



Delft University of Technology

Drivers and barriers of a platform-based business model in agriculture: The case of Apollo Agriculture

van Tuijl, Erwin; Basajja, Mariam; Intriago Zambrano, J.C.; Knorringa, Peter

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From the **Editorial Board**

The Platform Economy: Opportunities and risks

Growing up in the UK in the second half of the twentieth century, buying food required going to a supermarket and paying with cash or a cheque; a take-away meant walking down to the local fish and chip shop; choosing a university involved travelling around the country visiting individual cities and universities and booking a holiday required a visit to a travel agent to pick up a couple of colourful brochures.

Nowadays, all of these things can be done via a small screen from wherever you happen to be. This transformation has changed how we interact with each other; how we study, work and communicate. It is a truly global transformation, not limited to 'rich' or 'developed' countries. Indeed, for many countries in the Global South, digital communication has enabled more people to have greater access to global goods, or at least knowledge of them.

In the last decade, this technological transformation has developed even further, with the growth of the platform or gig economy: more than simply the digitalization of goods and services, the gig economy facilitates the purchase of and access to those goods and services. Those with the (digital) cash or credit on hand can order whatever they want online and expect it to be delivered to their doorstep almost immediately.

Is this a positive development? Does the gig economy provide opportunities or does it simply exploit the poor and the disadvantaged by offering them zero-hour contracts with no security and very few benefits? In three articles, DevISSues looks into these questions: Sunil Tankha investigates the economic and policy dynamics and challenges of the gig economy, and in two case studies, Huijsmans et al and Van Tuijl et al look at its practical application in the Netherlands and Kenya respectively.

Moving away from digitalization, our Focus on ISS feature describes a project investigating the needs, opportunities and skills of migrants in The Hague. In collaboration with The Hague municipality, this project 'audited' the situation of migrants in the city. The final report will be presented in June, but first results suggest that more still needs to be done to ensure The Hague makes true its name as the City of Peace and Justice (see Hintjens et al).

Along with our other regular features - Staff-Student discussion, news and events, alumni and student portraits - DevISSues once again showcases the academic, participatory and inclusive community that makes up ISS.

Jane Pocock, DevISSues editor

Colophon

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DevISSues@iss.nl

Editor Jane Pocock

Editorial Board Lee Pegler, Sunil Tankha, Sandra Nijhof

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Rector's Blog

Reconnecting

Inge Hutter, Rector ISS



It's six months since I wrote the following in the last DevISSues in October 2021:

'It is a wonderful and happy time. After over one and a half years we are going back to normal. But will we indeed go *back* to normal, the *old normal*? Or are we moving forward to a *new normal*? Moving from a liminal phase - an in-between period? Is it a transition? Can it be transformative?'

Little did I know then that corona would force us into yet another lockdown in December. There was no 'going back to a new normal'; it was back to working from home. It's only very recently that we've been able to work in the ISS building without asking permission to do so (hence, as 'normal') and meet one another again.

Yet I wonder whether we now really are going back to a new normal. It's a very pleasant time, meeting each other again in-person, but it's also a confusing time. Many of our meetings are still online or hybrid, and we only work a limited number of days from the ISS building. We are travelling again to conduct fieldwork but now in line with a clear university travel policy: in an effort to reduce our footprint, journeys of fewer than 700km are taken by train. ISS has expanded on this travel policy, emphasizing the concept of mindful travel: to carefully plan when to fly (and when not) when travelling further than those 700km. And our PhD defences are still hybrid.

So, certainly, we haven't got back to the old normal.

It is also a strange time. Meeting each other in person, I realize how corona seems to have created 'missing links' between people. I can almost 'see' the new links developing; as pathways and connections between one another. We 'reconnect', re-bond and create new pathways of connection. It is indeed not just returning to the old normal.

Reconnecting is also the theme of our 70th anniversary which we celebrate this year. We want to reconnect with each other at ISS and we want to reconnect with all of you in the world. A world that is quite different from two years ago with its changing geopolitical power relations, climate crisis, wars and conflicts.

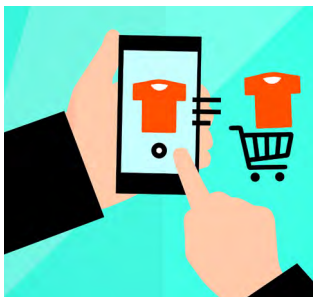
The jigsaw puzzle of the ISS building, a present to all colleagues in 2021, and on which we worked together at the entrance of our building, was the inspiration for our lustrum logo: reconnecting with each other and with the world. We'll be hosting a number of lustrum activities this year, most of them in October, the week around our Dies.

I am so much looking forward to reconnecting, to co-creating new pathways, to re-bonding.

Please join us in this effort!!



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All illustrations by Mohamed Hassan



Sunil Tankha is Assistant Professor of States, Societies and World Development

The Platform Economy

Economic intermediation is moving online. This means that the acts of purchase and distribution of goods are shifting from the physical to the digital. Obvious examples are online purchasing of goods, where retail experience and logistics are moved to platforms, while the products themselves remain physical and must be physically delivered. In some cases where the goods are intellectual, music and literature for example, the physicality of the transaction embodied in compact discs and books is also completely digitized. The platform economy now adds up to around US\$ 7 trillion, or around twice Germany's GDP.

This phenomenon raises three broad questions: What are the economic dynamics behind these trends? What are the distributions of winners and losers from these trends? What are the new challenges for policy making raised by these trends?

Economic dynamics

The superficial and textbook economic dynamics underlying the platform economy are relatively simple. These platforms are able to create a

competitive advantage for themselves because they reduce transaction costs and because they obtain greater economies of scale. Online retailing reduces the number of intermediaries (think slimmed down supply chains), does not need expensive physical retail real estate, is open 24/7, automates most transactions after an initial infrastructural investment (which itself is distributed over thousands of sellers) and facilitates a potentially global market reach. For the platform owner, skimming a percentage off each transaction adds up to tremendous revenue. For the seller, the ability to access a larger digital market with fewer intermediaries is attractive.

There are, however, more important economic dynamics which are occult. These relate to the financing of platforms and their spin-off benefits and effects. Many platforms are not economically competitive and subsidize their primary economic activity (the intermediation of goods and services) because they are vehicles to gather data and to test technologies. In India, Uber, for example, initially subsidized taxi rides in order to make their service more attractive. Partly this forces service providers to get on the platform and eventually helps the platform reach enormous scale, and subsequently pricing power. However, it is also the data which platform providers obtain from users that is in itself a tremendously valuable asset since it is the essential input into building the AI systems that are going to be at the forefront of technological development. Because of these occult assets, platform companies are able to obtain massive and cheap venture capital and thereby distort the competitive environment in their favour.

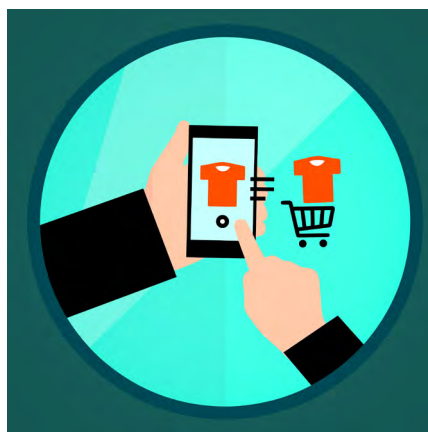
Winners and losers

For developing countries, the platform economy offers opportunities. Because legacy infrastructures are less developed (think retail space but also banking and credit facilitators), platform economies face little entrenched competition and are able to leapfrog and achieve scale faster and with fewer venture capital requirements. Lessons learned in home

markets can then be leveraged into new markets and allow the emergence of southern innovators and, to use a term dear to the digital world, disruptors. Kenya's M-Pesa is the most recognizable of such enterprises. Moreover, platform economies are suited to the low individual transaction values which characterize developing country economies because the marginal costs of individual transactions are much lower than in traditional retail. This facilitates greater volumes of and access to economic activity.

