

# PC Winter Meeting 2015 - Report VP Chapters

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## Abstract:

During 2014, two new Chapters were launched in Africa – each of them has carried out an activity supported by the Field Development Fund. Also, the Pakistan Chapter was established. The overall members count has been similar to the previous year's. The degree of activity of the respective Chapters, as well as their web presence, have continued similar to those of previous years.

Many Chapters plan specific activities to respond to the challenges they see, and there is increasing demand for the Field Development Fund. We should attend to their calls.

Many Chapters in the Asian-Pacific area belong to the group of Chapters we have little contact with or which are having difficulties. The Asian-Pacific initiative appears to be a most promising policy. However, attention is called to the Mediterranean area, where several smaller local groups could move towards a future Chapter.

*A note of precaution: the current version of this report (1) has been developed based upon the reports from the following Chapters: Benelux, China, India, Latin America and South Africa.*

*African Regional. It will be updated as I receive the reports of the remaining Chapters (Brazil, Economics, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Student , Switzerland, UK).*

# 1 Information concerning relevant aspects

## 1.1 Chapters and membership

Over the past years, the ensemble of Chapters has been rather stable. At first sight, the launch of the Canada Chapter – which was not viable for its members due to the huge territory –the apparition of two Chapters in Africa and of the Pakistan Chapter, are the mentionable news (see the table below).

Membership of Chapters continues to be twofold: most Chapters have a certain number of members who are *not* SDS members. Usually, it is quite difficult to know how many “local” members there are, because for many Chapters, this is simply the number of individuals who participate in the activities they organize. The numbers in the following table 1 are taken from the SDS site (status: February 2015) and my previous report (for 2013); please keep in mind that due to non-geographical Chapters like *Economics* or *Students*, some individuals may be members in more than one Chapter:

Existing chapters			Membership 2013		Membership now		Fractional rate of change	
2012	2013	2014	Total	SDS	Total	SDS	Total	SDS
		African Regional			49	39		
Australasia	Australasia	Australasia	54	34	50	37	-0,07	0,09
Benelux	Benelux	Benelux	36	29	23	16	-0,36	-0,45
Brazil	Brazil	Brazil	43	28	45	34	0,05	0,21
	Canada		37	20				
China	China	China	38	22	22	13	-0,42	-0,41
Economics	Economics	Economics	167	117	163	110	-0,02	-0,06
German	German	Germany	53	33	49	36	-0,08	0,09
India	India	India	34	9	16	7	-0,53	-0,22
Italian	Italian	Italy	21	13	21	15	0,00	0,15
	Japan	Japan	38	14	30	22	-0,21	0,57
Korea	Korea	Korea	14	6	8	6	-0,43	0,00
Latin America	Latin America	Latin America	60	41	61	44	0,02	0,07
		Pakistan			8	4		
Russian	Russian	Russia	7	7	7	6	0,00	-0,14
		South Africa			23	18		
Student	Student	Student	139	69	106	60	-0,24	-0,13
Swiss	Swiss	Switzerland	32	21	26	22	-0,19	0,05
UK	OK	UK	104	66	50	33	-0,52	-0,50
<b>Totals</b>			<b>877</b>	<b>529</b>	<b>757</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>-0,14</b>	<b>-0,01</b>

Table 1: Chapters and membership

In most cases, the changes are not huge. The changes in the German and UK Chapters look big, but we have to consider that each year’s numbers came from different sources, and one year’s time of observation is not sufficient to discuss trends.

What these numbers confirm is the diversity of Chapter sizes: some Chapters *are* very small (*Russia, India, China*) and the non-geographical Chapters are comparatively big (*Economics, Student*).

