Winter PC Meeting, January 15, 2010
Regarding Conference Organization and Logistics
Submitted by Rogelio Oliva
==========

July 26, 2009

To: Erling Moxnes
President, International System Dynamics Society

From: The undersigned Past Presidents of the Society

We acknowledge that it is important for the Society to support the development and dissemination of good professional SD practice in many nations around the world, to encourage the education of beginners, and to provide political support for nascent chapters. But these goals are not best served by organizing our only annual meeting in locations where SD activity is low. These goals would be served better by organizing special events, workshops, seminars, or classes specifically tailored to the needs of each region that aspires to increase its indigenous SD expertise.

We are writing to suggest that the goals of the Society may be better served by a change in its current policy related to the sites of the society's annual conference.

We believe that the two most important goals for the meeting are that it give a convenient opportunity for members of the society to meet under circumstances that will raise the overall competence in the field and that it cover its own costs. We believe these goals for the annual meeting will be served best when the conferences are held near major centers of SD activity.

In particular, we suggest that the meeting be organized alternately near an American city that can be reached by direct flights from several cities in Europe and near a European city that can be reached by direct flights from several cities in the US. We also suggest that the society should consider ways to support the efforts of emerging SD communities through the activities described above.

Sincerely,

Jay Forrester, Dennis Meadows, Rogelio Oliva, Jack Pugh, Mike Radzicki, George Richardson, John Sterman

In support of the above request, we have performed a statistical analysis of the impact of conference location on the conference, including: attendance, quality (as measured by the rejection rate for submissions) and profitability. We also did an analysis of the impact of conference location on the membership patterns for the hosting country. All analysis were performed on data available from the Society's website, and are available for inspection from Rogelio Oliva.

For the purposes of this analysis, conferences were divided into two categories: those meeting the guideline of being in, or near, an American or European city accessible by direct intercontinental flights, and those not meeting those guidelines (designated as "remote" in the analysis). The "remote" sites are:

Oslo, Norway
Keystone, USA
Shanghai, China
Bangkok, Thailand
Stirling, Scotland
Tokyo, Japan
Istanbul, Turkey
Wellington, New Zealand
Bergen, Norway
Palermo, Italy
Oxford, UK
Nijmegen, Netherlands
Athens, Greece
Albuquerque, USA

1. **Holding the conference in a remote location has a *negative* impact on attendance to the conference equivalent to more than two years worth of the normal attendance growth rate.**

```
      Source |       SS       df       MS              Number of obs =      27
-------------+------------------------------           F(  2,    24) =   95.08
       Model |  543703.051     2  271851.525           Prob > F      =  0.0000
    Residual |  68617.6898    24  2859.07041           R-squared     =  0.8879
-------------+------------------------------           Adj R-squared =  0.8786
       Total |  612320.741    26  23550.7977           Root MSE      =   53.47

------------------------------------------------------------------------------
         att |      Coef.   Std. Err.      t    P>|t|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
        year |   18.45179   1.338797    13.78   0.000     15.68865    21.21493
      remote |  -37.00205   20.86979    -1.77   0.089    -80.07517    6.071077
       _cons |  -36541.11    2670.53   -13.68   0.000    -42052.81   -31029.41
```

