

12th February 2015

I think, therefore I blog!

Why join the blogosphere? Perhaps I have something to say. I was not, however, sure how this “something” would make sense, as I considered communication of ideas – framing a thought, analysing and writing – to be not easy. Blogging is a research tool and it is a hard work. Writing as part of communication is also hard. As my role model the writer [William Zinsser](#) put it a long time ago, “a clear sentence is no accident. If you find that writing is hard, it's because it is hard.”

There were [152 million blogs](#) in the world in 2014, and a new blog is created every half a second. I have been toying with the idea of starting a blog for some time. It has nevertheless not been easy to *start*. There are a number of good reasons for getting blog set up and published. [Dan Reich](#) of Forbes listed nine reasons why one should start blogging. I agree with many of his reasons, but I'm thrilled most by the challenge and possibility of turning messy (and seemingly complex and frightening) ideas into neat ones! I have therefore decided to sit down and write the “damn thing” – William's words, not mine!

But why do I want to do it? The objective of this blog is to provide some relevant inputs, thoughts and analyses on themes and issues in development – economic, social and political. Specifically, I will focus on projects in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus, as well as experiences from other regions/countries. The blog tries to tell the story of our work, as part of HEVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, to our multiple audiences – from the donors to local stakeholders. This is indeed part of the “proving” (accountability) and “improving” of our work. In the process, we learn and share this learning.

I want to make this blog more than a “one-person show”. What I write here will not be thoughts coming from myself alone. I know a number of people abuzz with creative ideas. I will invite them to have joint articles published.

The blog will cover a number of themes; it seeks to ask some challenging questions and tries to provide perspectives from every angle. Its central frameworks and principles are derived from a systemic thinking of facilitating sustainable and large-scale impacts. I hope I am not too ambitious.

The first topic, “Telling good stories: clutter is the enemy!”, will be on telling our stories well, an issue that we are time and again confronted with. Good reports, cases or reviews telling good stories answer basic questions like: is what we are doing having an impact? Good stories are also a channel that link up project performance/relevance with upward and downward accountability (i.e. the donor and target groups respectively), and lateral (internal) learning. Good stories convey information factually, briefly and clearly. I will make some confessions of how I struggled to explain my work to my family. We will look at some challenges and good practices in telling nice stories from our work as development practitioners.

The second topic will be on “what is systemic thinking in development and why is it important?” I will write how and why systems for the exchange of goods, services and commodities that function effectively are crucial to the livelihoods of poor and disadvantaged groups. Yet the question of why some systems, such as the labour market and governance, function well or underperform/fail has been challenging for many development agencies. The debate on aid effectiveness mirrors this challenge in stimulating sustainable and large-scale impacts that endure the phasing out of interventions. Systemic thinking is by no means limited to economic transactions, or projects that exclusively deal with economic

development. The approach has wider relevance to a number of thematic areas, ranging from education, water, health, governance and financial services. Stay tuned for more on this.

I have more topics...I hope to write at least one post per week. If I succeed, [I will be the writer who really stayed](#). Writing is a journey, come along with on a voyage...