## 1.2 Chapter development and state

Membership *per se* is not very important: how active are the Chapters? In the 2012 report, I had classified the Chapters according to how many activities they had reported. In the following table 2, the first three columns are taken from that report. Currently, those Chapters that turn in their yearly report inform about the activities carried out, the number of institutions with members in touch with SD, the number of institutions offering some degree of SD training and the number of different application domains of their members:

Chapter development	2012			2014				
	Active	Development level	Category	Activities reported	Institutions	Taught in	Schools	Application domains
African Regional								
Australasia	unknown	unknown	low					
Benelux	Yes	new	new	4	6	6	3	
Brazil	Yes	stabilizing	medium					
China	Yes	stable	low	8	160	12	2	15
Economics	little	stabilizing	medium					
Germany	Yes	stable	high					
India	Yes	new	new	3	5	3	0	4
Italy	Yes	stable	high					
Japan								
Korea	unknown	unknown	low					
Latin America	Yes	growing	high	1	30	30		
Pakistan								
Russia	unknown	unknown	unviable					
South Africa				4	3	5	1	various
Student	Yes	stable	high	1				
Switzerland	Yes	stable	high					
UK	Yes	stable	high					

Table 2: Activity of the reporting Chapters

Australasia continues to report the absence of Chapter activity. I hope the surge of the Asian-Pacific initiative will allow this Chapter to connect and to re-launch.

There are two Chapters spanning a huge territory: Latin America and China. The Latin America Chapter holds an annual conference, which is the one official activity – many other local activities are not reported as Chapter activities, since they are carried out by local groups. Comparison between the reported activities, the number of institutions and the membership numbers (previous section), yields the suspicion that in China, there must be a huge number of people involved with SD without being member of the Chapter. However, an attempt at getting closer to the Chinese SD community (initiated by John Richardson during the Delft conference) has not been successful yet.

Both of the new Chapters from Africa have carried out an activity with the support of the Field Development Fund. They display impressive membership numbers and look very promising.

### 1.3 Web presence

Web presence is a relevant aspect for the SDS, since our own web presence is frankly outnumbered by the manifold Chapter sites, and the web is our main link to the wider population around us (potential users and future practitioners alike). The following table re-displays how I reported the Chapters' web presence in the two previous reports, followed by a look at the present state:

Web presence	2012 Site	2013		2014				
		Updated	SDS Logo	LinkedIn	Website	Updated	Content	SDS logo
African Regional					south african site			
Australasia	outdated	2011	Yes					
Benelux	OK	OK	-	Yes				
Brazil	OK	OK	No	Yes	Yes	dic-14	Rich	Yes
China	none							
Economics	outdated	LinkedIn	No	Yes	Yes	unspecified	Chapter objectices	No
Germany	OK	OK	No		Yes	ene-15	Rich	No
India	OK	July 2013	No		Yes	nov-14	Functional	modified
Italy	OK	OK	Yes	Yes	Yes	nov-14	Rich	Yes
Japan		OK	Yes		Yes	sep-14	Functional	Yes
Korea	none							
Latin America	OK	OK	No		Yes	nov-14	Rich	modified
Pakistan								
Russia	OK	Unknown	No		Yes	Unknown	Rich	No
South Africa				Yes	Yes	nov-14	Very new -> little content	Yes
Student	OK	OK	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Functional	modified
Switzerland	OK	OK	No		Yes	sep-14	Functional	No
UK	OK	OK	No		Yes	ene-15	Rich	Yes

Table 3: web presence

The table reveals that there has been little change over the recent years: Chapters with Rich sites (offering more than news and event information) are the majority, and most of the remaining Chapters have at least a reasonably updated site telling us what has been going on recently and what's up in the near future. Those sites using the SDS Logo are the same as before – however, three Chapters have laid their country/continent map under the Logo, so it appears to be a different one but still strongly replicates the original SDS Logo.

## 2 Discussion

We continue having Chapters of rather different degrees of development/activity:

- 1) some are doing just fine, they are close to the SDS and do not ask for support (Germany, UK);
- 2) some are working hard to develop, they are close to the SDS and ask for support (India, Italy, Latin America, South Africa, African Regional);
- 3) some are working hard to develop, they are close to the SDS but do not ask for support (Benelux, Brazil)
- 4) some appear to be doing just fine, but there is little interaction with the SDS (China, and Russia despite few members);
- 5) some seem to be at the edge of going down and there is little interaction with the SDS (Australasia, Korea, Pakistan);
- 6) and some are small and stationary (Switzerland, Russia, Japan).

