

PC Winter Meeting 2016- Report VP Chapters

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Abstract

During 2015, the Iran Chapter was started and the new Chapters in Africa undertook several activities, including conferences with the support of the Field Development Fund. Membership has been stable. The degree of activity and their web presence was similar to previous years.

The Asia-Pacific conference originally planned for later in 2016 has been moved to February 2017. The attempt to move towards a Mediterranean Chapter has not worked out.

It continues to be important that active new Chapters apply for support from the Field Development fund.

1 Information concerning relevant aspects

1.1 Chapters and membership

The set of Chapters continued to be stable in 2015. The two new Chapters in Africa are working well (see section on chapter development), and we have an Iran Chapter since 2015.

Chapter	Years			
	2012	2013	2014	2015
African Regional			1	1
Australasia	1	1	1	1
Benelux	1	1	1	1
Brazil	1	1	1	1
China	1	1	1	1
Economics	1	1	1	1
German	1	1	1	1
India	1	1	1	1
Iran				1
Italian	1	1	1	1

Chapter	Years			
	2012	2013	2014	2015
Japan		1	1	1
Korea	1	1	1	1
Latin America	1	1	1	1
Pakistan			1	1
Russian	1	1	1	1
South Africa			1	1
Student	1	1	1	1
Swiss	1	1	1	1
UK	1	1	1	1

Table 1: Chapters over the years

There have not been huge changes in membership count of chapter members who are also paying members of the SDS. According to the previous reports and the website membership database (for 2015), the situation is the following:

Continent	Chapter	SDS members in each year		
		2013	2014	2015
Global	Economics	117	110	102
	Student	69	60	55
Africa	African Regional		39	29
	South Africa		18	10
Asia	Australasia	34	37	31
	China	22	13	20
	Japan	14	22	14
	India	9	7	10
	Russian	7	6	9
	Korea	6	6	5
	Pakistan		4	9
Americas	Latin America	41	44	38
	Brazil	28	34	26
Europe	UK	66	33	52
	German	33	36	41
	Swiss	21	22	27
	Benelux	29	16	16
	Italian	13	15	14
All continents		509	522	508

Table 2: Chapters and “full” membership per continent

There are two chapters that are not bound to specific geographic or linguistic attributes: *Economics* and *Students*. They are larger than the other chapters – which is not surprising given their global scope. The *African* chapters are probably entering a more stable regime with slightly less “full” members; being quite active chapters, the slight downturn is not problematic. *Asia* has a larger number of chapters, but three of them have gone below the critical number of 10 “full” members. *Russia* has not had a stronger membership headcount in the past years, but they use to be independent and have a stable pattern of activity. *Korea* has a low number of registered members, but they have had many activities during 2015, so I expect the number of “full” members to be bound to rise. *Pakistan* is one of the new chapters, so I do not think the number of “full” members is indicating a problem now. However, this might be one of the chapters to monitor. The two chapters of the *Americas* are stable. In *Europe*, the *Swiss* chapter shows an increase in membership, while *Benelux* has decreased (despite the fact of having the International Conference in Delft every other year. The fact that the *Italy* chapter has been very active did not turn into a higher membership yet – this may take some more time.

Three years of data may still be too short to look for tendencies. However, I dare to say we have a core of strong and stable chapters in Europe and in the Americas.

It is also interesting to look at the proportions between “full” members of the SDS and “local” or “associate” members. The following table shows percentages which have been computed as

$$\text{Percentage} = (\text{total members} - \text{full members}) / \text{full members}$$

and therefore represent the part of each chapter which consists of “local” members:

Continent	Chapter	% local members in each year		
		2013	2014	2015
Global	Economics	43%	48%	38%
	Student	101%	77%	76%
Africa	African Regional		26%	59%
	South Africa		28%	90%
Asia	Australasia	59%	35%	29%
	China	73%	69%	55%
	Japan	171%	36%	71%
	India	278%	129%	140%
	Russian	0%	17%	44%
	Korea	133%	33%	120%
	Pakistan		100%	44%
Americas	Latin America	46%	39%	55%
	Brazil	54%	32%	42%
Europe	UK	58%	52%	40%
	German	61%	36%	44%
	Swiss	52%	18%	30%
	Benelux	24%	44%	19%
	Italian	62%	40%	43%
All continents		65%	45%	50%

Table 3: Percentage of “local” members in each Chapter

Just like for the “full” members, the table shows mainly an image of stability. Some chapters, which have decreased their number of “full” members (like in Africa) see the percentage increase due to a more stable group of chapter members who are not SDS members (not so in the Benelux chapter). In the Student chapter, one might have expected the low membership fee to draw in more individuals, but there may be other reasons why students do not immediately sign up in the SDS. India and Korea have a comparatively big group of “local” members.

Overall, it appears that even the global chapters have a relevant non-SDS membership. This seems to be unavoidable, because these chapters represent the “Sputnik” of system dynamics: either they are in places where system dynamics is new (Africa, India) or where other methodologies have a much wider and dominant installed base of users (Europe, Americas and large parts of Asia). We should not expect a huge percentage of individuals who participate in workshops or other chapter activities to “see the light” and become “full” SDS members. Some do and some do not.

We can certainly remind Chapters that the Society would very much like to see “local” individuals become “full” members, but we ought not to interpret the current situation as a failure of the chapters.

1.2 Chapter development and state

As in previous years, it is notoriously hard to collect information concerning chapter activities. Despite the fact that Chapter representatives know that an annual report is their responsibility, many find it hard to collect information from their members.

