighbouring fishing communities and government officers over time, including their use of knowledge and information in decision-making.

The research is taking a transdisciplinary co-production approach, which means that it is informed by theory and methods from several disciplines and involves non-academic actors in undertaking the research. We're achieving this through participatory workshops and involving partners in collecting and interpreting data.

What we're hoping to achieve

The research aims to bring new knowledge and tools to assessing adaptive fisheries governance capacity and new insights on how such capacity can be built. We therefore aim to assist the fisheries sectors in Malawi and Uganda to:

- Develop plans for making progress towards adaptive fisheries governance
- Plan for systems and structures that will enable more inclusive adaptive fisheries governance
- Reduce the negative impacts of fisheries practices on biodiversity and strengthen protection of biodiversity
- Better integrate biodiversity protection, climate resilience measures and poverty alleviation in fisheries policy and governance

Leadership for Inclusive and Democratic Politics

Dr Petra Alderman reports on IDD's research collaboration with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

IDD hosts a mutually rewarding research collaboration with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and the Developmental Leadership Program called the 'Leadership for Inclusive and Democratic Politics' project. I am the current research fellow working with the project, and over the past three years I have worked on several fascinating pieces of policy-oriented research.

One of my early research projects examined the role legislatures play in protecting the environment. I chose to look at this in the context of single-use plastic bans. Single-use plastics present a serious environmental challenge: they are ubiquitous, hard to recycle, and unsuitable for repeated use. Once they leak into the environment, they take hundreds of years to decompose. During this process, they break down into small particles called micro- and nanoplastics that carry harmful chemicals and can absorb other toxins from the environment. While the impact of these particles on human health is not fully known yet, micro- and nanoplastics have been found in all our ecosystems, from Antarctic sea ice to farmland soil, prompting serious public discussions and policy considerations on how best to tackle this issue.

Single-use plastic (SUP) bans are a tempting policy option. They feel radical and bold, and often attract wide-spread public and media attention. They signal a level of commitment that other policy options and instruments, including environmental fees and regulations, do not. Examining the presence (or absence) of legally binding national or federal level SUP bans across 32 countries and three in-depth case studies of Barbados, Kenya and Thailand, I was surprised by the level of diversity that I found both in terms of the bans' content and the processes behind enacting these bans.

Some bans focused on phasing out just one single-use plastic product, typically a bag or a straw. Others took on multiple products ranging from single-use plastic cutlery to balloon sticks. Many were adopted with little to no legislative

oversight which was surprising given the high stakes involved in implementing such bans.

Does the bypassing of parliaments matter when it comes to adopting environmental policy? The joint WFD and DLP policy report that I produced shows that bypassing democratic institutions and processes – even if it is in the name of swift environmental action – does not always pay dividends. SUP bans enacted through a legislative process were often more robust and sustainable than those that did not go through such a process. To learn more about this research, please visit the report webpage.

Another research project that I produced used WFD's framework for assessing and understanding electoral commission independence that was co-developed by IDD's Nic Cheeseman. I used this framework to evaluate the independence of the Election Commission of Thailand (ECT) during the 2023 general election. The ECT is the key organisation responsible for the organisation of all elections and referendums in the country, but its conduct has been marred with controversy for most of its 27-year history. I used the framework to ask some key questions about its independence during the 2023 election, analysing data from interviews and personal observation of the campaign process and election-day voting.

Some of my key conclusions emphasised the importance of the commissioner selection process – or who is selected to become the ECT commissioner and how – to the commission's independence and the role it plays in the country's democratisation and autocratisation trends. But rather than strictly looking at the level of government interference in the commissioner selection process, I made a case for taking a broader look at other actors, including militaries and judges, who may also wish to control the selection process even though their positions do not directly depend on electoral outcomes. I presented the report's findings at the first annual meeting of

the Global Network for Securing Electoral Integrity, co-organised by USAID and International IDEA.

My most recent project examined the role political parties play in polarisation. More often than not, we tend to see political parties as agents of polarisation, but lumping all parties together under the polariser umbrella is not very helpful. To improve our understanding of the different roles political parties can play in this process, I developed a new typology of party roles by examining the actions and reactions of different political parties vis-à-vis their political motivations, capabilities, standing, and wider contextual factors. I illustrated each party role type by drawing on experiences of political parties in countries like Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, Thailand, Malaysia, and Venezuela. Some of the key take-aways from this report show that political parties hold keys to both polarisation and depolarisation, and that not all parties set out to polarise. Polarisation is a process that is driven by the relational action-reaction dynamic which means that sometimes even parties that do not explicitly set out to polarise will end up doing so by triggering a polarising backlash. The report is pending publication and should be available to read in full on WFD website.

