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Swiss Agency for Development
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SDC NETWORK
Democratisation, Decentralisation
and Local Governance



Thinking and Working Politically

**Peer-to-Peer Learning Workshop
for the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation**

Bern, 11-12 September November 2018

Workshop “harvesting” report



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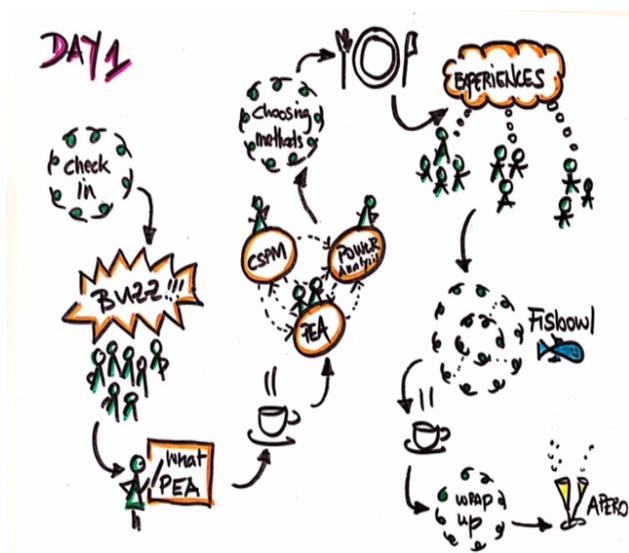
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1. Introduction and programme

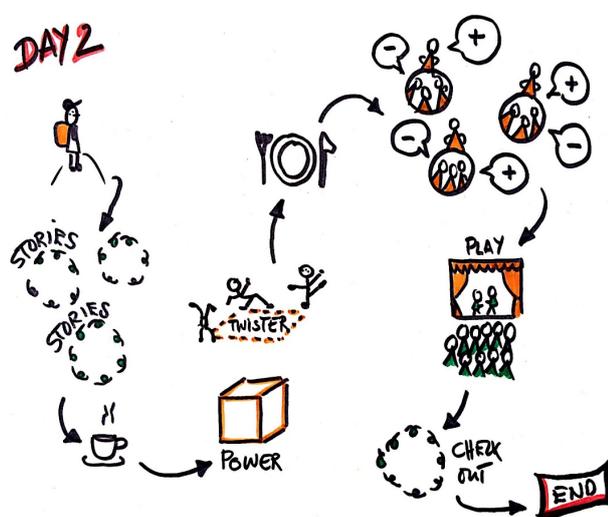
This workshop was initiated by SDC's Democratization, Decentralization and Local Governance (DDLG) unit to facilitate peer-to-peer learning on thinking and working politically (TWP). The format was designed to maximise interaction and discussion rather than to provide training on political economy analysis. The majority of participants were SDC staff from headquarters, but the group was complemented by two participants from Helvetas in Kosovo (Decentralisation and Municipal Support Project) and one participant from GIZ.

Marie Marchand from SDC's SmartSpace team facilitated the workshop and was supported by three resource persons: Laure-Hélène Piron and Gareth Williams from the Policy Practice Ltd and Professor John Gaventa from the Institute for Development Studies. The programme is provided in Annex A, the list of participants in Annex B and an updated reading list in Annex C.



Day 1 was devoted to the theme of **thinking politically**. This included lesson learning from undertaking politically-informed analyses (such as political economy analysis -PEA, power analysis or conflict analysis) and experience sharing on applying these analyses to development programming. During the morning, we shared experiences of different analytical approaches through a presentation on ten “top tips”, knowledge cafés on different tools and group discussions. In the afternoon, we discussed in groups and in a fishbowl setting how analyses had shaped (or not shaped) development programmes.

Day 2 was dedicated to the theme of **working politically**, both with external partners and within development organisations. In the morning, we used a story telling approach to reflect on how we can work differently with our partners (in government, civil society, international level) and a power cube “twister game” to examine the different forms of power embodied in these relationships. In the afternoon, we examined the barriers and enablers to thinking and working politically within development organisations, and used a role play exercise to explore how a thinking and working politically approach can be presented persuasively to SDC senior management.



To ensure the workshop best met their needs, participants were asked beforehand to complete a survey and take part in an interview with one of the resource persons. The following points were also mentioned in the opening “check-in” session:

- For most participants, providing advice on PEA/TWP is part of their team mandate or job descriptions. This includes SDC desk officers approving / quality assuring proposals, SDC staff communicating the benefits of a PEA/TWP approach to colleagues, a GIZ staff member involved in designing new programmes, and Helvetas staff using TWP during programme implementation.
- Participants were keen to share experience on how to apply findings of PEA/TWP to programme implementation including problems of how to incentivise change in partner countries, how to build relationships with key stakeholders in country and how to deal with power relations within SDC and with other donor agencies.
- A number of participants requested that the workshop should include discussion of the analytical tools to undertake PEA/TWP, including a focus on how social/cultural aspects can be included in the analysis.
- Finally, a few participants were interested in using the workshop as a pilot to consider how TWP/PEA issues can be discussed more broadly across SDC.

2. Thinking politically

Question: Why does power and politics matter for the success of development interventions?

The workshop opened with a buzz session addressing the broad question of why development agencies need a better understanding of power and politics. The following points were made by the participants:

- Development agencies work with change agents and decision makers in country. We need to understand their interests, incentives and sources of power in order to facilitate change.
- To tackle poverty and exclusion we need to explicitly target development interventions to benefit those that do not have power.
- Development agencies need to be aware of their own limitations, interests and incentives and how these influence their ability to bring about change.
- We need to be aware of sovereignty issues in the countries where we work, and consider the question of when is it legitimate to seek to influence domestic political processes.
- We should be aware of our own values (e.g. Swiss values such as solidarity)
- Development agencies have made progress in improving analysis of power and politics, but still struggle to translate this analysis into effective action.
- Socio-cultural aspects of power relations are often critical to understanding how development takes place and who is excluded, but this is not sufficiently analysed in political economy analysis.

Question: what does a good politically-aware analysis look like?

Gareth and Laure-Hélène from the Policy Practice Ltd presented their ten ‘top tips’ for how to undertake a good analysis, based on their experiences of applying political economy analysis to practical problems. Their presentation slides are provided in Annex D. The top tips were:

<i>The “what”</i>	<i>The “how”</i>
1. Be clear about the purpose of the analysis	6. Be clear about who does the analysis and for whom
2. See both the short and the long term	7. Design the research process to deliver good quality
3. Look behind the façade	8. Be realistic about how research products are disseminated
4. Follow the money	9. Keep the analysis alive
5. Analyse the gender dimensions of power	10. Answer the “so what”: what should be done differently?

