

# Thomas Balbach

## Curriculum Vitae

Leuven, Belgium — thomas.balbach@kuleuven.be — thomasbalbach.github.io

### EDUCATION

---

#### PhD, Public Administration

Period: October 2022 – expected October 2026  
KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

#### Erasmus Mundus Master of Science (MS), Public Sector Innovation and eGovernance

Period: 2020 – 2022  
KU Leuven (joint degree with University of Münster and Tallinn University of Technology)  
*Graduated summa cum laude with congratulations of the examination committee.*

#### Bachelor of Arts (BA), Political Science

Period: 2012 – 2016  
Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

#### Erasmus exchange, European Social and Political Studies (full year)

Period: 2013 – 2014  
University College London (UCL), London, United Kingdom

### EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

---

#### PhD Candidate & Researcher

Time Period: September 2022 – Present  
KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium  
*Public procurement research; applied methods include text-as-data and machine learning (e.g., STM, BERT, causal forest, random forest), and process modeling (conditional process analysis, BPMN). Uses R primarily and Python for selected machine learning tasks.*

#### Research Stay

Time Period: June–July 2024  
Evans School, University of Washington, Seattle, United States  
*Empirical analysis of the role of policy goals in government contracts with Professor Benjamin M. Brunjes.*

#### Senior Business Analyst

Time Period: February 2020 – September 2020  
Sopra Steria, Brussels, Belgium

#### Business Analyst (eu-LISA; National Registry of Belgium – NewBelpic)

Time Period: November 2018 – February 2020  
Sopra Steria, Brussels, Belgium  
*Functional analysis, test case definition, end-user testing and acceptance, increment validation, and baseline documentation.*

#### Junior Business Analyst (Federal Public Service Finance Belgium – AEOI)

Time Period: June 2018 – November 2018  
Sopra Steria, Brussels, Belgium  
*Supported analyses for Automated Exchange of Tax Information (AEOI).*

#### Business Developer Germany/Austria/Switzerland

Time Period: August 2017 – June 2018  
CitizenLab, Brussels, Belgium  
*Led market entry into German-speaking markets for an e-participation solution; developed market strategy, tested value propositions using open data, closed first deals in Germany.*

### **External Collaborator for Research and Analysis (fee-based)**

Time Period: April 2015 – June 2015

Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, Berlin, Germany

*Large-N survey analysis (descriptive statistics; cluster analysis), structured telephone interviews, and results visualization for briefings and presentations.*

### **Intern**

Time Period: June 2014 – September 2014

Senate Department for Economy, Energy, and Enterprises (Senatsverwaltung für Wirtschaft, Energie und Betriebe, Berlin, Germany)

*Prepared tender-related work (ERDF financing; market exploration; performance specifications), communications and documentation, and stakeholder coordination.*

### **Mentee Building Opportunities for Leadership and Development (BOLD) Immersion Program**

Time Period: September 2013 – February 2014

Google, Europe

*Immersion into Big Tech business models and systems.*

---

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **Journal Articles**

- Van de Walle S, Crompvoets J, Balbach T, Becker J, Brandt T, Clever L, Räckers M, Villena-Tagle C, Juuse E, Lember V (2025). *Translating between public administration and the digital. A study on the motivation and choices of digital governance students.* (Accepted) Information Polity.

### **Book Chapters**

- Plaček M, Rosell J, Howlett M, Migone A, Howlett A, Darnall N, Nemec J, Drechsler W, Dimand AM, Balbach T, Angelov N, Davis N, Fojtík R, Paswan P (2026). *Future of Green Public Procurement.* In Plaček M, Rosell J (eds.), *Green Public Procurement : Global Insights, National Strategies, and Future Directions for Sustainable Governance.* Springer Nature Switzerland AG.
- Balbach T (2023). *Geschafft? Wie Führungskräfte die Verwaltungsdigitalisierung im Sicherheits- und Verteidigungswesen in Deutschland und Großbritannien bestimmen.* In Krause TA, Schachtner C, Basanta TEP (eds.), *Handbuch Digitalisierung der Verwaltung.* Transcript Verlag.

