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LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND FRAGILE STATEHOOD

**Analysis of institutional arrangements and development trajectories
in the border region of Amu Darya
(Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan)**

Application

Research application submitted on June, 10 2004

to the Volkswagen Foundation

within the framework of the promotion initiative

between Europe and the Orient – Middle Asia / Caucasus in the focus of science

I. Basic tasks

Research topics

Analysis of *local governance* and fragile statehood in the border region of Amu Darya (Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan) in consideration of development trajectories as well as development, functionality and interplay of formal and informal institutions.

Synopsis of the research project

The aim of this research project is to identify the perspectives of statehood in the border region of Amu Darya (northeast Afghanistan, southeast Uzbekistan and southwest Tajikistan). The study is focused on the analysis of the reciprocal relationships of local governance and the exertion of influence on behalf of the state in the context of fragile statehood. The local level is of particular interest, as here the population is confronted most directly with state institutions in *policy* areas such as administration, jurisdiction, security and resource management. Political-cultural and historical similarities to both sides of the Amu Darya (Emirat of Bukhara) form the starting point for the selection of the research region.

The research project combines three scientific perspectives to satisfy the complexity of reciprocal relations of local governance and statehood: a diachronic and a synchronic approach as well as a spanning analysis. The historical examination will pinpoint the development trajectories of the interplay of collective (informal) and state (formal) institutions within three different state contexts. This analysis shall enable to draw conclusions for the structural stability and the changeability of local policy design. The synchronic comparison clarifies to which extent state institutions are embedded in local governance structures in the contexts of differently distinct statehood (Afghanistan: failed state; Tajikistan: weak neopatrimonial state; Uzbekistan: authoritarian neopatrimonial state). The analysis of cross-bordering influences shall show whether and how cross-bordering action in the region affects local governance and the distinctness of statehood.

Estimated total time

The duration of promotion applied for is three years (January, 1 2005 – December, 31 2007). Preparatory work for the project has been running since February 2004.

II. Research objective

In international relations the state is considered a stabilising model of organisation. Regions not permeated by the state are labelled fragile and are hence considered a security risk. In these regions the sphere of influence of the state is often confined to the capital or few urban centres, whereas on the local level state institutions cannot establish themselves. The border region of the Amu Darya¹ is situated in the periphery of national influence, wherefore the analysis of its local structures is insightful for the development conditions of statehood and the perspectives for stability in the region.

¹ Alongside the Tajik-Afghan border the Amu Darya is called *Panž*.

The relations between formal (state-run) institutions and informal (collective) institutions form the focus of the project at hand. Starting point for the study research are the historical similarities in the politically and socially once coherent region of the Amu Darya. The aim is to attain fundamental as well as application-oriented findings of local governance and statehood in the region:

- a) From a basic perspective the main interest is to analyse to which extent different development trajectories of state building in the region have altered the institutions of local communities under different national general conditions and which interfaces have emerged between local and state institutions. The analysis of the dynamics of change or persistence in the development of local governance allows conclusions to be drawn about their stability today.
- b) The application-orientated interest of the project lies in the examination of mechanisms and the functioning of local governance in fundamental and relevant areas of politics. The analyses shall allow for propositions on the inherent stability of local political processes and on the development perspectives of statehood in the Amu Darya region. They shall exemplarily give information about the question how resistant traditional institutions of local communities can act compared to state building processes. In order to achieve this research goal, the applicants emphasise following key points:
 - The historical development trajectories of statehood in the Amu Darya border region from the transit zone between the Emirat of Bukhara and the kingdom of Kabul in the 18. and early 19. century up to their contemporary embodiment in the states of Afghanistan, Tajikistan und Uzbekistan.
 - The examination of local governance structures in particular consideration of the relation between formal (state) and informal (collective) institutions of the local community. In detail, the research dimensions are: (a) security, (b) jurisdiction, (c) state administration and collective self-organisations well as (d) resource management (access und control).
 - The influence of cross-bordering relations, perceptions, interests and actions within local governance and statehood in the study regions.