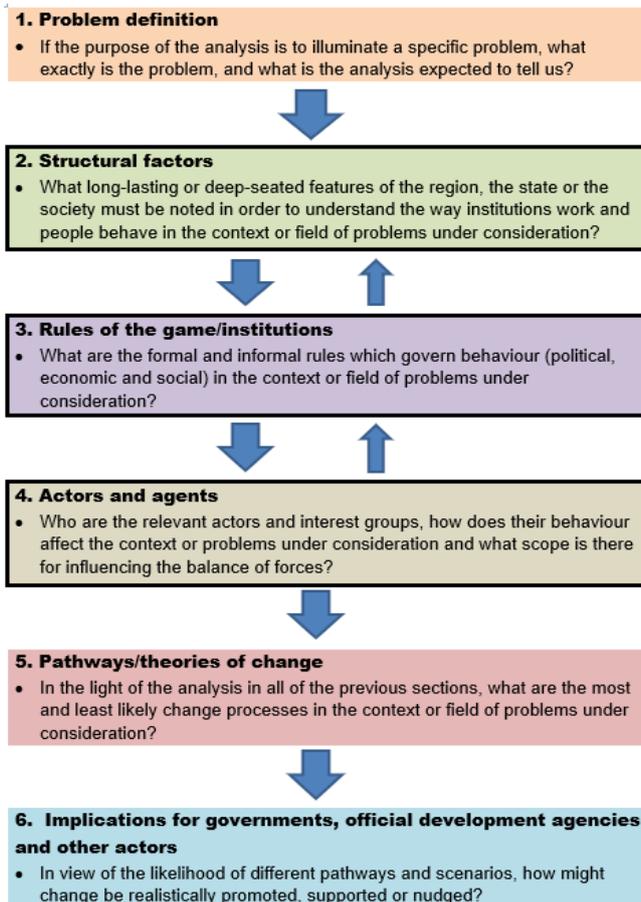
Question: how to undertake politically-aware analysis

This session was organised as a ‘knowledge café’ with three short presentations and question and answer sessions. They were repeated three times so that small groups of participants could move between them.

Political Economy Analysis (PEA): Gareth presented the six steps of PEA presented in previous SDC training courses. This draws on elements of DFID’s drivers of change format, the Netherlands Strategic Governance and Corruption Assessment and an EU PEA framework. The framework is intended to organise the analysis around 6 logically connected steps moving from problem definition, to analysis to action. A framework summary is at Annex E.

Highlights of the discussion amongst participants after the presentation of the framework:

- The framework is intended to draw attention to the wide range of processes explaining development outcomes. On reflection participants considered that SDC’s analysis tends to focus mainly on stakeholder analysis (step 4) without giving enough attention to structural factors (step 2) and institutions (step 3). (e.g. an earlier version of a Moldova civic education programme was only based on stakeholder analysis). Analysing both formal and informal institutions is key.
- Experience with using the framework at previous SDC training courses has highlighted the need to begin with a clear definition of a problem and clarity about the guiding question for the PEA. This is often the hardest step.
- PEA can often provide helpful guidance on what not to do (avoiding mistakes) or identifying critical weaknesses that require programme design adjustments.
- SDC programmes do not always know how to address some of the “structural factors” that affect a country (e.g. demographic trends relating to ethnic groups in the Balkans)
- PEA has limitations. The analysis may raise questions that cannot easily be answered (e.g. informal institutions are difficult to research). It can be difficult to take account of the wide range of incentives and institutional factors that influence people’s behaviour (e.g. gender and socio-cultural factors are often not given enough attention). Furthermore, there is no simple read across from analysis to action, although politically informed analysis can help to identify more realistic pathways of change.



Examples of the application of the six-step framework discussed in the knowledge cafés

Mozambique decentralisation. PEA training for SDC in Harare in 2016 used a case study of the political economy of decentralisation. A key learning was the importance of framing the analysis in terms of a clear definition of a problem. Through the exercise, participants were able to develop a clearer sense of why the lack of decentralisation is a problem in Mozambique, and how this causes interregional tensions and undermines the political settlement. By understanding the problem in these terms, it became easier to identify what caused it and what change pathways may be desirable and feasible.

Burundi decentralisation. PEA training for SDC at the Tunis workshop in 2017 worked on a case study for SDC support to decentralisation in Burundi. This concluded that in the present political context it was unrealistic to expect that decentralisation reforms would proceed in the short to medium term. However, there was still an opportunity to work with local administrations on local development initiatives. The workshop recommended a shift in strategy for the next phase of SDC support

SDC support in the Western Balkans. Participants in our workshop discussed how important structural drivers, including demographic trends (rapid growth of the Roma population) had not been given enough analytical attention and had not been sufficiently discussed with partners.

Moldova Civic Education. After a decision to enter the civic education sector, the SDC cooperation office in Moldova became aware that they do not have sufficient knowledge on the political economy in the sector. While they have been provided by partners with an excellent stakeholder analysis particularly for the formal sector, the information about actors of the informal sector was missing as was analysis on powers and interests shaping the sector. A PEA was commissioned and conducted by a local economist and validated in workshop in August 2018 with a broad range of state, non-state actors and international actors.

Power analysis: Laurent presented a “story of empowerment” relating to the long-term relationship between the National Federation of Artisans in Mali (an umbrella informal sector organisation) and SDC. The methodology allowed the relationship to be analysed from different perspectives, including those of grassroots members, consultants or the donor agency. Laurent then asked participants to analyse the relationship through a “power cube analysis” (see day 2). Highlights of the discussion:

- It is valuable to analyse a situation from the point of view of different stakeholders.
- The story made SDC’s own power and influence more visible and drew attention to the need to be more conscious about how this power is used and experienced by partners.
- In terms of the power cube analysis, the SDC evaluation process created a new “invited space” for the membership of the Mali informal sector federation.
- Power cube analysis can be useful, in particular to understand the different types of power available to different actors and the spaces in which they are used.
- It may be necessary to combine power cube analysis with other tools, such as PEA/stakeholder analysis, which examine the incentives and interests of stakeholders.
- Power cube analysis tends not to look at sustainability issues.

Conflict Sensitive Programme Management (CSPM): Richard illustrated this SDC approach using the example of a case study of the water sector in Tajikistan. CSPM provided useful insights into why drinking water supply was given a low political priority (for the responsible ministry drinking water was seen as a lower priority than energy and irrigation). The causes were related to the. CSPM helped to unpack the various formal and informal interests at play around water and the international dimensions of potential water conflicts, which are not always analysed as part of a country portfolio. Highlights of the discussion:

- CSPM also draws attention to questions of power because power relations are a key driver of conflict.
- CSPM does not provide a single, well-defined tool, and offers limited practical guidance on how to conduct analysis.
- CSPM can empower the SDC staff that use it to ask challenging questions. For example, Richard’s use of CSPM raised difficult issues that eventually led to a decision not to proceed with the second phase of the SDC water sector programme.
- Using CSPM effectively requires a relationship of trust between SDC HQ staff and local partners. Because this developed over time in Tajikistan, Richard was able to raise difficult issues and be taken seriously.

Question: Why and how did you choose a specific method of analysis? What was the outcome?

During the ‘circle with talking piece’ discussion at the end of the morning, participants raised a number of issues relating to the question of how SDC can use analytical tools more effectively. A key conclusion was that good analytical tools already exist, but the organisational culture of SDC can be a barrier to their effective use.

- **Tools and approaches:**
 - Numerous tools exist and are well documented. They include PEA, CSPM, the power cube and others. They are not intended to be followed slavishly, but to prompt users to ask the right questions.