### **Working Papers**

- “Toward a Theory of Perfunctory Government Contracts.”, Public Governance Institute, KU Leuven, Belgium.
- “The Pursuit of Public Interest Goals in Public Procurement. Evidence From Belgium.”, Public Governance Institute, KU Leuven, Belgium.

### **Conference Papers**

- Balbach T, Ducuing C, Ramya C, Santoro C. *Neoreactionary Ideology, Regulation & Governance.* Brown Bag Seminar of the Public Governance Institute; Leuven, Belgium (2025-04-16).
- Balbach T, Lammers W, Van de Walle S. *Do transaction properties explain the uptake of green public procurement? A vignette experiment in the United States.* IRSPM; Bologna, Italy (2025-04-08).
- Balbach T. *The Buyer-Side Fragmentation Problem of Self-Regulation. Evidence on Green Public Procurement in Germany.* DemoTrans Conference on Democracy and Capitalism; Leuven, Belgium (2025-03-14).
- Balbach T. *Transaction Properties and Political Control Explain the Uptake of Green Public Procurement. Evidence from Germany.* Workshop on the Regulatory Governance of Public Procurement; Berlin, Germany (2024-10-24).
- Balbach T. *Transaction Properties and Political Control Explain the Uptake of Green Public Procurement. Evidence from Germany.* Seminar at the Evans School, University of Washington; Seattle, Washington (2024-07-22).
- Balbach T. *Why are transactions taken off the market? Convenient contracts - a missing term in transaction cost theory.* PMRC; Seattle, Washington (2024-06-27).
- Balbach T. *Mimetic Isomorphism May Explain the Contextualized Uptake of Green Public Procurement. A Structural Topic Model of Framework Contracts.* IRSPM; Tampere, Finland (2024-04-17).

- Balbach T. *Transaction Properties Explain Government Contracting for Broader Outcomes. A Vignette Experiment in the United States.* IRSPM; Tampere, Finland (2024-04-16).
- Balbach T. *Does official language proficiency lead to bureaucratic discrimination?* PMRC; Utrecht, The Netherlands (2023-06-28).

## Science Outreach

- Balbach T, Lammers W, Van de Walle S (2025). *Public buyers want to go green – even when it is hard.* DemoTrans Policy Brief. (Published online) [https://feb.kuleuven.be/drc/LEER/demotrans/DemoTrans\\_Policy\\_Briefs](https://feb.kuleuven.be/drc/LEER/demotrans/DemoTrans_Policy_Briefs)
- Balbach, T., Schmidt, L., Kravchenko, Y., Dumas, J. (2021). The Importance of a Good Fit Between eID Systems and Country Context. SocietyByte - Science Magazine of the BFH Centre for Digital Society. <https://www.societybyte.swiss/en/2021/03/19/the-importance-of-a-good-fit-between-eid-systems-and-country-context/>
- Balbach, T. (2021). Why AI Applications Get Stalled in the Public Sector. AI Policy Exchange. <https://aipolicyexchange.org/2021/03/11/why-ai-applications-get-stalled-in-the-public-sector/>
- Balbach, T., Bensiek L. (2021). Behörden brauchen Handlungsspielräume, um die verordnete Digitalisierung sinnvoll umzusetzen [Authorities need room for maneuver to meaningfully implement the mandated digitalization]. N3GZ Blog. <https://n3gz.org/2021/03/26/behoerden-brauchen-handlungsspielraeume-um-die-verordnete-digitalisierung-sinnvoll-umzusetzen/>

## Other

- Preregistration: Green Public Procurement in Germany. 2025. <https://osf.io/b7jph/> (embargo)
- Preregistration: Transaction Properties Explain Government Contracting for Environmental Outcomes. A Vignette Experiment in the United States. 2024. <https://osf.io/3sbu7/> (embargo)
- Preregistration: Systematic review on public policy-related criteria in public procurements. 2023. <https://osf.io/rdz3k/> (embargo)

---

## GRANTS & AWARDS

I have taken the lead and contributed to grant applications to various funding agencies, including the European Commission (EU framework programme), Research Foundation Flanders (FWO), and the Special Research Fund (BOF).

