

This text is a preliminary proposal for Nijmegen as a venue for the 2006 International System Dynamics Conference (ISDC). The conference is to be hosted by Nijmegen University, which will change its name to Radboud University in September 2004. A proposed time for the conference is Sunday 23 July to Thursday 27 July 2006, although later dates are possible.

### **1. Features of conference venue**

System dynamics is an active field of research, teaching and consultancy in Nijmegen and throughout the Netherlands. In addition Nijmegen offers an attractive location for a professional conference. Nijmegen is a center of system dynamics research and teaching. In 2003 two researchers at Nijmegen University (Carolus Grütters and Etiënne Rouwette) received their PhD on system dynamics. At the moment the teaching program at the Faculty of Management Studies includes a system dynamics course which is attended by approximately 250 bachelor students. Group model building is part of a broader study on intervention methods and taught to about 200 bachelor students.

Other system dynamics centers in the Netherlands are the following. System dynamics is part of the teaching program of Utrecht University, Delft University, Sioo (postdoctoral courses on management) and courses offered by the Ministry of Finance. A number of Dutch consultancy firms regularly employ system dynamics: Atrivé, Significant, Minase and TNO Telecom. Accenture and PricewaterhouseCoopers are active in system dynamics projects in the Netherlands. A number of larger firms and government institutes have been exposed to system dynamics in either commercial or research projects. Among these are Shell, Fokker Aviation, Stork, KPN Telecom, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Agriculture and regional and local governments. In 2001, academics, consultants and other interested parties have established the Systems Thinking Platform which has met three times since.

Apart from professional considerations, Nijmegen as the oldest city of the Netherlands offers a unique conference venue. In 2005 the city celebrates its 2000 years' existence and the fact that it enjoys city rights for 1900 years. In July each year some 40,000 people from all over the world come to Nijmegen to participate in the four day walking march, the 'Vierdaagse'. The city combines interesting historic sites with ample opportunities for nature visits in forests nearby. More information on the city can be found on [www.nijmegenonline.nl](http://www.nijmegenonline.nl). In the Netherlands English is commonly spoken and the climate in Summer is pleasant.

Three hours of traveling by car or public transportation gives access to cities such as Amsterdam and Brussels, the North Sea coast and the unique natural reserves the Wadden Sea and the Veluwe forest.

## 2. Travel costs and accessibility

The conference venue is accessible by train within two hours from the international airports of Amsterdam (Schiphol) and Frankfurt in Germany. Airfares as compared to the 2003 and 2004 conferences are competitive (see appendix 1). At present a number of low cost carriers such as BasiqAir, RyanAir and EasyJet provide frequent connections to locations such as the UK, Germany, Italy, Turkey and Norway. In addition many destinations in Europe can be reached by high speed trains.

The conference sessions will take place at the campus of Nijmegen University. The campus is about three kilometers from the city center where most hotels are located. Taxis are available and public transport between the city center and the campus is frequent and inexpensive.

## 3. Meal and accommodation costs for attendees

Appendix 1 includes an estimation of meal and accommodation costs for both 'normal' attendees and students. For 'normal' attendees costs add up to \$448,- which is well below the maximum of \$800,- suggested in the conference proposal guidelines. For students meal and accommodation costs are \$210,- which the conference proposal guidelines suggest should not be higher than \$400,-.

## 4. Direct conference costs

Direct conference costs can be kept low since all sessions (except for the banquet) can take place at the campus of Nijmegen University. Prices for room rental are \$0.49 per seat and the spreadsheet in the attachment provides further information on room sizes. Additional costs are charged in weekends. The opening ceremony can be held at the university aula or alternatively at the city hall. There are several alternatives for the conference banquet. An attractive location is the 'Wijnfort Lent', a 19<sup>th</sup> century fortress at the river Waal, three kilometers from Nijmegen city center. Wijnfort Lent provides facilities and dinner for up to 800 persons. A rough estimate of costs based on 550 attendees is as follows (see the spreadsheet):

- opening reception (\$9.78 per person, 550 attendees)	\$5,378,-
- rooms Sun (4 rooms for one day):	\$735,-
- rooms sessions Mon – Wed (12 rooms for three days):	\$11,573,-
- rooms Thu (5 rooms for one day):	\$1,033,-
- additional AV equipment:	\$2,798,-
- coffee breaks (550 attendees times 6 breaks):	\$3,775,-
- conference banquet (550 persons times dinner \$61.50):	\$33,825,-
- total	\$59,118,-

This comes down to a total of \$107,- per person which well below \$150,- as mentioned in the conference proposal guidelines. Lunch would be an additional \$28,- for three days and it would be possible to sell lunch vouchers for a lunch buffet. Attendees who want to have lunch on their own can do so at the university restaurant. It is reasonable to expect that a lower price can be negotiated for the facilities as a large number of rooms are rented at the same time for an academic conference. In addition, the Methodology Department of Nijmegen University has agreed to sponsor the 2006 conference and Significant has committed to sponsoring the wine for the banquet. Several other consultancy firms, universities and government institutes mentioned earlier have expressed interest in sponsoring or helping out at the time of the conference.