Nevertheless, the fundamental characteristics of platform economies will not facilitate decentralized development. The United States, of course, has the largest concentration of platform enterprises; but even in Asia, platform enterprises are concentrated in China, with a few others scattered in India, Japan and South Korea. Within these countries, these enterprises are also concentrated in one or two cities.

'... platform economies face little entrenched competition and are able to leapfrog and achieve scale faster and with fewer venture capital requirements ...'



Uneven development will accelerate as governments and the private sector respond by diverting infrastructural and other investments to these areas and contentious urban planning challenges will appear as dense and expensive cities emerge and those in the platform economy outcompete those in other economic sectors for real estate.

The balance of economic power will shift in complex ways. The experience of Asian colonization makes it clear that when trading platforms are monopolized, wealth accrues not to the producers but to the distributors of goods. The East India companies of England and Holland made obscene profits because they monopolized and oppressed producers in Asia. Platforms, in order to make themselves attractive to customers, squeeze the margins for the retailers and producers who sell on them. This may result in increases in what economists call consumer surplus at the expense of producer surplus. This may indeed be characterized as a net positive as it will force producers to seek efficiency gains, but a less superficial analysis will reveal that 'producers' include labour, and labour's purchasing powers will be depressed in favour of consumers who are often in wealthier countries or in wealthier groups of developing countries. At the same time, the flexibility and lower entry costs into platform economies will help a certain class of labour, mainly younger people who are looking for gigs rather than full-time steady employment. Of course, some of these benefits will come at the expense of more stable work.

Platform economies will also appear to level the selling field. For example, Etsy may provide a marketplace for individual sellers, but digital real estate (popping up on the first or second search spaces) can be even more exclusive than physical real estate, which will inevitably lead to an increasing concentration of economic winners.

Policy challenges

As with all new technological revolutions, the platform economy promises great



'... the flexibility and lower entry costs into platform economies will help ... mainly younger people who are looking for gigs rather than full-time steady employment.'

things but also introduces critical vulnerabilities. The monopolies it creates are bad, regardless of whether or not these monopolies yield lower consumer prices and increased convenience. They concentrate economic power and reduce corporate accountability. Moreover, the platform economy skews economic power towards venture capital, which often leads to predatory competition and different forms of labour exploitation.

Security aspects of the platform economy are under-emphasized. Large tech companies gather tremendous amounts of data and wealth globally and this data and the technologies they develop are utilized by military authorities. When corporations like Amazon, Google and Microsoft offer services to the US military, then in effect their global consumers are subsidizing and providing AI-relevant information to develop US military capabilities. Similar

transfers of power and resources are made to Chinese military capabilities by the consumers of Alibaba and Huawei. Given these two countries host almost all the large platform economy enterprises, the rest of us risk becoming impotent and involuntarily co-opted participants in this bipolar geopolitical belligerence.

Of course, the platform economy creates winners, many winners, which is why it has many fans and is expanding rapidly. It is creating novel and original services and allowing innovation and market access to new and different players. But it is also threatening the creation of a global economic monoculture which is problematic. Given the wealth and size of these enterprises, it would be naïve to imagine public pressure will fundamentally change the regulatory environment under which they operate any time soon. At best, for now we can only begin to study and publicize the concerns and to raise awareness.

New books

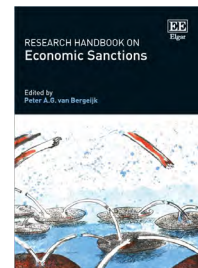
COVID-19 and International Development

Edited by Elissaios Papyrakis, this book examines how the pandemic affected global poverty and development outcomes and asks what challenges low-income countries face due to COVID-19.



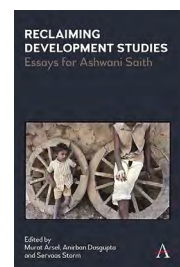
Research Handbook on Economic Sanctions

Peter van Bergeijk brings together 40 leading experts from all continents to analyze state-of-the-art data covering the sharp increase in sanctions in the last decade.



Reclaiming Development Studies: Essays for Ashwani Saith

Published in honour of emeritus Professor Ashwani Saith, the essays in this book touch upon many of the key questions of development studies centred around structural change, labour and poverty and inequality.



Where are they now?



Esperanza Reyes Echeverry

Study programme Industrial Development Programming
Year of graduation 1971

Country of origin Colombia
Current occupation Retired.

I worked for 35 years in the financial sector in Colombia, at the National Planning Department and with UNDP.

What made your time at ISS special? The friendships I made. After 50 years I still feel as it were only yesterday that we met. I have incredible memories of my stay at ISS.

What is your most memorable moment at ISS?

Getting to know different people from different cultures and experiences. Our teachers, so friendly and open. Living in the Queen's Palace. And getting to know Holland: a beautiful country, its people so friendly and nice. Some of them are still my friends. What we learned was very useful to our professional development.

What does ISS mean to you now? I feel proud of being a graduate from this important institute. I recommended it as a serious and important institute due to the variety and level of studies and the experience of the professors. ISS stands for quality and international prestige.



Ahmad Faraz

Study programme MA in Development Studies - Social Justice Perspective with Specialization in Human Rights, Conflict and Gender
Year of graduation 2018

Country of origin India
Current occupation Gender Technical Expert (War Child Holland)

What made your time at ISS special? ISS provided a space to not only learn critical thought but to immerse in it through engagement with the diverse cultures and thought processes that it attracts from all over the world.

What is your most memorable moment at ISS?

The celebration of its diversity, which one can see every day, but especially during the International Day celebration.

What does ISS mean to you now? It's a place where I nurtured and honed my intellect and learned empathy. It's my home away from home.



Carlos Osvaldo Scornik

Study programme Regional Development Planning
Year of graduation 1972

Country of origin Argentina
Current occupation Advisor on Human Settlements and the Environment in various Argentinian Provinces and International Organizations. Peer Reviewer for Argentinian National Commission on University Evaluation and Accreditation.

What made your time at ISS special? Getting to know and interact with people from many different countries and cultures and forging bonds of social harmony and international fraternity. Just as important, getting to know the Dutch economy, administration and society.

What is your most memorable moment at ISS? My lecture about Argentinian Economy and my research paper presentation, plus the frequent high-level discussions and conversations with our resident and visiting professors.

What does ISS mean to you now? It was a pleasant experience which broadened my mind personally and professionally.



Agrippine Ndemukulunga Nandjaa

Study Programme MA in Development Studies - Social Policy for Development
Year of graduation 2018

Country of origin Republic of Namibia

Current occupation Director of Caritas Namibia

What made your time at ISS special? At ISS we became a global family during the 15 months of studies!

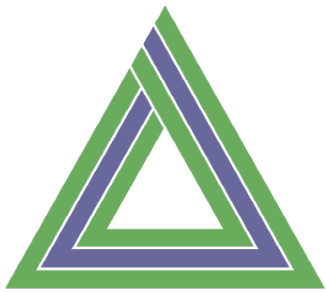
What is your most memorable moment at ISS?

I have uncountable beautiful memorable moments at ISS. It prepared me broadly to embark on my professional development career.

What does ISS mean to you now? ISS is an institute designed to prepare careers in all spheres of development studies. It is a diverse and inclusive institute which prepares individuals to apply knowledge to practical issues of development and social change.