### External Grants and Awards

#### Awarded

Award Title: Network Prize 2023 for theses on the topic of better legislation and bureaucracy reduction  
 Awarding Institution: Institute for Applied Economic Research (IAW) e.V.  
 Award Type: Master thesis  
 Role Status: Single author  
 Amount: 500.00 EUR

Award Title: Hack4Gov 2019 Second Prize  
 Awarding Institution:  
 Award Type: Hackathon for development of an online voting system  
 Role Status: Team Lead

Award Title: Flanders NLP Hackathon 2018 Honorable Mention  
 Awarding Institution:  
 Award Type: Hackathon for development of a solution for name/role extraction from meeting minutes  
 Role Status: Analyst

### Internal Grants and Awards

#### In preparation

Proposal Title: Toward a Robust Public Sector: Static Versus Dynamic Public Procurement Responses to Turbulence.  
 Funding Agency: Special Research Fund (BOF), KU Leuven Internal Funds  
 Role Status: Contributor

Percentage of Attributed Effort: 50  
Total direct costs and annual budget: 800,000.00 EUR

## **TEACHING AND ADVISING**

---

### **Courses**

Guest lecture on public procurement. *Organiseren en financieren van publieke dienstverlening* [Organizing and financing public service delivery], B-KUL-S0D07A, Master of Public Administration, KU Leuven, 2023-2025

Grading assignments on public sector innovation. *Public Innovation*, B-KUL-S0H07B, Master of Science Public Sector Innovation and eGovernance, Joint program by KU Leuven, University of Münster, Tallinn University of Technology, 2023-2025

Co-instructor. Guest lecture by Sopra Steria team on designing chatbots, Master of Business and Information Systems Engineering, KU Leuven, 2018

### **Supervision of Graduate Students**

Supervised theses by students of the Master of Advanced Studies in European Policies and Public Administration and of the Master of International Politics, KU Leuven, 2023-2025

Instructed a student research assistant on data entry tasks for a research project related to the Public Sector Innovation and eGovernance program, September to December 2024

Point of contact for student research projects related to public procurement and digital government, 2023-2025

## **SERVICE**

---

### **Service to the Discipline and Profession**

- Referee for Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, Public Management Review, and International Journal of Public Sector Management
- Co-chairing panel 23 “The Pursuit of Public Interest in Government Contracting, Public Procurement, and Grantmaking” at the Netherlands Institute of Governance conference 2026
- Chairing panel “Machine Learning in Public Administration”, PMRC 2024
- Developing a wizard for explicit logical bayesian analysis, a qualitative research method with statistical foundations, pioneered by Fairfield and Charman (2022). Ongoing project. Repository at <https://github.com/Elbanians/ELBA>. Deployed at <https://elba.onrender.com/>

### **Service to the Institution**

#### **Department & Faculty Service**

- Co-organizer of Netherlands Institute of Governance conference 2026, including a plenary session on genAI and research productivity, 2025-2026
- Initiator of Faculty of Social Sciences Hugging Face Community for large language models, 2025
- Facilitator of discussions on research pillar of strategy formulation process of Public Governance Institute, 2024-2025
- Buddy for international first-year PhD students, 2023-2025
- Organizer of the Public Governance Institute Journal Club, 2022-2023

### **Service to the Community and Public**

- Advisory to the Central Purchasing Body of the Flemish Government (Het Facilitair Bedrijf) with regards to the expenditure review for legislature 2024-2029, October 2025
- Speaker at workshop on European e-government. N3GZ (online). February 2021. <https://n3gz.org/events/n3gz-meetup-zu-europaeischem-e-government-2/>
- Speaker at workshop on digital public administration and the federal elections. N3GZ (online). April 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7XELLsnBy3M>
- Co-organizer of the Business Analyst Community, Sopra Steria Belgium, 2018-2020