- There is a lot of overlap and connection between them. Integration of several tools could be attempted (e.g. PEA and CSPM).
 - The advantage of following a larger framework (like PEA, power or CSPM) is that it encourages users to think broadly and avoid a narrow application of a single tool (e.g. focussing on stakeholder analysis without looking at the wider context of institutions and structural factors)
 - A multidisciplinary approach is required, for example by connecting an understanding of socio-cultural factors to a more economic view of incentives. Psychoanalytical approaches may be needed to explore why certain actors behave as they do.
- **Limits to analysis:**
 - The analytical tools can help development practitioners to be less politically naïve. However, national partners will always have the advantage of being able to understand the political economy context better than foreigners.
 - How far can we really understand a context? In the end, we need to take decisions based on limited knowledge. What level of understanding is good enough to make politically smart decisions?
 - It is particularly difficult to analyse informal relationships and institutions, particularly where these enter the realms of organised crime. Development agencies are not intelligence agencies!
 - Is there a risk that we are thinking too much and not acting enough? “Analysis is paralysis”. If we spend too much time trying to develop a perfect analysis we may fail to act. Perfect can be the enemy of the good.
 - Development projects usually start on the basis of an incomplete understanding of the political economy context. They learn by doing. Understanding of stakeholders’ interests and incentives is usually gained by interacting with them after the development project has started. Doing this effectively requires a willingness to take risks and acceptance of the possibility of failure.
- **Tools or culture?**
 - The general feeling in the group was that SDC has sufficient analytical tools, but its organisational culture is preventing it from thinking and working politically (TWP).
 - A more supportive culture for TWP requires more effective knowledge management so lessons learned from politically-aware analysis can be retained and shared (e.g. Swiss staff rotation means some local knowledge is lost).
 - Human resources are key. SDC has good, well-trained, thoughtful staff, but four year staff rotations between countries do not provide enough time for staff to become sufficiently politically smart.
 - However, staff changes can also create spaces for critical thinking and challenge (in Mali, an external evaluation; for Tajikistan, an experienced HQ adviser).
 - National programme officers can be a great asset in bringing understanding of political economy, but can also be a risk because they are linked into local politics.
 - SDC is very hierarchical; we are part of power relations with our partners; our national programme staff are embedded in their own national context: how can we promote equality given SDC’s own power and national staff interests?

- SDC increasingly works through implementing partners. Often these are not sufficiently empowered or capable to think and work politically.
- **SDC's own domestic context is changing:**
 - Credit proposals must now demonstrate the secondary benefits of development actions to Swiss companies. This requirement was seen as a “Game-changer” by some of the participants.
 - Restrictive administrative rules are increasingly limiting SDC's ability to respond quickly and flexibly to changing risks and opportunities.

Country-level dilemmas mentioned by participants and resource persons

Aid may reinforce the status quo in Kosovo. The example of the Demos programme in Kosovo experience was discussed. We are trying to influence partners who understand local power relations much better than us. We need to look at the “game of aid” and what local leaders do to maintain themselves in power. Aid may actually be helping to maintain the status quo.

Unintended consequences of aid procedures in Mali “empowerment story”. SDC had to commission an external evaluation process which led to unexpected changes in the national federation of artisans. The evaluation revealed how the grassroots were disconnected from the management. This led to reforms that improved trust, but also to higher running costs. At the same time, SDC was moving towards budget support as part of the aid effectiveness agenda, making it harder, initially, to respond to the new needs of the federation which the SDC evaluation had triggered.

Outsourcing political thinking and working in Rwanda vs Nigeria: te comparison of these two experiences raised the question of how far can implementing partners “think and work politically”? In the Rwanda Ikiraro programme (co-funded by SDC), donors closely manage the political relationship but may then criticise implementing partners for not thinking and working politically enough. By contrast, in Nigeria, DFID expects its implementing teams to manage state-level political relations. This model has empowered programmes to think and work politically but outsourcing political engagement too far can also carry risks for the donor.

3. From analysis to action

During the afternoon of the 1st day, we discussed how to use a politically-aware analysis to shape our decisions. Three groups responded to three different questions by sharing their experiences and digging deeper into one example.

Question 1: “How can politically-aware analysis be applied effectively to designing new programmes or adapting existing ones?”

Georgette: Mental health programme in Moldova. There was an iterative approach to program design starting with a did a deep context analysis in 2009. SDC already had a health domain with a focus on maternal and prenatal health, and a small programme on mental health. Georgette's contact with a gifted psychiatrist strengthened her awareness of alternative approaches to caring for mentally ill people. However, because of a societal value system and a health system that did not appreciate new ways of working, the psychiatrist could only apply her ideas in her own clinic. The SDC office saw a possibility to change the overall approach to mentally ill people in the whole country and kick-started a national

reflection process on mental health. The time for such a discussion was good: the country was opening up to Europe, there was a new minister of health and there were also reforms leading to the rationalization of state institutions. SDC pushed hard for this smaller programme to scale up working with the ministry, through changes in the policy framework, and with the esteemed class of elder psychiatrists etc. It took time to build all this support behind this new approach. In the end, the tender was only published in 2014, 5 years later and the programme started after Georgette had left. She was not the person that signed the credit proposal.

Irene: process of establishing a new cooperation strategy. SDC held a CSPM workshop looking at issues and causes hindering development and change (according to MERV). The workshop identified key problems where change was required (e.g. rule of law not properly applied, watchdog function of civil society not there, a need for transparency). The relevance of the current programmes to these needs was examined, as well as programming gaps and potential new entry points. The workshop concluded that it was important to not only work on transparency, but also on social inclusion. The overall objective was to 'stay engaged'. For Irene, the challenge was how to translate the new objectives into entry points for action.

Katharina: GIZ in fragile countries (Syria & DRC). GIZ developed a PEA tool (PÖK = Politökonomische Kurzanalyse). The short analysis is outsourced to a think tank. Then they use this as 'intuitive' information. Additionally they use an Integrated Peace and Conflict Analysis Matrix where they describe: drivers of conflict, external risks, mitigation measures, gender analysis and an actor's landscape. This analysis is more related to the *daily* PE dynamics and realities on the ground. A GIZ programme in Syria on mental and physical health in areas held by the moderate opposition supported newly emerging NGOs that started their own health services from scratch, mainly with money from the diaspora. The first thing that was needed was some quality standard for NGOs, who were mainly newly established. GIZ established health directorates in the regions held by the opposition where volunteering doctors were elected by the people to these positions. After a while, GIZ realized that they were giving too much power to the two NGOs they worked with, particularly, to two accountants. This resulted in a diversification of partnerships. GIZ are currently only working in Idlib. They are planning a new phase until 2020, but which may not go through because of the developments in Syria. In Katharina's view, these analyses helped structure GIZ's thinking about the non-intended negative consequences that the project might have. GIZ has adopted a triangulation approach, and are prepared to take risks provided that as many safeguards have been put in place as possible. Katharina also talked briefly about GIZ's work in DRC where a tense political environment constrained the ability of GIZ to involve staff in the analysis and to share findings.

Reflection on the experience:

- The group did not have an example where a particular piece of analysis led to change. They felt it is rather our 'métier' to work politically and in an adaptive manner and that **the daily work of a development agency leads to constant adaptations in a programme design.** In Moldova, the SDC office did not apply a 'political economy approach' in programme design. Rather they started from a local leader and established entry points around it. They were aware about the importance of the value system and the need for multi-stakeholder engagement in order to bring about change.
- For Katharina, it was important to take full account of **differences in the context for programming.** For a government like that in Moldova that is ready and interested in change, it is easier to promote reform than in situations of active conflict like Syria.

Group 2: “How can politically-aware analysis be used to develop and test theories of change and theories of action?”

Visar: Decentralisation and Municipal Support Project (DEMOS) project in Kosovo. The group considered how politically aware analysis could be used to strengthen Theories of Change (ToC) / Theories of Action (ToA). This includes:

- Analysis of key assumptions behind the ToC/ToA. In the case of DEMOS the analysis could look at key assumptions, such as the extent to which the public is concerned by municipal performance, the extent to which municipal leaders can be motivated by payment for results and the level of influence of central government over municipal authorities.
- Analysis of the results of the programme and unexpected consequences to reflect back on whether the ToA has delivered as expected.
- Inclusion of a discussion of the ToA/ToC within regular programme reviews (annually and at mid term).
- Focus group discussions with key programme stakeholders to discuss evidence supporting or contradicting particular aspects to the ToA/ToC.
- Programme delivery teams taking more ownership of the ToA/ToC and discussing it regularly.