Drivers and barriers of a platform-based business model in agriculture:

The case of Apollo Agriculture



APOLLO
AGRICULTURE

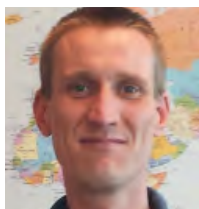
The platform economy largely focuses on consumer platforms such as Uber and Airbnb, whereas business-to-business platforms receive less attention.¹ This article² discusses Apollo Agriculture, a Kenyan-Dutch agro-tech platform that aims to support small farmers ('smallholders') in rural Africa to set up commercial business through a bundled input loan that they can use to obtain agricultural inputs. These smallholders are normally unattractive as customers due to their small size and high-risk profiles (e.g., limited chance of repaying loans). Apollo tries to support smallholders with an innovative platform-based business model.

Apollo's business model and platform ecosystem

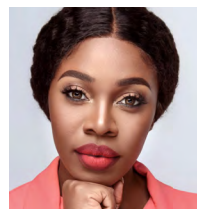
Apollo's model is based on several technologies and data sources and encompasses various actors in its platform ecosystem (see figure 1). Apollo offers smallholders a loan to obtain a comprehensive package of agricultural inputs, including quality seed, pesticides and fertilizer. Apollo does not provide the loan in cash, but in the form of a digital voucher on the M-Pesa mobile payment app that smallholders can use to pay local agro-dealers who supply these inputs. Apollo also provides training on how to use the inputs and adopts a repayment period that is based on the agricultural season: smallholders pay 10% of the total price at the start of the agricultural season and the rest after harvest. Finally, Apollo connects smallholders to insurers, so that they can safeguard an income via insurance if

their harvests fail due to extreme weather crises such as droughts.

A key role in the model is played by field agents who act as local 'human intermediaries' between technology and smallholders. The agents visit the smallholders on their farms and are the smallholders' direct and first personal contacts. The agents support smallholders by explaining how the bundled input loan works, but also collect field- and smallholder behaviour data via the Apollo for Agents App. Smallholders fill-out a survey in this app, answering personal questions (e.g., being married), data on assets (e.g., having livestock) and performance data (e.g., total acres farmed last year). The app is also used to add pictures and to mark the borders of the plot via a field walk and GPS technology, thus enabling Apollo to get further insights into the customer's



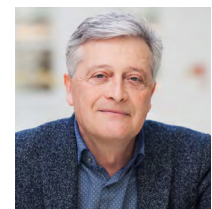
Erwin van Tuijl is a post-doctoral researcher of Digital Technologies & Innovation at ISS and at the International Centre for Frugal Innovation



Mariam Basajja is a PhD researcher at Leiden Institute of Advanced Computing and researcher at the International Centre for Frugal Innovation

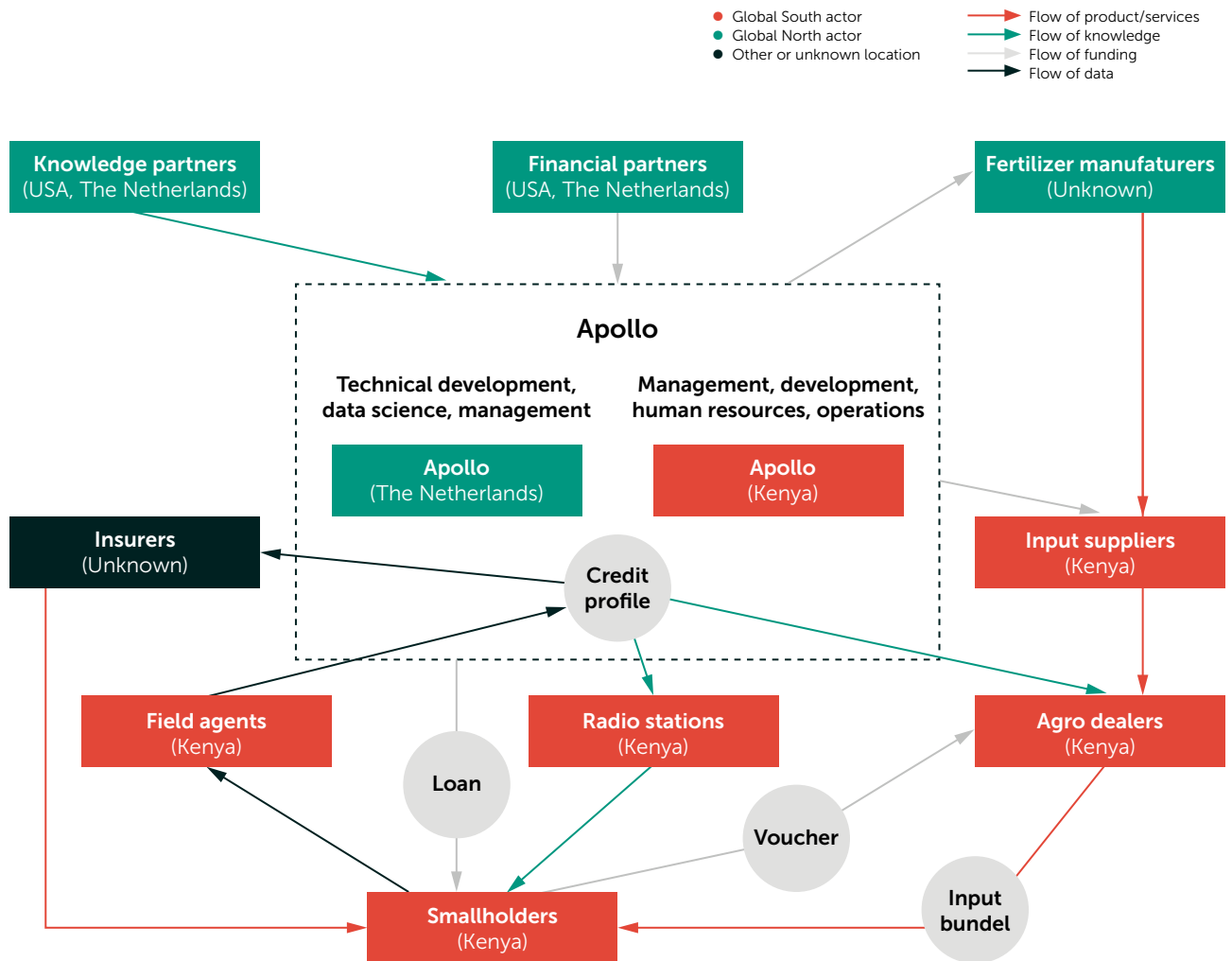


Juan Carlo Intriago Zambrano is a PhD researcher at Delft University of Technology and researcher at the International Centre for Frugal Innovation



Peter Knorringa is Professor of Private Sector & Development at ISS and Academic Director of the International Centre for Frugal Innovation

Figure 1: Apollo's platform ecosystem



farm (e.g., distance to roads) via satellite data and remote sensing technology. This combination of field, behaviour and satellite data is crucial for the development of credit profiles for smallholders who have never previously had a loan. These credit profiles are used for risk assessment (i.e., to decide which smallholders get a loan) and to provide customized training and inputs for each individual smallholder.

Drivers

Since its foundation in 2016, Apollo's ecosystem has grown rapidly with over 100,000 smallholders, 450 agro-dealers and 2,000 field agents, and it has raised over US\$ 12.2 million in financial capital. There are four drivers for this rapid growth. First, the innovative model

'...the innovative model combines societal and economic development, making it interesting for smallholders and for financial partners.'

combines societal and economic development, making it interesting for smallholders and for financial partners. Smallholders join Apollo to obtain commercial farm inputs and to secure an income through insurance; opportunities they did not have before. Financial

partners, including foundations and the venture capital arms of Bayer, Rabobank and MasterCard, not only invest in Apollo to create societal impact by supporting smallholders and their families to get out of poverty, but also to make money as Apollo has a profit-orientation.

