Report VP Chapters – July 2011

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Background

This report takes up where the Winter Meeting report left us with the idea to approach Chapters, try to tell them we want to support them, but also ask them to provide us information about their state of affairs.

Evidence of the current situation

What has been done since the winter meeting

Since the winter meeting, the plan to directly meet chapters during the international conference has been maintained, for no satisfactory communication has been established. This may have to do with the fact that I did not send out messages to say "hello" regularly; my apologies for that, but the scarce VP time has been absorbed with the discussions around reporting and the development fund (below). When I started sending out messages to ask for comments on the planned chapter report form, no answers came back (except from PC members). I repeated the "send your reports on time"-messages several times, and most of the few reports received arrived during the last 5 days before the deadline.

That said, with the help of diverse PC members, a first version of a new "chapter report form" does now exist (appendix I). Several chapters have had difficulties with giving a detailed members list (for practical and privacy reasons), we might simplify the form by reducing information to totals.

The other aspect is the fund for chapter capacity development. We have attempted a discussion *via* e-mail, but the subject is new and eventually only the revised application form was sent out to the chapters (appendix II).

Chapter reports and web presence

All chapters have been invited to send in updates concerning their activities and their situations. The following ones have sent such updates until today (July 16th):

Chapter	Commentary
UK	3 meetings with 15 – 45 participants, one reported publication, cash reserves from meeting revenues, £12,000 , member list reserved, from 440 registered members, 50 joined last year, with about 115 active participants. The annual meeting attendees were 50 (a little less than in recent years) with 10 new members. > 10 universities with courses, 10 application areas, application for development fund planned, website with up-to-date content.
Students	3 activities, cash reserves = $1.500, members list reserved, 250 members and 10 leaders, newsletter and website updated.
German	4 workshops, 2 national meetings, linked with the German association for SD and several supporting istitutions, 113 members but growth slowing down, searching to increase full membership, cash reserves = 6,313 Euros. Website up to date (http://www.systemdynamics.de/).
Latin-american	Reported in form of the Chapter poster, one major activity, no funds, diverse websites, this year annual meeting joint with Brazilian Chapter,

	for which it is planned to ask for "development" support.
Economics	Geographically disperse chapter with the challenge to maintain coordinated activities. 180 members in 51 countries, most members in the USA and Europe. No meetings, but about 20 reported publications and projects. Newsletter blog under construction.
Swizterland	4 activities with approx. 10 participants each, one reported publication. Relationship with SD educational institution, cash reserves CHF 2260. around 20 members (16 identified), 8 universities with courses, one school initiative, diverse application fields; a survey concerning materials is projected for next year. Website is updated, but will be redesigned.
Italy	13 activities with mean around 20 attendees, 12 reported publications, 3 institutional relationships, 10 universities with courses, 20 application fields, website up to date (with an interactive map for locating members, which shows how they cover the territory), will be redesigned.
Brazil	11 reported publications, 4 institutional relationships, 36 listed members, no fees, 4 universities with courses, 4 application fields, website updated. The big activity is this year's Brazilian&Latinamerican SD annual congress, planned for November. Website up to date (http://www.sdsbrazil.org/).
Benelux	4 activities, 1 reported publication on behalf of the Chapter, 4 institutional relationships, no fees, members' list will be informed later, 8 universities with 30 academics, 24 courses and >100 materials. Website updated.
Russia	No report, by personal contact I know of several publications and activities, the website appears to be updated (I cannot read the Russian alphabet).
India	No report received, but website updated (http://systemdynamics.co.in/).
Japan	No report received, but website updated (http://www.j-s-d.jp/index_e.html) and with activities.

The society's website has a section for chapter reports visible at: http://www.systemdynamics.org/Governance.htm#Chapter%20Reports. The reports do not appear to be updated (same situation as for the winter report). I wonder how the procedure is for uploading and linking reports that we did receive.

In case there is none formally defined, I'd propose the following:

1. VP Chapters uploads the chapter reports received in an archive (.ZIP) as "supplementary material", together with the VP report (there is already a deadline for that);
2. the Society's webmaster uploads the report files and updates the links (hopefully in the days before the conference).

Also, many chapters have websites which are linked from the society's chapter page:

Chapter	*Commentary*
Australasia	No change since winter report (about 1/3 of the pages do not have content; apparently the activity update is from 2007).

Egypt	No change since winter report (Info dates from 2002)

The chapters of China, Greece, Korea and Pakistan do not appear to have a website.

