

JANUARY 2009 -- FINAL REPORT ON 2008 ATHENS CONFERENCE  
by Emmanuel Adamides, Nicholas Georgantzas, Brian Dangerfield and Roberta Spencer

ATHENS CONFERENCE STATISTICS: The Athens 2008 conference was the lowest attended conference since 2002 with 386 registrants and 52 guests. We had an active conference team with Conference Co-Chairs: Emmanuel Adamides and Nicholas C. Georgantzas; Local Organizing Chairs: George-Michael Klimis and George Papaioannou; Local Organizing Team: Patroklos Georgiadis, George Papachristos, Nikolaos Pomonis, and Yeoryios Stamboulis; Local Co-host Institutions: University of Patras, Panteion University and The Hellenic Chapter of SDS; Program Chair: Brian C. Dangerfield; Workshop Chair: Jack Homer; and hundreds of other volunteers.

66% of our participants were members and 31% were students. 53% of the registrants were authors and 26% were (self-reported) newcomers.

The total number of registrants can be usefully compared with the attendance at Boston in 2007 and at Nijmegen in 2006. Variances can be almost exclusively explained by numbers of North Americans (including Mexico) and Europeans. There were 79 attendees from North America at the Athens conference; 299 at Boston and 106 at Nijmegen. European attendees at Athens numbered 203; 160 at Boston and 266 at Nijmegen.

Given the trend evident over many years that more North Americans attend the USA based conferences and more Europeans when the conference is based in Europe, we can see that approximately 30% of the shortfall in registrations at Athens arises from prospective North American attendees and 70% from Europe.

THE PROGRAM WAS WELL BALANCED. The Methodology thread had the highest percentage of papers in Athens at 11%. It was followed closely by papers in Health Policy, Business, Public Policy, Methodology Alternative Approaches, and Education accounting for +/- 9% for each of these threads. The other threads' percentages were as follows:

Economics 7%	Complexity/Agent-Based Modeling/Nonlinear Dynamics 3%
Energy 7%	Military 2%
Operations Management/Supply Chain 7%	Psychology 1%
Organizational Dynamics 6%	Qualitative System Dynamics 1%
Environment and Ecology 4%	Security 0%
Strategy 4%	
Information Science 3%	

The rejection rate for papers was 12.22%.

The online submission and review system worked well. A total of 445 submissions were handled through the online system, including:

13 Workshops	16 Duplicates/Withdrawn (no decision)
99 Posters (included Dev. Papers)	38 Roundtables/Special Posters (no decision)
42 Rejected	42 Meetings (no decision)
123 Parallel (included Dev. Papers)	<b>445 TOTAL</b>
10 Plenaries	
62 Withdrawn (w/program decision)	
<b>349 Subtotal</b>	

NEW PROGRAM EVENT AT THE ATHENS CONFERENCE was the Developmental Papers sessions. Susan Howick managed these sessions and produced a reflective document on 22.08.08. The motivation of the sessions was to encourage attendees to present work-in-progress and, in part, this might attract those who felt the preparation of a full paper might preclude their attendance. Those submissions not thought likely to sustain a good level of debate were cast as Developmental Posters. The second and third sessions were far better than the first which was affected by a problematical room layout. Given the emphasis on discussions, the denial of a slide presentation is re-affirmed with the proviso that speakers ought to declare 2-3 issues they would like the audience to address at the close of their oral presentation.

Successful continuing events included the Poster Symposium and Buffet, Chapter and Special Interest Group Poster Session, Getting Started With ... Software Workshops, PC Meet and Greet, Prospective Conference Host Meeting, and the Newcomer Orientation Session.

THE ATHENS CONFERENCE LOST ABOUT \$67,000 LESS THAN THE "PESSIMISTIC" BUDGET. The overall **unaudited** loss for the 2009 conference was just over \$55,000 (this number will change somewhat after the annual review by our CPA). Budgeted pessimistic profit at 455 registrations was estimated at \$12,500. Actual registrations were 386 meaning income from participant revenue was about \$37,000 under the pessimistic budget projection. Our conference sponsorship income was pessimistically budgeted at \$54,600 and we received only \$30,650, a difference of \$24,000. We had two new sponsors and an impressive four returning sponsors who have been loyal conference sponsors for **eleven years**. Additionally, eight sponsors have joined the conference for five to nine years, and twelve sponsors have been active for two to four years.