According to this complex combination of research aspects the project will adopt an interdisciplinary orientation. It takes up the specific and complementary perspectives and approaches of various socio-scientific disciplines (sociology, history, politics, ethnology and geography). The project shall be conducted in close cooperation with scientific partner institutes from the three study regions and shall furthermore expand research competences existing there today.

III. Justification and originality of the research topic

The research project will combine five innovative approaches with each other to embrace the area of tension between state and collective impulses in its entirety:

- The analysis of local governance structures and their connectivity to the state from the perspective of different historical development trajectories.
- The embedment of the analysis in a comparable context which does not merely consist of a series of single studies on structurally similar countries, but which examines a particular region in a comprehensive manner.
- The expansion of the common research variables „(self-)administration“, „security“ and „resource control und access“ with the aspect of „jurisdiction“.
- The analysis of the effects of cross-bordering perceptions, interests and actions on local governance.
- The overcoming of the differentiation in regional studies between post-Soviet research on Central Asia on the one hand and research on Afghanistan on the other hand.

Various international conferences conducted by the authors² make clear the relevance of the analysis of local structures, as the current knowledge on local structures in the study area is insufficient. This knowledge gap does not only constitute a fundamental restraint for the design of successful projects of development cooperation, but also for the development of political strategies – such as in the transnational fight against drug cultivation and smuggling or in the setup of state structures in Afghanistan. In addition, there is a special interest in the region on part of German politics as the stabilisation and development of northeast Afghanistan is in the focus of the German contribution to the fight against terrorism. For example, logistic units of the German army are based in Termez (Uzbekistan), and a provincial reconstruction team (PRT) is based in Kundus (Afghanistan).

IV. Status of research and deepening of the research aspects

In the following, the aforementioned research aspects will be presented in detail. Additionally, an overview of the status of research will be provided, highlighting both the theoretical discussion as well as the according processes which can be discerned in the study area.

First, the processes of development and collapse of (fragile) statehood and their effects on both sides of the Amu Darya will be discussed (IV.1.). Secondly, the authors will expound on their scientific understanding of local governance, taking into consideration especially formal and informal institutions. Furthermore, the empirical research levels of the planned research project in the border region of the Amu Darya will be explained (IV.2.). Finally, the significance of border regions will be addressed to clarify the fact that even though the Amu Darya does currently fulfil the function of a border river, the surrounding region was characterized by a closely connected economic, cultural and political network in the past (IV.3.).

² *Promoting Security in Afghanistan and the Region*; Conference hosted by the Liechtenstein Institute on Self Determination, Princeton, and the Center for Development Research (ZEF), Bad Honnef and Bonn, 21 - 24 May 2003; *State Reconstruction and International Engagement in Afghanistan*; Conference hosted by ZEF and the Crisis State Programme, London School of Economics, Bonn, 30 May - 1 June 2003.

IV.1. Fragile Statehood

IV.2. Local Governance and Institutions

Every community knows of and employs forms of self-organisation. Governance in the sense of authoritative navigating thus does not solely consist of the actions carried out by state institutions, but also of „governing without government“ (Rosenau / Czempiel 1992). Governance hence comprises the regulation of all policies affecting the community interest and transcends state action by referring to all person groups who are involved in the political process. Accordingly, this research project is based on an understanding of governance as the entirety of local institutions, mechanisms and processes, which serve the relevant actors on site as a means of expressing their interests, resolving their conflicts and fulfilling their rights and obligations (cf. UNDP 1997).

1) *Institutions*

To analyse local governance, it is necessary to examine the institutions which become operative in the local arena. This project is footed on an interdisciplinary and dynamic understanding of institutions which includes components of the economic, socio-anthropologist and political theory of institutions. Starting point is the handy definition of institutions as “rules of the game“ (North 1990: 3) which stands in the tradition of *New Institutional Economics* and highlights the frame of action for collective action. Reduced to this formulation, though, this approach blends out the social rootage of institutions, other norm systems (e.g. religion, ideologies), the heterogeneity of societies and the possible symbolic content of resources (Mehta et al. 1999; Liebelt 2003). Thus the research project also incorporates a socio-anthropological perspective which emphasizes the legitimation of institutions (Douglas 1991). Furthermore, the term ‚power‘ is taken into account to explain institutional constraints as outcome and means of unequally distributed power resources (Goodin 1996). This perception underlines the procedural character of institutions, which form the actions of the actors on the one hand, but emerge and develop from interactions themselves on the other hand (actor-centred structuralism – Giddens 1984; actor-centred institutionalism – Mayntz / Scharpf 1995; cf. also Merkel / Croissant 2000). For the analysis of local governance the research project is thus footed on a notion of institutions which encompasses the dimensions *frame of action*, *legitimation*, *power* and *process*. It can be defined as