Repeating information from the winter report: "according to information from the home office, several chapters have fallen below the minimum member number of 10: Pakistan (5), Egypt (8), and Russia (9). Two chapters have a representative who is not a member of the society: Nikos Pomonis (Hellenic Chapter): never been a member; Natalyia Lychkina (Russian Chapter) not a member since 2009".

Diagnosis

Some chapters appear to be healthy and stable, and they tend to respond e-mail calls (UK, Students, Swiss, Italian, Latin-American, Brazil and Benelux. The European and Latin-American chapters have a solid academic development and several application domains. Most have shown interest in the development fund in their reports.

The Economics chapter still seems like a different case to me, for it is not a country- or language-specific chapter, and as this year's chapter president I'm not neutral; still, I can say that most of its members do not take part in the Internet-based activities yet, but as a global chapter there cannot be a physical gathering besides the international conference.

The India chapter is active and direct talks with them will surely complement the lacking information during the conference. Also other active chapters (like Japan) will be requested to inform us during the conference.

Russia is a strange case: one of the Economics chapter's member from Russia reported quite a few activities and appears to be "the Co-chairman of the Russian Branch of the System Dynamics (sysdynamics.ru)". Despite the activities (some of them reported in the Economics chapter's report included in the supplementary material to this VP report), the chapter does not seem to be OK in terms of members and their own standing in the SDS.

Some chapters do not give signals that would allow classifying them as "working": Egypt, Greece, and Pakistan.

The following table is an attempt at classifying chapters. There are several categories:

- *new*: chapters that may need special attention and support for their star-up phase;
- *high*: satisfying situation, no specific needs;
- *medium*: improvable operations or communication;
- *low*: no signs of activity, no information available, but will be at the conference to talk about it;
- *unviable*: no signs of activity, no information available, not at the conference.

For some chapters, there is an observable trend: *upwards*.

Chapter	Active	Development level	Web-presence	At conference	Informs	Category	Trend
Australasia	?	?	outdated	1	0	low	
Benelux	1	new	1	1	1	new	
Brazil	1	stabilizing	1	1	1	medium	up
Economics	1	stabilizing	1	1	1	medium	up
China	?	?	none	1	0	low	
German	1	stable	1	1	1	high	
India	1	new	1	1	0	new	
Korea	?	?	none	1	0	low	
Latin America	1	growing	1	1	1	high	up
Russian	?	?	1	1	0	unviable	
Latvian (proposed)		new		1		new	
Student	1	stable	1	1	1	high	
Italian	1	stable	1	1	1	high	
UK	1	stable	1	1	1	high	
Swiss	1	stable	1	1	1	high	
Egypt	?	?	outdated	0	0	unviable	
Greece	?	?	none	0	0	unviable	

I would like to express my satisfaction with the chapters that are working in a stable manner, maintain a satisfactory web presence and maintain the minimal communication with the Society. Specially the Benelux Chapter seems to be a case where the "chaptership" is conferred to an extensive and stable group which has already outlived the firsts couple of crisis. There is no need for specific plans concerning these chapters.

On the opposite extreme, the chapters of Egypt, Greece and Pakistan fulfill the three criteria the previous report had mentioned for disenfranchising unviable chapters:

"There may be chapters that do not manage to maneuver themselves into a viable situation in a reasonable delay. In my opinion, "viable situation" means:

1. not standing outside the agreed-upon rules laid down in the society's policies and in the chapter's constitutions;
2. having at least one regular chapter activity;
3. maintaining a (web) presence that does not harm the society or system dynamics."

The following section suggests a plan for improving the overall chapter situation over the coming 12 months.

A plan for the coming year

For the PC meeting

The mail discussion about chapter development stages has shown a certain variety of ideas. Specifically, the relationships between demand and offer and their respective development need a definition. Depending on this definition, the process and forms for the "capacity development fund" should be discussed and tentatively defined, in order to present a transparent device to the chapters.

Also, I propose to develop a collaborative newsletter system for all chapters, where the chapter representatives and members they authorize can post items concerning chapter activities and also member achievements (publications, models …). If we all share the same type of design and start posting our news in a continuous manner, the web system becomes livelier and the workload per person/week will be lower. It is a way to capitalize member's efforts in a synergic manner.

Last not least, I propose to review the chapter report form and bring it to a "version 2", in which only items not covered by the newsletter system are maintained.

During the conference

For chapters classified as "unviable", I recommend terminating their paper-existence: they seem not to exist, and maintaining them visibly attached to the SDS – if anything at all – harms the Society's public image.

For chapters classified as "low", I plan to explain the situation to them during the conference (sadly after the PC meeting) and negotiate an agreement. If they promise to get their web-presence up on track and to put at least one chapter activity together – and to maintain communication with VP chapters – I'd give them one more year to show themselves as active chapters. Otherwise I'd proceed to recommend their termination.