Second, the entrepreneurial skills and complementarity of the founders have been crucial for the success so far. Two of the founders worked and studied in Silicon Valley and brought in technology (machine learning and app development), crop yield models and access to venture capital. The third founder, a son of a smallholder, worked in agricultural insurance in Africa so has knowledge and networks among smallholders in Africa.

Third, Apollo has a strategic focus on maize. The company can build on the historical skills of two founders who worked on maize yield models during their time in Silicon Valley. In addition, maize is a large market and is less sensitive to climate change than other crops. Moreover, as maize is a food product, Apollo addresses a market for basic needs that even generated business during the COVID-19 pandemic (Apollo nearly tripled its customer base during the pandemic).

Finally, Apollo uses a 'frugality approach'. Frugality is a mindset that focuses on complexity reduction of goods, services, systems and business models in order to offer more affordable services and products that are accessible to a large number of users.³ Apollo attempts to develop a low-access model to support the needs of a large group of smallholders who are normally unattractive as customers. Frugality not only underlies the vision of Apollo due to the affordable input bundle to support this group, but also in terms of the implementation of the new model. Apollo uses existing agro-dealer and field agent networks (who work on a commission basis) so that Apollo can directly reach smallholders and can keep costs low. Moreover, beyond complex internal technologies (e.g., machine learning), it uses simple technologies (e.g., SMS, voice mail) to support smallholders with old mobile phones or with lower levels of literacy. Apollo also partners with local radio producers who speak the 'language of the smallholders' and make complex and boring training text understandable to smallholders.

Barriers

Despite the relatively fast growth of Apollo – which is a key requirement for platform-based models – we have identified four barriers that hinder the fast scaling of the model to other regions. First, a weak transport infrastructure in rural Africa hinders the last mile distribution of farm inputs, fertilizer in particular. Fertilizer is transported in bulk in trucks which can reach many agro-dealers and

smallholders only via a limited number of roads and only in certain seasons (e.g., during the rain seasons trucks may get stuck in mud).

Second, it takes time to onboard smallholders who cannot simply 'join online'. Instead, in-person meetings and field visits are crucial to enable this model to gain trust among smallholders, to explain how it functions and to collect data. Likewise, it takes time to develop local networks with the agro-dealers, field agents and radio producers on which Apollo relies to implement the model.

'Apollo attempts to develop a low-access model to support the needs of a large group of smallholders ...'

Third, customers and local context vary across regions. For instance, customers may have a different attitude or ability to repay loans and soil conditions differ across regions. Accordingly, there is need to build new expertise and to collect new data to build specific crop yield models (which are used to provide customized inputs and training) for each new region. This explains the continuous need for additional financial capital for further growth and technological development (i.e., machine learning).

Finally, Apollo is challenged to manage its ecosystem with a diversity of actors who have different interests. In the current strategy, Apollo does not function in the same way as 'matchmaker' platforms such as Amazon, which connects buyers and sellers, but more as a 'classical' reseller.⁴ This means that Apollo carries the burden of risk by offering the bundled input loan and most of the inputs itself (exceptions include the field agents who work on a

commission basis and insurance that is offered by third parties). This strategy enables Apollo to keep control and secure quality in service delivery, but it also requires large upfront investments. Apollo hopes to shift to a matchmaker platform in the future, but that will also lead to changes in the business model, with possible tensions with and between ecosystem partners. What is the exact product and who controls what: bundled input loans; credit profiles; training; physical agricultural inputs?

Conclusion

The case of Apollo has shown the potential of agri-tech platforms to address societal and economic development goals and to deliver products and services to customers who could otherwise not be reached. However, development and implementation of such a business model is far from easy and is hindered by new barriers (e.g., ecosystem management) as well as by 'traditional' barriers that existed before the platform economy, such as weak transport infrastructures.

- 1 Grabher, G., & Van Tuijl, E. (2020) Uber-production: From global networks to digital platforms, *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 52(5): 1005-1016.
- 2 This article is based on Van Tuijl, E., Basajja, M., Intriago Zambrano, J.C., and Knorrninga, P. (2022) *The Global South as Testbed: Case study Apollo*, ICFI working paper, Den Haag, and is part of the project "The role of new technologies in addressing the SDGs: What is in it for the Global South?", funded by the Dutch Science Organisation (NWO) within the programme Dutch Research Agenda Small projects for NWA (file number NWA.1418.20.005).
- 3 Leliveld, A. & Knorrninga, P. (2018) *Frugal Innovation and Development Research*, *European Journal of Development Research*, 30(1): 1-16.
- 4 Hagiou, A., & Wright, J. (2015) *Multi-sided platforms*, *International Journal of Industrial Organization*, 43: 162-174.



Deliveroo bike couriers taking a break from delivering food orders in The Hague. © Hamdu

**Platform work and international
higher education:**

Reflections from/with ISS students

Roy Huijsmans (ISS), with Hamdu (ISS 2017-18), Issaka Adams (ISS 2017-18), Catalina Arango (ISS 2018-19), Laura Avila (ISS 2018-19), Daya Sudrajat (ISS 2018-19)

ISS students have long held jobs next to their studies. Increasingly, this work is done in the gig economy. In this article, we look into the relation between international higher education and the gig economy. We do so based on research with and by ISS students, looking at the case of pet-sitting and food delivery.

Platform economy: an entry point into the labour market

I have a friend. He is trying to come to ISS...He is aware of Deliveroo already. I told him how during the day if I have long hours, I can earn €100. He said 'wow!'. Do that for more days and that should be more than a director's salary in Ghana, even if that is for a month (Deliveroo rider from Ghana, January 2019)

The emerging gig, or platform, economy is associated with a long list of concerns ranging from diminishing labour protection and rights to fears about algorithmic management. It is therefore not surprising to see workers with a migrant background overrepresented in the gig economy – and this includes international students. However, by delimiting the discussion to the (real) problems of the gig economy and viewing migrants as most affected by it, we lose sight of how international education and the gig economy actually interact and how this produces particular migration trajectories and experiences. As the quote above shows, prospective students know about the gig economy before setting foot in the Netherlands. The platform economy has thus become a factor in the planning of international education and in becoming an international student.

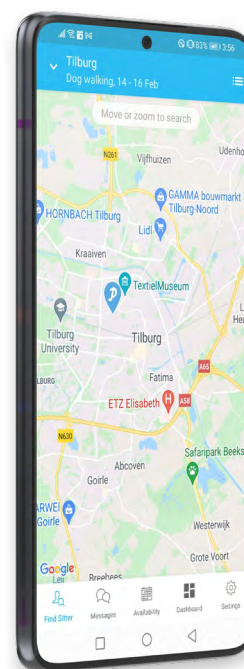
'Women are more often involved in pet-sitting and claimed that the work was about more than money.'

Despite its problems, the platformization of work has removed some barriers to accessing the Dutch labour market. Typically, no previous work experience is required, no letter of application or CV, no references, no language requirements, no stressful interviews. One just fills out an online form (available in English), sets up an account and waits for it to be approved. There may be an identity check after which one can login and start earning.

The ease of entering the work makes the gig economy a likely first entry point in the Dutch labour market. Additionally, the self-employment model exempts gig work from legal restrictions applicable to non-EU students such as a limit on the number of hours one can work and a work permit requirement ('TWV'). Finally, being one's own boss allows fitting the work around one's study schedule.

Platform work in migrant students' lives

Earning money is an important reason for international students to enter the gig economy. For men, food delivery work is common, and the earnings help realise degrees of male providership for self and others. Women are more often involved in pet-sitting and claimed that the work was about more than money. Shadowing a fellow student involved in dog sitting through Pawshake for a research exercise,¹ Daya recorded her saying:



The reason why I do pet-sitting is more because I love dogs... Also, this activity can give networking opportunities. We never know who we will meet, right?

