

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, Duccing 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
- 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