



NOVA Network Soils and Society “SoilSoc” – report from the 2009 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

Nearly 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 2009.

Board meeting 2009

The annual board meeting took place in Ås, Norway from 26th to 27th November 2009. It was hosted at UMB by the Norwegian board members Trond Børresen and Shahid Nadeem. All but the two newly-invited board members were able to participate. The program of the meeting started on the arrival evening with a dinner and continued the following day with an all day long meeting (Attachment 1. List of participants and program of the board meeting and 2. Meeting agenda).

SoilSoc board 2010

The great work conducted by former network leader, Kristina Lindström, and secretary, Anu Mikkonen, was acknowledged. The new network leader Ólafur Arnalds and secretary Ella Wessén presented themselves along with new and old board members who all gave a short presentation of themselves.

It was also acknowledged that Lis Jonge from the University of Aarhus and Tarja Lehto from the University of Joensuu, that could not participate in this years board meeting, have been invited and accepted membership in the SoilSoc board. Thus all seven SoilSoc member universities/faculties are now represented in the board, which is the only way to ensure their active participation in course planning and organising. It was decided not to include two additional student representatives because the costs of the board meetings would then become too high. However, it is recommended that when a student representative from Denmark or Finland leaves the network, the new student should be chosen from the university that thus far has not been represented.

SoilSoc courses 2009

The course leader of the SoilSoc PhD course “*Microbial N transformations and NO/N₂O emissions*” given 7-12 June in Norway, Åsa Frostegård, reported about the outcome. She gave a brief summary

about how the course schedule had looked and handed out the course evaluation showing that the participating students generally thought positively of the course. A total of 37 students participated in the course and most students finished the exam and got 4 ECTS but some did not and then received 3 ECTS instead.

SoilSoc courses 2010

The PhD student course "*Soil degradation, erosion and restoration*" will be held 7-16 June in Iceland and was presented by course organiser Ólafur Arnalds. He reported that the course will be run the same way as last year and everything was looking good still at the time of the meeting. Course registration is already open at the course homesite

<http://soilsoc.slu.se/courses/coursesSoilSoc/2010erosion.html>

The PhD student course "*Sustainable use of tropical soils*" which will be held 23 Oct – 6 Nov in Ethiopia was presented by course organiser Kristina Lindström. Participants of the course will fly to Addis Abeba in Ethiopia where they will be met by local students. There will be some sightseeing in Addis Abeba first after which a bus ride will be taken to the University of Awassa where the actual course will be organised. There will be both local and Nordic students involved and there will also be excursions to study different soils. The costs for boarding, travelling within Ethiopia and food are covered. But travel costs for both teachers and students have to be applied for by themselves.

Course registration is already open at the course homesite

<http://soilsoc.slu.se/courses/coursesSoilSoc/2010tropical.html>

The master level course "*Remediation of contaminated soils*" that will be held in August in Denmark was presented by the course organizer Ole K. Borggaard. The course will run from 9-27 August and generate 5 ECTS. The course will concentrate on soils contaminated by heavy metals, PAH, oil and other organic pollutants and it will focus on the most relevant remediation methods including soil washing/flushing, bioremediation and phytoremediation. There will be three excursions during the course.

General discussions regarding upcoming courses

There was some discussion regarding coverage of travel costs for teachers participating in MSc-courses. The NOVA guidelines are as such; non-NOVA teachers travel and accommodation costs should be included in the application for giving the course while NOVA teachers should apply for Nordplus grants to cover costs for participating in the course. Each NOVA university has a Nordplus contact person they can contact for further information

(http://www.nova-university.org/page.cfm?open=5&MenySidor_id=43#Teach).

Suggestions for future SoilSoc courses

Two possible courses were presented and positively received by all board members.

One suggestion was a course with a peatland/peatsoils/wetland in the northern hemisphere focus.

Peat soils can for example be greenhouse gas (GHG; CO₂, CH₄, N₂O) sinks or sources depending on if they are drained or not. Therefore, peat soils are very crucial in today's climate change debate. Some keywords in such a course would be management, peat formation, organic soils, wetlands, bogs and mires, restoration, drainage, forestry, agriculture, microbiology, ecology, climate change, GHG emissions or fluxes.

The other suggestion was that all SoilSoc board members together could plan a course about soils directed to PhD students that do not primarily work with soils. The importance of soil is seldom recognized and soil can sometimes be taken for granted, even though it is not sure that they will

always be there. The theme could revolve around "The value of soil and how to use land". The value of soil and maintenance of functional soils would be covered from environmental and socio-economic perspectives. A topic like land-use conflicts among resource users would be central, for example addressing the currently debated question on land use for bioenergy vs. food production. Examples of other land-use conflicts are settlements, forestry, and tourism. In addition to disciplines covered by members in the SoilSoc board, environmental communication, economics, ethics and landscape ecology and architecture should be included.