This led Daya to conclude that pet-sitting can be a cure for homesickness (missing one's own pets) and offers a chance for unexpected opportunities, next to a source of income. In Pawshake, pet-sitting takes broadly two forms: the pet comes to stay with the 'pet-sitter', or the pet-sitter comes to stay at the 'pet-parent's' place. The latter takes international students out of the ISS bubble and shows them 'how the Dutch live'. For the former, students can easily integrate pet-sitting into their study schedule: walk the dog before class and check in between classes. Making this work means finding out whether 'the dog can be left alone for a few hours' as Catalina observed (2019). Laura probed this further in an interview with an ISS pet-sitter: 'a puppy requires more times to go out, they can pee in your room and maybe if they are anxious they can eat whatever they find around'. Therefore, it is important to ask about the age of the dog in months as the app only gives the age in years. In addition, fitting dog sitting around the study timetable may turn it into a collective effort. Shared international student accommodation becomes an asset or, as Laura observed, a community of international students

The platform economy has ... become a factor in the planning of international education and in becoming an international student.

may also function as a 'community of dog sitters'. Students help each other out with pet-sitting when stuck in class or group assignments, students (alumni included) refer pet-sitting requests to peers if already occupied themselves.

The role of migrant students' network was also important for the food deliverers. Information about delivery addresses that usually gave a substantial tip is shared within a select group of fellow riders only, typically those sharing a country of origin. And when encountering trouble on the road, migrant riders would reach out to country-fellows rather than contacting the platform's helpdesk:

Especially the first week was hard. My first day...I was delivering an order... and then my tyre got blasted. I was worried, I didn't know what to do. Whether Deliveroo would deduct my money... I then called U. [also from Ghana]. By that time U. was a bit experienced because he had introduced us. So I called him and he came with a bike. But then Deliveroo called me. I told them I was just waiting for a bike to come. They said, 'no problem', and that next time I had any problem at all I should just let them know. (Deliveroo rider from Ghana, January 2019.)

Gig work: transforming and perpetuating migrant identities

The encounters of food delivery workers with other city residents are largely limited to other underemployed migrants, such as those working as kitchen and restaurant staff, while contact with better off clients (international or Dutch) is often fleeting. This is different for pet-sitters. Laura and Catalina noted how prior to a first pet-sitting appointment it was common to meet up with the pet-parent, at times at their residence, or over a drink in a café. And if the gig developed into a regular pet-sitting arrangement, the pet-sitter would not only develop a relationship with the pet but also with its owner. Additionally, cruising the streets

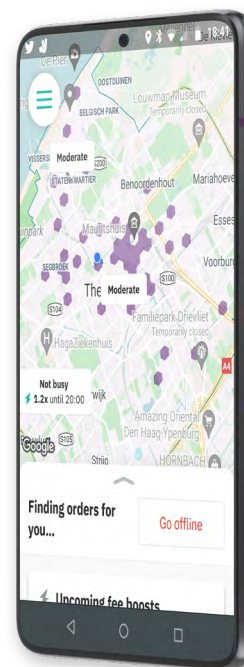
of The Hague with a dog transforms migrants' social position in the city. Laura observed that when walking a dog it is easier to start up a conversation with a stranger about their dog. This led Laura to conclude that due to her pet-sitting work: 'I have now these "relationships" with pet-parents that otherwise I wouldn't have created.' For Laura, doing pet-sitting has substantially transformed her experience of being in The Hague: 'I spend more time outdoors, I walk more, I interact with Dutch people and I adjust my schedules to care for and take her [dog] out until the pet-parent comes to pick her up. When I am with her, people perceive me differently: for M [the pet-owner] I am *la niñera* [the baby sitter], for my fellow students I am her pet-sitter but for strangers I am the owner. I have to admit that A. is not only a dog that I take care of, she has also become my daily companion.'

Graduating from the gig economy?

Well, actually I was searching for a job back home but wasn't getting any. Then there were these guys who had remained who were saying: 'You shouldn't have gone. Come back and do the one year [search year]. You make some money. There is money in Deliveroo. Come back!' So there was persistent pressure from them... so I came back (Deliveroo rider from Ghana, January 2019)

Few international students aspire to remain in the gig economy long term. So why are they still there post-graduation? Here, the Dutch search year visa ('zoekjaar visum') is key. For many, the principal objective of the search year visa (retaining international talent in the Netherlands) is dependent on the visa holders' involvement in platform work. It allows them to pay the bills while the

search is on. For others, a search visa means postponing return migration. Euros earned through an additional year of platform work means international students do not just return with a degree but also with savings. For others (such as the rider quoted above), it is widespread unemployment back home which renders working in the platform economy in the Netherlands a preferred position from which to look for jobs in their home country. Across these diverse scenarios, the international degree itself is insufficient to immediately transform the migration trajectory in desired ways. Keeping open the prospect of doing so eventually is dependent on continued involvement in the Dutch platform economy.



1 The research exercises referred to in this article were all carried out as part of the ISS research technique course in ethnography (2018-19).

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Our MA ranked 1st in the EU teaching

QS World University Ranking recently ranked the ISS MA in Development Studies 11th globally and 1st in the EU.



Congratulations to 2022 graduates in Master of Public Administration in Governance teaching

In March, nine graduates of the MPA in Governance programme received their degrees at a graduation ceremony in Paramaribo, Suriname.

The MPA in Governance is a collaborative programme between ISS and the F.H.R. Lim A Po Institute for Higher Education in Suriname.



ISS celebrates its 70th anniversary ISS



ISS is 70 years old. This year we will hold a number of events to celebrate this milestone, the majority taking place around the Dies Natalis in October. Check out the ISS website for more details.

Analyzing the social dimensions of development research

The Indices of Social Development has been updated to include new variables, more countries and data for 2020. ISD brings together 200 indicators, synthesizing them into a usable set of measures to track how different societies perform along six dimensions of social development.



Honorary doctorate for ISS alumna alumni

Alumna Martha Pobee has been awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Humanities from the Dominican College in New York. The award is in recognition of her work on international relations, diplomacy, peace and security, education and human rights and her support of women and youth.



Dissertation prize for ISS alumna alumni

Congratulations to alumna Elizabeth Ngutuku who has been awarded a Praemium Erasmianum dissertation prize. The prize is awarded to persons or institutions that have made an exceptional contribution to culture or scholarship emphasising the importance of tolerance, cultural multiformity and undogmatic critical thinking.

Ukraine file on ISS website research

We have a new Ukraine file on our website with a collection of articles by ISS academics and students on the situation in Ukraine.



The unseen faces of COVID-19 research

During the last episode of Research InSightS LIVE on 17 March, we discussed how the pandemic has affected climate, education and inequality. Scan qr code to watch the recap video.



In Memoriam

As an ISS community we send our heartfelt wishes to the family and friends of those former students and staff who have passed away in recent months.

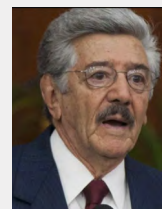
Khalid Hameed Farooq

We were shocked and saddened to hear of the sudden death of alumn Khalid Hameed Farooqi on 7 May after returning from a family holiday. Khalid was originally from Pakistan and lived for many years in the Netherlands and Belgium. He graduated from ISS in 1994, with an MA in Development Studies, specializing in the Politics of Alternative Development Strategies.



Adolfo Lugo Verduzco

We sadly share the news of the passing away of ISS alumnus in Adolfo Lugo Verduzco from Mexico. Adolfo is the former head of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and governor in the state of Hidalgo. He graduated from the Diploma programme in Public Administration in 1962.