Reflection on the experience: A key observation of this working group is that Theories of Change (ToC) and Theories of Action (ToA) appear to be underutilised tools within SDC. There is a sense that the tools are owned by headquarters rather than programme implementers and are generally regarded as a requirement for credit proposals rather than as tools to reflect on what strategies to promote change are likely to succeed or fail. It was also noted that the group was not aware of cases within SDC where political analysis had been used systematically and proactively to adapt a ToC/ToA. The general conclusion was that greater use of politically informed analysis is needed to develop, test and adapt ToC/ToA opportunities and risks.

Group 3: “How can analysis be used to navigate changes in programme context, and better understand opportunities and risks?”

This group did not identify many examples of formal analysis helping to navigate risks and opportunities. Instead, they looked at programme changes and tried to identify why they had come about:

- **Ertan: Kosovo Helvetas Demos programme:** the programme provides performance-based grants to incentivise improvements in municipal governance. The programme has changed significantly from phase 1 to phase 2: from 17 municipalities to working across the whole country; performance is no longer measured in terms of service delivery but governance improvements (such as integrity); and the modality changed from off-budget to using country systems relying on public audit reports. 50% of the funding comes from the government, 50% from SDC. It is seen as a programme with higher risk, but also higher potential “returns”. The change was prompted by an external evaluation of phase 1. The new approach has not been appreciated by Demos as it makes it much harder to manage relationships with partners (in the past, mayors would draw more on Demos technical expertise).

- **Aita: response to closing space in Egypt:** The SDC field office proposed working with the judiciary which it considered to be the most independent sector (HQ did not know what analytical approach the field office used to come to that conclusion). The SDC cooperation office was also seen as a safe space for CSOs to convene. The field office decided to be very creative to consider how it could indirectly continue to support human rights defenders. The change in the programme also coincided with a new management team. The programme was approved by the SDC HQ because it was clear that options were very limited and SDC was the only donor supporting human rights organisations – but it was hard to make the case.
- **Alexander: Honduras:** the overall approach of the programmes was reshaped in response to the local elite violating human rights. There was a shift in approach from technical to political: All the programmes were seen as governance programmes with a human rights-based and conflict-sensitive approach. The main driver for the change was the new head of office, who had made similar changes elsewhere.
- **Richard: Tajikistan water programme:** SDC wanted to move out of infrastructure into governance. This went against some significant domestic interests (e.g. minister is interested in visible results such as infrastructure). There was no formal analysis but a debate within the office as part of a move from a humanitarian to a developmental approach.
- **Richard: Kyrgyzstan:** changes in the context were very slow so it was hard for the SDC field office to observe them. An evaluation enabled the office to understand that its assumptions that government was interested in implementing reforms were unrealistic.
- **Richard: Mozambique:** Budget support was undermined by corruption. Why was SDC not aware? Perhaps because SDC had been present for a long time, so had become too close to the government and less critical?

Reflections from these examples:

- **Sources of programme changes:** a change in management / staffing; an external expert providing a new view; fixed elements of programme cycle management (e.g. evaluation after a phase); a radically different political context.
- **Implications for SDC approaches:**
 - It is important to keep analysis alive. Often a good analysis is discussed during a workshop or for a few weeks but then it is forgotten.
 - The MERV does not help as it is backward looking to justify what was done – we need forward looking analysis.
 - SDC mid-term reviews should check the validity of assumptions of programs and contexts.
 - The annual country programme review looks at the portfolio but not at individual projects.

Plenary: fishbowl discussion

A video is available: <https://share.zem.ch/index.php/s/XlQwqLXjO6fZR28>

A fishbowl discussion was organised to streamline the process of feeding back ideas from the three working groups. A wide range of issues connected to the problem of how to use politically aware analysis for the purpose of programme adaptation were discussed. The

starting point for the discussion was a reflection on the usefulness of the concept of the Theory of Change/Theory of Action and then considered how the tools of political economy analysis and thinking and working politically can be used to inform the development and testing of these theories.



- **There was broad agreement about the value of the concept of a Theory of Change or Theory of Action (ToC/ToA)** as a tool to think clearly about how change happens in a country or programme context, and how SDC can most effectively promote change. It is essential to create more time and space for critical reflection on these questions.
- **Several speakers indicated that SDC is not using the Theory of Change as effectively as it could.** The concept of the ToC tends to be most valued by SDC headquarters with more limited ownership in country offices or programme partners. As such, the ToC is often regarded as little more than a requirement for credit proposals rather than a tool for development practitioners to reflect on what type of approach is likely to be successful and how programmes can respond to changing opportunities and risks. Several speakers suggested that the ToC concept needs to be demystified and communicated to programme staff in simple and practical terms.
- **It was suggested that there are very few examples within SDC of changes to programme strategy following a proactive and systematic review of the ToC.** Instead programme changes tend to occur in response to dramatic shifts in the political context (e.g. Arab Spring), changes in personnel (individuals in project management, supervision and evaluation positions can have a large impact and programme direction) and through decision making based on intuition around what is likely to succeed.
- **Several suggestions were shared on how SDC could more effectively and regularly reflect on ToC.** These included the idea of organising brainstorming sessions within project teams, convening focus group discussions of project partners and consulting with external experts. In order to build ownership, this exercise needs to be led by project teams rather than being contracted out to consultants (one case was mentioned where poor advice from an external consultant had undermined the programme strategy). It was suggested that reflections on ToC should make use of the different skills and perspectives available across Swiss Embassies (development,

diplomatic, military). In addition there is an opportunity to make use of Swiss neutrality to create space for discussion on sensitive topics with external actors.

- **A high level of political attention from headquarters can help to stimulate this discussion but could also disempower country teams.** Different cases were cited. In Syria, high-level political interest had put pressure on GIZ to engage in more frequent (quarterly) monitoring and reflection on country strategy. However, another example was given of a non-Swiss project where high-level ministerial interference had undermined the delivery team's ability to think and work politically.
- **It was also suggested that reflection of the Theory of Change can be a useful opportunity to engage project partners and beneficiaries** both to learn from their perspectives, build ownership of the programme approach and to empower actors as change agents.
- **Participants reflected on whether or not SDC has the right tools and authorising environment to conduct a politically informed analysis of theories of action and theories of change.**
 - One speaker considered that ToC is not sufficiently emphasised in SDC's Project Cycle Management (PCM tools). Ex-post comment from Andrea: That is not entirely the case. First of all, there is a H2N on 'Impact Hypothesis'. And SDC uses this term as a synonym to ToC, even though the latter term is sometimes understood broader. Also, using this term, the PCM tools talk about impact (EP Guidance) as well as Impact Hypothesis (CP Guidance and ProDoc Guidance).
 - Other participants considered that the choice of tool may be less important than creating space for regular and systematic reflection.
 - Existing tools such as actor mapping and power analysis can be used to test assumptions behind the ToC.
 - The MERV tool is suited to the purpose of analysing changes in the political economy context. However, this is oriented towards tracking country level changes and adapting the country cooperation strategy rather than reviewing individual programmes.
 - It was also suggested that analytical tools need to be more forward looking to consider what changes are likely to occur in future and how these will impact on country strategies and individual programmes.
 - One participant drew attention to changes in the geopolitical context (including greater assertiveness of regional powers), which are often not sufficiently reflected in the analysis (for reasons of diplomacy and political sensitivity).
- **Many speakers made suggestions on the timing and frequency of reviews of the ToC.** Much depends on the country context. For example, in the case of Syria it was suggested that the fast-changing situation requires quarterly reviews, whereas in more stable contexts an annual or mid term review may be sufficient. It was argued that programmes need to be given sufficient time to demonstrate results at outcome level before their ToC can be tested. In this light there was a discussion about the risk that programmes could be judged too hastily before their ToC have had a chance to deliver. The example was given of Macedonia, where SDC's patience in continuing support to the country through periods of weak governance was now paying off since a reformist

government had taken power. Another participant was of the opinion that donors cannot show limitless patience and are under increasing domestic pressure to demonstrate results quickly.