Development Engagement Lab (DEL)

Professor David Hudson reports on what has been a busy and exciting time for the Development Engagement Lab (DEL).

Dr Soomin Oh and myself – alongside our colleagues at University College London – had the huge honour of running something called the Development Engagement Lab (DEL). DEL was a five-year study of public attitudes and engagement with global development in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States (2018–2023) funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. We have also been carrying out our related research in Japan, Ireland, and Canada, too.

DEL was very much a partner-focussed research programme. We worked with many NGOs and government agencies across the four countries in order to co-produce the research, data, and analysis. We also used the latest analysis to help convene two-to-three meetings with our partners in each of the countries every year. So it was a pretty enormous undertaking: constantly developing new surveys and experiments to test new hypotheses and investigate different topics; for example how does the German public feel and think about their government's newly announced Feminist Foreign Policy? What do U.S. citizens in Texas think about American leadership on poverty alleviation? Are they more or less supportive than people in Florida? Has flooding and wildfires affected the public's perceptions of climate change? Who are the best messengers when it comes to persuading people to donate or sign a petition? (Clue: it's not celebrities!). These are precisely the kinds of things we and our NGO and government partners wanted to know the answers to. Please do take a look at DEL's website for the answers: www.developmentcompass.org/. We have slide decks, reports, and blogs on these questions and many more.

As well as investigating contemporary concerns through our surveys we also collected tracking data on 10 key questions every four months in order to gauge whether support for development

cooperation is waxing or waning. Contrary to what you might be led to believe in some quarters of the media and political discussion, in the UK support remains relatively robust and shows signs of increasing. Interestingly, when the political debates around cutting the aid budget were on the front pages there was a sharp uptick in support for development aid amongst the public. Seeing the policy and budget attacked actually reinforced support. As did the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

2023 was the last year of the grant and in April we hosted an amazing conference 'Public Engagement, Aid & Sustainable Development: Evidence, Insights and the Road to 2030'. The conference brought together approximately 120 participants, including academics specialising in public behaviour/aid communications, policymakers (mainly from UK and France, but also Uganda, Belgium, Denmark, the U.S. and Norway), NGO leadership (Oxfam, Save the Children, ONE Campaign), private sector leadership (Gates Foundation) and journalists.

On the first day of the conference, Minister Andrew Mitchell – the conference's keynote speaker and Minister for Development and Africa at FCDO – announced, at Chatham House, a new strategy to increase UK public support for international development from around 50% (current) to 70%. The most up-to-date figures at the time originated from our research at DEL, and in the speech the Minister also laid out DEL's role in continuing to monitor progress toward that figure.

It's very exciting for us that our work has been so thoroughly weaved into, as well as, informing Government policy. The policy stems in large part from our segmentation and historical knowledge about what works best in moving people. Whether or not it is possible to get another 20% of the British public supporting development assistance is possible remains to be seen, but we'll continue to research into how best to talk to the public about development issues to try and do our bit.



Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell, Minister for Development & Africa, speaking at the DEL conference 2023

Mapping mental health resources

Professor Paul Jackson reports on a project on what happens to the mental health of people, particularly young people, when they have been exposed to conflict and violence for a long time.

This research was a joint programme between the UK's ESRC/Newton Fund and Minciencias in Colombia and was developed, and was run, as a partnership between the University of Birmingham and Universidad de los Andes with a PI in Colombia and one in the UK - Professor Paul Jackson in IDD.

This particular project ran until 2024 and was innovative in a number of ways, not least as a full inter-disciplinary approach between a network of social scientists, mental health specialists and community organisations. As part of an investigation into mental health, the project aimed to examine social ways of dealing with and monitoring mental health, moving beyond just clinical approaches that may be limited in scope.

The research approach analysed public and community-based mental health provision for conflict-affected young people in Colombia to identify areas of good and weak practice within communities in the Pacific Region. We know a lot about PTSD and what that can do to former combatants, but there are a lot of other mental health issues that can affect young people as a result of violence itself, or the stress of existing in a conflict situation.

There is gap in understanding between the experience on the ground and the large studies done by centralised health providers that concentrate on formal, clinical records of mental health. What we wanted to do is to involve social science together with clinical approaches and to move away from the urban areas where there are available formal records. Most conflicts happen in the countryside and yet these rural areas are frequently neglected in terms of service provision.

This is certainly the case in Colombia where there are big inequalities between urban and rural areas and across regions.



