

# THE AFTERLIFE OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH PROJECTS A PRIMER

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# The afterlife of academic research projects – a primer

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The Swiss Network for International Studies (SNIS) was founded in 2008, in the wake of the creation of the Graduate Institute for International and Development Studies (GIIDS), with the mission of being a platform for fostering research in international studies. Its birth occurred in the context of 10 years of experience accumulated and documented by the Geneva International Academic Network (GIAN), who had been funding projects lead by mixed teams (academics and international organisation practitioners) from all walks of academic and international policy life. GIAN's mission was to foster cooperation between Geneva University and institutes and international organisations, in the idea that the intellectual and policy capital present in this international centre needed to be cultivated, fructified and widely disseminated. Geneva's strength then, as today, was the fact that policy makers and scholars were interested in similar themes and topics, even if they did not always know about each other's interests. GIAN, through its network that spun both the worlds of academia and international organisations had the means of keeping an eye on what was "hot", interesting, and relevant, and in more than one case match made teams for particular research projects. Matchmaking was actually a term employed often denoting the kind of alliances that were established through GIAN funded projects, which included mixed teams and sometimes a (slight) push towards more cooperation<sup>1</sup>. The SNIS received

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<sup>1</sup> See "Collaborer pour mieux réussir", by Philippe Chastonay, Véronique Zesiger et Emmanuel Kabengele, in *Les Liaisons fructueuses*, GIAN, 2008, p. 190.

an extended mandate reaching beyond Geneva-based universities, towards the whole spectrum of academic institutions on the Swiss territory.

This study was commissioned by the SNIS in order to identify what became of GIAN funded projects after their conclusion. Most of these projects ran for two or more years, making not just the financial, but also the human investment an important one. It is believed that finding out how and which of their results and outputs continued to travel beyond the official closing event (that each project had to organise) can provide the SNIS and other interested actors with ideas of how to best guide current and future projects. Also, these projects' afterlives might suggest the most efficient funding options depending on the aims of each project submitted to SNIS.

The basic assumption behind this initiative is: if a project goes on past its conclusion, in various forms this is a desirable and good thing, from a perspective of sustainability.

The nature of academic research and projects carries an in-built element of the perennial: publications and accounts are there to feed other researches and publications, as well as new discoveries. However, there are forms of continuation which are more purposeful, such as the building of training programmes, establishing a research and policy agenda, popularisation of content, etc.

The GIAN book published on its 10 years of activity, "Les liaisons fructueuses", became a precious instrument for understanding and guiding research on the topic, as were the interviews performed with former team members of GIAN funded projects.

As previously mentioned, the main aim of this study is to find out

1. What happened with (certain) projects after their conclusion
2. What kind of links have been created between academics and IO staff working in mixed teams on projects; have they survived and in what form
3. What identifiable impacts certain projects had, beyond expected ones and with what elements concerning teams, nature of the project, etc. they are related.

A first part of this report lists the number of funded projects and their type, presenting their most common products by type of funding.

A second part presents five projects whose leaders were interviewed and presented ways in which their projects continued after their conclusion, thus offering ideas and avenues for how other projects could go on. This part engages with the three elements enumerated above and analyses how they were played out in relation to these projects.

A third part includes a discussion of the ideas and reflections that project members expressed in the book “Liaisons fructueuses”, as well as the ones made during the interviews performed with respect to the very useful contributions of collaborative research projects.

## A note on methodology

Interviews as well as the writing concerning research projects and their evolution after conclusion allowed for the development of a few indicators that would show what is the life of a project after its formal conclusion.

One element to be taken into account is that when a research project concludes, it is supposed to have achieved the goals, objectives and results it set for itself, namely specific findings, products, and the advancement of knowledge. Unless another specific project is derived from the initial one, or an explicit requirement asks for a continuation of the project after the conclusion, there is no obligation to keep going with the research, and, more often than not, teams move to the next one or to different undertakings altogether. Hence, in the absence of efforts especially focused on promoting a completed project, many occurrences related to it are incidental and sometimes downright surprising.

The following are considered to be indicators that a project has an afterlife:

- dissemination strategy, events - content, relationships
- another project derived from the initial one - content
- institutionalisation and thus consolidation of the project strategies and aims in further actions - content, relationships
- elaboration and perpetuation of practices in the given area of research - practices
- further use of the materials and tools elaborated as part of the project - content
- further collaboration between team members and institutions of the initial project - relationships, practices

These factors can be grouped under three categories of afterlife: content, relationships, practices.