- **While recognising the need for long time horizons, speakers were supportive of the need for more regular and early reflection on programme results** and the need to adapt ToC. It may become obvious early in project implementation that there are problems with the ToC that require changes to programme strategy. This may not require the ToC to be completely abandoned but may point to the need for adaptation and incremental improvements. This had been the experience of a ToC review for an SDC funded civil society programme in Rwanda (Ikiraro) where the initial ToC has been elaborated and adjusted rather than replaced. In the case of the Rwanda programme the Theory of Change/Theory of Action was adapted to include a broader range of state and non-state actors (in particular the role of the legislature and private sector) and to take greater account of both formal and informal processes of policy influencing.

Wrapping up day 1

In the last session, the resource people, Gareth and Laure-Hélène, reflected on day 1.

Gareth referred back to the discussion on the need to recognise the limits to politically-aware analysis and that it is not realistic to expect to gain a perfect understanding of the political economy. The key question is how to achieve “good enough” political analysis and to use this to make development partners act in ways that are politically smart. The general feeling of the day had been that there was a need for SDC to improve analytical tools, but that the greatest challenge is to change organisational culture so that thinking and working politically becomes more normal and more expected of staff. Gareth also highlighted the observation that SDC increasingly works through intermediary organisations, and suggested it was important to encourage a thinking and working politically approach amongst these partners,

Laure-Hélène noted how participants had already started to discuss challenges facing SDC as it integrates more with foreign affairs (rather than the contexts where SDC operates in partner countries). Participants recognised that donors such as SDC are political actors and part of a geo-political context, so have to be part of the PEA context analysis themselves. There are also issues of power within SDC which may limit or enable the space for change. Finally, SDC’s own domestic political context was affecting its mandate and programmes. Other aid agencies have faced the same challenge recently so SDC could compare lessons (AusAid/DFAT in Australia, Danida in Denmark, DFID in the UK, etc).

A final discussion took place on the pros and cons of splitting technical functions of aid management from political direction. In the case on Germany, Katharina felt that the split between BMZ (political direction) and GIZ (technical implementation) had made it harder for frontline staff to think and work politically. In the case of SDC, participants considered that increasing integration with the diplomatic units of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs created both opportunities and risks. There are opportunities for connecting development and diplomatic perspectives on the politics of development, but also risks that development staff will become more exposed to Swiss political and commercial pressures.

4. Working politically with partners

Starting day 2: Packing a bag pack

We welcomed Prof John Gaventa who joined day 2 of the workshop. Every participant added a key word / expression they retained from day 1 into a bag pack symbolically given to John!

Individuals, Keep a political eye on the Theory of Change, Don't only follow intuition, Shaping relations, Don't follow the money, Broaden perspectives, Tools vs culture, Influencing relations, Look behind the façade, Boundaries, Good enough PEA, The game of aid, Trial and error.

Questions:

- **How did you manage relationships with key stakeholders in country, recognising their interests and incentives?**
- **How has a “thinking and working politically” approach enabled you to build and manage relationships with key partners, identify new partners and build coalitions?**
- **How did you involve your partners in processes of programme design and adaptation?**

Three Story Circles

In the first part of the morning, three persons used a “story-telling approach” to describe how they had managed relationships with partners around a programme. Participants listened, listened, and listened and then asked questions.

Irene: Tunisia tourism development project design. Irene related her experience of supporting the design process for an alternative tourism development project (Destination Dahar) when she was head of the SDC office in southern Tunisia (2012-13). The project was designed in the context of the aftermath of the 2010-11 revolution when tackling issues of regional development disparities, social inequalities, unemployment and outmigration had become priorities for Swiss cooperation. The Swiss Secretariat for Economic Cooperation (SECO) conducted a feasibility study that identified the potential for alternative tourism that could bring employment and small business development opportunities outside of the mass tourism model.



The key principle in the design process was to ensure that stakeholder participation was as broad and inclusive as possible in order to build local ownership of the initiative. SECO recruited a trusted intermediary well known to SDC and French Cooperation to establish a stakeholder platform bringing together all relevant stakeholders from the public and private sectors. Workshops were held in multiple locations and aimed to link

local and national stakeholders with international experts. In the context of Berber culture where women tend to speak out less than men, the workshops succeeded in ensuring relatively strong female participation and voice. The workshops were viewed as having been critical in building trust between stakeholders and achieving consensus around an alternative tourism model. However, there was one notable opponent of the process – a hotel owner from the coast – who attempted to disrupt proceedings but was ultimately side-lined.

During the group discussion the following observations were made:

- The role of the trusted coordinator appears to have been critical to the success of the process, but assigning this responsibility to a single person creates risks that this individual will act as a gatekeeper or may favour certain groups. It was critical that the individual was well known and trusted by SDC.
- Many of the critical discussions took place outside of the formal consultative spaces (e.g. in café settings) and were brokered by the coordinator and SDC local staff.
- Regional and central government interest in the project was mixed. Although government was generally supportive they were more concerned with issues such as refugee management. It would have been useful to consider how the government's permissive attitude to the project could have been converted into more active support.
- The project design and consultation process was informed by CSPM principles, but could have benefitted from more systematic conflict and gender analysis, analysing in particular Berber-Arab relations.
- Following the design phase, project implementation was contracted out to Swisscontact. Many of the relationships that SDC had established were disrupted as a result of the handover.

Dorothee: Haiti agriculture sector governance programme design. Dorothee narrated her experience of designing a new programme in Haiti. She initially relied on her national programme officer to introduce her to relevant stakeholders, including in the Ministry of Agriculture, the local director in the Southern Region and a local research centre. She was able to identify problems of financing within the Ministry and challenges around innovation. She was keen to meet with farm organisations, which officials had said did not exist, and eventually, through an NGO was able to meet local farmers who explained the challenges of exporting agricultural products. Through this process, she was able to identify the poor communication and collaboration within the sector. She designed a programme around: stakeholders innovation, strengthening farmers organisations and support to implement innovations. Issues that emerged from the discussion included:

- **The importance of national programme staff for SDC:** They have the networks to gain access to relevant stakeholders. However, we also discussed whether they might at times act as “gate keepers” for less well networked Swiss staff, and how to manage the potential for competition. In Haiti, Dorothee and her national programme officer were each responsible for a different programme which reduced tensions.
- **The importance of senior champions within SDC:** The SDC Ambassador was himself an agronomist. He had knowledge of the sector and good insights, and was able to give Dorothee good guidance (e.g. to target farm organisations which the national programme staff had not prioritised). The Ambassador could also have meetings with Ministers of Agriculture which rotated frequently and inform them of the programme. This is one of the benefits of integrated Embassies.

- **Understanding power relations within a sector** through her meetings, she identified the power relations between agronomists (educated élite – which her national programme officer was part of) and farmer organisations (which had been excluded from the initial stakeholder mapping). The programme design was courageous as it aimed to turn the relationship on its head and challenge Haiti’s legacy of authoritarianism: it aimed to give farmers a voice and encourage innovation through their interactions (rather than as a result of researchers inventing for farmers). Seeds appear to be a technical issue but are actually a reflection of power in the sector (the Ministry buys seeds internationally and there are few domestic traders).
- **SDC long-term commitment:** The sector was identified as part of SDC’s second cooperation strategy for Haiti. Dorothee was given the mandate to work on agricultural governance and used it to facilitate innovation. SDC’s 12-year commitment meant that Dorothee could design an inception phase to test the approach, and the programme would be adjusted through successive phases.
- **The donor community:** It was discussed how SDC positioned itself amongst the other donors working in the agriculture sector. SDC had identified a niche as a small donor working on innovation. It would use its experiences to advocate with the Inter-American Development Bank working with the Ministry. SDC decided to ignore the Americans (very powerful in Haiti but doing their own things).