We also have a SD group of respectable size, but this group has never tried to become a Chapter: the USA. Despite some discussions concerning this subject at the Delft conference, no attempt has been made in this direction. Nevertheless, the USA has a stable crowd of dynamicists. This, together with the strengths of the first group of Chapters (which happen to intersect with locally recognized SD organizations), should awaken our curiosity: what makes these groups so strong?

- a) Is being a Chapter a prerequisite for becoming a strong group?
- b) Is it a stage in a group's development?
- c) Is it a consequence of being a strong group?

No answer is known to me, but after a couple of years in the VP Chapters role, I would choose option b). In this context, it is important to remember that geographical area and language are not the only reasons why groups can or should be set up: application fields and other thematic topics (usually expressed as SIG) are valid reasons, too. Such groups seem to depend on the entrepreneurial qualities of an individual or a small group and the loyalty of this nucleus, and they do not need to accumulate huge membership counts to become stable.

I see two topics for VP Chapters and the SDS:

1. It is my opinion that the abovementioned groups 1) and 2) are relatively easy to work with, because they tell us what they need (see next section for details).
2. A look at groups 4) through 6) suggests that the Asian-Pacific area has many Chapters which do not tell us what they need, and to some extent, they may not even feel they need anything from the SDS (China).

For both cases the Field Development Fund is a useful tool, as the next section will show.

## 3 For 2015

### *3.1 Attending to the developing Chapters*

A subset of our Chapters tell us which challenges they are facing, what they plan to do about it and what they would like the SDS to help them with. For those Chapters, the best thing we can do is to support them. The following table 4 briefly outlines their statements (in addition, the respective sections of the reports from the India, South Africa and Student Chapters are very instructive):

Chapter	Challenges	Planned activities	Support demanded
Benelux	Recruit more members. Launch an international prize.	1-day conference and activities at the ISDC	
China	Encourage members of the China Chapter to attend the ICSDS	SD national conference in Beijing with the estimated scale about 100 attendees.	
India	Demonstrate usefulness of SD -> raise demand for SD work -> increase demand for SD training.	Target business schools (2 top schools selected) Support demanded:	Top dynamicist for keynote and exercises
Italy	Presence in Italy and the Mediterranean area	Food Supply and Distribution System: the Mediterranean basin Conference, joint with the FAO and Italy's Italian National Research Council	Support for having guest speakers (Jorgen Randers, George Richardson)
Latin America	The SD Journal in Spanish	2015 Latin American Conference on System Dynamics	Financial support to bring a at least one keynote speaker to the conference.
South Africa	Consolidation of SD in Chapter area, Post-doc positions, expanding ESKOM conference	Publish material, continue ESKOM conference, collaborate with universities	Chapter News on the Society Newsletter Chapter Roundtable session during ICSDS Collaborative academic activities. Sponsor system dynamicists to visit South Africa Help to align some aspects of its membership database.
Student	Changing student population, changing academic support for PhD students -> changing needs	Improvements for PhD Colloquium	

Table 4: Chapter plans 2015

In the light of these plans and needs, the Field Development Fund should be the platform for helping these Chapters have access to top dynamicists.

### ***3.2 Catalyzing support in underdeveloped areas with high potential***

The Asian-Pacific area concentrates many of the Chapters which appear to be either rather independent from the SDS (China) or which are having a hard time developing (Australasia, Korea, Pakistan). The Asian-Pacific initiative appears to a key ingredient for the respective groups and Chapters.

Additionally, the Mediterranean area (where the Egypt and Greece Chapters used to be) has a certain potential. The current initiative to launch a Mediterranean group – carried out by the Italy Chapter – should be closely observed and supported.