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Editor's notes

Welcome to the third issue of **dlgn**ews! This issue is dedicated to looking back at the F2F network meeting and to looking into the future of **dlgn**. Links to the results of the F2F including the NALAS NEXPO are presented in this issue, together with some lessons drawn from the social reporting experience. Additionally, this issue presents the reflections on the link between decentralization and fragility. Also, news from the South Asian Hub are being shared, as well as links to training opportunities on Decentralization and Local Governance in the Netherlands, Switzerland and in South Asia.

We hope that you enjoy this third issue and that it provides you with the information and links you are looking for.

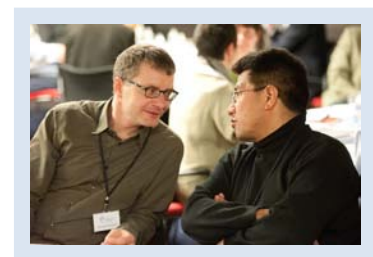
Warm regards,

Kuno Schläfli,
Focal Point DLG, Western Balkans Division SDC

Looking back at the F2F Meeting in Sarajevo

Around 75 members of the **dlgn** participated in our second F2F event, which was organized in Sarajevo, from March 7-11. Three days of intensive discussions of SDC thematic issues were followed by two days of conferences and workshops at the Municipal Fair – NEXPO - organized by NALAS, at the occasion of its general assembly.

The F2F was the culmination of intensive learning and exchange activities that took place during the months preceding the meeting, involving around 60 **dlgn** members in the preparation, analysis and synthesis of case studies. In fact, there were so many interesting good practice documents produced that parallel sessions had to be organized, to discuss them in depth. The only disadvantage was, of course, that some participants missed the discussion on certain issues, since they could not participate in two parallel sessions at the same time. In spite of this small disadvantage, in general, participants found the discussions enriching, stimulating, and relevant to orient our practice towards improved impact and quality. However, in order to make the discussions from the different sessions available to everyone, a **dlgn** blog was developed, where the F2F programme, presentations, discussions, impressions, photos and opinions of participants are to be found. Please follow the link to the blog: http://www.dlgn-f2f2011.ch/?category_name=impressions-2. It was certainly an eye-opener to realize that from all the work done on the chosen topics, **good practices** became evident and clear recommendations emerged, which can be institutionalized and integrated in a **policy paper on Decentralisation and Local Governance**.





NALAS NEXPO a successful networking event

For this event, organized in Bosnia & Herzegovina in the Balkan region, SDC partnered with the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe - NALAS. Around 1200 delegates from 15 south-eastern European countries participated in the municipal fair. This offered a unique opportunity to exchange with mayors and staff, who are partners of SDC programs in the Western Balkans. Read about that inspiring experience on the http://www.dlgn-f2f2011.ch/?category_name=nalas-conference and visit the NALAS website <http://www.nalas.eu/events/2011-03-10-NEXPO/index.aspx>, where you can also read the NALAS declaration addressed in particular to the European authorities, demanding that local authorities be recognized as partners for negotiations together with national governments.

Social Reporting experience – lessons learnt

During the F2F, a new experience with **social reporting** has largely contributed to the dynamic atmosphere and satisfaction of participants. More than 400 persons (unique visitors) have visited the blog in the last month: <http://www.dlgn-f2f2011.ch/>. Making work 'fun', social reporting had a very positive impact on our social interaction and therefore, intensified thematic discussions. The event was able to train video reporters who documented the different highlights of the F2F. The lessons learnt on social reporting for future occasions can be found in the following link: <http://www.dlgn-f2f2011.ch/?p=666#comment-18>



After the F2F – dlgn's next steps

After this successful event, what will be the next steps? The core group in Berne had first discussions on the planning of activities for the next 6-10 months. We shall organize a workshop to detail our plans on May 4, where we shall treat the follow-up of the learning projects and what remains to do in order to consolidate our good practices (documents, orienting guidelines, etc.) and how to pursue and intensify learning and exchange on the basis of these orientations. In a second step, we shall reflect on the policy recommendations we can derive from these learning processes, which can nourish a future policy for decentralisation and local governance. And finally, we shall discuss topics, which we need to deepen in the future, in order to respond to practical needs and policy demands. We shall keep you informed and **invite you to comment and complement our planning**. Very useful would also be if you can respond by informing about **PCM-moments forts** in your programme for which you would like colleagues from the network to participate and to contribute.