The important common feature running through these indicators is the fact that the link between the initial project and what followed after is explicit or at least clear. It is not necessarily causal in nature, but neither is it lost in the mist of follow-up and relations that postdates the closing of a project.

In order to understand how these work and come about after the conclusion of a project, semi-structured interviews were organised with project leaders whose projects have an aftermath (see below).

The interviews sought to map out what happened throughout the projects in terms of research and team processes, how and if all the aims were achieved and if, beyond initial aims, further ones developed, and under what form. The questions present in the semi-structured interviews were as follows:

- Description of projects aims
- Description of how the partnership within the team was constructed
- Expected and unexpected elements throughout the duration of the project concerning results and products
- Continuation of the projects in terms of new funding/initiatives, consolidation of partnership, use of tools developed, institutionalisation of the project or partnership

Depending on the responses obtained, the interviewer asked for further clarification and details in the matters relevant to the object of research.

Time constraints as well as the reduced availability of a significant number of former project leaders did not allow for a large-scale inquiry, but rather for the establishment of five proto-types of project aftermath. To be generalisable on a grander scale, these schemes would need to be tested against many other concluded projects, possibly in other academic and institutional contexts.

At the same time, a typology of projects that simply concluded, with no purposeful or incidental follow-up would also be useful in order to establish what kind of projects, teams and collaborations are to be encouraged to continue. With respect to this, a review based on documents in GIAN archives and web research, indicates the following:

- as previously mentioned, small grant projects were generally intended for very precise and punctual events – conferences, workshops, short communication series, hence not intended for any kind of continuation; the only exception to this was the small grant project presented in the pages below
- many, if not most, of the long-term projects looked at relatively bounded (both in time and scope) and well defined issues, and had very precise products in mind; it is suggested (but not yet substantially confirmed) and intuition would also uphold, that focusing on relatively narrow issues gives less scope for a project's afterlife

The general aim of this study is to provide a series of criteria according to which funding entities can evaluate and encourage projects, and which go beyond the standard academic measures - such as sound research design, relevance and feasibility - to sustainability, future developments, usefulness (long and short-term) and long-term research consolidation.

# GIAN funded projects and their aims

Aside from being imperatively interdisciplinary, GIAN funded projects had to fulfil an explicit request: utility for public policy purposes (*utilité en aval*), which would make their processes and results interesting for international organisations<sup>2</sup>. All submitted projects had to explain what was the utility of their expected results, beyond the publications and the conferences that are the “natural” products of academic research. Each project had to be used for, or at least address, a question of international relevance<sup>3</sup>. To a certain extent this requirement automatically introduced an “afterlife” element to each project.

There were five types of useful results identified by the GIAN team:

1. Recommendations for different governments and international organisations (4 projects)
2. Didactic material and training programmes (20 projects)
3. Knowledge and expertise transfer, and capacity building (8 projects)
4. Manuals for practitioners (8)
5. Articles, books, websites, guides (77)
6. Benefits for team members (77) (career development, training)

During its years of activity the GIAN funded a total of 77 collaborative research projects, combining different disciplines, and 36 small grant initiatives. Whilst projects would normally last from two to three years, small grant initiatives would typically last a few months. Most often, they would be projects for the valorisation of existing results, or for rounding-off previous initiatives. Small grants would also fund seminars and conferences, as well as publications.

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<sup>2</sup> *Les liaisons fructueuses*, p.94.

<sup>3</sup> *Les relations fructueuses*, p.94.



Unlike the SNIS, GIAN rules allowed for both project and small grant initiatives to be lead by non-academic leaders, coming from the IO and NGO world. Of the total of 77 projects 19 were lead by non-academic project leaders, and of the 36 small grants, 16 were lead by non-academic leaders. Proportionally, small grants were more often conducted by non-academic staff than the other projects, which suggests: that it was comparatively easier to get funding as a non-academic leader for small grant initiatives, and that more proposals were made by non-academics for small grants than for projects. This fits with the fact that non-academics (particularly those coming from the IO and NGO worlds) work with shorter timeframes and concentrate on specific products, such as conferences or training modules. It also confirms that the needs and interests of Academia and the policy community are slightly different: one is mostly interested in discovering things and in a second place disseminate its discoveries, whereas the other is more interested in effecting an impact through different means, on policy.