On Monday, February 15, the reported state is the following:

Chapter development	2014			2015				
	Active	Development level	Category	Activities reported	Institutions	Taught in	Schools	Sponsored by Field Development Fund
African Regional	Yes	developing	Medium	No report				Yes
Australasia	Unknown	Unknown	Low	No report				
Benelux	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	No report				
Brazil	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	No report				
China	Yes	Stable	High	Several	160	10	2	15
Economics	Little	Stabilizing	Medium	No report				
Germany	Yes	Stable	High	Several		12		
India	Yes	Descending	Low	No report				
Italy	Yes	Developing	Medium	No report				Yes
Japan				No report				
Korea	Yes	Developing	Medium	Several	20	10		
Latin America	Yes	Stable	High	No report				
Pakistan				No report				
Russia	Unknown	Unknown	Unviable	No report				
South Africa	Yes	Developing	Medium	Several	3	5	1	Yes
Student	Unknown	Stable	High	No report				
Switzerland	Unknown	Stable	High	No report				
UK	Yes	Stable	High	Several	14	6		

Table 4: Activity of the reporting Chapters

It ought to be mentioned that both Chapters from Africa as well as the Korea Chapter make substantial efforts in their activities. As usual, the UK and the German Chapter realized a bunch of activities – including a new award for outstanding work in the UK Chapter.

I turn in this report in the expectation of receiving more reports during the coming days.

1.3 Web presence

Web presence also transmits an image of stability in most of the cases. The following table shows the current state of web presence and qualifies it in the “level” column into high, reasonable or low according to if the chapter has a website with relevant information for chapter activities which is up to date and if beyond that, system dynamics resources like publications are offered. The last column (“tendency”) refers to if each chapter is moving beyond their web presence of previous years, remaining stable or falling behind.

Web presence	2015					Level	Tendency
	LinkedIn	Website	Updated	Content	SDS logo		
African Regional	Yes	SDS site	Yes	Coordination of activities		Reasonable	Improving
Australasia						Low	Stable
Benelux	Yes					Low	Stable
Brazil	Yes	Yes	Mid 2015	Rich	Yes	Reasonable	Losing up-to-date-ness
China							Stable
Economics	Yes	Yes	unspecified	Chapter objectives	No	Low	Stable
Germany		Yes	Feb 2016	Rich	No	High	Stable
India		Yes	No: nov-14	No	modified	Low	Losing up-to-date-ness
Iran		SDS site	(Arabic)	(Arabic)			
Italy	Yes	Yes	Feb 2016	Rich	Yes	High	Stable
Japan		Yes	No: sep-14	Functional	Yes	Reasonable	Losing up-to-date-ness
Korea							
Latin America		Yes	No: nov-14	Rich	modified	Reasonable	Losing up-to-date-ness
Pakistan							
Russia		Yes	Apparently 2016 (Russian)	Rich	No	Reasonable	Stable
South Africa		Yes	Dec 2015	Growing (“includes resources”)	Yes	Reasonable	Improving
Student	Yes	SDS site	Yes	Functional	modified	Reasonable	Stable
Switzerland		Yes	July 2015	Functional	No	Reasonable	Losing up-to-date-ness
UK		Yes	Yes	Rich	No	High	Stable

Table 5: Web presence

It has to be said that the quality of web presence tends to mirror que state of the chapters: UK and Germany have been very organized and active, and they use their websites to support their activities and to reach out to interested individuals. The African Chapters are pushing forward and this includes their web presence. Other chapters use the web site or web page as coordination tools for

their activities, without offering “resources” (many chapters in Asia, but also the two “global” chapters). Still other chapters are stable in themselves and do not feel the need or opportunity to reach out over the web site (seems to be the case in the Americas). A last group seems to be struggling to survive and in their agenda, web presence may have a low priority.

Overall, I’d mention the UK, the German and the Italy site as exemplary – with apologies to the Chapters using other alphabets which I cannot read.

2 Discussion

My chapters classification is virtually the same as last year:

- 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 (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 (Korea, 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, Pakistan, India);
- 6) and some are small and stationary (Switzerland, Russia, Japan).

Beyond trying to support the Chapters who ask for it – in several cases via the Field Development Fund – and improving the web-based services, I see little that can be done to have a substantial influence on Chapters. New Chapters start with much energy and quickly have achievements to demonstrate. However, after that initial phase, growth (or development) becomes more difficult, and it seems that only the voluntary and sustained effort of a core group of individuals holds most Chapters together. I know this to be the case in the Latin American, Brazil, Italy, Benelux and India Chapters – where the first fared well enough to reach stability (many individuals teaching system dynamics in diverse universities, thus producing a steady inflow to the practitioners stock), Brazil and Italy turning around a downward development, and in Benelux and India I am afraid the downward development has yet to be turned around.

One mentionable example is the Mediterranean conference organized by the Italy Chapter, which has supported in the hope to launch a Mediterranean Chapter. This has not turned out the way hoped for – but patience is called for: it may not be time yet for a Mediterranean Chapter (as comparison: when the Latin American Chapter came to exist, local groups had been already working in different countries of the Region for many years), but the persistent work of motivated individuals in our Chapters will build bridges of collaboration and increase the number of opportunities for system dynamics.

3 For 2016

The same two directions of work indicated last year still need to be continued.

Attending to the developing Chapters: the Chapters who ask for support must be supported as best possible by the Field Development Fund. Also, the facilities for communication across SIGs and Chapters might be a topic for advances – even though one might as well argue that for those who are active, cross-communication is already possible.

Catalyzing support in underdeveloped areas with high potential. The Asian-Pacific conference will be an important event – however, the planned date has been moved from November 2016 to February 2017.