General discussions regarding future SoilSoc courses

In order to plan above mentioned courses, a planning grant could be applied for from NOVA for which there is no application deadline (<http://www.nova-university.org/own.cfm?page=7>). If these courses should be run in 2011, which was suggested, the applications should be sent in during spring 2010 to NOVA. The exact application date has not yet been set by NOVA but will be announce later on the NOVA website (<http://www.nova-university.org/own.cfm?page=15>).

NOVA prize 2009 for SoilSoc

How to use the NOVA prize money was discussed and it was decided that it should be used for MSc-student mobility to other SoilSoc members institutes concerning other activities than course attendance (e.g. practical training, lab visit), for which the NordPlus grants don't apply. Each SoilSoc university, including Joensuu and Aarhus, can use 500€ and give it to one student or divide between two or more. Each board teacher member is free to decide how the student(s) receiving the scholarship of their university is chosen. Money should be transferred between universities and not between SoilSoc secretary and student directly. The student should get reimbursed from her own university and then the university gets reimbursed from the SoilSoc secretary.

SoilSoc programme in different universities: minor or specialisation

Only the University of Helsinki has done this yet, and none of the other universities had an immediate plan to start formalising a SoilSoc programme at their university.

Advertising SoilSoc

It was discussed that a general poster about SoilSoc for advertisement should be made by the SoilSoc leader and secretary. This poster should be linking to the website and it should be posted in all universities. It is important that each member encourage other people to participate in NOVA related issues such as giving courses and participating in courses. Each country hosting the SoilSoc board meetings could invite SoilSoc interested from their own country to join.

In addition, when new information has come up, the secretary should send out an e-mail to all SoilSoc interested listing news and linking to the website for further information.

It was decided that members from Baltic countries could not be included as members in the SoilSoc board but those interested should be kept informed about what is happening within SoilSoc.

Network funding

The network leader should write and send in the application for running the SoilSoc during 2010.

Board meeting 2010

The next board meeting should be held in Helsinki and the preliminary date was set to 18th and 19th November 2010. The secretary will send out e-mail in beginning of September 2010 reminding people about the date.

Attachments:

1. List of participants and program of the board meeting 2009
2. Meeting agenda

Appendix 1

Participant-list for the SoilSoc board meeting 2009

1. Ólafur Arnalds (Iceland)
2. Taru Lehtinen (Iceland)
3. Sara Hallin (Sweden)
4. Ella Wessén (Sweden)
5. Kristina Lindström (Finland)
6. Anu Mikkonen (Finland)
7. Ole K. Borggaard (Denmark)
8. Karina K. Jessing (Denmark)
9. Trond Børresen (Norway)
10. Shahid Nadeem (Norway)

Program

Thursday November 26th

19:00 Dinner at Egon Restaurant in Ski close to the hotel

(<http://www.egon.no/index.asp?ParentID=2805&MenuID=2806&DocID=5309>).

We meet at the hotel lobby at 18.55 and go to the restaurant together.

Friday November 27th

Take a taxi to get from the hotel to the meeting in the morning.

The meeting will be at the department for Plant and Environmental Sciences,

Jordfagbygningen (Map for UMB: <http://www.umb.no/about-umb/article/how-to-find-the-university>).

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 Ås

Appendix 2

NOVA SoilSoc Board meeting November 27th 2009

Agenda

1. SoilSoc board meeting 2009

- Welcome and introduction – Trond Børresen

2. SoilSoc Board 2009-2011

- Presentation of the new network leader (Ólafur Arnalds) and secretary (Ella Wessén)
- 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 *Microbial N transformations and NO/N₂O emissions*, 7-12 June 2009, Norway – presented by Åsa Frostegård
- Discussion on experiences, feedback and practices

4. Organisation of the next SoilSoc PhD and MSc courses

- PhD course *Soil degradation, erosion and restoration*, 7-16 June 2010, Iceland - presented by Ólafur Arnalds (see also <http://soilsoc.slu.se/courses/coursesSoilSoc/2010erosion.html>)
- PhD course *Sustainable use of tropical soils*, 23 Oct – 6 Nov 2010, Ethiopia - presented by Kristina Lindström (see also <http://soilsoc.slu.se/courses/coursesSoilSoc/2010tropical.html>)
- MSc course *Remediation of contaminated soils*, August 2010, Denmark – presented by Ole K. Borggaard
- Discussion on teaching and practicalities

5. Discussion on future SoilSoc summer schools

- Ideas for future SoilSoc summer schools
- Nordic student mobility – discussion about future

6. SoilSoc Programme in different universities: minor or specialisation

- Specialisation possibility in the universities, discussion on the situation

7. Network funding 2010-2011

- Funding application to NOVA and widening the network, discussion on the situation

8. Board meeting 2010

- Place, time and host
- The organiser of the next summer school should be invited to participate