a modifiable (*process*), normative set of rules of social relations (*action frame*) derived from the holding of interest conflicts (*power*), which is regarded legitimate and which contains problem-solving and regulation potentials for human behaviour (*legitimation*).

For the analysis of local politics we propose a differentiation between formal and informal institutions. Whereas formal institutions are set up under constitutional law, informal institutions arise evolutionally due to a regular interaction between individual, collective or corporate actors without any constraining formal regulation (Merkel / Croissant 2000). Informal institutions for example are customs / traditions, moral values, religious beliefs and networks (Mayntz 1997, v. Beyme 1991, Geiss 2002, Conrad 2003). The power of informal institutions may assume a different status according to the context (Lauth 1999): In authoritarian regimes, in situations of transformation and in weak states informal arrangements sometimes appear as „functional equivalents“, which at least partially provide more efficient forms of communication, negotiating of interests and policy implementation

and thus compensate for the inefficiency of state structures. In many cases, their functional weakness offers informal institutions considerable room to unfold (Merkel / Croissant 2000). Whenever insecurity prevails with regard to the validity of new institutions, the incentives for the creation of informal rules are extraordinarily high. Informal rules can be established as parallel institutions outside of state institutions or – according to the subject – overlap with these (‘institutional bricolage’ – Cleaver 2000). Thus it is possible to combine the benefit of informal arrangements (potential integration effects, high decision flexibility) with the benefit of state institutions (legitimation) (Merkel / Croissant 2000). In the context of local governance the overlapping of these levels are of special interest (Mehta et al. 1999). On the local level institutional developments in the course of state building processes have to prove themselves in direct confrontation with traditional mechanisms. In central Asia as in other developing regions the problem of political action lies in the mixing of the local logic of action with externally introduced political forms. This mixing results in „hybrid structures of the political life“ (Conrad 2003: 4). This phenomenon is a central topic of the research project, since this approach remains a research desiderate in the case of central Asia: The and significance of the overlapping of informal and formal institutions enables us to analyse to what extent different development trajectories of state formation in Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have contributed to social change and how resistant the respective groups of the society along the Amu Darya are towards the exertion of influence on behalf of the state.

2) Levels of research

To define the empirical research levels for the qualitative analysis of the significance of informal and formal institutions on the local governance level, the authors take up a category developed at the Center for Development Research which subdivides governance in four functionally and structurally closely linked dimensions: *Security Governance*, *Political Governance*, *Administrative Governance* and *Socio-Economic Governance* (Debiel / Terlinden 2004 - forthcoming). According to this category the research project at hand concentrates on the research levels guarantee of *security*, *jurisdiction* in its multiple forms (as part of *Political Governance*), *state administration* and *societal self-organisation* as well as *management* of economically relevant resources:

- *Guarantee of security*: If the state does not fulfil its protection function or abuses its monopoly of power by arbitrarily using force, the subjective perception of security dwindles in the population, and thus does the societal legitimation of the state. Power is privatised, and the monopoly of power resolves into in power oligopolies. Militias protect the interests of individuals and guarantee security for payment or on basis of personal loyalties. In the context of our research project it is of interest to analyse whether the states of the research region fulfil their protection function directly and, if this is not the case, whether and how security is guaranteed by other actors.
- *Jurisdiction*: The interpretation of law regulates the social existence. In formalised relations the vested law constitutes the basis for the regulation of disputes, in informal relations it is the customary law. Different sources of the law can exist both for the penned law as well as for the customary law which even coexist next to each other sometimes. All three research countries are characterized by multiple forms of legal organisation and jurisdiction. Alongside modern law Islamic notions of law and local customary law also play an important role. Rather often different notions of law

overlap or collide with each other. By addressing the question, which jurisdiction enjoys which legitimacy, it is possible to deduce information on the actual power structures.