Overall, of 113 funded items, 78 were lead by academics, which means 30% of funding went to initiatives that were lead by non-academics. This represents a little less than a third of the total, which means that the IO and NGO communities were represented and listened to relatively intently. During this ten-year period, projects gave rise to partnerships with 28 international organisations and agencies out of 36 based in Switzerland (as counted by the Swiss Mission to the UN) and 109 project cooperation agreements.

When looking at these results, it is important to bear in mind that knowing about the opportunities offered by the GIAN was also a factor in receiving proposals from outside academic circles. In a few instances, those who were not part of Academia admitted not knowing about them and being both surprised and grateful for their existence.

## Life after the conclusion of a project – five accounts

A traditional academic research project generally concludes with a series of publications, a conference and a project report. Depending on the nature of the project policy recommendations might arise. As specified in the introductory section of this study, follow-up and follow-through after the conclusion of such projects is not a very sustained practice, as emphasis is placed on evaluation in view of funding. Being projects that had a certain aspiration for policy impact, GIAN funded initiatives sometimes had a different trajectory, in the sense that, after their conclusion under the GIAN aegis, they continued to pursue an itinerary, through different products, such as documentary films, training modules, training guides and consultant services. Amongst the funded items, five projects were examined in detail, in order to explore the avenues that projects may take after they conclude. These instances gather together the main ways in which the “afterlife” of a project manifested itself.

Three of the initiatives were led by academic staff, and two of them were led by NGO activists, which, as shall be seen, influenced the different forms of continuation of activities, but did not affect whether it occurred or not. They cover a wide spectrum within the realm of international studies, ranging from the analysis of international organisations to natural and conservation sciences.

The projects examined were chosen to represent the variety of initiatives funded, going from academic researches - extended over two years - to projects lasting a few months, lead by both academics and NGO representatives.

# Refugees and the Global Cold War project

**Project duration:** 2 years

**Funding:** CHF 220'000

**Lead Institution:** Academic - IUHEI

**IO partner:** United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)

This is the account of a research project that lasted initially two years, and subsequently evolved into an institutional set-up and a specific reflection on the topic it treated.

Led by Professor Jussi Hanhimäki, this project debuted in 2006 and concluded in 2008.

Its afterlife includes five of the six indicators enumerated above:

- longstanding IO-Academia collaboration in subsequent projects
- dissemination strategy, events
- another project derived from the initial one
- institutionalisation and thus consolidation of the project strategies and aims in further activities
- perpetuation and knowledge of practices in the given area of research
- further use of the materials and tools elaborated as part of the project

The main aim of this project (which had already obtained funding for its first two years from the Ford Foundation) was to classify and structure UNHCR archives, which held documents regarding refugee movements during the Cold War. This period represented a blind spot in refugee and migration studies, as primary material was not easily accessible, nor had research trends focused on it. By the same token this initiative provided the physical resources to perform a task that operational organisations do not have the time to accomplish. The GIAN requirements pushed for the formulation of

a project that combined research with archival work. To this end a team was set up to work with UNHCR archives and archivists in order to develop a filing system that could benefit both UNHCR and the wider needs of the research community.

An interesting feature concerning this project is that the initial idea came from a PhD student who was interested in the Cold War and the UNHCR and was working on the UNHCR archives.

This situation reveals that a project does not always have a clear idea as a starting point. A question that is interesting for a researcher may open a realm of possibilities, including the combination between academic interest and policy relevance within the same research project. Then there are different constraints that must be taken into account. This element revealed itself important for the stage after the conclusion of the project, because, having achieved the envisaged goals and products - the reorganisation of the UNHCR archive, a series of book chapters on refugees, an edited issue for *Refugee Survey Quarterly* and a conference on the issue - the initiative could get additional funding from other sources, such as the Swiss National Research Fund, which supported it for another four years.

The experience and knowledge built throughout this process allowed the project leaders and coordinators to take advantage of institutional opportunities and set up a research centre specialised on migration issues, under the umbrella of the Graduate Institute for International Studies. The Institute provides the core funding, working space and support for additional fund-raising efforts.

