

Preface

By Marie-Laure Salles

In 2021, while drafting the Cantonal Report on International Geneva, the Republic and State of Geneva asked the Geneva Graduate Institute to help answer a simple question: Who are the main donors allowing International Geneva to work and thrive and how has their support evolved over the last two decades? While the question seems simple enough, providing an accurate answer called for a structured research project. Naturally, we saw the strategic importance of such a study and accepted the challenge with great enthusiasm.

When exploring internally who could do the study, we discovered the exceptional work of Livio Silva-Muller, a Ph.D. researcher in our Anthropology and Sociology Department. Livio was utilising new methods to compile and harmonise historical data on financial flows to climate organisations in Brazil. He teamed up with his friend, Remo Gassmann—an alumnus of the Geneva Graduate Institute, who after graduating became the Head of the Global Development Policy Program at the Heinrich Boell Foundation in Washington, D.C.

Livio and Remo used small random samples to assess four distinct data collection strategies and propose an adequate methodology. Relying on multiple tools, the authors scrapped over 300 financial statements, amounting to over 30,000 transactions that funded work by large-scale international organisations over the last 20 years. Along the way, they unearthed intriguing data points, like organisations that, according to their financial statements, received a single donation of 630 billion - clearly a reporting mistake - multiple small Swiss cities participating in international development, or even the occasional donation from neighbourhood charities.

At a time where multilateralism is being questioned and is under financial stress it is important to re-affirm two fundamentals: The indispensable role of multilateralism as we face so many acute and urgent global challenges that we need to approach together, as an international community; and the importance of financing for the sustained role and impact of global governance. Having more transparency on who pays today for multilateral governance is an important step to a prospective reflection on where will / should the funding for tomorrow's multilateralism come from. This prospective conversation on the financial side has to connect with the larger discussion currently taking place in the context of the Summit of the Future of September 2024 – where the key is a projection towards a transformed multilateral agenda and possibly even of the architecture of multilateralism.

Let me finish by thanking Olivier Coutau, Delegate to International Geneva from the Republic and State of Geneva, for the initial idea behind the report and for the excellent collaboration on this and on so many other projects. I would also like to warmly thank Livio Silva-Muller and Remo Gassmann for their outstanding research and for a commitment to produce the study that went above and beyond the call of duty. I would finally like to express my appreciation to Professor Achim Wennmann, the Institute's Director for Strategic Partnerships, for supervising the report, project and publication.

This report is only the beginning of a conversation that needs to continue on the important question of how do we finance the multilateral collaboration of tomorrow. Financing collective mobilisation is key to preventing our world from falling prey to some of its old demons (inequalities, authoritarianism and nationalism, conflicts, hate and fear) as well as to new forms of existential threats (climate change and depletion of natural commons, a technological revolution that threatens rather than serves humanity). We owe this collective mobilisation to the new generations – the urgency to work together towards a more peaceful, just and sustainable world has never been so clear.