



## **NOVA Network Soils and Society “SoilSoc” – report from the 2010 year’s board meeting**

### **History**

The NOVA network SoilSoc, short for Soils and Society, was established in 2006 to bring together Nordic teachers, researchers and students in the multidisciplinary field of soil science. SoilSoc is active in both MSc and PhD level education and its main aims are to:

- **Increase** and improve **Nordic interaction** among students, teachers and researchers in the field of soil science
- **Improve** the diversity and quality of **graduate education** in the field of soil science in the Nordic countries
- **Create** a motivating **study environment** for Nordic students in the field of soil science

Four years after the first planning meeting, SoilSoc is now an established network with representatives from all relevant NOVA member universities. This report summarizes what was discussed at the board meeting 2010.

### **Board meeting 2010**

The annual board meeting took place in Helsinki, Finland from 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> November 2010. It was hosted at Hotel Haikko Manor located close to Helsinki by the Finnish board members Kristina Lindström and Anu Mikkonen. All but two board members, Ole K. Borggaard and Lis Jonge, were able to participate so Karina Jessing was the single representative from the University of Copenhagen while the University of Aarhus was represented by Anders Vendelboe. Also, Markku Yli-Halla had been invited to participate in the meeting as a local soil scientist representative in addition to having participated in one of the SoilSoc courses given during the year. The program of the meeting started on the arrival evening with an informal spa followed by dinner and then continued the following day with an all day long meeting (Attachment 1. Program of the board meeting 2010 with a list of participants and 2. Meeting agenda).

### **SoilSoc board 2011**

It was decided that the current network leader, Ólafur Arnalds, will continue for one year. It was considered favorable if that the network leader was not rotated to frequently since it is good to have some continuum. However, the job as secretary could rotate more frequently and it was decided that Karina Jessing will replace the current secretary, Ella Wessén. The transition between secretaries was decided to take place in March 2011.

### **SoilSoc courses 2010**

The course leader of the SoilSoc PhD course "*Soil degradation, erosion and restoration*" given 7-16 June in Iceland, Ólafur Arnalds, gave a brief summary of his thoughts about the course. He thought that the student group participating this year was less interactive than the student group participating in 2008. He thought this might be because it was only 2 years between courses, but thought the practical parts of the course had gone well and that the weather had been good. A total of 14 students from both Nordic and Baltic universities participated in the course that generated 4 ECTS.

The master level course "*Remediation of contaminated soils*" was held in Denmark during 9-27 August and organized by Ole K. Borggaard. Karina Jessing handed out written information that Ole had prepared as a final report for the course. In summary, there were problems with enrollment of students which created a lot of extra work for the course organizer and even though many students applied, only 6 students completed the course that generated 5 ECTS and all of these students were Danish. However, the teaching part of the course went well and students participated actively, made very good individual reports and expressed good satisfaction with the course. So from a teaching point of view Ole considered the course as a success. However, if the course should be run again it was stressed that the involvement of Nordic teachers would improve the course and that it is necessary that the number of participating students severely increase.

The PhD student course "*Sustainable use of tropical soils*" was held 23 Oct – 6 Nov in Ethiopia and the outcome was presented by Kristina Lindström. She thought that the course went very well. She pointed out that courses like this are important since it offers the opportunity for students to get broader knowledge about more than your own specific subject. If the course will be organized again, Markku Yli-Halla commented that more time should be spent in the field (digging more soil-pits) and that it should be organized so that there is less overlap between the lectures. In total 41 students participated in the course out of which 19 students were from the Nordic countries while 22 students were from Ethiopia and the course generated 5 ECTS.

### **SoilSoc courses 2011 and 2012**

There were quite thorough discussions of planning and running at least one SoilSoc course in 2012. A NIMC course entitled *Preservation of microorganisms in microbial resource centres* will be organized in Helsinki in 2011, probably on 2-6.5, by Kristina Lindström and colleagues and Kristina Lindström also informed that she might apply for money to organize the course "*Sustainable use of tropical soils*" a second time during 2012.

### **Suggestions for future SoilSoc courses**

The discussion from 2009 years board meeting about potential future courses resulted in the suggestion of a course on the topic; *Peat soils in the northern hemisphere*. Ólafur Arnalds had after last year's meeting contacted a person in Finland that might have the possibility to host such course but it turned out that the person in question was not connected to a NOVA university. However, our SoilSoc member from Joensuu, now a part of the University of Eastern Finland (UEF), Tarja Lehto offered to take the lead in organizing such a course. It was decided that it will have to be given during summer and it was stressed that teachers from several Nordic countries should participate.

Another view regarding courses that was discussed at last years board meeting was the importance to offer a broad course about managed ecosystems with a focus on soils. This since you as a PhD student might not have a broad background knowledge about soils in general, and it could be very helpful to be able to put your own particular subject in a bigger context. Several different disciplines could potentially be included in such a course.