The centre performs research on several aspects of migration, including, but not limited to, refugee questions. It also hosts other projects, such as the Global Detention Initiative. It organises a week-long training module on migration for the Graduate Institute's summer school on international relations, led by the former coordinator of the GIAN funded project, and contributes to the debate on the topic in different other ways: organisation of conferences, by welcoming students and researchers interested in the topic, and through the series "Conversations on global migration governance", which keeps involving the UNHCR and other relevant parties.

On a staff level, some of the initial team members have continued to work with the bigger programme, some have gone on to work in the NGO world and some have pursued other careers connected to academic research.

Institutional ties with the UNHCR and the archive department were strengthened and continue to bear fruit on different occasions such as the ones mentioned above.

A most important element to retain from the example of this project and its evolution is that one research initiative gave rise to something greater than it, both in institutional and intellectual reflection terms. The project sparked not only the set-up of a research centre, but started to shape debate in matters of refugee and migration movements mapping and analysis. According to Prof. Hanhimäki, the prominent afterlife indicator in this case was the institutionalisation of the project. This was an initiative that occurred along the way and became opportune according to the needs and trends that were developing in the field. An element to emphasise is the fact that it was the PROJECT that was institutionalised and not the collaboration with the UNHCR. This was a constitutive element of the project, but not the object of formalisation. This example represents one form of capitalisation of research, which, in the academic world is comparatively rare.

# Mémoires audiovisuelles de la migration sénégalaise

Audiovisual memories of Senegalese migration

**Project duration:** 5 months

**Funding:** CHF 50'000

**Lead Institution:** Academic - UNIGE

**IO Partner:** UNESCO, International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

This project was a small-grant initiative, requiring a relatively low level of funding, CHF 50'000 for three months, which proves that small amounts of money can be effectively invested in short-term projects.

Amongst the indicators mentioned above for project afterlife, this project exhibited

- a dissemination strategy of results
- another project derived and connected to the initial one
- the perpetuation of practices in a given area of research
- further use of the materials and tools elaborated as part of the project
- further collaboration between team members and the institutions of the initial project

The product envisaged by this project was a documentary film on Senegalese immigration and its challenges in host countries, conceived as a complementary activity to the programmes already undertaken by the University of Geneva, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNESCO. The producers, part of the University's academic staff, worked together with IO colleagues in order to illustrate the policy issues at stake in a humane manner.

A film as a product of academic inquiry is a rarity. Finding funds destined to its

production from academic oriented donors is extremely hard.

In their interview, Prof. Cattacin and Dr. Jenny Maggi pointed out that the GIAN structure of funding, which was comparatively flexible, was adapted to the kind of atypical product that a film is in the academic realm.

As a product, a film has long life more or less embedded in its nature and function. Certainly, this also depends on what its authors intended to achieve with it. The film had not been fully edited, before it started receiving invitations to festivals and public projections. Being itself a tool through which research and analysis were valorised on a specific topic, it quickly became a means by which the subject of South-North migration was illustrated to Swiss national authorities dealing with the matter. It subsequently made the rounds of conferences on development and migration. At the time of the interview with the project leaders, the news had reached them that the film “Tukki-bi. Le Voyage” had become a teaching material in the programmes of various higher education institutions training social workers in the matter of dealing with migration and migrants.

The rather unexpected itinerary that this small - grant product has appears to be the result of a happy coincidence between the topic it treated - migration - and the form with which it chose to approach it, a visual document.

This leads to the idea that, when a research project is developed, it is worth thinking what type of products its results can yield. As previously mentioned, conferences, reports, articles and books are the traditional academic products. It is important to gauge the relevance of the topic researched and what echoes it might elicit with a wider public if other ways of sharing the discoveries are used. Films are one example, but public websites, interactive tools, informal meetings might be hypotheses to explore.

In terms of collaboration between Academia and IOs, the contacts established for this particular project were sustained, even when IO staff changed mandate. The new staff member in charge of migration issues at UNESCO “inherited” the projects with UNIGE, and the former staff member also kept the professional connection, assisting in the new projects developed by Dr. Maggi and Prof. Cattacin and currently funded by the SNIS. This project can be considered a continuation of the previous one, inscribed in an approach that seeks to consolidate and develop a particular approach to migration issues, going through the tool of cinematic experience.