The Mapping Mental Health Research Team

Young people find it very hard to integrate into society after experiencing mental health issues after violence and conflict. These issues including depression, other mental disorders and psychosocial problems related specifically to young people, and have been largely ignored. This may be particularly serious in contexts where local social and community environments have been degraded or undermined, there have been breaches of human rights, or where there are limited economic opportunities as a result of conflict. The Pacific Region was one of the most conflict-affected areas, has some of the highest rates of poverty in Colombia, is primarily rural, and continues to have high rates of poor mental health as a result of ongoing exposure to violence.

Our research took an innovative approach in three ways: it explicitly linked the local, the meso and the macro levels, recognising that much mental health care, such as it is, exists at the local level and that is where there may be an opportunity for effective intervention; it represented co-production both between Colombian

and UK teams, but also with civil society organisations at the local level; and it used an innovative mixed methods approach linking social science and clinical approaches to mental health.

The result of the first research of its kind in Colombia provided initial evidence to focus policy and services to try and reduce inequalities in access to health care, and to provide evidence to improve the provision of mental health services.

IDD Report: Localisation in world politics

Dr Emily Scott, Associate Professor in International Development, on gathering scholars and practitioners of civilian protection, humanitarianism, forced migration, and transitional justice to engage questions of localization.



The event provided the opportunity to gather leading scholars and practitioners in civilian protection, humanitarianism, forced migration, and transitional justice, and build bridges between oft-siloed areas of study that have hampered knowledge creation. Together we discussed localisation, broadly defined as the transfer of power and agency from global to local actors. We unpacked questions about who is 'the local'; what shapes global-to-local and local-to-global movements of power and agency; and how localization can reinforce existing power structures and/or foment resistance.



Contemporary armed conflicts are becoming more protracted with damaging consequences for affected civilian populations. This raises questions about who can and should lead conflict and post-conflict solutions. Failures of Western-led interventions in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, have inspired scholars to think about the effectiveness of 'insider' versus 'outsider'-led responses. In 2016, world leaders committed to 'localisation' at the World Humanitarian Summit—to making global responses 'as local as possible, as international as necessary.' And yet, approaches to civilian and refugee protection, humanitarian action, and post-conflict justice are still guided by those in the Global North (Obrecht 2014; Campbell 2018) with scholars showing that local actors remain excluded from project design. They are implementing activities and taking on risks, but not leading (Scott 2021; Yakinthou 2018).

The event underlined a persistent need for systematic, interdisciplinary, and comparative analysis of the concept of 'localisation' and its application in various conflict settings. As a takeaway, we underlined a need to understand and capture the ways localisation efforts are being experienced by affected populations, both positively and negatively.

It was wonderful to be gathered in person and to build off one another's ideas and energy. The network we created will be moving debates on dynamics of local agency in conflict and post-conflict response and norm contestation forward. We will keep you posted on a forthcoming podcast series (hosted by me, Jennifer Welsh, and Adam Kochanski) and an edited volume or special issue, with contributions from scholars and practitioners.

Thank you to the following participants for their engagement and ideas: Lisbeth Zimmerman, Alexander Betts, Amitav Acharya, Rana Khoury, Merve Erdilmen, Megan Bradley, James Milner, Alexander Hinton, Elena Lesley, Mohamed Sesay, Erin Baines, Ketty Anyeko, Emily Paddon Rhoads, Oliver Kaplan, Dima Toukan, Luna K C, Federico Borello, Maha Shuayb, Maria Martin de Almagro, Geoffrey Lugano, Hugo Slim, Amanda Murdie, Philippe Frowd, Catherine Lu, Michael Barnett, Marc Linning, Fernando Nunez-Mietz, and Oumar Ba.

With this in mind, Jennifer Welsh, Adam Kochanski, and I gathered scholars from around the world in September of 2022 at a workshop at McGill University, in Montreal. This was funded by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Connection Grant. Our aim was to better understand the concept of localisation, which entered international relations literatures two decades ago (Acharya 2004) but today takes on a life and meanings of its own in various areas of policy and practice. We aimed to respond to a missing academic and practitioner consensus on what localisation means, what it looks like, and how best to study it.



For more on localisation, visit interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain

Shutdown: Understanding the closure of social media space in West Africa

Professor Jonathan Fisher reports on IDD's work with the Centre for Democracy and Development in Nigeria to understand the prevalence and impact of internet shutdowns in West Africa.

For a time, West Africa held the dubious distinction of being the site of the world's longest-running internet shutdown. In the midst of anti-government protests in the minority anglophone western regions of the country, Cameroon's government shut off internet access to around 20% of the Cameroonian population in January 2017, leaving citizens in those areas offline for 270 days. Cameroon is not unique in this regard. The majority of West African citizens have seen internet, or social media, shutdowns threatened or implemented by their governments in the last seven years. Sometimes this has lasted for only hours but sometimes for weeks or months – with often devastating results on livelihoods and security.