### **General discussions regarding future SoilSoc courses**

It was again commented that it is possible to apply for a planning grant for courses from NOVA for which there is no application deadline. Information about this can be found at: <http://www.nova-university.org/own.cfm?page=7>.

See also the NOVA website for information about grants and funding for courses: [http://www.nova-university.org/pagetop.cfm?MenySidorTop\\_id=3&open=5](http://www.nova-university.org/pagetop.cfm?MenySidorTop_id=3&open=5).

### **Advertising SoilSoc, website information and student mobility**

It was stressed that all board members should advertise for SoilSoc and refer to the website for information about upcoming courses at their own University. There are several links on the SoilSoc website to different graduate schools and master programmes at each of the member Universities. Sara Hallin told the board about some graduate schools established at SLU in Sweden, *e.g.* Focus on Soils and Water, that are very active in giving PhD student courses. The international research program STAIR was presented by Anders Vendelboe from the University of Aarhus. Karina Jessing showed the website with information about the postgraduate school RECETO and also informed about EnvEuro which is a two-year Master in Environmental Science that is offered by, together with three other European universities, the University of Copenhagen. Trond Børresen commented that at least three of the programmes at UMB in Norway have an important focus on soils and Tarja Lehto informed about the UEF graduate school EnSTe which has a focus on environmental toxicology.

It was discussed that we need to promote soil studies more at the MSc-level and also that we need to promote mobility for master students. It was decided at the 2009 years board meeting the NOVA prize money to SoilSoc should be used for MSc-student mobility and that it is free to be used by students connected to either board member in some way. Each board member has access to roughly 500 euro to use for this purpose.

### **Network funding**

The network leader, Ólafur Arnalds, had at the time of the board meeting sent in an application for funding to run SoilSoc during 2011. It was later announced that SoilSoc was granted with half the amount that was applied for. This means a decision is needed on how to proceed with the network activity since we will not be able to have both a yearly board meeting and a paid secretary.

### **Board meeting 2011**

The next board meeting should be held at the University of Aarhus and the preliminary date was set to 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> November 2011. The secretary will send out e-mail in beginning of September 2010 reminding people about the date.

**Attachments:**

1. Program of the board meeting 2010 with a list of participants
2. Meeting agenda

## Appendix 1

### Participant-list for the SoilSoc board meeting 2010

1. Ólafur Arnalds (Iceland)
2. Sunna Askelsdottir (Iceland)
3. Sara Hallin (Sweden)
4. Ella Wessén (Sweden)
5. Kristina Lindström (Finland)
6. Anu Mikkonen (Finland)
7. Karina K. Jessing (Denmark)
8. Anders Vendelboe (Denmark)
9. Trond Børresen (Norway)
10. Shahid Nadeem (Norway)
11. Tarja Lehto (Finland)
12. Markku Yli-Halla (Finland)

### Program

#### **Thursday November 18<sup>th</sup>**

**18.00-20.00** Spa

**20.00** Dinner

When all have arrived to the Hotel Haikko Manor we will start with an informal spa followed by dinner at the hotel (<http://www.haikko.ru/en/dining.php>).

#### **Friday November 19<sup>th</sup>**

The meeting will be held in meeting facilities located at Hotel Haikkon Manor (<http://www.haikko.ru/en/meetings.php>).

**7.00-9.00** Breakfast

**9:00** SoilSoc Board meeting starts

**10.15** Coffee

**11:30** Lunch

**12.30** SoilSoc board meeting continues

**14.00** Coffee

**15:00** Meeting ends, departure from the hotel

## Appendix 2

### NOVA SoilSoc Board meeting November 19<sup>th</sup> 2010

#### Agenda

**1. SoilSoc board meeting 2010**

- Welcome and introduction – Kristina Lindström

**2. SoilSoc 2011-2012**

- A representative from each country gives an update on developments in relation to international studies and the NOVA program
- New members in the board – discussions about how the board should be organised in the future

**3. Presentations and experiences of past SoilSoc courses**

- PhD course *Soil erosion, degradation and restoration*, 7-16 June 2010, Iceland – presented by Ólafur Arnalds
- MSc course *Remediation of contaminated soils*, 9-27 August 2010, Denmark – presented by Karina K. Jessing
- PhD course *Sustainable use of tropical soils*, 23 October-6 November 2010, Ethiopia– presented by Kristina Lindström
- Discussion on experiences, feedback and practices

**4. Discussion on future SoilSoc courses**

- Ideas for future SoilSoc courses
- Nordic student mobility – discussion about future

**5. SoilSoc Programme in different universities: minor or specialisation**

- Specialisation possibility in the universities, discussion on the situation

**6. Network funding 2011-2012**

- Funding application to NOVA, discussion on the situation

**7. Board meeting 2011**

- Place, time and host

**8. Other items**