# Etudes des politiques de commerce international d'espèces menacées; Gestion de la biodiversité et de la tortue marine

Study of international trade policies concerning endangered species; Biodiversity management and marine tortoises

**Project 1 duration:** 2 years

**Funding:** CHF 300'000

**Lead Institution:** United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)

**Academic Partners:** IUED

**Project 2 duration:** 2 years

**Funding:** CHF 250'000

**Lead Institution:** Geneva Natural History Museum

**Partners:** WWF, International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), IUED

These two projects were chosen because Prof. Marc Hufty, from the Graduate Institute for International and Development studies acted in both cases as the academic partner. (The coordinators came from the UNEP and the Museum of National History, respectively, but, unfortunately, both had retired and were unavailable for interviews). Prof. Hufty brought the project “memory” needed in terms of details of what it meant to work in initiatives which were not lead by academics, but by representatives of the IO and scientific communities.

These two projects had in common their very concrete aims of obtaining more information on animal species under threat from man-made conditions and using that information in the elaboration of legal frameworks that would protect them. They



achieved their results, in the form of material for the consolidation of the convention on protecting rare species in the context of international trade and getting more data on marine tortoises.

It was interesting to note that the reason why the academic partner was chosen for these two projects was a need for methodology and rigorous analysis, as well as a social perspective on the matters under examination. As Prof. Hufty mentioned in his interview, the UNEP and the Museum of Natural History were in need of skills and a perspective typical of academic inquiry in the social sciences. These projects responded to both policy and nature conservation needs.

In terms of afterlife indicators for the two projects, of note is

- the perpetuation of knowledge and practices in the given area of research
- another project derived from the initial one - in a peculiar form
- inclusion in an institution and consolidation of project strategies and aims in other activities

The first project, concerning regulations of the trade in species under threat was an initiative meant to bring more clarity in an area of international trade that was understudied, and under-regulated. In other words, the project addressed an issue of policy reform. It was also meant to raise awareness of the questions in the relevant areas and to design an evaluation guide for reports and other projects concerning the matter. It is worth noting that, given the nature of the project, elements of “afterlife” were already embedded in it as it aimed to influence policy.

The research related to marine tortoises aimed to design strategies for nature conservation, whilst at the same time keeping in mind the needs of human communities related to them.

The two projects yielded an almost complete spectrum of products, ranging from the traditional reports, through conferences and websites, to a documentary film shown on the France Television group in 2007.

In these cases, Prof. Hufty underlined that the “afterlife” of the projects was interesting through the details that survived and developed. On a macro scale, both initiatives continued to exist, by developing other research projects and even a research

commission. However, the smaller “off-shoots” are encountered more seldom. The collaboration projects helped the partners understand how each one functions from an institutional point of view. The academic partners in the first project wrote an analysis and an unplanned report on the way the Secretariat of the Convention for the regulation of the trade in protected species works, which eventually became a project in itself. Prof. Hufty currently works as a consultant on different commissions and working groups dealing with nature conservation. This grants access to the inner mechanisms of the institutions to different students interested in studying them and ensures a steady, if “under the radar” contact between IOs and relevant academic experts.

Such examples of project afterlife suggest that its existence depends to a great extent on the quality of interpersonal relations built during previous interactions, and Prof. Hufty emphasised the fact that it was his and his team’s interest and enthusiasm, combined with examples of what such collaborations could bring, that helped the relation going further. It is worth noting that in the context of changing academic teams (in which PhD students come and go, often depending of the funding for certain projects) it is often the academic leader who remains as torch-bearer for the results of the projects.

# Non-State armed actors and anti-personnel land mines

**Project duration:** 2 years

**Funding:** CHF 120'315

**Leading institution:** Geneva Call - NGO

**Partners:** United Nations Mine Action Centre, IUHEI, Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)

This project was led by Dr. Anki Sjöberg, senior project manager at Geneva Call, and had a team comprised of NGO, IO, and academic staff. Its main aim was to map out an issue that until 2005 had not been explored almost at all, namely the use of anti-personnel land mines by non-state actors, and to develop materials and tools with which to understand it.

The afterlife indicators present for the project were the following

- consolidation of project strategies and aims
- perpetuation of practices and knowledge in the given area of research
- further use of the materials and tools elaborated as part of the project

The main products yielded by the project were reports and articles in specialised outlets. However, being a rather pioneering initiative in its field, the products quickly became a useful tool for the internal activity of Geneva Call, who negotiates with non-state armed actors the ratification of the convention against the use of anti-personnel landmines. Furthermore, it was taken over by others involved in advocacy operations.