The congress center of Nijmegen University regularly handles conference registrations (including credit card payments), hotel arrangements and the social program. An exact price for this service would have to be negotiated, but this year prices for other conferences have been around \$17,- per attendee and an additional \$2,800,- for working hours. On the basis of 550 attendees this would come down to \$12,150,- or an extra of \$22,10 per attendee.

## **5. Program features**

This part of the conference proposal addresses appropriate conference themes, special sessions and the social program. Details of the conference theme need to be worked out with the Program Committee, but a suggested conference theme is 'Models of decision making'. This theme brings together several important topics. First, it continues the attention given to the interplay of psychology and system dynamics, evident at the special forum on psychology at ISDC 2003 conference in New York and the psychology stream at ISDC 2004. Researchers on potentially interesting topics in cognitive and social psychology, for example group decision making, can be invited at a special session.

Second, this theme allows us to contrast different rationalities as espoused in for example economy and psychology. This evokes several interesting discussion themes, such as the ability of system dynamics to act as a bridge between disciplines or the rationality of using system dynamics as a tool for organizational interventions.

Third, several researchers at Nijmegen University are working on related 'systemic' sciences such as social cybernetics and social systems theory. The conference theme 'Models of decision making' allows us to probe the differences and commonalities of different ways of conceptualizing systems. At previous conference linkages to systems thinking and operational research have been explored (for example ISDC 1999), but the relations to social cybernetics and social systems theory have not been addressed in depth. Contrasting both approaches might shed more light on their respective methodological and philosophical assumptions.

At present the social program has not been worked out in detail. However, the 2000 years' anniversary of Nijmegen University and the festivities surrounding the Vierdaagse provide excellent opportunities for social activities.

## **6. Facility characteristics**

At the Nijmegen University campus three rooms of 150-200 persons as well as several rooms for about 20 or 70 persons are available at all times. There is the possibility to rent a lecture hall with a capacity of 420 persons, but for 550 persons a part of the campus restaurant might be used. The campus restaurant can be used for the coffee breaks and lunches. Exhibitors can be located near the lunch space. Adjacent to the campus restaurant (and accessible by an indoor hallway) is a building with several large auditoria. Registration on Sunday may take place at the university aula and later on move to the hallway of the lecture halls. Additional rooms for parallel sessions are located opposite the lecture halls. If this setup can be followed all rooms are in adjacent buildings or located across the street.

## **7. Manageability of risks**

Three sources of risks are identified in the conference proposal guidelines: 1. attendance; 2. local direct costs; 3. Central Office administrative costs. The risk with regard to attendance is expected to be low since many centers of system dynamics are located nearby and can attend the conference at reasonable expenses. Local direct costs are lower than the maximum fee mentioned in the proposal guidelines and it seems reasonable to expect a lower total price. The conference team is willing to spend time and effort in managing local arrangements in order to keep administrative costs as low as possible.

## **8. Local host**

The proposed conference chair for this conference is Dr. Etiënne Rouwette. Program manager is Özge Pala. Co-chair is Prof. Dr. Jac Vennix. A number of co-workers will be part of the conference team: Dr. Carolus Grütters, Rienk van Marle, Cécile Thijssen and Eugene Zhuchenko. Student volunteers are available.

Etiënne Rouwette was a member of the student team helping in organizing the ISDC 1992 in Utrecht, the Netherlands and a member of the organizing committee in 1999 in Wellington, New Zealand. Currently he is a member of the policy council. Özge Pala was a member of the student team helping in organizing the ISDC 1997 in Istanbul, Turkey. Özge Pala and Etiënne Rouwette organized the first Student Colloquium at the ISDC 2000 in Bergen, Norway. Jac Vennix was conference chair of the ISDC 1992 in Utrecht, the Netherlands, is managing editor of System Dynamics Review, former president of the System Dynamics Society and winner of the Forrester Award in 1999. Carolus Grütters completed his PhD on system dynamics in 2003. Rienk van Marle and Cécile Thijssen are lecturers and Eugene Zhuchenko is a PhD student at the Methodology Department.

Etiënne Rouwette, July 2004

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Attachment: Estimated participant costs ISDC 2006 Nijmegen