On the expense side, when compared to the pessimistic budget, we overspent by \$6249. The biggest over-budget items were coffee and audio-visual equipment. Coffee was not budgeted as, in budget development, coffee breaks costs were incorrectly included within the meeting room rental price. Additionally, audio-visual was budgeted at only \$1000 as the budget planned for the local hosts to provide all equipment. The local hosts provided all equipment except for the plenary room where services were provided by a professional firm. It seems that the University at Albany line went over budget, but within the budget, funds unused in the Professional Fees line shifted to the contract with the University.

Until the end of December 2008 the Society was anticipating receiving pledges of sponsorship. At the end of the conference, Emmanuel Adamides, Conference Co-chair stated he would try to get sponsorship, the Research Committee (who would pay after the conference EUR2000); the Hellenic Chapter (EUR3000); and also contributions from general public organizations to the Chapter. The Chapter had one application pending with the Ministry of Culture for EUR20.000. The Society had already written off a EUR5000 sponsorship from Public Power Corporation that was withdrawn.

In a reply to request advice on how to close out the accounting for the conference, Emmanuel Adamides wrote that he did not have a clear answer until just before Christmas 2008 given the social unrest and the riots in Athens. Late December he managed to meet with the General Secretary of the Ministry who said that they could provide EUR10.000 as soon as contracts and invoices issued from Greek legal entities (the services providers) to a Greek conference organizer were provided - they wouldn't support any conference organized by a foreign legal entity. Since the General Secretary did not have any of these documents, the whole issue was dropped. Emmanuel Adamides followed by writing "This may also be a problem for the University of Patras Research

Committee (they had decided to provide EUR2000) but that is more debatable and flexible ... We live in difficult times.”

**Follow-up information sent by Emmanuel Adamides on January 14, 2009.**

I may be a bit late for this matter, but due to my heavy schedule at the beginning of the year, it was last Monday that I had the time to have a look at this Conference report and discuss it over the phone with some of the people that were involved in the conference.

Regarding the finances part, first, I think it should be made clear that the Research Committee of the University of Patras never promised 3000 Euros. It was always 2000 Euros (their letter of 17/4/2008 that we received), and this amount was communicated to the Society.

Secondly, and most important, the local organising team feels that it should be made very clear that the conference proposal of the Hellenic Chapter was submitted under the assumption that the conference would be organised by a conference organising company which would guarantee the conference's financial success for a relatively low fee.

This assumption was dropped by the SDS, with the result of being, at our best knowledge, the only international conference held in Greece that was not organised by a conference organising company and the only one reporting a financial loss.

We think that the last points should be part of the report because one of the purposes, of the report, probably the most significant, is to provide leads for learning so that the same mistakes are not repeated in the future.  
Best regards, Manolis

Please let us know if you have any questions or comments.  
The Athens Conference Team

## Budget Comparison to Actual - 2008 Conference

	455	500	386		
	Budget Pessimistic	Adjusted Average	Actual	vs Pessimistic	vs Average
<b>Part A - Revenue and attendance</b>					
Total Revenues in \$	222685	244708	161417		
Total Participants Revenue	163267	179414	126047	-37220	-53368
Guest Income	4818	5294	4720	-98	-574
Sponsorship Income	54600	60000	30650	-23950	-29350
Total Revenues in \$	222685	244708	161417	-61268	-83292
<b>Part B - Expenses</b>					
Total Expenses					
Impact on Society v Budget:					
Bank Adjustments/Bad Debt/Exchange Rate	910	1000	735	-175	-265
Brochures (CfP and Registration)	3700	3700	4230	530	530
Contract w/ Ualbany (Salaries-Services w/Overhead)	96077	100000	107578	11501	7578
Credit Card Costs	4445	4850	3847	-598	-1003
Chair Related Expenses	500	500	0	-500	-500
Conference Awards (DM)	1000	1000	66	-934	-934
Conference local/on-site expenses	3599	3645	9684	6084	6039
Conference Souvenirs (bags, pens, pads)	0	0	1250	1250	1250
Facilities on location	33750	33750	31445	-2305	-2305
Food	45768	50294	44971	-797	-5323
Mailing/Postage Shipping	2455	2500	1938	-517	-562
Publications-Proceedings	1824	1824	0	-1824	-1824
Social Program (and transportation including guests)	0	0	0	0	0
Supplies - Other	551	578	190	-361	-388
Survey	0	0	0	0	0
Travel (preconf, preplanning and event travel)	4500	4500	6428	1928	1928
Professional Fees/Misc Help at Peak Time	11095	11500	4062	-7033	-7438
Subtotal Expenses	210174	219641	216423	6249	-3218
<b>Gross Conference Surplus/Loss \$</b>	<b>12511</b>	<b>25068</b>	<b>-55006</b>		
	Budget Pessimistic	Adjusted Average	Actual	vs Pessimistic	vs Average