The fact of using these materials eventually opened their way into international fora, which, not only adopted them as evidence of best-practice, but adopted the approach and methodology used to develop them in order to further their research and activities.

One long lasting influence of this particular research project was introducing a reporting format in a leading publication in the area, The Landmine Monitor, which, in its turn, determined a whole monitoring trend related to the mine issue.

This initiative is an example of a concluded project, which continued its life mainly through the use of the tools it brought into existence and the effects that this use had. This brings again into focus that the choice of how the results are presented and made public depends on the nature of the subject treated, and, of course, the aims of those who work on it.

In terms of collaboration and team members, the landmine project exhibits the same pattern (which tends to be most often encountered) of steady maintenance of contacts between different communities, working together as the necessities of different initiatives require.

The land-mine project and its products bring into focus the issue of the stage at which an issue is incorporated and made into a project. As stated above, the question of land mine use by non-state actors was not new in itself, but efforts to engage with such entities that fall between the legal definitions and web of international regulatory frameworks were. In order to address this issue more effectively, research was needed into the profiles of such groups. GIAN supported a project, which essentially was placed in the beginning of the development of knowledge and practice in a specific area. Chances were, and subsequently they were confirmed by the reception of the project's results, that this primary project was going to set a standard and open a road in the matter. In terms of project afterlife, this is very important, since, as Dr. Sjöberg herself confirmed, the knowledge and way of looking at land-mine use by non state actors became embedded in subsequent approaches.

The seeds of a project's afterlife are sown in the use and implementation that is being sought for its results. An interesting note is that, since it developed tools that were going to be primarily useful to those who developed them, in other words, they were created for some other institution or entity, they found a use in subsequent activities of Geneva Call and other fellow actors in the field of activity.

# Forced evictions and Olympic Games

**Project duration:** 2 years

**Funding:** CHF 250'000

**Leading institution:** Centre On Housing Rights and Evictions - NGO

**Partners:** ONU Habitat, UNIGE, IUHEI

**Post conclusion extension:** 4 months, CHF 7'000

This project dealt with the matter of house evictions and the right to housing, in the particular context of cities hosting Olympic Games.

The project was lead by the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions and included a team of academics from the Graduate Institute of International Studies.

Its interest stems in the fact that, the very nature of the matter at hand and the event that it examines makes it relevant, at least every two years, which is as good as saying it keeps up its relevance constantly. Hence, the materials that have been written on the subject, a study on seven case studies and a guide of practical recommendations are regularly solicited and used.

However, despite the continuous relevance of the topic, this project exhibits only one of the indicators listed as proving a continuation or “afterlife”.

- dissemination of results and participation in relevant events, by one of the members of the initial team, Ms. Claire Mahon, author of the main report produced by this project

The peculiarity of this initiative is that the institution that undertook it, the Centre on housing rights and evictions, did not want to pursue research or activities after the conclusion of the project. However, certain team members, which also had academic interests and activities have pursued research on the topic and continue to present the reports and guidelines in different settings, mostly academic.

Ms. Claire Mahon, who was part of the initial research team, is regularly invited to

training workshops and information sessions and has obtained additional funds from GIAN in order to update the research and present it to as wide a public as possible. In addition to that, this research has been included into greater legal studies concerning human rights.

One of the main ways in which the project continued in terms of influence and impact that it had was that it was a major input into the Special Rapporteur on Housing Rights' thematic report to the Human Rights Council in 2009, on mega-events and housing rights. Some of the team members continue to teach, train, talk and write on the topic, using the original resources, and awareness raise amongst other advocates, academics and those working on housing rights around the world. The main focus has often been on spreading the message in other disciplines such as the sport for peace and development world, or urban planning, etc. There was an important "follow-up advocacy tour" in North America, funded separately by GIAN before it became SNIS - that attracted a lot of media attention in the US and Canada - Public Radio Chicago, many public meetings and meetings with the Organising Committee of Olympics in Vancouver, as well as public lectures. Use has equally been made of the original project work in the Housing and Land Rights Network's report on the 2010 Delhi Commonwealth Games. Importantly, the report also had an impact on bidding criteria for the 2016 Olympics, concerning the legacy of the Olympic buildings.