- *State administration and societal self-organisation:* Administration as the direct means of exertion of power on behalf of the state has the task to organise the social existence along the rules formulated in the political process. However, in every society there are mechanisms of self-organisation which are not based on formalised and rationalised relations, but on informal exchange relations. Thus it is of interest to analyse the relation formal and informal institutions have with each other. By focussing on questions of administration the level of actors will be analysed as well. Here it is important to scrutinise to what extent patronage and solidarity relations play a role in the recruitment of the national administration personnel. Furthermore, it will be investigated through which channels local interests are defined and represented towards the political centre.
- *Resource management (access and control):* Due to the predominant aridity and the widespread irrigation-intensive cultivation (cotton) and the new regulation of property questions in the research region the natural resources water and land are of high significance. However, the research study will also take into account physical (capital, means of production, infrastructure etc.) as well as socio-cultural resources (information, training, societal reputation etc.). Essentially, this topic is concerned with the rights of use, resource access and resource control. In the research region resource control is one source for political power along the collectively awarded and mainly traditionally reasoned authority.

3) Local Governance in the research regions

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To sum up: The general situation of local governance is characterised by an 'institutional bricolage' in all three research countries: kinship and clientele relations exert considerable influence on the formal state institutions. Patronage determines the access to and the control of resources and administration. Whereas the existence of state structures is questioned generally in Afghanistan, the current situation in Tajikistan is rather vague. With the national formalisation of *Mahallas* Uzbekistan has already begun incorporating informal institutions.

IV.3. The border region of the Amu Darya

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V. Research assumptions and questions

The following fundamental assumptions and questions form the basis for the analysis of local governance in the three components of the research project (diachronic comparison, synchronic comparison, analysis of the influence of cross-bordering action):

- 1) *Assumption for the development of local governance in the region:* The logic of functioning of informal institutions has survived differently evolved state contexts and currently determines local governance structures in various state systems.

Explanation: Informal, often traditionally grown institutions currently are highly influential in all three areas of the study region, even though they passed through different state building processes. This manifests itself in the processes of building security, decision making, assignment of loyalty and appropriation of resources. It is possible that formal institutions are involved in these processes as well, while the actual decision making and constitution runs through informal channels, i.e. the traditional principle of the informal persists in formal institutions. The scrutiny of this assumption shall clarify whether informal institutions resemble each other across national boundaries and - if this is the case - to what extent this result can be ascribed to the consolidated political-cultural context. If this is not the case, the research study will aim at analysing to which extent state building processes or other influences (e.g. conquests, wars, migrations) have effected these changes.

Central questions: Which traditional forms of local politics can be discerned? What is the political-cultural context of their emergence and development? How have they developed in regard to state institutions? Which development trajectories have they adopted?

- 2) *Assumption regarding the relationship of state and informal institutions:* Informal institutions in the study region appear to be resistant against attempts by the state to exploit and remove these institutions. The informal logic of functioning impairs the potential capacity of state institutions and weakens its legitimacy.

Explanation: In contrast to state institutions informal institutions exhibit a higher degree of efficiency-independent (diffuse) legitimacy as they are structurally arranged more participative and enjoy a stronger affective support; nonetheless they generally only follow the interests of specific population groups (clientelistic networks). State institutions are perceived as external factors on the local level. The legitimacy of state institutions orientates itself to its performance, which can be impaired by the fact that state institutions are hollowed out themselves by an informal logic of action. Thus the action of informally infiltrated state institutions tends to only benefit very few population groups. On the other hand these informal institutions take over existential functions whenever the state is too weak to comply with these functions. Against the background of different development trajectories in all three states it is expected that every state will need to take a different stance regarding the dealing with informal institutions to achieve a balance between state influence and persistence of informal institutions. The examination of this assumption shall give information on the qualitative differences of the local governance structures in consideration of the reciprocal relationship of state and traditional institutions.