We invite you to comment and complement our planning on the future of dlgn!

Share with us, what are the "PCM moment forts" in your programme for which you would like dlgn colleagues to participate and contribute to?

Contributions from participants – LoGIN at the F2F

LoGIN, the South-east Asian Hub, during the F2F, contributed to the experience exchange and sharing with the following presentations: Election Support Campaigns in India, capturing change in women's leadership development; the capitalization of SDC supported experiences in Decentralization and Local Governance in India, and the mid-term results of the LoGIN supported Research Programme, including a reflection on the process of how to manage a research fund. Information about the presentations can be found at the following Link: [http://www.sdc-decentralization.net/en/Home/Community Affairs/Regions/South Asia/Wiki South Asia](http://www.sdc-decentralization.net/en/Home/Community%20Affairs/Regions/South%20Asia/Wiki%20South%20Asia)



Decentralisation and fragility

Is there a nexus between state fragility and decentralisation? There have always been debates whether decentralisation is a strategy against fragility - strengthening the state bottom-up - or an instrument that promotes centrifugal tendencies. At a roundtable in Switzerland on April 6, Dinesh Tripathi, a Supreme Court Lawyer from Nepal presented the challenge.

Mr. Tripathi identified the lack of (implementation of) decentralisation as a strong factor for the current fragility of the state in Nepal. While previously, the centre managed to uphold at least a minimum level of service delivery, current stalemates at the centre and the almost complete lack of decentralised institutions led to a breakdown of public service-delivery in wide parts of the country. This also created challenges for the sustainability of the development work. In his view, effective decentralisation would have helped to keep the state functioning during times of political crisis at the centre.

At the same time, current debates on federalism in Nepal created apprehension of some groups, to the extent that it would encourage them to seek for more than own decision-making powers within Nepal. In general, it can be noted, that debates on decentralisation (or federalism) can bring division and power struggles to the forefront.

Furthermore, experiences in other countries show that it very much depends on the design of the decentralization process or non-centralised governance, whether it contributes to stability and creates space for development. Some experiences even demonstrate that decentralisation can be used to strengthen top-down accountability and to enlarge the reach of power-holders at the centre, or enlarge the space for corruption and repression.

This debate on fragility and decentralisation is particularly relevant in view of current developments in Northern Africa. Under what circumstances can decentralisation help to build stronger and more legitimate states and improve governance? How to approach a decentralisation debate, so that it does not unnecessarily fuel rivalries between groups? And finally, how should decentralisation be designed, so that it can bring benefits for stability and democratic development?

Effective support for decentralisation and local governance takes into account the three dimensions: the assessment of the context, the reform process and its actors, as well as, the institutional design of decentralisation. If done in a conflict sensitive way, decentralisation can lead to balance power and strengthen governance at all levels, bring state institutions closer to civil society - and contribute to overcoming fragility.

Further reading:

- GSDRC (Governance and Social Development Resource Centre) Helpdesk Research Report: Decentralisation and Assistance to Sub-national Governments in Fragile Environments, 2008, <http://www.gsdr.org/docs/open/HD560.pdf>
- Engberg-Pedersen, 2008, Local Governance in Fragile States, DIIS Policy Brief, Danish Institute of International Studies, Copenhagen, http://www.diis.dk/graphics/Publications/Briefs2008/PB2008_10_Local_governance.pdf
- Eva Schrottshammer, Uwe Kievelitz, 2006, Decentralisation and Conflict: a guideline, GTZ, <http://www2.gtzt.de/dokumente/bib/07-0148.pdf>
- OECD-DAC 2008, Service Delivery in Fragile Situations: Key Concepts, Findings and Lessons, Paris, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/17/54/40886707.pdf>