More than the other instances, the itinerary of this project exemplifies how it gets carried through individuals and by the nature of the subject that was analysed. To a certain extent, it can be said that it continues to travel almost in spite of its initiator, who abandoned it as an active research topic. The role of personal interest and engagement is very much highlighted in this case.

## Concluding remarks

These five examples illustrate the different types of “afterlife” research projects can develop. As previously stated, these forms are not exhaustive, and a more numerous population of cases could bring forward other instances.

Starting from the minimum common denominator in terms of products, namely reports, journal articles, books, guides, conferences, some projects can reach institutionalisation, as the refugee related research showed, which is the most perennial of forms, since it leads to sustained and wider activities and consolidated contact between those who associated in its development; some can reach pedagogical status, as the immigration project with the documentary film, did - this case is important because, unlike other instances, producing a training tool was not the primary aim of the project, but the needs of the field required this use; some continue with other research projects, like the nature conservation initiatives, because they responded to policy needs, and developed additional “off-shoots” if during the initial research other needs were identified; some projects continue their existence through the influence they have exercised in a particular area, such as the landmines one; certain projects have only individual team members and researchers to rely on for their perpetuation.

The indicators used to identify the existence of project “afterlife” were developed following the interviews performed and the reading of project reports. The first important characteristics they point to, is that projects can have an incidental and a purposeful continuation. This might seem trivial and self-evident, but it is crucial for anyone engaged in a research project, because it makes all the difference in terms of openness. If a team is prepared for unexpected returns once the results of its projects are made public, then it will be possible to seize opportunities for continuation when they arise. If it is considered that a project stops with its formal conclusion, then such opportunities, even if they arise, might not be used.

Intended continuation is generally envisaged in the project, and it is linked to a dissemination strategy of results, and the explicit planning of a subsequent project. It is important to note that one must also differentiate between different types of continuation: pursuit of knowledge elaboration and accumulation through other projects, and use of results for impact, training and teaching.

Indicators of incidental continuation are prolongations of a project that were not planned for initially. These can be the development of new rapports between team members, such as the Biodiversity project showed, impact of policy as in the Olympic Games project, the adoption of research and reporting practices by a whole practice community as in the Land Mine and Non-State Actors case, and, strongest and perhaps most unexpected of all, the transformation of a project in a training programme, as it happened with the Refugee and the Cold-war research. The list of incidental continuations is in fact longer than the planned ones, for the simple reason that it is hard, in the planning and design phase of a project to foresee what might happen. Certain projects have a large scope and their teams' ambitions are great, but the numerous "unknown unknowns" that influence any such enterprise obscure somewhat the horizon. With the possible exception of young fields of research, where impact of projects can be estimated, openness towards unexpected avenues of life is crucial. Last, but not least, individual commitment and enthusiasm is the ingredient without which none of the above can materialise.

A further needed distinction is between the results of projects and the practices they have developed. Both can continue to operate, together or separately. Good examples of such instances are the projects on biodiversity and land mines. In the case of the marine tortoises project, the results concerning avenues for policy making were included in official decisions AND the collaboration practices between Prof. Hufty and the members of the CITES commission continued, as he was invited to perform a further study on the practices of the organisation itself, which had not been initially envisaged. In the case of the land-mine project, reporting practices developed throughout its duration came to be adopted by the land-mine community at large, as this had not been approached by anyone else before.

These examples highlight the importance of the following elements, to be taken into account when examining a project

- the nature of the project - **exploratory** (like the refugee, nature conservation and landmine researches), **analytic-descriptive** (the Senegalese migration and the Olympic Games research); when a project is exploratory, it has quite a high chance of establishing an agenda and forms for future research that might yield further collaboration and activities; when a project is analytic-descriptive it needs to find more unusual forms of expression in order to be noted and continued
- the timing of the project - is the issue contained to a restrained or a wider (including several sectors and communities) current agenda, is it



occurring regularly or is it more of a one-off type of topic that needs to be sustained through special efforts;