Ertan and Visar: Kosovo – Helvetas local government programme

This was a very interesting story involving challenges of developing and maintaining relations with a key government official, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Local Government in Kosovo. SDC has a co-financing arrangement with the Ministry, and has maintained a good arrangement with the Secretary General, who seems to be a promising champion for reform. However, this relationship was challenged in a complicated incident in which the Ministry sought funding for a workshop outside of Kosovo (in Albania) and SDC



refused, as it could have been seen as simply paying government staff nice per diems to travel. The staff within the Ministry were very angry, as such meetings are also a way to supplement meagre salaries. While the local SDC office made this decision, apparently the Minister met someone else from SDC who then implied that this should not be an issue. Also, there were apparently other examples in another programme, where such support was provided, opening SDC up to accusations of ‘double standards’ and risking the relationship with a powerful champion.

This incident led to discussion of a number of themes which are important more broadly for understanding how to think and work politically in such a context. These included:

- **The challenges of working with high level champion.** While supporting high-level reform champions is a critical strategy, especially in settings where these may be few and far between, the example also showed the risk of basing the strategy too much on

one individual. Should that relationship sour, or should the person move on, the strategy fails. The group discussed what other strategies were in place, such as building multiple relationships, finding other allies, etc.

- **Whose rules and incentives count?** This is also a good example of instances where the rule-based approaches to such decisions may not work in a very different context. While SDC was thinking in terms of centralised guidelines of how funds should be used, in this context, this workshop was arguably a) a very good way to for the Secretary General to build her influence, b) to reward others in the organisation and thus build the constituency for change, and c) to hold an important workshop in conditions which participants would find attractive. The incident poses important ethical and strategic challenges about ‘whose reality counts?’ Could or should SDC have been more flexible in its approach?
- **Long-term or short-term impacts?** If it was important to have the workshop, and if such workshops were critical to the SDC intervention, one could argue that of course SDC should be willing to bend its rules about overseas travel and per diems. On the other hand, this is a programme on public integrity – does SDC need to model the importance of such policies and procedures around financial expenditure, and not bend the rules because of political pressure and for instrumental purposes?
- **Reading the informal signals.** At first, the local SDC staff did not think this would be such an issue. However, then the Secretary General refused to hold meetings with them, though without explaining why. But this was an informal signal that the relationship was at risk. The staff sought other ways to ‘read the reality’. Signals are not always direct, and thinking and working politically means constantly watching for the informal cues of where spaces are opening or closing.
- **The perverse incentives of per diems.** The question of whether and how much to pay public officials, NGOs and others to attend workshops is a worldwide issue in international development. It could be argued that the underlying problem is that officials receive such low pay in settings of weak states, that handsome expenses and nice trips are necessary to provide incentives for capacity development and reform. But one could also argue, that this perpetuates a larger problem of not paying civil servants properly. Also, SDC staff appear to have sent mixed signals on the SDC position on this. Is there an underlying need to discuss this issue more broadly within SDC, and indeed with other donors within Kosovo? Does the ‘per diem’ culture found in aid create perverse or skewed incentives for reform?

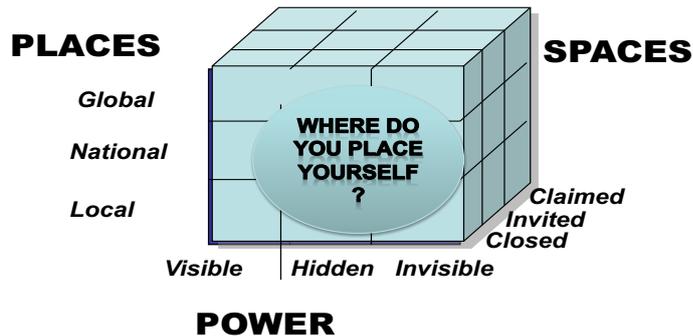
Power cube

In the second part of the morning, Prof John Gaventa presented the power cube as another methodology to explore power relations within the aid sector. His presentation can be found in Annex F. He used www.powercube.net to explore all the dimensions of the cube. John noted SDC had supported the power cube project when it was launched in 2008.

During the discussion, it became clear that for some people, the difference between hidden and invisible power was not clear: ‘hidden power’ are the issues that are kept off the table by bias but there is a grievance; ‘invisible power’ keeps people from even seeing the issue, they have internalised exclusion



The Power Cube



Power twister game

Questions:

- *Where do you actually spend your time and resources? Which space and levels? What forms of power are you addressing?*
- *How does your presence or intervention change the power picture?*
- *How do you develop alliances with others (in other spaces and levels?)*

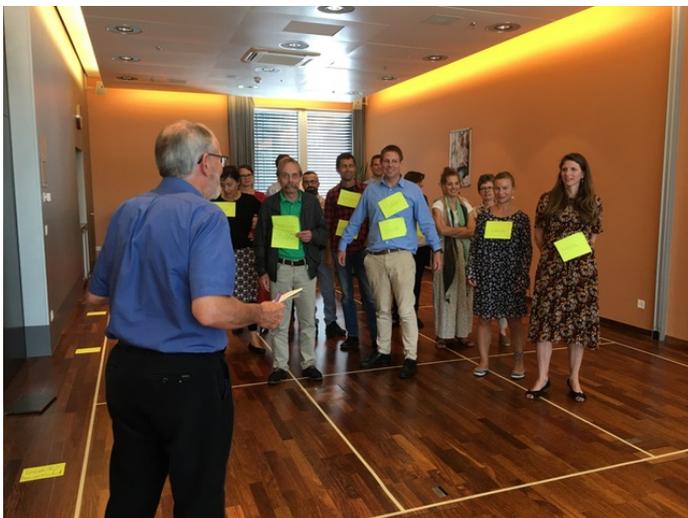
This exercise was about 'Putting yourselves in the picture'. Participants were asked to buzz with others on this, and then to locate themselves in the 9 dimensions of the Power Cube, in response largely to question 1. Reflections on the exercise:

- The discussion focused mostly on **how SDC staff consider their power internally within SDC hierarchy** (rather than with external stakeholders which was the theme of the morning). This reflects current preoccupations with SDC's role and internal changes. While the question was open ended, and didn't specify whether we were asking about power 'out there' or within SDC, most participants discussed how they experienced power within the organisation. Some said that within the organisation, 'they didn't feel powerful'. Others discussed how they could play roles of linking 'closed and invited spaces,' of helping to connect to the 'claimed spaces', of using information and knowledge for change, or of bridging across levels. This led to a very interesting discussion about their own 'agency' or ability to bring about change within the organisation. An important insight was from a participant who said, 'I realise that I might not have decision-making power, but I have other forms of power.'
- Interestingly, most of the participants (largely headquarters based programme staff) grouped in the middle of the cube. **They worked**



more at a national level, and often straddling invited and closed spaces. This raised important questions about how from that position they can support more local claimed spaces, or how they can also engage with the often ‘hidden’ power at the global level. Participants noted the difference between Swiss staff and national programme officers in the field offices.