Rose Gawaya

Dr Rose Gawaya from Uganda sadly passed away in March. Rose graduated from the Women and Development programme at ISS in 2001 and last year completed her PhD at the University of Pretoria, South Africa.



Aspiannor Masrie

Very sorry to share the sad news of the passing away of ISS alumnus Aspiannor Masrie (Upi) from Indonesia. He was at ISS in 2001-2002 in the Politics of Alternative Development Strategies specialization.



Rhoda Kadalie

ISS alumna Rhoda Kadalie died at her home in the US in April. Originally from South Africa, Rhoda served in on the Human Rights Commission during Nelson Mandela's presidency.



Ferdinand van Dam

This former ISS professor and development expert passed away at the end of 2021. He had worked several times at ISS as a visiting professor.



3 new professors at ISS staff



Rosalba Icaza, Lorenzo Pellegrini and Andrew Fischer have been promoted to professor at ISS. Their inaugural lectures will be held later this year.

Prince Claus Chair inaugural lecture staff

Professor Khayaat Fakier will hold her inaugural lecture as Prince Claus Chair holder 2021-2023 at the end of May 2022. Her research focuses on putting care at the centre of equity and development debates.



PhD defences PhD



Rukumbuzi Delphin Ntanyoma
12 May 2022

What makes people (dis)engage in violence? A micro-level analysis of choices, incentives, and expectations in Eastern DRC



Seohee Kwak
7 April 2022

Public action in Vietnam: Between toleration and repression



Zahra Zarepour
8 February 2022

Cash instead of subsidy: Essays on the impact of the 2010 Iranian energy subsidy reform



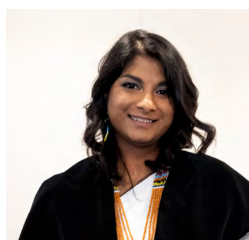
Sergio Coronado
Cum Laude
2 February 2022

Peasants, protests and litigation: Struggles over land and institutions in Colombia



Elyse Mills

21 December 2021
Transnational fishers' movements and the politics of global fisheries



Zuleika Sheik
Cum Laude

13 December 2021
Liminagraphy: Lessons in life-affirming research practices for collective liberation



Andrea Floridi
9 December 2021

Firms navigating in the borderland between formality and informality



Roselle Rivera
7 December 2021

Beyond access: Gender and transport justice in Davao City, Philippines



Sabna Abbass Ali
3 December 2021

Extractive industries and development: An investigation into the resource curse impact on happiness, growth, export diversification, and institutions



Antonio Roman-Alcalá
30 November 2021

Histories of othering, practices of solidarity, and prospects for emancipatory convergence among California's food and farming movements in times of resurgent rightwing power

Social engagement. City of Peace and Justice? Not yet for all

What is MNOS?

MNOS is the Migrant Needs, Opportunities and Skills project, funded by The Hague municipality, which was completed in March 2022. The idea to 'audit' the situation in two deprived city neighbourhoods, Schilderswijk and Spoorwijk, was initially conceived by Dalmar Hamid Ali, herself a refugee researcher and ISS Migration track graduate. She is also MNOS Research Coordinator and led a team of 13 Migrant Researchers from September 2021 - March 2022. The team received invaluable support from the ISS project office. This short overview relies on survey results with 152 respondents and on almost 100 interviews with migrant men and women, youth, professionals, volunteers and The Hague municipality employees carried out by the MNOS team. Of these interviews, almost 60 were conducted by Dalmar for a Baseline Study. The final report will be available from June 2022.

Den Haag municipality support

The municipality aimed to promote academic collaboration and gain insights into vital problems in the 'City of Peace and Justice'. This project was perfectly timed since it aimed to influence the city's planning process and plans were being drawn up in 2021-22 in both selected areas of the city. With a relatively modest budget (€65,598) we managed to foster collaborations with local voluntary and public bodies, and between two Hague-based higher education institutions (through Helen Hintjens for ISS, and Naomi van Stapele at The Hague University of Applied Sciences - THUAS). MNOS examined migrant poverty, the under-use of their talents and the need for more economic opportunities. The Baseline Study outlined seven recommendations for The Hague municipality:

1. Linking-up information through One-Stop-Shops
2. Shaping alternative pathways towards decent work
3. Securing well-being in the neighbourhoods

4. Pathways for youth
5. Opening up youth prospects
6. Tackling long-term poverty and lack of opportunities
7. Transforming the municipality's vision of these neighbourhoods

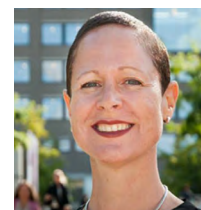
These recommendations were discussed with Schilderswijk and Spoorwijk representatives and with a member of The Hague Neighbourhood Team in March 2022. The discussions will continue in May and June, as neighbourhood plans are currently being finalized.

Background to MNOS

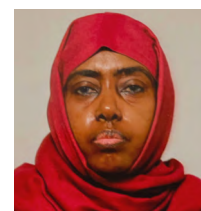
In 2020, as the pandemic hit, ISS funded four projects through the Local Engagement Fund. One was DUCCC (Documenting the Undocumented: Coping Creatively with COVID) which worked with eight migrant researchers and gathered over a hundred virtual artefacts (videos, music, photos, stories, blogs, poems) documenting the daily lives of undocumented people in The Hague through the first year of the pandemic. DUCCC contributed to an



Helen Hintjens is Assistant Professor in Development and Social Justice at ISS



Naomi van Stapele is Lector Inclusive Education at The Hague University of Applied Sciences



Dalmar Hamid Ali is Visiting Fellow at ISS

The views in this article are entirely those of the authors and not of the Municipality of The Hague, which funded this study, nor of ISS.

Open University (UK) project, COV-19: Chronicles from the Margins, run by Professor Marie Gillespie. MNOS can be seen as a spin-off of DUCCC, especially since several DUCCC researchers joined the MNOS Migrant Researcher team. Two local NGOs, Filmis and PRIME, provided valuable logistical support for both DUCCC and MNOS.

Some results so far

From 2021-22 the Migrant Researcher team expanded from 8 to 13. Their dedication and reflections on hardships experienced during the pandemic by migrants were informed by their training in survey methods, story-boarding and digital storytelling. The survey was completed between October and December 2021, and from January to March 2022 the researchers gathered narratives of migrants' life experiences. Dalmar helped create a vibrant network of community groups and local organizations including men, women and youth groups in Schilderswijk and Spoorwijk.

Among the key findings were the need for action to reduce the city's internal polarization and create more post-pandemic opportunities for young people and single women-headed households. Migrant opportunities and skills were found to mostly depend on local policies, broader economic conditions and the human and financial resources available for training, education and work experience, especially of youth. Localized poverty and debt seem to be rising (Box 1).

The survey suggested that The Hague municipality looks quite remote from a neighbourhood perspective. The Baseline Study also hints that even though some municipality programmes work quite well, more can be done to harness skills, including those of undocumented migrants. Legal status is a real divide between residents with migrant backgrounds. This growing divide poses risks for The Hague as a city. For those with legal status, more opportunities and possibilities exist when it comes to education, work and even healthcare. A Turkish-Dutch woman, studying at THUAS and working as a local volunteer, noted:

If you are living in the Netherlands and able to integrate, you can live a

normal life and have a stable life. In general, you don't need much because the municipality provides all that we need (Interview, woman respondent, Spoorwijk, August 2021).

Even those who have retired feel able to access education:

I am retired, a pensioner, but I am also a PhD student and now I would also like to learn more about religion so I am in contact with the Academy of Amsterdam (Interview, Baseline Study, Congolese male respondent, Schilderswijk, July 2021).