Our research, funded under Facebook's Foundational Integrity research programme, seeks to understand why these restrictions are imposed, and how different actors – in West Africa and beyond – respond to them. A collaboration between IDD (Jonathan Fisher and Nic Cheeseman) and the Centre for Democracy and Development (Idayat Hassan, Lassane Ouedrago, Idris Mohamed) in Nigeria, the study has two strands. On the one hand, and drawing on interviews and discussions with policy-makers and social media officials based in London, California, Abuja, and Ouagadougou, we examine how senior figures in government and 'big tech' understand and negotiate social media restrictions.

On the other hand, we examine how individuals and communities cope with shutdowns. Focusing on the total telecoms shutdown imposed on much of north-western Nigeria for several months in 2021, we chart the major impact shutdowns can have on the everyday lives of people, businesses and communities. We also explore the different forms of agency and innovation that emerge in these challenging circumstances, as well as the ways in which these experiences lead people to reflect on and rethink their relationships with the state.

Critically, internet – and social media – restrictions are not a distinctively African phenomenon. Nor are they confined to states often described as authoritarian. Infamously, the country with the most egregious record in this regard, India, is neither African nor authoritarian. Indeed, as our research underscores, state efforts to curtail or shortcut communications are not even a contemporary phenomenon, and often their genealogies can be traced back to the pre-digital era, both in practice and in the minds of those living through the event. As one of our focus group participants from Zamfara State, Nigeria, opined, 'the shutdown action is just like [the] era of colonialism'.

Our research, therefore, seeks to place contemporary internet shutdowns within their political and historical contexts. This does not, of course, mean blindly accepting the narratives of governments

who raise the spectre of 'national security' to cynically and opportunistically close down internet access on the eve of an election, or during an anti-government protest. Equally, though, we cannot entirely dismiss the concerns of African governments who argue that California-based social media platforms do not fully understand the political dynamics unleashed by social media in all contexts. Many of the world's most significant social media platforms continue to be based in Silicon Valley and are staffed, to a substantial degree, by executives whose political and ideational universes are fundamentally Western and liberal.

This, in many respects, is the challenge of social media today – how to reconcile competing local and national understandings of 'acceptable' public discourse with (where they are human!) those of, distant, social media executives who seek to balance notionally universalist norms with specific contexts and concerns. Our research points to the central importance of power dynamics within this process.



Making aid work for displaced women

Dr Sandra Pertek's project entitled 'Making Aid Work for Displaced Women' has secured over £1.3million from the UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship award. practitioners of civilian protection, humanitarianism, forced migration, and transitional justice to engage questions of localization.

Dr Sandra Pertek is a principal investigator of the 'Making aid work for displaced women: Integrating Islamic philanthropy and the international humanitarian system to improve outcomes for women' project – a major policy-oriented research initiative funded by UKRI. Starting in September 2024 at IDD, she explores the ways in which Islamic philanthropy principles can be leveraged to improve humanitarian outcomes for displaced women.

Alarming, the number of forcibly displaced people continues to increase yearly with many displacement emergencies becoming protracted. Resources, capacity, political will, and governance models to protect displaced people have fallen woefully short of needs in often feminised displacement emergencies. There is a massive need for a more inclusive humanitarian policy to address the intersecting needs of displaced women and children. It is estimated that over half of the world's forcibly displaced people are hosted in Muslim-majority countries, yet the principles of Islamic philanthropy, such as zakat (obligatory charity), sadaqah (voluntary charity) and waqf (endowment) have received little attention in terms of their potential to support forcibly displaced women, lacking integration into policy and humanitarian discourse.

'Making aid work for displaced women' is a multi-methods and multi-country research initiative with a strong policy and capacity-building component to help strengthen responses to women in displacement in Muslim-majority contexts. The initiative involves a global analysis and case studies in some of the largest Muslim-majority and minority refugee-hosting countries, focusing on some of the most protracted displacement crises, including Bangladesh, Kenya, Türkiye, and the UK, where Islamic philanthropy operates transnationally.

The project includes a team of two research fellows, three locally-based researchers and a University of Birmingham-funded PhD student. In addition to the research team, the project involves humanitarian and academic



partners including the Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies (CHS, Doha), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC, Geneva), Islamic Development Bank (IsDB, Jeddah), World Humanitarian Action Forum (WHAF, London/Dubai), Turkish Red Crescent Academy (Kızılay Akademi, Ankara).

