

Early Developments of the System Dynamics Venture

Trying to be as brief as possible, we (Michel Karsky and Bernard Paulre) will describe the events that led to the Brussels conference of 1982.

The Paris conference in 1980, during which first suggestions of an international SD Society were formulated, was preceded by several annual SD conference in France and in Belgium.

These conferences took place in :

Place	year	Chairman/Organiser	Specificity
Toulouse	1975	Jean Lebel	It was decided to have Annual SD conferences
Grenoble	1976	Rechenmann	
Solaize (Lyon)	1977	Michel Karsky	First non-French Participants : Aracil (Spain) De Bruyn (Belgium)
Rouen	1978		Conference by Joël de Rosnay, Who was one of the first to explain System Dynamics to French readers, in an important book : The Macroscope. One Scottish scientist showing a pollution model. Two Belgian professors from Mons.
Mons (Belgium)	1979	Couvreur – Van Snyck	Conferences by Prigogine, G. Coyle, Parker, Sharp, Dangerfield, Krallmann, Hurtubise First American participant : Dave Peterson, with two presentations.
Paris	1980	Bernard Paulré (sponsored by AFCET)	Conferences by J. Forrester, J. Rahn, St. Beer, R. Day, S. Des, B. Richmond. The Proceedings were published (B. Paulré ed. 1981: System Dynamics and the analysis of change, North Holland, with a preface by Forrester)
Rensselaerville	1981	David Anderson	Jean Lebel proposes that a formal System Dynamics Society be created.

At this conference, for the first time, a full session (presided by M. Karsky) was devoted to non-linear dynamics (catastrophe theory, bifurcations, etc.). Many attendants were sceptical concerning the existence and practical use of non-linear phenomena. Jay Forrester intervened with the following description : imagine a person in a tent. What he/she can reach in the tent is the linear world. If he/she makes a whole in the tent and puts an arm out, whatever the arm can reach is the non-linear world we know. The rest of space is the entire non-linear world we have yet to explore.

Brussels	1982	Bernard Paulré (sponsored by Universities of Bruxelles, Liège and Mons, AFCET and SOGESCI)	"From physical sciences to social sciences" - 7 th International Conf. on SD. Conferences by Boulding, Prigogine, R. Day, R.G. Coyle, B. Richmond and many others.
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Some of the papers of the Brussels conference have been edited by Bernard Paulre and Peter Allen in a special issue of the journal *Environment and Planning* : Allen, P.M., B.E. Paulre eds. (1985), Special issue on new approaches in dynamical-systems modeling, *Environment and Planning B-Planning & Design*, 12, 1, pp. 1-3

As can be seen from the above list, the international aspect of these annual conferences, as well as the idea of an international SD society, developed progressively, through a slow maturing process. The suggestion to create a SD International organisation was first proposed by Jean Lebel and Bernard Paulré during the Paris conference of 1980, at a cocktail organised by the MIT club in honor of Jay Forrester and during the conference in an aside room in the University Paris Dauphine.

This idea was pursued and developed at the Rensselaerville conference by Jean Lebel and formalized in Brussels in 1982.

Among the Society rules agreed upon (discussed and formalized during two meetings between Peter Senge and Michel Karsky – the second meeting was needed because Michel mistook the agreed upon location of the next conference, which would have led to two consecutive meetings in Europe), was the notion that the annual SD conferences would alternate between the USA and Europe. Since then, there have been a few exceptions, with the inclusion of China, New Zealand, Mexico, etc.)

Concerning Michel Karsky's injury (a torn knee ligament) while playing in a soccer match during the Rensselaerville conference, here is what happened :

Having rented a car for the whole length of the conference, Michel drove down immediately after the injury to the small town (probably called Rensselaerville) where he was told an old doctor was still practicing and even making house visits - a unique feat in the county and maybe the state - . She made him sit on the bed, feet dangling, paced back a few feet, looked at both knees, shook her head and said : "nothing to be done, it'll take six months". And in effect it took six months to heal.

During the medical examination, Michel was looking at her medical diploma which bore the date : 1924