- **Contrast between internal and external perceptions:** SDC colleagues see themselves as powerless within their organisation. For external partners (e.g. Helvetas) SDC makes decisions and has visible, formal power. Georgette agreed: there is a formal power to say yes/no to programmes – definitely external stakeholders attributed this formal power to her. Laure-Hélène commented she was surprised SDC staff felt they were in invited spaces when often they are in a closed space (meetings only accessible to donors / diplomats).
- John emphasised that many participants attempted to span, or bridge across spaces. As intermediaries, they also had **individual agency and ‘power to’**. How this power is used becomes important, whether it is used positively to enable and facilitate the opening of spaces for others (knowledge-brokers, conveners), or whether this is used in a more top-down, domineering way (gatekeepers, ‘power over, role of aid money’). This



connects to internal discussions on ‘leadership’, with important discussions to be had on the styles and meanings of leadership and how they exercise their power (over, with, to, for what?).

- John also reflected on his work that has focused on claimed / local spaces, but as he argued, perhaps most **important form of power is global / closed spaces**, which have to be challenged.

5. Working politically internally

During the afternoon of the second day, we discussed:

- ***What management practices within your organisation encourage or hold back a “thinking and working politically” approach?***
- ***How did you engage with your managers and your peers to convince them of the need to “think and work politically”?***
- ***What organisational challenges did you face to adapt your programme or innovate in a new one, and how did you overcome them?***

We broke into three groups to discuss these issues and prepare recommendations.

Question: what are the enablers and barriers to thinking and working politically within their own organisations at four levels: a) the frontline worker, b) the management level, c) the systems and d) the political level?

The following table highlights the key points that were identified by the three groups:

	TWP enablers	TWP barriers
Country-level	<p>Swiss image: “Swiss brand” gives access and credibility in the field e.g. in Kosovo Switzerland is seen as neutral, and this enables those working for Swiss Aid to convene dialogues, raise questions, etc. without necessarily being seen as having a ‘foreign agenda’.</p> <p>Field-office: SDC is very decentralised and field offices can adopt TWP approaches. SDC can work at different levels in-country (Ministry, other donors, civil society, populations) and have direct relations. Integration within Embassy means can have better access to diplomatic skills and knowledge; Ambassador can assist. National Programme Officers play a key role in bringing access to local knowledge (but may also act as gatekeepers)</p> <p>Long-term: SDC can stay long-term in a country and develop relations. SDC long-term programmes in a sector so can adapt over time</p>	<p>Swiss image Swiss approach is also very diplomatic and consensus based, there was a worry that at times it can lead to self-censorship, or not ‘rocking the boat’ where it would be good to do so.</p> <p>Local knowledge it can be hard to understand the local context “black box” of where power really lies.</p> <p>Time pressures and capacity constraints may limit ability to undertake political analysis. Too many pressures from HQ on field offices so no time to engage with partners,</p> <p>SDC rules e.g. per diems can make building relationships harder.</p> <p>Challenges of working with partners how to manage stakeholders? Staff in field might get too close and not critical enough. It can be difficult to establish close working relationships with implementing partners that are required to share ideas on thinking and working politically.</p> <p>SDC integration within Embassy can also mean SDC staff excluded from some meetings and dilemmas (e.g. commercial vs peace or local development agendas).</p> <p>Necessity of maintaining good relationships with the host government can make it difficult to carry out sensitive analysis.</p>
SDC management and Systems	<p>Staffing: National programme officers provide local insights and institutional memory. SDC Swiss staff rotation of 4 years is longer than most other donors. Staff rotations also enable fresh thinking. Individual creativity is valued.</p> <p>Management support field offices can feel well supported by their hierarchy, with a shared vision and team approach; HQ can provide constructive challenges to field. SDC has a relatively open office culture.</p>	<p>Staffing The lack of an HR system that could recruit those with the right skills and values for TWP</p> <p>Results agenda HQ push to deliver results in a short time frame The drive towards ‘upwards’ public accountability, rather than on the changes actually achieved; HQ is risk averse and not always transparent.</p> <p>Disbursement pressures. If funds are not disbursed they are lost.</p> <p>No flexibility in PCM cannot adjust activities within the phase of a programme. Limited possibility to adapt to fast changing opportunities and risks.</p>

	<p>PCM tools: annual reports, MERV, end of phase reports provide space for reflection and entry points for analysis and adjustments. At planning stage can include budget line for studies / PEAs to be done during programme.</p> <p>Long programming horizons: SDC is still able to make long term programming decisions.to think long term.</p> <p>Learning SDC works hard to be a learning organisation, and that it often encourages adaptation and flexibility, an approach which is needed to think and work politically in difficult contexts.</p>	<p>Financial procedures are cumbersome. Cannot commission additional reviews or adjust easily when the external context changes.</p> <p>M&E lack of effective monitoring of theories of change, and an effective data base, to allow staff to build the narrative on how thinking and working politically is leading to results. Accountability systems generate pressure to show results, not to engage in internal reflection.</p>
<p>Swiss level</p> <p>SDC HQ</p>	<p>SDC is well networked e.g. with Parliament, central government; Swiss NGOs can raise issues on behalf of SDC. Potential to make more of Swiss Parliamentarians themselves, to get them in the field to experience the work first hand. As politicians, they also know a lot about 'thinking and working politically'.</p> <p>SDC-Ministry of Foreign Affairs integration: SDC has freedom to make decisions and can influence foreign policy. SDC now has greater access to knowledge of Swiss diplomats. Better prospects for more coherent development and foreign policy making.</p>	<p>SDC-Ministry of Foreign Affairs Integration SDC may be losing some influence and independence and needs to adjust to new global and domestic context (e.g. greater aid scepticism)</p> <p>Political context some self-censorship because of critical media; need to connect better with Swiss politics. SDC may have become overly concerned with preserving its image and reputation and not admitting failures.</p> <p>Business pressures. Pressures to demonstrate secondary benefits of Swiss cooperation to Swiss companies.</p>

Role play

Question: What are your recommendations to help your organisation think and work politically?

The three groups which had identified the enablers and barriers to TWP were then asked to prepare their top recommendations for SDC management. Each group was given the opportunity to make their case to SDC directorate through a role play.



Group 2: We need to deliver effectively. Don't need to convince you of the need to work politically. It will improve our cost effectiveness, and so image of Switzerland will improve.

- 1. Human resources:** It is essential to have the right staff who are creative, innovative and courageous. For this we need Human Resources strategy to find the right people, to train them, to empower them and build up their political skills, negotiation skills, not just thematic expertise,
- 2. Communication:** SDC represents Switzerland in other countries. Need to convey better what we do to the Parliamentarians and to publics. Communicate results and failures. We could also Invite more Parliamentarians to see what we are doing in the field.
- 3. Monitoring and evaluation:** In order to communicate better we need better monitoring and communication what changes we are helping to bring about. We do not spend enough on it and we need a good database on political processes and assess if our ToCs behind our programmes are correct. Now we report on results but not on processes. By doing this better we would enrich our accountability and reputation. An asset is the internal learning culture of SDC, but logframe do not provide space to report on this.

SDC Directorate response:

- We are aware of these issues and have a communications group inside SDC. We have the MERV which is a very good tool?
- What are your concrete proposals on human resources? We are part of the federal administration so we are constrained by broader HR management practices. We already do a lot of training.

Group 3: We have act in politically informed and smarter ways to be more effective and to be taken more seriously. Our staff and partners are very busy respecting PCM, but we need to balance this by being more politically aware and smart. Recommendations on how to achieve this:

1. MERV should be done at a project level (not just portfolio)
2. Staff should be more capacitated and trained on TWP with a helpdesk to support thematic colleagues
3. Partners should be able to raise concerns if they feel we are not thinking and working politically (e.g. providing feedback in the results reporting self-assessment/add indicator some degree of political awareness in the annual report).