The project builds on Sandra Pertek's research, policy and practical experience to date at the intersection of gender, religion and forced migration. While evidence shows religion matters for displaced women as a protective and risk factor and engaging religious resources is essential for improving outcomes for displaced populations, little is known about how Islamic philanthropy can support the complex and intersecting needs of displaced women. Therefore, the 'Making aid work for displaced women' initiative critically analyses various aid paradigms and works towards their integration to enhance aid coordination and effectiveness, contributing to developing an inclusive humanitarian scholarship, policy and practice. Specifically, it investigates how the (dis) connections between the international humanitarian system and Islamic

philanthropy actors shape humanitarian commitments and responses to women in conflict and forced migration. In doing so, the project seeks to negotiate gender-sensitive Islamic philanthropy models, linking these with the ethics of women's protection and inclusion within the humanitarian system.



Visit the project website
bit.ly/41pyh1a

Getting serious about organised crime

Serious organised crime is a global threat, with a large, widespread and growing impact upon such areas as security, finance, corruption, conflict, influence operations and politics.

It's also become central to how some states operate in the so-called 'grey zone'; actions stopping short of physical confrontation, but which are nonetheless hostile.

As a response, the University of Birmingham has been awarded a six-year £7.2m research grant by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) to lead the Serious Organised Crime and Anti-Corruption Evidence Programme - SOC ACE, led by Professor Heather Marquette and a team based in IDD.

SOC ACE's focus is in generating rigorous research engaging directly with policy and practice to discover more feasible options to tackle serious organised crime (SOC), illicit finance, kleptocracy and corruption. Putting political analysis at the heart of its research, SOC ACE helps demonstrate the role research can play in raising the profile of more politically feasible options with reformers.

SOC ACE's extensive research ranges from human and drug trafficking to tackling gangs, illicit finance, sanctions evasion, state operations to influence democratic processes, and much more. A full list of more than 100 publications can be found on the SOC ACE website at www.socace-research.org.uk/.

With over 45 research projects supported since SOC ACE began in 2021, recent examples of research include - Matthew Redhead (RUSI)'s research on State threats - With increasingly faced hostile actions by state and state-linked actors in the "grey zone" between peace and war, such as espionage, sabotage, and subversion. The public discussion sometimes focusses too much on military rather civilian implications.

This research clarifies the meaning of 'state threat', exploring its scale, nature, and significance. It examines the integration of old and new methods, greater risk-taking and innovation, outsourcing covert activities, and the exploitation of modern societal vulnerabilities.

Shifting global power dynamics and weakening international norms have created a "geopolitical climate change", with new low-cost, low-risk, and politically deniable, approaches for hostile actions. Olivia Allison (University of Exeter/RUSI) and Dr Tena Prelec (University of Rijeka) research looks at how Russia uses illicit finance in its political interference, political violence and information campaigns around the world, including the way it is changing dynamically in the context of the war in Ukraine and its occupation, as well as its role in Russia's military strategy.

Dr Sami Bensassi and colleagues (University of Birmingham) are assessing smuggling activities emanating from global trade hubs along China's "New Silk Road" that facilitate international trade between Europe and Asia, including how these facilitate illicit financial flows, as well as the impact of stigma that's attached to certain trade hubs as a result.

Professor Christopher Baber and Professor Heather Marquette (both University of Birmingham)'s research uses sensemaking to better understand some of the 'interoperability' challenges that undermine effective integrated, multi-agency efforts to counter SOC and other transnational threats. The research aims to develop a potential Cooperative AI system to help improve decision-making and integrated working in the future.

Felipe Botero (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime) and team are assessing Colombia's ambitious peace proposal aimed at ending armed violence through what's known as the Total Peace Policy (TPP), which aims to promote simultaneous negotiations with criminal organisations and other armed groups, negotiating separately with each of the most powerful illegal armed and violent organisations in the country simultaneously.

This year has seen some exciting results for SOC ACE's research, such as:

- Research led by Professor Santiago Tobón (Universidad EAFIT), Professor Christopher Blattmann and Dr Benjamin Lessing (University of Chicago) have won the Medellín Mayor's Office annual Medellín Impact Award 2024.
- Professor David Lewis (University of Exeter) published his book on Occupation: Russian Rule in South-Eastern Ukraine, with Hurst Publishing. Other SOC ACE research was also published in the Review of Economic Studies, European Journal of Political Research, Behavioural Public Policy and Economica.

Our research has featured in a number of media outlets this year, including Dr Benjamin Lessing (University of Chicago) writing in The Economist about research from Medellín, Colombia, showing the promise of using incentives rather than force to change cartel behaviour. Eliza Lockhart (RUSI)'s research on financial rewards for whistleblowers on economic crime received coverage by 22 media and sectoral outlets, including the Financial Times, Reuters, The Telegraph and The National Law Review, while Matthew Redhead's research was picked up by iNews and Olivia Allison and David Lewis's research on Russian economic crimes in occupied Mariupol was featured in the Kyiv Independent.