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Network News

Research studies on local governance and social inclusion in South Asia

LoGIn- Local Governance Initiative South Asia - has been supporting nine researchers in India to undertake field research on the topics of local governance and social inclusion. Two short-term research studies have been presented: "Social exclusion and inclusion: A study of four Panchayats (village councils) in Rajasthan" and "Matsya Sabha for Ensuring Active participation of Fisher People in Grama Sabha". Based on this experience an international conference is being organized in Nepal, in June 2011. For more information, look at [the announcement](#) on the training opportunities section. More information about this research studies can be found at: <http://www.sdc-decentralization.net/en/Home/Community Affairs/Regions/South Asia/Wiki South Asia>

Study visit from Bangladesh to India

From the 14 – 20 of April, 2011 Intercooperation and Transparency International Bangladesh held a study visit in India to learn about the experiences in the State of Karnataka. The focus of the visit was on mechanisms adopted by local governments, civil society and the media for promoting accountability and transparency. For additional information about this study visit, contact LoGIn: login@sdn.net

Thanks LoGIn colleagues for sharing the news from South Asia!

If you want to read more about LoGIn Lines, the newsletter of the Local Governance Initiative South Asia follow the link:

<http://www.sdc-decentralization.net/wiki>

Training Opportunities

Summer Course on Decentralization and Local Governance

From the 11 – 15 July 2011, The Hague Academy for local governance is offering a summer course on Decentralization and Local Governance. This course is designed for professionals at donor and development organizations dealing with the design and implementation of decentralization support processes. Basic concepts of decentralization and local governance will be discussed having a look into fragile states or countries with strong ethnic and religious tensions. The course fee is Euro 2.450 and includes all training - related costs, drinks, lunches, material and travel during the course. Application deadline is 13 of May, 2011. For more information on this course follow the link: www.thehagueacademy.com

International course on Local Governance and Rural Decentralization

The Wageningen UR Centre for Development Innovation and the Royal Tropical Institute in the Netherlands is organizing an international course on Local Governance and Rural Decentralization. The course will be held in February and March, 2012. By relating theory to practice, the course will address the challenges faced around building local governance in support of rural development. The course will focus on multi-stakeholder processes and social learning concepts and methodologies for institutional change. The course fee is Euro 3.300 and includes administration fees, lecture materials and excursions. Deadline for applications is 27 of January, 2012. For more information and online application follow the link: www.cdi.wur.nl/UK/newsagenda. A limited number of fellowships are available from the Netherlands Fellowship Programme NFP. **The deadline for the fully completed NFP application procedure is 29 April at 16.00 (CET).** For further information on fellowships follow the link: www.nuffic.nl/nfp

Seminar on the tools of urban planning

The French Development Agency and the CEFEB are organizing a seminar entitled: The tools of urban planning. This seminar will be facilitated by experts from **urbaplan** (www.urbaplan.ch) and **transitec** (www.transitec.net) and it is designed for officials and local authorities involved in urban issues, central governments, agencies, project management or project implementation units. The training will be held in Lausanne from the 12 – 27 of September, 2011. The language of instruction will be French. The course fee is Euro 4.500. For further information contact f.laurent@urbaplan.ch or martin.stucki@transitec.net

Seminar on urban development in Africa and Maghreb

Urbaplan and **transitec** are also organizing in Lausanne another seminar on urban development in Africa and the Maghreb, from the 12 – 27 of September 2011. The different modules will present a mix of theories and practical exercises, including site visits. In order to encourage south-south exchange, participants will also be invited to present their experiences. The course fee is Euro 4.500. For further information contact f.laurent@urbaplan.ch or martin.stucki@transitec.net

International Conference on Effective Local Governance: Accountability, Participation and Inclusion

From the 2 – 4 of June, 2011, an International Conference on Effective Local Governance addressing the topics of Capacity Development, Democratic Accountability, Participation and Inclusion will take place in Kathmandu, Nepal. This conference is organized by PRIA (www.pria.org) with the support from the Local Governance Initiative, South Asia - LoGIn - and the Learning Initiative on Citizen Participation and Local Governance - Logo Link. Participants from different regions are expected to attend this conference, which will discuss the findings of the empirical cross-country research studies that took place in five countries in South Asia. LoGIn invites **dlg**n members to participate in this conference and would provide support with travel and lodging expenses for 8 - 10 participants. For further information, please contact LoGIn at login@sdg.net before the **25 April**, 2011.

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