During the chapters' poster session I will interview especially those chapters we don't have a report from, explaining them the need to maintain minimal communication and to comply to the rules we all agreed upon.

For all these chapter interviews, I'll also explain the "capacity development fund".

The general Chapters session will give us one more hour of dialogue.

After the conference

VP Chapters will have to monitor the progress made by "low" category chapters. Also, some promoting and screening of the newsletter system will be required (if this system is launched). Thirdly, the "capacity development fund" will demand some processing and orientation for interested chapters.

I'd like to close with a remark that does not have to do with chapters directly, but there is a relationship. Our presence at FaceBook (http://www.facebook.com/systemdynamics) is not in a good shape, and the same must be said for the Wiki (http://www.systemdynamics.org/wiki/index.php/Main_Page). I do not have an explanation concerning the reasons, but I'd say that developing these two aspects would help chapters: they are usually "on the border", meet many people who do not know SD, and nowadays it can be expected that these people, when they come back to their office, Google for SD and if they find a good Wiki or a living Facebook, that helps.

It would be my honor to challenge chapters to make contributions to these two sites; there are important positive externalities for everyone.

Appendix I: Annual Chapter Report form (current version)

Annual Chapter Report

The Chapter

Chapter:	
Year:	2010-2011

Officers
        President:
        Chapter-society liaison:
        Webmaster:	

Website:	http://
Last update:	

The past year

Chapter development

Activities

Please list all activities organized by the Chapter as such in the table below; insert rows as needed. A list of extra-chapter attendees should be given in annex.

Activity	Date	# Attendees

Publications

Please list relevant publications in form of books, chapters, articles and conference proceedings; add rows as needed. "Type" should be coded as follows: A=article; B=book; C=chapter;P=proceeding;S=software.

Publication	Type

Relationships with other societies or institutions

Please indicate other institutions and professional or scientific societies your Chapter maintains a relationship with. Add rows as needed.

Institutional development

If you have made changes to your constitution or other developments the Society should know about, please mention them here.

Finances: cash reserves

If your chapter raises a membership fee, please indicate your current financial situation here.

Cash reserves =

Members
Please list the Chapter's active members in the table below. Add rows as needed.

#	Name	Affiliation	E-mail	SDS member
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
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22				
23				
24				
25				

Level of development of system dynamics in the Chapter's area

Description of relevant attributes

The following variables are currently used to look at the development of system dynamics in the Chapter's local area:

1. Universities. Number of universities where at least one faculty belongs to the system dynamics community: represents the coverage inside the local university system.

2. Faculty. Number of faculty members who belong to the SD field: indicates if there is quantitative growth of SD in the universities. More faculty should lead to more mouth-to-mouth inside universities.

3. Courses. Number of institutions where SD is taught as part of other courses or in its own right: university training is a main driver of diffusion of SD, and it can be used as a proxy for the number of young adults who are exposed to SD.

4. Generations. Number of faculty members who belong to the SD community and have studied under a local faculty member: expresses the solidification of the community.

5. Schools. Number of school-level initiatives: progress diffusing amongst your adults towards teenagers and children, indicates a broadening outreach which promises to accelerate diffusion in the future.

6. Materials. Number or materials (books, articles, models, software) developed by local dynamicists: indicates that the field is generating products. Also, materials are needed for diffusion (reaching local people).

7. Application field. System dynamics should become recognized as regular work method in at least one field of application; this would signalize that the local society has integrated it.

Variable	*Value*
Number of universities	
Number of faculty	
Number of courses	
Number of second generation faculty	
Number of school initiatives	
Number of materials	
Number of application fields	

Your assessment of the closing year

Please elaborate concerning any particular development that may be relevant for the Soceity.

The coming year

Challenges
What are the opportunities the Chapter plans to take, or challenges you plan to approach during the coming year?

Planned activities
Which activities (like workshops, courses or seminaries) does the Chapter plan to perform during the coming year?

Support required
What would you ask the Society to do to help the Chapter?

Appendix II: Fund for "Fund for Development of Capacity Application Form"

Fund for Development of Capacity Application Form

Chapter identification

Chapter:

Year: 2011

Entity or individual responsible for the fund (who represents the Chapter):

Description of the proposed activity

Dates:

Invited experts (aided by the fund):

Addressed audience:

Description:

Total cost:

Amount needed from the Society:

Description of impacts

Describe the impact on current dynamicists' skills as far as workshops and training are concerned. Describe the reach of what the workshop or training receivers will do with their enhanced skills.

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