

Swiss Chapter of the International System Dynamics Society: Minutes of the 24th Meeting

Time and place:

18.01.2010; 18.30 – 20.00; ETH Zurich

Participants:

Nadine Schieritz, Klaus Kocher, Ronald Meisel, Lukas LaRoche, Christof Trauffer, Louis Gerber, Thomas Beck, Lukas Schmid, Sylvelin Hauge, Justus Gallati, and Stefan Grösser

Absent with excuse: Birgit Kopainsky, Katrin Hugel, Gianluca Colombo, Pascal Duport, Giuseppe Feola, Christian Flury, Marcel Loher, Olaf Tjetje, Markus Schwaninger, Tim Scheffmann

Agenda:

1. Address of Welcome
2. Introduction of Participants
3. Guest Speech by Dr. Nadine Schieritz
4. Meetings in 2010
5. Closing

Results/Resolutions

2 Introduction of Participants

Welcome to Dr. Nadine Schieritz, Swiss Re, who attended a Swiss Chapter meeting for the first time.

3 Guest Speech given by Dr. Nadine Schieritz

Dr. Nadine Schieritz, Vice President Swiss Re, Zurich, presented her ideas concerning how to apply System Dynamics in the practice.

System Dynamics is hardly ever reported to be used in practice. Nadine Schieritz represented the position that SD in its wholeness might not, but that some elements of SD can be applied beneficially on a regular basis. These include: problem focus, archetypes and mental models, for example.

Problem Focus

A student of System Dynamics learns to focus on a specific problem. This is put forward by the phrase "model a problem, do not model a system" (Sterman 2002). The discussion elicited that a problem focus is able to transcend existing boundaries between departments and can lead to more complete solutions (avoid silo-thinking).

Archetypes

The system thinking archetypes, developed by Senge (1990), represent powerful diagnostic tools for problem analysis. This is an element of SD which can be used without a large investment and can yield interesting insights into a problem.

Mental Model:

Mental models are cognitive representations of reality out there inside of individuals. Individuals decide based upon these mental models. The value of System Dynamics is to provide a method to enable a decision maker to improve his or her mental model consciously. In addition, discussions dedicated about mental models are means to create a shared mental model within the organization (same language is developed).

Discussion

During the discussion phase, several ideas have been elicited. The first question was at which organizations thinking in terms of System Dynamics might be (most) useful. The participants agreed that systems thinking might be most useful at the top management level. But also middle managers can make use of it in order to develop solutions to problems for their own. The issue of acceptance of these solutions might be moderated by the existing organizational cultures. A second insight was that System Dynamics enables a person to learn faster about issues which are developed by models. The model required to learn might be a mathematical model, the insights gained from the model is almost always qualitative in nature and might be applicable to a large variety of situations.

4 **Next Meetings**

The 2010 Chapter Meetings will be held at the ETH Zurich on:

- Monday, 26 April 2010 (→ General Assembly)
- Monday, 26 July 2010 in Seoul, Korea
- Monday, 18 October 2010

Please save the dates!

Zurich, 18.01.2010

Stefan Grösser