Central questions: Which functions do formal and informal institutions fulfil? Which relationship do they have with each other? Do informal mechanisms support state institutions complementarily or do they infiltrate their logic of functioning? Do any change dynamics emanate from informal institutions or do they form structural block coalitions? Which legitimacy do formal and informal institutions enjoy? How do they affect the societal integration process?

- 3) *Assumption on cross-bordering influences:* The perception of cross-bordering connections as well as transboundary action directly influences local governance structures and indirectly affects state coherence as well.

Explanation: In the Amu Darya region cross-bordering perceptions play a crucial role. Examples are the trade relations through clientelistic networks, the alignment on a cultural centre beyond the border, a joint political interest in the region (e.g. irrigation), the support of isoethnic groups in wars or migrations. As external factors these activities are of high significance for local governance structures. They can have integrative effects, but they can also amplify centripetal trends or export instability and thus jeopardise state coherence. The examination of this assumption shall reveal which development and destabilisation potentials cross-bordering perceptions and actions bear for the region.

Central questions: How is the population of the neighbouring countries viewed and which effects does this perception have on the transboundary relations? How has the political and economic exchange developed in the region? Which effects does this have on local governance structures? What are the main problems and potentials for the development of exchange relations and a joint use of resources in the region? Which roles do local and national interests play in this regard?

VI. Methodical procedure

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VII. Implementation of the project

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VII.1. Research

The research part consists of

- 1) a study on the development trajectories of local governance in the region,
- 2) a comparative study on administration and resource management in West-Khatlon (Tajikistan) and Surchondaryo (Uzbekistan),
- 3) a case study on judicature and security politics in Surchondarjo (Uzbekistan),
- 4) a case study on judicature and security politics in West-Khatlon (Tajikistan),
- 5) a case study on the relationship between local governance and statehood on the basis of the aforementioned research areas in north-east Afghanistan,
- 6) a comparative study on the influence of cross-bordering actions on local governance in the entire Amu-Darya border region,
- 7) a comprehensive study on local governance and fragile statehood.

Study 1) analyses the political-cultural preconditions in their historical development, study 6) the independent variable of external influence through transboundary action. The case studies (2-5) will concentrate on the district level (one to two districts each) in the three study countries.

A comprehensive study on the entire region (7) brings together the results with a view to the conditions for statehood.

VII.2. Dissemination of the research results

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VII.3. Cooperation

The project foresees cooperation on different levels with scientists and university institutions in the region, the German Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Kundus as well as the implementation program of the EZ. This cooperation scheme includes following components:

- 1) **Fellowships:** To achieve an international network with the scientific research partners, three fellowships (at 2 months) at ZEF will be allocated to guest researchers from the region, each of which will write up a research study.
- 2) **Workshops:** To present and discuss the relevant questions a kick-off-workshop is scheduled in Germany. An intermediate conference in the region serves as a possibility to reflect on first research results. Additionally, a workshop will be conducted with the partner institutions during the field study stay in the research region (s. *appendix A.3. cooperation*). The project results will be presented and discussed at a final conference.
- 3) **Science promotion:** The field studies will be supported by assistants from the region, whose research competences will be expanded through this form of cooperation. Additionally, the researchers will offer method-workshops at the partner institutions during their field study stay. This was already agreed with the National Policy Research Center (NPRC) of the University of Kabul.
- 4) **Existing contacts:** Before filing the project proposal, cooperation was verbally agreed with partner institutions and persons regarding a scientific collaboration as well as general support during the field study.

VII.4 Project members and responsibility assignment

Prof. Dr. Hans-Dieter Evers (Applicant) is director of the department „Political and cultural change“ at ZEF. Mr. Evers bears the responsibility for the project and the supervision of the doctoral students.

Prof. Dr. Paul L. G. Vlek (Applicant) is director of the department „Ecology and Management of natural resources“ at ZEF and will take over the supervision of the doctoral students.

Both applicants know the research region from various field studies and research experiences (s. *appendix A.4.2. CVs*).