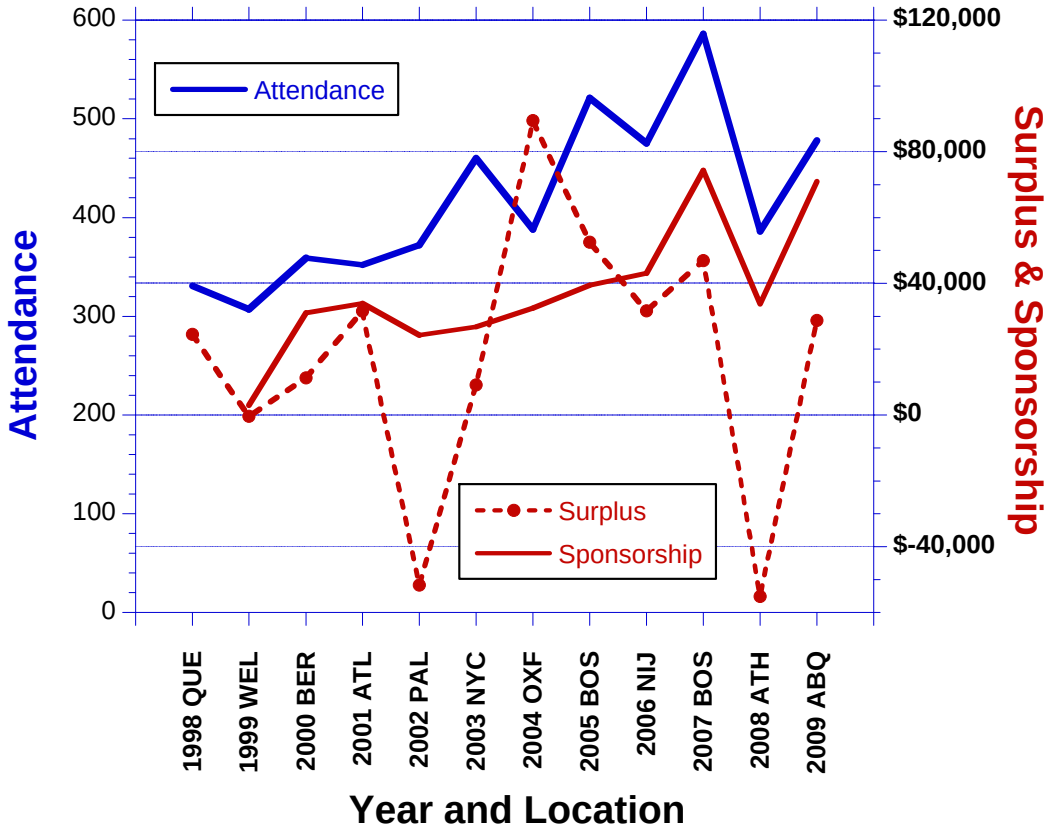
2. **Setting the conference in a remote location has a *negative* impact on conference quality, as measured by the submission rejection rate, equivalent to more than two years worth the normal rejection rate growth rate.**

```
      Source |       SS       df       MS              Number of obs =       9
-------------+------------------------------           F(  2,     6) =   19.11
       Model |  .022934182     2  .011467091           Prob > F      =  0.0025
    Residual |  .003601059     6  .000600177           R-squared     =  0.8643
-------------+------------------------------           Adj R-squared =  0.8191
       Total |  .026535241     8  .003316905           Root MSE      =   .0245

------------------------------------------------------------------------------
          rr |      Coef.   Std. Err.      t    P>|t|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
        year |   .0208277   .0033715     6.18   0.001     .0125779    .0290774
      remote |  -.0411648   .0175188    -2.35   0.057    -.0840317    .0017022
       _cons |  -41.63974   6.756487    -6.16   0.001    -58.17227   -25.10721
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
```

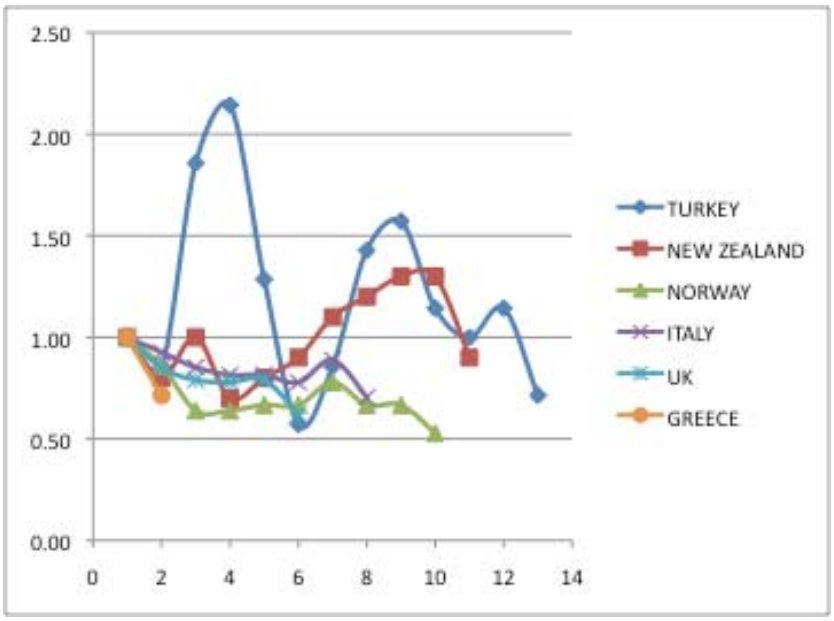
Note that data on the rejection rate was only available for the last nine conferences (n=9), yet the model fit and the regression coefficients are significant.

3. **There is a strong correlation between attendance to the conference and the amount of sponsorship obtained (r = 0.80)—cf. point 1 above. Furthermore, there seems to be an issue with cost containment in some of the remote locations.**



4. Hosting a conference does not have a discernable lasting impact on the society membership for the hosting country.

Regression analyses were not significant, but the following graph shows the evolution of the membership in the hosting countries (remote locations only). The x-axis is adjusted so that year 1 is the year of the conference, and membership is normalized so that 1 is the membership in that country the year of the conference.



Keep in mind that since inception the society as a whole as been growing at approximately an 8% annual rate.