SDC Directorate response

- Does the Foreign Ministry think SDC should more politically aware? Our role is technical: to alleviate poverty. We don't see why it is important to work politically.... What do the taxpayers think? It is also a difficult political moment and we need to be careful.
- We already do this intuitively. Our staff knows how to think and work politically. Yes, good idea for partners to bring issues to our attention if there is a problem.
- Don't agree for the need for another indicator or new tools: there is a fatigue (e.g. with CSMP), do you want to bring another abbreviation TWP?
- Trainings led by DDLG already confirmed for SDC... that's a good thing. The process of SDC integration with Embassies is happening and useful. We have always been working politically without thinking about it. Let's give this a couple of years.

SDC staff response: Being politically aware shouldn't mean that we make much noise about this in the Swiss media.

Group 1: I am here because I need your help. Our political analysis is not strong enough and we are not thinking enough about how power relations affect our work. We would like you to give us authorization to develop concrete proposals on the following:

- We need to engage with stakeholders and understand the local politics
- We need to be able to explain the political realities of beneficiary countries to Swiss ministers and publics.
- Need greater flexibility of funds: use funds for opportunities when the moment arises.

Directorate response:

- Is the problem that people don't have the financial flexibility to respond to opportunities, or is it that people haven't actually tried?
- We have constraints and need to respect the Ministry of Finance rules.
- We'll ask your group to think a little more and give us the argument why certain rules and processes are making work in the field more difficult.

In plenary, we then reflected on the exercise. It provided a useful reality check on how SDC management is likely to perceive the TWP agenda and how this may differ from HQ/field staff. Overall, the recommendations accepted by the SDC directorate in the role play and other important factors had been:

- look into financial management systems to see if more flexibility could be introduced;
- training and developing a culture of working and thinking politically;
- need to pay attention to Swiss domestic politics and the narrative of how development cooperation benefits Switzerland;
- the value of bringing Swiss parliamentarians to see work in the field;

- the importance of the interaction between SDC HQ and field colleagues to create time to reflect on how to work politically.

6. Final reflections

In the final session of the workshop, all the participants reflected on:

- ***What is shifted in me during this workshop?***
- ***What concrete action will I take?***

Andrea: I'll be thinking about next steps on support staff skills on thinking and working politically and how organizational culture can create more space for TWP.

Georgette: I intend to take ideas from this workshop back to my Directorate. We shouldn't add more instruments or tools, but think about finding space within our existing frameworks to promote TWP. We should build informal networks in SDC on TWP.

Alex: We should make best use of existing instruments (e.g. CSPM, MERV) to enable the TWP approach. We should treat this as a transversal theme rather than an additional responsibility. More guidance is needed on how to apply ideas from TWP in practice.

Laurent: I'm more convinced than ever that my work on social inclusion requires a political economy perspective. Theories of change need to explain how we can navigate power relations to promote social inclusion.

Visar: I'll aim to apply PEA to the Demos programme in Kosovo using the power cube and the six-step PEA framework.

Irene: I learned that PEA is not just an analytical tool but that I can use it for PCM. It has helped us reflect our own role and power. I would love to apply power cube ideas to work in a country office. I will communicate ideas from the workshop back to my division.

Richard: I now more convinced than ever about the importance of political economy. Power relationships are everywhere. Even if we don't have decision power, we still have power to influence. I won't communicate to my Division formally what happened in the workshop but I'll start asking different questions.

Ertan: We discuss politics a lot in the project office but we need to document it more and make our analysis more systematic. I like the idea of progressively scaling and deepening our analysis, starting small with a one-hour reflection, then a one day workshop, then even more depth.

Katharina: For GIZ appraisal missions, I will insist on a more diverse team.

Aita: the workshop has helped de-mystify the PEA. I will apply it to the midterm review of the Tunisia strategy.

Dorothee: the topic was not new but I am more confident what it is. The question of values and culture became clearer. We cannot work politically if we don't have clear values. I'll be making use of these ideas on my visit to Ethiopia next week (Leitungsseminar). I'll also keep the power cube in mind and try to apply it to gender.

Marie: the TWP discussion relates to the question of SDC organizational culture. Our discussion on 'agency' is also related to 'leadership'. Many parts of SDC are discussing the same thing. Good to know it is happening. Use your space!

The resource persons also made some concluding points. They had all appreciated the fun and participatory workshop style. It showed that TWP is something that staff are already doing.

Laure-Hélène

- SDC has clear strengths that helps TWP: field offices with local level partners that can support grassroots and local level development
- SDC can use some of its systems and processes to deepen its TWP approach and have structured approach: go beyond stakeholders analysis to explore what is shaping the incentives for / against change in a more systematic way than at present
- This workshop itself can be part of the SDC TWP deepening process as participants can continue to collaborate and encourage change. You have a lot to build on and can support one another

John

- Thinking and Working Politically should be done under the radar.
- The role play (on recommendations for internal change) was useful, but in addition to seeking to change organisations we can use existing spaces to promote this way of thinking and working.
- We should use Switzerland's strength (neutrality, credibility) and its privileged position to think and work politically.

Gareth

- Change in organizational culture is more likely to come through evolution rather than revolution. We need a Theory of Change on how to embed TWP in donor organisations. Realistically we are looking at small incremental steps exploiting existing room for manoeuvre within SDC.
- Existing tools can be tweaked to create more space for TWP. e.g. Logframes can be made more flexible by including process indicators, menus of possible results or retrospective outcome harvesting. Programmes can be scored on how well they apply TWP practices as part of performance monitoring.
- Ultimately making a strong case for TWP depends on being able to provide evidence that where it has been applied better results have been achieved. We need more case studies of where TWP has made a difference to programme effectiveness.

Following the workshop, the resource persons met with Andrea and Marie to discuss next steps for SDC:

- This workshop was a good test of how to conduct an interactive workshop on TWP. It seemed to meet its objectives

- The external resource persons were surprised how much internally focused the workshop became. This is indicative of the wider challenges SDC is currently facing as it integrated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Many participants fear the space for TWP within SDC is shrinking.
- The workshop showed that SDC HQ-based staff are interested in TWP but do not want more formal tools. There had been resistance to CSPM seen as a tick-the-box exercise.
- There was some interest in learning more about detailed methodologies and key PEA concepts. It might be that some future SDC learning events could be targeted at SDC partners who are implementing programmes on the ground (such as Helvetas in Kosovo).
- The workshop did not identify many politically-aware analyses that had explicitly informed SDC programmes (design or adaptation). The workshop did not examine many analyses to see how they went deeper than stakeholder analyses and looked at more structural/institutional factors. There does not seem to be documentation available on how programmes change in SDC. There needs to be a stronger evidence base showing how the application of TWP contributes to programme effectiveness.
- Should not look at TWP as a tool but as a strategy for cultural change within SDC and with its partners. It would be good to identify which areas within SDC would be priorities to support that change process e.g. is it flexibility of funding or different types of programmes?
- There is a concern that the space for flexible programming is shrinking in SDC, but there are still many opportunities to use existing spaces more effectively for TWP.
- What kind of staff networks would help to promote the TWP approach? Note the failure of the previous PEA network that was closed by SDC management (and taken over by DDLG and been used to reflect on how to respond to shrinking political space)
- Linking SDC to external partnerships on TWP should be considered.
- John Gaventa suggested “learning journeys” or “action inquiries” to respond to SDC needs on TWP. This would focus on learning rather than establishing structures like a community of practice.
- A practical workshop on thinking and working politically in an era of increasing authoritarianism would be useful.