Dr. Conrad Schetter (Project leader) – historian and geographer – is Senior Researcher at ZEF. Mr. Schetter has published several publications on the societal and political change in Afghanistan. As project leader his tasks include the writing of the final comprehensive study (s. *VII.1. Research 7*) as well as the adjustment of the research contents and the logistic coordination of the project. He is also responsible for the textual focussing of the scientific

individual studies to guarantee the superordinate scientific objective target of the project. In addition, Mr. Schetter bears the responsibility for the supervision of the doctoral students during the field study, for the completion of the individual studies as well as for the connection of the results. Furthermore, Mr. Schetter is responsible for the adjustment with the cooperation partners in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan und Tajikistan. For the purpose of coordinating the project two journeys to the research region are foreseen for Mister Schetter.

Bernd Kuzmits (Assistance) – Political scientist and Slavist – is research employee at ZEF. He will take over the study on influence of transboundary action on local governance (s. *VII.1. Research 6) and appendix A.2. Research – individual research projects*). This research study shall lead to a doctorate. Mr. Kuzmits speaks Russian and has worked on transformations in the GUS so far. Additionally, he will support the project lead and is responsible for the organisation of the scheduled conferences.

Dr. Christine Nölle-Karimi is qualified as a university lecturer at the chair of Iranistics of the University of Bamberg. She will take over the study on the development trajectories of local governance in the region (*VII.1. Research 1) as well as Appendix A.2. Research – individual research projects*). Mrs. Nölle-Karimi speaks Persian, has a profound knowledge of the research region due to numerous research stays and has published many socio-cultural and historical studies on the region (s. *Appendix A.4.2. CVs*). Her research stay will take place during the same time as that of the doctoral students, so that Mrs. Nölle-Karimi will also assume supervision tasks during this period.

Tommaso Trevisani – ethnologist – is currently earning a doctorate at ZEF on „land reforms and social change in Uzbekistan” within the framework of the *German-Uzbek Khorezm Project*. After completing his dissertation he will take over the comparative study on administration and resource management in West-Khatlon (Tajikistan) and Surkhondaryo (Uzbekistan) (s. *VII.1. Research 2) as well as Appendix A.2. Research – individual research projects*). Mr. Trevisani speaks Uzbek and knows the region from several research stays. His research stay is scheduled for the same time as that of the doctoral students, so that Mr. Trevisani will also assume supervision tasks during that time.

Zabihulla Saipov has graduated as Master of International Affairs of the School of International & Public Affairs at the Columbia University / New York after studies in his homeland Uzbekistan as well as Pakistan and Great Britain. (s. *Anlage A.4.2. Lebensläufe*). He will take over the case study on judicature and security politics in Surkhondaryo (Uzbekistan) (s. *VII.1. Research 3) as well as Appendix A.2. Research – individual research projects*). Mr. Saipov already has an acceptance for the doctoral programme at ZEF from October 2004. His dissertation grant is financed by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

2 N.N. An invitation to bid for two project assistant positions (West-Khatlon/Tajikistan and north-east Afghanistan) will be filed from December 2004 to March 1, 2005.

VII.5. Feasibility of the project

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VIII. Schedule

		Research	Conferences/ Publications	Cooperation				
2004	12	Literature research			PHASE 1			
		Invitation to bid for two project assistants (2 N.N.)						
2005	1	Selection of two project assistants (2 N.N.)						
	2							
	3	Preparation of the individual research projects						
	4							
	5		Kick-Off-Workshop (Bonn)					
	6	1. Field study (approx. 3-4 months)						
	7							
	8							
	9							
	10	Discussion and revision of the intermediate results – participation of the doctoral students (Zabihulla Saipov, 2 N.N.) with the ZEF-doctoral-programme		Fellowships of the guest researchers at ZEF				
	11							
	12							
2006	1	2. Field study		Competence-building for the research assistants	PHASE 2			
	2							
	3							
	4	↓ (approx. 8-9 months)	Field study Dr. Nölle-Karimi	Field study Tommaso Trevisani		Method-workshops at project partners		
	5							
	6							
	7							
	8							
	9							
	10							
	11							
	12							
2007	1	Completion of the studies			PHASE 3			
	2							
	3							
	4							
	5							
	6			Publication of the intermediate results in articles / ZEF Discussion Paper				
	7			Publication of basic historical study				
	8							
	9							
	10			Final workshop (Bonn)				
	11			Completion of the publications				
	12							
2008			Final publication					

IX. Costs projection ...