

Afterword

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Every European System Dynamics Workshop (EuSDW) is a highlight for me. It is an honour to be invited, it is a wonderful opportunity to be able to present, it is a fantastic forum to discuss, and it is a treat to be part of a unique group of people with diverse backgrounds but with a shared interest (Figure 1): to exchange ideas, learn from and support each other and by doing so promote the field of System Dynamics. The 2019 European System Dynamics Workshop in Galway, hosted by the amazing Professor Jim Duggan from National University of Ireland Galway, was no exception. On the contrary, it featured some extras that made it particularly special to me. First, Galway and I go way back and returning there, after so many years, was emotional for reasons entirely non-System Dynamics. Second, the program featured the novel element of System Dynamics in 5 (5 Talks, 5 Slides, 5 Minutes), which facilitated even more the inclusion of work in progress in the discussions. And third, I travelled to Galway as the President-Elect of the System Dynamics Society, which is the ultimate reason why I have a chance to offer some reflections on the impact of the European System Dynamics Workshops on the field of System Dynamics and more generally on their value as a scientific meeting format.



Figure 1: Participants of the 2019 European System Dynamics Workshop in Galway.

The idea and the format of the EuSDW series go back to Peter Milling and Andreas Größler (Größler, 2015; Lane *et al.*, 2004). The fundamental idea is that a research-orientated gathering of a small number of active participants is a useful way both of furthering the development of a specific theme and of bringing together system dynamicists who are dispersed across European regions with different languages and cultures, and who in some cases work in relative isolation. The workshops are not conferences. The sessions are supposed to be about work in progress, work that others can contribute to, comment on and be inspired by. To assist this, the workshops are structured in a particular way. An important feature involves the circulation of papers on the work to be presented. Invitations to present work suitable for the chosen theme of the workshop are sent out some months before the event. Papers on the work are circulated to all participants before the workshop. For each paper, one discussant is asked to provide detailed comments on the work. After each presentation and the comments of the discussant, generous time is allocated for general discussion. The EuSDWs are therefore a wonderful example of peer mentoring (Richardson *et al.*, 2015) among system dynamicists in Europe.

The theme of the 9th European System Dynamics Workshop was “Addressing Public Health and Security Challenges with System Dynamics”. As system dynamicists, we know that complex problems such as public health and security challenges cannot be solved by any one discipline or any one actor. Participants of the European System Dynamics Workshops obviously all share an interest in System Dynamics. Beyond that, they bring diversity in terms of background, expertise and experience. This diversity is very important as innovation happens at the intersection between disciplines (e.g. Ness & Riese, 2015), and innovation is definitely required to facilitate solutions to public health and security challenges. The constructive atmosphere of the EuSDW series allows for the formulation, discussion and refinement of new ideas. On top of this, the production of a special issue in the aftermath of the workshop provides the quality

control needed to bring these new ideas to a broader audience and to contribute to the discourse of, in this year, how to address public health and security challenges. When I compare my initial paper drafts for the workshop presentation to the final, published papers (this year but also in previous years), the difference is striking. What the EuSDW effectively does is to replace at least one desk rejection and one or more rounds of revisions of an underdeveloped journal article. It thus accelerates the publication process and helps System Dynamics work become visible more quickly.

Continuing with reflections on how my paper has benefitted from the EuSDW format, I would like to mention one additional point. My own discussant (Kapmeier, 2020) had clearly spent ages on the preparation of his comments. Similar to Florian, the other discussants put enormous effort and thought into their piece of feedback during the workshop. There are multiple benefits to doing this, both for the authors but also for the other participants of the workshop. First, discussant comments help elevate the discussions during the workshop to a new level. For relative newcomers to the specific topic, they also help position the topic and understand the discourse surrounding the topic. Second, discussant comments are very helpful for the further development of the presented papers. Beyond that, at least in the case of my own paper, they sparked a discussion between Florian and me to pursue one aspect of my paper further and turn it into a separate, joint publication effort. I assume that this is not so much the exception but rather the rule when it comes to the long-term impacts of the EuSDW series.

To close this afterword, I would like to thank Professor Jim Duggan very, very much for his wonderful hospitality and a perfect organization of a very productive workshop. Furthermore, I would like to gratefully acknowledge Professor David Lane's continued support of the workshop series and for arranging, yet again, the publication of a special issue (Figure 1). At this point in time, we might not know yet whether it will be possible to re-convene in person in 2021, but after the 38th International Conference of the System Dynamics Society, virtually in Bergen, we definitely know how to run online conferences. Therefore: I very much look forward to the 10th European System Dynamics Workshop.



Figure 2: Some of the participants who went on a biodiversity walking tour of the area surrounding the University after the close of the workshop. Shown here are Yaman Barlas, Erling Moxnes, David Lane, Caitriona Carlin, and Jim Duggan.

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