Prof. Marquette said, "We live in interesting times, in which serious organised crime has become increasingly connected with both state and non-state actors and other transnational threats.

"Effective policy responses must be evidence based. The SOC ACE programme aims to produce research that supports policy-makers and practitioners in addressing the issues and very real human suffering caused by serious organised crime, illicit finance, kleptocracy and transnational corruption."



For more information about SOC ACE visit socace-research.org.uk

Doctoral researchers

IDD has a vibrant and active doctoral research programme. Some of our cohort report on the exciting work they have been undertaking.



Some of IDD's PhD Cohort and inside the World Bank



Cardiff Conference

In June 2022, a number of PGRs from the University of Birmingham made the short cross-country trip to take part in 'Reinvigorating Area Studies: A Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) Training Event for ESRC and non-ESRC Students'. The conference – hosted by the Wales DTP and with support from the South Coast DTP and Midlands Graduate School, included a wide spread of presentations by researchers from institutions across the three doctoral training partnerships. The richness and diversity of the topics – as expected from an area studies conference – offered the opportunity to explore novel approaches to our thinking and pose questions to each other that in spaces more limited to our own disciplines, would likely not have been raised. Many areas of commonality emerged too, and particularly insightful was the value of sharing experiences on complex research ethics once in the field and faced with the realities and complications of all that fieldwork brings. IDD was represented by a number of PGRs presenting their research projects including: Nicola Heaton, Scarlett Elliott-Vass and Jasmine Burnley.

Jasmine Burnley – Unravelling the Climate Change - Conflict Nexus through a World Bank Post-Graduate Research Placement

In Semester 1 of the 2022-23 academic year, I had the fascinating opportunity to be placed at the heart of the World Bank Group headquarters in Washington D.C. as a research fellow in their Social Sustainability and Inclusion Practice, one

of the core pillars of the World Bank's policy, guidance and research that provides advice and leads global operations.

The research fellowship, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, honed in on the complex relationships between climate change and conflict, an area that is receiving growing attention from the policy and academic worlds. For the World Bank itself, climate change and conflict represent two of the most significant agendas: the World Bank is the world's largest multilateral provider of climate finance, and in the last decade or so, the Fragility, Violence and Conflict (FCV) agenda, has rapidly risen to be one of the most political and weighty within the Bank. At the same time, the risks posed by climate change are forecasted to disproportionately impact countries characterised by FCV. How to manage the intersection between the two has become one of the most pressing issues facing World Bank advisory services and operations. Although work to help countries on achieving 'Just Transitions' is scaling up within the World Bank, there remain gaps in programming which directly address the linkages between climate and conflict. Notably, the potential for climate change actions such as hydropower development, use of critical minerals amongst others to increase forms of conflict communities (through displacement, biodiversity and livelihoods loss, reinforcement of existing unequal and conflict-linked power dynamics) have to date been under-explored. The work of the placement was a response to these gaps.

During the fellowship, and in order to develop a strand of analytical work to fill this gap, I was able to lead consultations

with internal World Bank staff, and academics, UN agencies and NGOs on this nexus, and with a team of people, explored operational implications and developed a conceptual framing to support the development of future operations. After many years of working closely with national organisations that have concerns around World Bank operations, working inside what is viewed by some as a development monolith, offered incredible insight to how it worked – its incentives, structures – and what it aims to achieve. Over a decade ago, Rosalind Eyben wrote of her experience in the then UK's Department for International Development, as an academic brought in from the outside to develop think pieces. In particular, she stressed the advantages of 'hovering on the threshold', through taking an insider-outsider approach that allowed for new understandings around the challenges – and opportunities – that exist inside institutions, challenges that we are rarely able to see when we are on the outside alone. The opportunity to take up a placement like this provides not just opportunities to extend our own knowledge in particular areas, or exchange ideas across the worlds of policy, operations and academia. Such placements also offer up the possibility of deepening our understanding of how the core building blocks of the international development's institutional system function, and how they can be challenged to improve. For that reason alone, more of these placements would be valuable indeed.

Jingwen Jiang – Lenovo, China internship experience

My PhD project asks how the Chinese government's policy reforms indirectly shape Chinese private sector companies' HR strategies. My thesis uses Lenovo as a case study to analyse how corporate culture evolves and shapes HR strategies in different political contexts. The difficulty of obtaining real and up-to-date data from publicly published sources in the context in which I was working encouraged me to choose participant observation as one of my methods. So, I applied for an internship at Lenovo headquarters in Beijing, China. I was assigned to Lenovo's HR department from June 2021 to August 2021 and was placed in the organizational development team.