Gaps are growing, however, between undocumented and other residents in these two neighbourhoods, which is aptly illustrated by a middle-aged Moroccan IT expert who speaks eight languages yet can only find cleaning or decorating work:

...a secure, stable living, stable home and surety of a job...is not possible, as I am undocumented. There are opportunities but if you are considered to be an undocumented migrant all doors are closed (Interview, male respondent, Schilderswijk, July 2021).

Unlike migrant status holders, undocumented migrants' lack of legal status, unstable work and problems with

housing and education, impinge heavily on their well-being. There are also other risks involved in further criminalizing poorer neighbourhoods that may implicate wider Dutch society. The vital caring and community roles that undocumented people play in the city of The Hague should give them rights to everything this city has to offer so that they can live a decent, dignified life. One researcher in our team asked, 'who is a migrant'? In a sense, we are all migrants, potentially, and each of us needs decent work, access to basic needs (housing, health, education) and recognition for what we contribute to society. Increasing opportunities and countering negative stereotyping in media and schools can help promote more equal life chances for all neighbourhoods in The Hague. We hope the city municipality will, in the future, reinvest in both of these 'problem' neighbourhoods by recognising the talents of those who live there and who play such a crucial part in the social and economic life of this city.

Conclusion: make true the name of this city

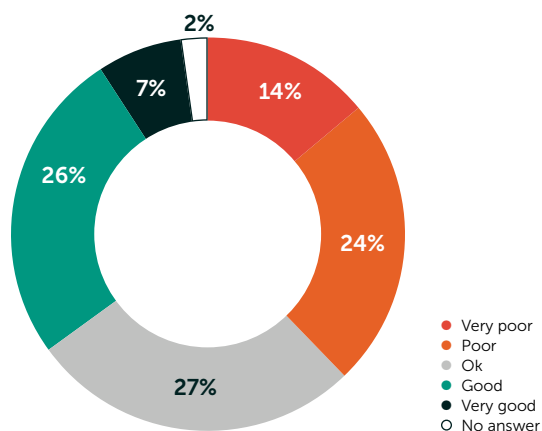
We hope the Baseline Study, survey and interview data, as well as our soon-to-be-completed final report, will help those responsible for finalizing neighbourhood plans in Schilderswijk and Spoorwijk to include the lived experiences, needs and aspirations of all local residents. The first priority is to engage with the broader



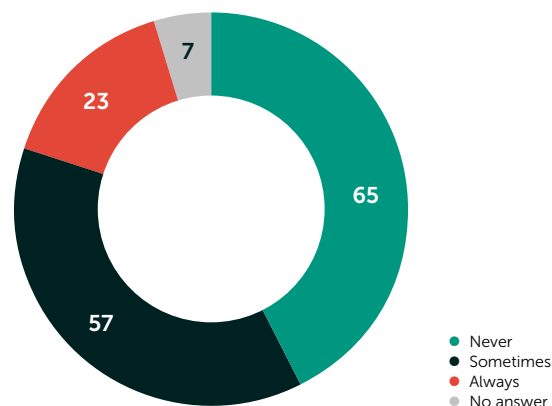
Henna painting, Vervenstudio (Pamper Studio), Spoorwijk (small business for women)
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Box 1: Overview of Survey Results

Survey respondents' perceptions of present quality of life

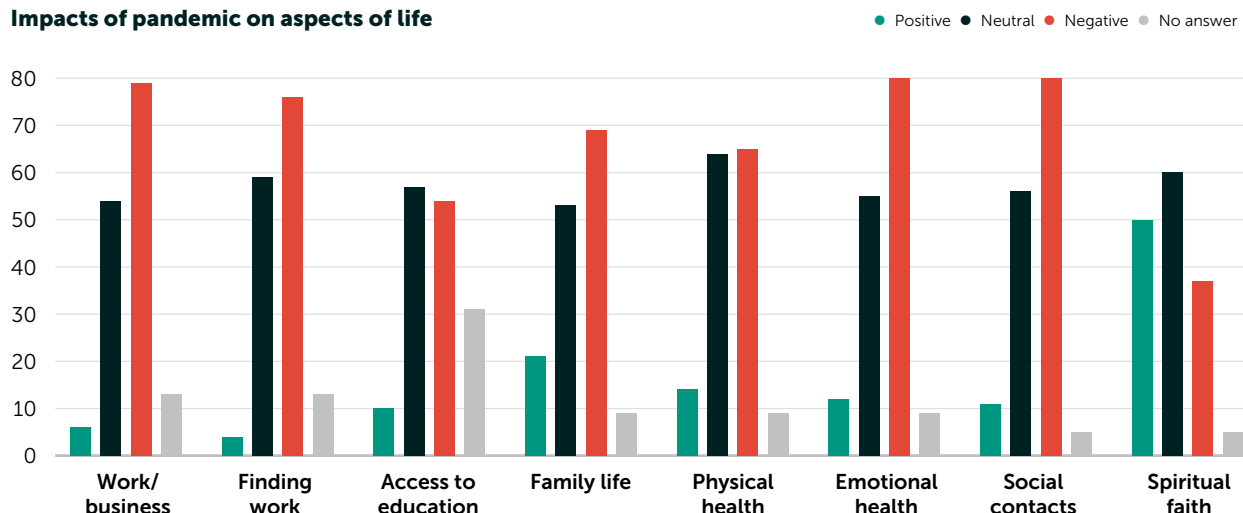


Self-reported debt at the end of the month



Note: Figures are numbers, not percentages. Around 40% have no debt, and some of these may have reasonably good incomes. Most undocumented people cannot borrow except from friends or family and cannot access municipal help for debt relief.

Impacts of pandemic on aspects of life



Note: Interestingly, the only positive effects overall were for the spiritual dimension.

debate in the Netherlands about tackling inequalities in cities, to reduce crime, poverty and despair. We advocate a politics of hope to overcome these divides and misperceptions of vital areas like the neighbourhoods in focus. At neighbourhood, city and national level, all migrants' needs and skills need attention, documented and undocumented. For migrant youth, especially, opportunities are needed to break social isolation, stigma and growing poverty. Our team is keen to encourage those working in the

municipality of The Hague to regularly visit these neighbourhoods and hear from these migrants themselves about how to achieve more inclusive development at the local level. There are already numerous pathways to genuine social and economic inclusion instigated by migrant residents, such as those driven by voluntary initiatives that make true the name of this City of Peace and Justice.

Our litmus test for MNOS is to bring the priorities and insights from migrant

residents themselves to the attention of the municipality of The Hague. Acknowledging their creativity and efforts at social inclusion, in both neighbourhoods, can help (re)build relationships of trust between the city authorities and local residents. This is a vital first step towards more inclusive development, employment opportunities and poverty reduction.

The full, edited transcript of this conversation with links to all background information is available in DevISSues online at <https://www.devissues.nl/>



Dr Mathias Rieger and student Hoa Ngo talk about the collaboration between ISS and the University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City.

The best of both worlds

– a Double Degree in Development Economics with the University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City



Mathias (M): Thanks for agreeing to this discussion. Could you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Hoa Ngo (H): Thanks, Matthias. My name is Hoa Ngo. I was born and raised in North Vietnam. I have a bachelor's degree in finance and banking and I worked for five years in Vietnam in market and customer research. After three or four years I began to feel that the implications of my job were not very ethical. The end result of my work was generally to advise my clients how to get their customers to buy and consume more: great for business but not very sustainable. I wanted to do something with social impact so began browsing Master programmes in social development with economics. I came across this programme at UEH offering the double degree with ISS.

M: How were the classes at UEH?

H: The classes were very small, just like at ISS. The lecturers have a broad knowledge which they apply to the Vietnamese context. The programme broadened my view and I now realise that Vietnam has its own way of doing things and that not everything from the West is great or effective.

M: You moved to the Netherlands for the second part of the double degree. Can you explain how that transition went?