- the audience of the project - which is another way of asking if the topic treated and the methodology used are transversal to several sectors, they address only a limited issue etc.;
- what is the best means for conveying both the process and the results of the research according to the nature of the research; traditional academic analysis and policy reports are obvious choices, but some subject matter might be photogenic, easy to combine with current affairs and debates, or adapted to other forms of transmission, such as websites, newspaper articles, video and audio documentaries, posters;
- a more sensitive and possibly less straight forward factor to take into consideration - linked with the issue of the nature of a project - is why the project exists in the first place; does it aim to bring more knowledge and practices to a restrained group of individuals interested in a topic, academic and policy makers, to develop tools later to be used in other explorations, within and without the boundaries of the initial study, or to build a body of knowledge and practices for the benefit of society at large; to a certain extent this issue is related to the role that Academia wishes to play in the City (as defined in the IO-Academia collaboration report) and quite simply with the question of being of service;

As a last note on the presence of indicators, it is worthwhile to notice that only one of the five projects included all the indicators used to identify a possible afterlife. This was the Refugee and Cold War project, which was also the one that evolved into an institutional form.

The project on the Olympic Games is also an outlier, for the opposite reason, namely that only one indicator was clearly exhibited - the fact that the project continued through the activity of one of the authors of its main reports, invited to speak, train and teach on the topic on a constant basis.

The indicator most often missing in the examples provided was the one related to continuation of the project through further collaboration of team members and institutions participating in the initial project. It is ironic, but not a coincidence that the weakest link is also the feature on which GIAN and now SNIS has set its sights to strengthen. These examples show it is possible to have collaboration for the time of a

project, but the challenge is to go beyond that.

In order to understand better the possibilities of achieving such a result, this study suggests two further avenues to explore. One, as previously stated, the examination of more concluded projects in other contexts, in order to refine the set of indicators and conditions in which they arise; related to that, a more challenging task is the exploration of modes of collaboration within mixed teams in terms of how the process is structured: hierarchically or horizontally, does it depend on one person, or each member of the team is appropriating the project, are there competing priorities etc. This type of research would complete the previous SNIS study on collaboration patterns and might suggest in which conditions a project might enjoy an afterlife.

# Reflections on research projects funded by GIAN

In other realms of life, only a tiny part of investment goes into the actual project, and the vast majority goes in support actions (see IT, commercial products, re-producing etc). Academic research projects are special in that a lot of time and investment goes into the period before products - books, articles, websites etc - at best fifty percent, at worst eighty percent elaboration and twenty percent production. Hence, generally, funding agencies and such focus on feasibility before the product, and less energy is invested afterwards. Also the fact that most such research is available freely to a wide public, does not make an incentive to cater to it, further than the researchers' own motivation to do so.

The aim of this report was to find out the main factors that determine or at least participate in the "afterlife" of a research project.

During the research and interview period, a question kept appearing in between the lines and in the background of all the other questions that sought to identify the processes at work. It was what some would call a philosophical and existential question, namely, why do individuals, whether academics, IO or NGO staff choose to undertake projects. Although this form of activity and structuring of different practices is widespread in organisations, it is neither inevitable nor always desirable. And yet, proposing a project has become something of a staple instrument for getting funding.

In the context of this report, it would seem that there are two possible answers to the question of why projects. One is that the initiators have a keen interest in the subject they research and a project, with all the deliberation and planning it requires seems to be the best adapted form to tackle the issue. The other is that projects are part of a common accepted language and a relatively secure way of getting a proposal through. It is certainly not easy to determine which initiative corresponds to either of these instances, but one indication of openness can be how the project fared after its conclusion. If its products "travel" and open the road for other initiatives, chances are the initial interest that sparked it is still there.

Another important element the GIAN funded projects underline is what could be called the intangible benefits of collaboration within mixed teams.

If the tangible benefits are the project results and the different means of giving them value, the intangible or, rather, more fungible benefits, are in the network creation processes.

This network creation might not be institutionalised, but rapports are built that can be used in other initiatives.

One interesting fact that came to light when doing research for this report is that most of the project leaders that came from NGO and IO structures are now retired. However, former team members from the Academia could still appeal to them in terms of getting in contact with staff members of their former organizations, getting ideas about how to proceed in order to build a partnership, or simply finding out how a structure works and what would the best interlocutor be in that structure for a particular project.

A lot of this type of lasting contacts goes “under the radar” of both the academic and IO communities, but it is often the factor that helps spark an idea, a proposal or a project.

GIAN funded projects cultivated a variety of contacts, which participated at the different stages of development of a project. The most vulnerable and “needy” stage is often the beginning and the conclusion and dissemination one, which requires as much support from the outside academic community as possible. One, in order to build productive synergies, the other, in order to keep them going.

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