Once I joined the team, I began assisting with a new project. My days were spent reviewing information and results from other similar projects launched by other companies in the same industry, as well as reviewing academic literature. At the same time, I also supported other teams if they needed help, such as arranging training venues and handling email communication regarding meeting arrangements. Sometimes, I also wrote draft PowerPoint presentations for reporting to senior management.

In addition to my daily work, I maintained a daily diary, noting down key details such as main happenings, daily conversations, and interactions between employees. If I had not interned at Lenovo, I might never have known how real employees reacted and behaved, for example, how employee behaviour and attitude is influenced by the corporate culture and change management, and how employees interact with each other (e.g., in meeting scenarios). This was especially crucial because the pandemic deeply impacted the ability to conduct qualitative research and collect primary data. When I first tried to contact potential interviewees via LinkedIn, no one was willing to participate in the interviews because they did not trust me. At the same time, it was hard to access gatekeepers of my case study company because the pandemic made it more difficult to travel and some staff were still working from home.

Thus, the experience of my internship made it much less difficult for me to choose my interviewees because the

people who worked with, they trust me and referred me to more people. Apart from this, I have built up a personal network with some employees in preparation for interviews. My time at Lenovo revealed that it is a centralised company in terms of decision-making and management. Lenovo's organizational culture tends toward global integration and is shaped by the makeup of its workforce. However, work subcultures are heavily influenced by the culture of sites of operation.

Mayumi Fuchi's ongoing public engagement and collaboration, building bridges between academics, policy makers, and practitioners

During the course of her PhD, Mayumi has steadily continued to engage with stakeholders critical to maximizing the impact of her research. Throughout 2022, she has contributed to a number of sectoral flagship efforts within the areas of her research, accountability and safeguarding – including the review by the Independent Commission for Aid on the UK Government's safeguarding efforts in preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated by aid workers.

Following her research dissemination workshop with key stakeholders in April 2022, she now sits in an advisory capacity on the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Safeguarding Independent Committee and the Government of Netherlands' global technical committee of safeguarding initiatives. She was also invited by Muslim Charities Forum to write on challenges of NGO accountability, analytically forecasting the future of the UK charity sector in the coming years and beyond.

Moreover, Mayumi presented her work at the in-person International Society for Third Sector Research Conference in Montreal (July 2022). Given the disruption caused by Covid-19, this was an important opportunity to expand her academic network at one of the few international events that bring together third sector practitioners and scholars. She is now working towards a joint publication



with accountability scholars she has encountered at the conference.

Currently heading global safeguarding at an international non-governmental organisation, Mayumi held a research dissemination workshop with FCDO Safeguarding Department in early 2023 and spoke at the global Humanitarian Network and Partnership Week in Geneva where over 2,000 practitioners, researchers, UN officials, governments, and the private sector gathered to collaborate in identifying solutions and solving challenges in the field of international development. Mayumi intends to continue her collaborations to amplify her research findings, co-generate new knowledge, and influence policy for the aid sector and beyond.

In Memoriam: Linda Curry (1949–2023)

Dr Donald Curtis, a former IDD Director, remembers Linda Curry and the critical role she played in establishing IDD's distance-learning programmes

When, as a well-retired member of academic staff, I had pretext to pop into The Muirhead Tower, 11th Floor, I would take the opportunity to catch up with old colleagues, and as like as not would find Linda Curry's door open. She was ever a busy person but not too busy for a quick exchange. IDD has always been a complex enterprise, and as administrator of the newly developed distance-learning programme, Linda, who had first joined IDD [then DAG] support staff way back in the 1970s, had now found herself a pivotal role in the Department as it responded to the opportunities and challenges of on-line learning.

Unless distance learners, IDD alumni will not necessarily have encountered Linda Curry, who has died, aged 73, after a long illness. But those of us who worked in the Department over the years were always appreciative of her contribution. In the early days she was PA to the then Director, Ken Davey, and acted as his gatekeeper-cum-chaser. Her great buddy, Caroline Rance, then played a similar role in our sister department, INLOGOV, chasing up deadlines on behalf of Ken Spencer, if I remember correctly. Academics can be awkward customers, but we were managed with good humour and mostly delivered on time. At some stage later, I think it was when she was supporting Malcolm Norris, Linda's administrative reach went national when she took on a role in the administration of the [UK] Development Studies Association.