H: I had to consider whether to do the second part of the programme at ISS because the pandemic situation was good in Vietnam at that time with everything remaining open. The Netherlands, on the other hand, was in a hard lockdown.

But I think that to live and study in a new country brings a lot of experience. This is especially true at ISS because of the diverse community here. I arrived in the Netherlands in January 2021 when it was really cold and snowing. It was the first time I had seen snow. I was really excited on the first day but by the next, mwah!

M: What did you appreciate most about the courses, the teachers and the institute as a whole?

H: At first it was a bit boring because everything was on Zoom. Also, I didn't

stay in the ISS dormitory so I was also rather lonely. My perception changed when I joined a class about local development promotion led by Dr Georgina Gomez. It was in collaboration with The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS), making it even more diverse. Students from THUAS have more practical experience and are active in business, while students from ISS have a very good theoretical approach. We did a lot of project work and had to learn how to work and cooperate with people from different backgrounds. It was the first time I had ever worked with people from Latin America, from Africa. It was a very nice period with each of us bringing our own strengths to the projects.

'It was the first time I had ever worked with people from Latin America, from Africa.'

M: At ISS you were enrolled in the Economics of Development (ECD) Major. What makes this Major special and how is it different from other Majors at ISS?

H: It is very different because we focus on data and statistics. There's a joke that when all the Majors come together, ECD students usually understand what the other Majors are talking about but they don't understand us! Probably because we focus on quantitative research, with so-called complicated tools and methods, whereas the others rely more on qualitative research. What I see now is that the skills ECD taught us are the skills that the real world needs and are useful for finding work.

M: Your Research Paper (RP) was quite innovative. Could you tell us more about it?

H: My RP was about using the online price of products that are also sold in supermarkets to measure and track inflation and see whether the pandemic had an impact on their price. My case study was a multi-channel retailer in Vietnam. The innovative method you mentioned refers to how I collected the data. I had an assistant to help me build a web scraper which collected daily price data from two supermarkets in Vietnam. Every day the web scraper scraped around 7,000 products from their websites; I used the data to analyse how product prices changed over time and to see whether an increase in the number of COVID-19 infections had an impact on the consumer price of goods.

M: It was a fascinating piece of work, extremely innovative in terms of technique and with huge implications for policymakers.

Did the double degree and your experience at ISS help you find work?

H: Currently I'm working for Ikea as an insight analyst. I work on one of its projects, helping the team evaluate a new digital customer meeting point. I think I got this opportunity because of my experience working on multicultural projects in a multinational environment. One of the most important skills that I learned at ISS is to take a more methodical approach to research, to identify the limitations of earlier approaches and improve them.

M: Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

H: That is a very big question. I think that I will go with whatever opportunity comes to me. I am open to anything that might give me the opportunity to learn and explore new things.

M: How would you describe your journey from UEH in Vietnam to ISS and now IKEA?

H: As an emotional journey that helped open me up to new challenges.

The full, edited transcript of this conversation is reproduced on DevISSues online at www.devissues.nl.

Development and Change

Development and Change is an interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed journal devoted to the critical analysis and discussion of current issues of development. It was established by the ISS in 1969, in response to the perceived need for a multidisciplinary journal dealing with all aspects of development studies.

Volume 53, Number 3, May 2022

The Fracking Frontier in the United States: A Case Study of Foreign Investment, Civil Liberties and Land Ethics in the Shale Industry

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Thomas Grisaffi

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Hayley Jones

The Rightful Share: Land and Effective Claim Making in Odisha, India

Samantha Balaton-Chrimes, Sandeep Kumar Pattnaik

Polanyi's Double Movement and Capitalism Today

Richard Sandbrook

Double Movements and Disembedded Economies: A Response to Richard Sandbrook

Geoff Goodwin



Working Papers

The ISS Working Paper series provides a forum for work in progress which seeks to elicit comments and generate discussion. The series includes academic research by staff, PhD participants and visiting fellows, and award-winning research papers by graduate students.

Integrated justice approach to land reform: Why is it important and how? Cynthia Bejeno ISS Working Paper Series 690

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Using online prices for inflation estimation and pricing behaviour research: A case study from Vietnamese multichannel retailers during the COVID-19 pandemic Hoa Ngo Working Paper Series 693

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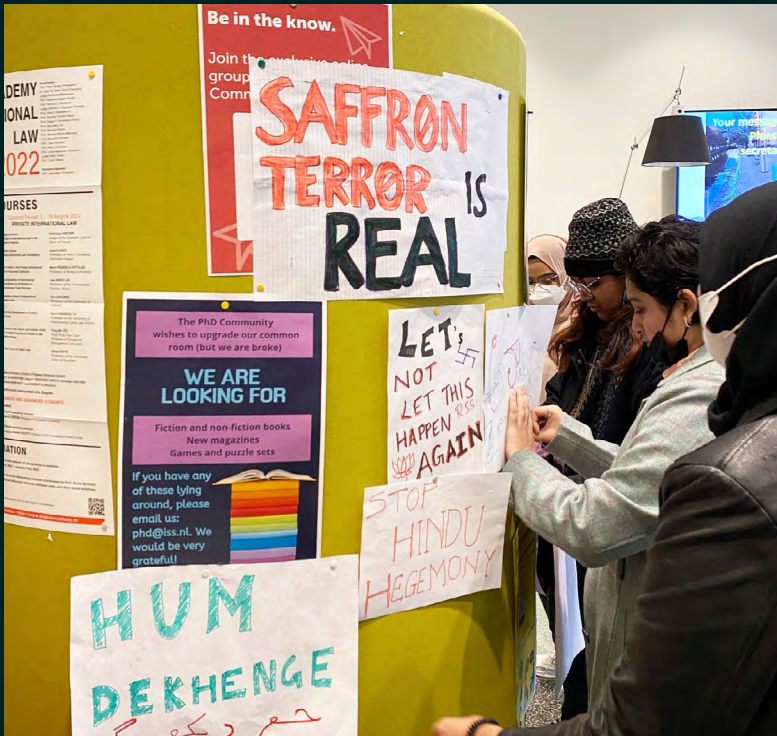
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Economic sanctions and the Russian war on Ukraine: A critical comparative appraisal Peter van Bergeijk Working Paper Series 699

STUDENT LIFE



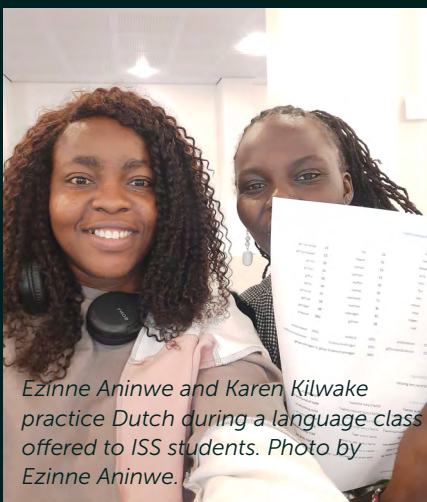
ISS students show solidarity with Muslim girls in India. Photo by Mariya Khan.



Having fun at the Uithof skating rink. Photo by Amina Said.



Rafy Abdul-Salam and Amanda Pokuah proudly show their trophy for coming second in the women's indoor soccer tournament.



Ezinne Aninwe and Karen Kilwake practice Dutch during a language class offered to ISS students. Photo by Ezinne Aninwe.



ISS students taking part in the sports day.

Feminist Methodologies:

Experiments, Collaborations and Reflections

As a contribution to the Well-being, Ecology, Gender and cOmmunity (WEGO-ITN) research, this book offers in-depth reflections on how feminists 'do' research with inspiring examples from around the world.

50k downloads in just over one month!

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(WEGO-ITN is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 764908)