Mid-career, Linda undertook an Open University Degree, and followed it up with a Masters degree from Birmingham. It was



to the good fortune of the Department. To the distance-learning role, she brought personal experience of on-line learning, insight into its possibilities and, from earlier IDD experience, tact. Nick Devas writes, 'She had an amazing ability to get academics to deliver what was needed but this was always done graciously and with good humour'. John Watson, an initially reluctant conscript into DL, admired Linda both as an efficient administrator, and for having 'a vision for DL teaching that went beyond the sort of 'another version of what we usually teach for people who

can't get here". I think she saw distance learning as a very special form of sharing and passing on knowledge among people for many of whom it was lived experience'.

A good colleague and team player, she will be much missed.

In Memoriam: Professor Ken Davey (1932–2021)

Professor Paul Jackson reflects on Professor Ken Davey's life and contribution to IDD and the University

Professor Ken Davey, who died aged 89 in February 2021, enjoyed a wide and varied career encompassing the military, the colonial service and academia. His calm judgement benefitted people in countries as diverse as Indonesia, Uganda and Slovakia and many places in between.

'Jobs for retiring administrative officers? Well there's new town corporations, university administration, MI5....Oh, and there's a man called Maddick recruiting staff for a department of local government at Birmingham University'. On this suggestion by the Overseas Service Resettlement Bureau Ken met Ronald Wraith for an interview on bar stools at Liverpool Street Station. In 1969, after two more years in the Uganda Government, he joined the Institute of Local Government Studies, housed in prefabricated huts next to the Chamberlain Tower at the University of Birmingham.

In this way Ken became a 're-tread', one of a number of former district officers appointed on five years contracts under an agreement between the University and the Department of Technical Cooperation (later ODA and then DFID). Initially housed at a former Cadbury residence of Wast Hills House, Ken's early roles included ensuring that guests did not take drinks into the Drawing Room lest Cadbury descendants 'take offence at the consumption of alcohol in the presence of the family portraits'.

After a stint at the East African Staff College, Nairobi from 1970–72, Ken returned to the Institute where training postgraduates had expanded to



Ken in 1998 with Birmingham PhD graduate Dr Susiyati Hirawan, who was at that time head of the inter-governmental fiscal relations unit in the Indonesian Ministry of Finance.

accommodate large numbers of civil servants mainly from Africa and Asia, who had lacked opportunity for university education but now occupied posts normally requiring it. Ken embarked on his career encompassing teaching, research and regular short assignments overseas that continued until the end of his career. These assignments encompassed working for the Nairobi housing department, training civil servants in Juba in Sudan for many years and most particularly 20 years of involvement in Indonesia where Ken worked on central-local fiscal relations, produced an unlikely black market best-seller on budgets, redesigned the financial law and trained a cadre of senior civil servants.

During all of this time, Ken's career within the University blossomed. In 1981 he became a Chair and Head of the Institute

of Local Government Studies and in 1998 he became Head of the School of Public Policy at Birmingham. As Ken himself said about his retirement: 'Only the car park barrier took any notice'.

Born 1932 in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, Ken was educated at Silcoates School near Wakefield, going on, in 1951 to read History at Merton College, Oxford. In 1954–6 he did National Service with the Royal Artillery in Cyprus during which he took part in undercover operations in Cyprus during the 'Emergency'. On leaving he joined the Colonial Service. In 1956, he was posted to Uganda where he served as a District Officer and Magistrate in Toro District, followed by stints in Bunyoro, Masindi and Mbale. In 1962 he was moved to the Ministry of Local Government in Kampala, and in 1964 became Senior Courts Advisor, Ministry of Justice. His final posting was in 1966 as Chief Regional Inspector, Ministry of Local Government, Kampala, responsible for reform of local government finance.

Ken married Beryl Herbert in 1962 and they had three children Guy, Julian and Stephanie. To the end he was quiet and considered, always understanding the human elements of what makes organisations work and combining that with a clear mind. We always listened when Ken raised his hand to speak. Requiescat in pace.

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Brock Bersaglio, BA, MSc and PhD (Toronto) – Conducts work on how development shapes and is shaped by relationships between humans, animals and plants, and microbes – with a focus on eastern/southern Africa. Present research considers inclusive alternatives to conservation, community-based approaches to wildlife health, and anti-capitalist/colonial/imperial environmental struggle. (Room 1136, 11th Floor Muirhead Tower, B.D.Bersaglio@bham.ac.uk).

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Emily Scott, BA (McGill), MA, PhD (Toronto) – Political scientist specializing in humanitarianism and the global and local governance of health and migration. Specialized in the Middle East and areas affected by conflict, with experience in Lebanon, Jordan, East Jerusalem and the West Bank, South Sudan, and Syria, amongst others.

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Selected publications

Books

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