

Into the Seventh Decade of ICSB

From National US Orgins to Global Player

By Dr. J. Hanns Pichler

Following a 1956 conference on Small Business Management at the University of Colorado, formation of the - at first - US-based „National Council for Small Business Management Development“ (NCSBMD) took shape in 1957 with selection of a nucleus of officers and an advisory board. Soon after, in 1958, the first By-Laws were adopted and official membership to the Council was introduced in 1961. No one of the early „pioneers“, such as Wilford L. White (after whom the prestigious award of ICSB should be named later on), D. J. Duncan and W. O. Metcalf (receptient of the first Distinguished Service Award in 1971), probably ever would foresee which journey the Council – surely with ups and downs – would embark upon over the decades to come.

Internal growth and evolution of the organization with conferences in regionally varying parts of the US over nearly two decades led to a first major reorganization with, in 1977, officially changing the name from „National Council...“ into today’s „International Council for Small Business“, followed by the adoption (1980) of revised By-Laws including a newly devised Board structure which by and large should remain the same over the next three decades.

The first „international“ outreach took place in 1979 with the ICSB conference in Quebec and the respective Canadian Council (CCSBE) becoming the first ICSB affiliate; in consequence, the US organization also was turned into an affiliate being renamed 1981 in USASBE (with G. Hills serving as its first president overlapping with his ICSB presidency at the time).

With Bob Brockhaus taking over as ICSB President in 1983, followed by a long tenure over some two decades as Executive Director from his base at St. Louis University, increased efforts were initiated toward reaching out for new affiliates on a global scale.

Thus, on board in 1987 came ICSB-Korea as very active an affiliate since then (with Yoon-Bae Ouh in 1995 being elected the first ICSB president from the Far East). Also in 1987 ICSB-SA as the Southern Africa affiliate (later renamed SAESBA) - still under Apartheid and as the first member from a developing region – was formed; quite active an organization from the outset (with Klaas Havenga serving as ICSB president in 2001-02, and a well attended World Conference 2004 at Johannesburg). Activities thereafter unfortunately faded away so that SAESBA finally was disaffiliated (2013); efforts toward a revival under new leadership more recently have been resumed with negotiatons on the way.

„Europe“ (ECSB), conceived as a regional affiliate from the very beginning, joined in 1988 with Josef Mugler from the Vienna University of Economics & Business serving as its first president. Under Mugler’s chair and Bruce Kirchhoff as then ICSB president, the first World Conference outside N-America was organized 1991 in Vienna with a record attendance including, for the first time, many participants from Eastern Europe after the Soviet Union’s break-up, lending a special flair to the gathering; over a decade or so to follow ECSB should remain the affiliate with largest membership. Scientific efforts and activities early on led to formation of the yearly RENT („Research in Entrepreneurship“) conferences of ECSB, by

now in their 31st year, with widely acknowledged scholarly repute all over Europe and beyond.

ICSB's global outreach, by then, firmly had taken hold with expansion of the organization into further regions, such as: Australia & New Zealand as SEAANZ, formed in 1992; so far hosting four World Conferences in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne and Wellington (1995, 2000, 2006, 2012 respectively) – with Brian Gibson and Colin Dunn both serving also as ICSB Presidents as well as in various other Board positions joined as a very active Senior VP by Claire Massey from New Zealand who organized and chaired the 2012 ICSB Conference.

ICSB-ROC (Taiwan) joined in 1991 with quite ambitious activities including organizing the ICSB World Conference in 2001. The ICSB World Conference will return to Taipei, ROC Taiwan in June 2018.

In 1992, Malaysia came on board, but never really got into gear and after some years, with mutual agreement, was disaffiliated (in the earlier 2000s). In 2014 the country returned as an affiliate, named ICSMEE Malaysia, under new perspectives and very active a program since then having organized, among other initiatives, a well attended Asia region ACSB conference at Miri/Sarawak in Oct. 2014 with proclamation of a „Humane Entrepreneurship“ policy initiated by then ICSB President K. C. Kim of ICSB Korea.

The Entrepreneurship Forum of Singapore formally became an ICSB affiliate 1994 and organized a World Conference in 1998, yet soon after somehow faded away and finally also was disaffiliated; a successful revival under new leadership of Den Huan Hoi was undertaken in 2011 and Singapore has remained an active member ever since with regular Board participation as well.

ICSB-Puerto Rico & Caribbean was formed in 1996, with Jose Romaguera and Zulma Qiniones subsequently having served as ICSB Presidents; also under their chairmanship two World Conferences were held in 2002 and 2013 in the region and various other members of the affiliate over the years remained quite active on the ICSB-Board. Puerto Ricans furthermore were instrumental in forming an ICSB chapter on Barbados which after some time, however, again vanished from the scene.

ICSB-Brazil joined as a chapter in 1998, but never became really active and later on was disaffiliated, before recently joining again in 2013 under new initiatives with promising auspices.

Similarly, Japan was interested in ICSB affiliation early on, but despite various efforts and visible engagement – while encountering continued rivalry at home from ISBC – never really got into gear; a revived attempt embarked upon in 2012, however, carries renewed promise under more active leadership.

Intermittently just to mention, through special contacts of the ICSB Board, India was close to becoming an affiliate in 2012, but unfortunately chose to opt out before final approval.

Recent breakthroughs toward further broadening ICSB affiliation in hitherto untapped regions came in the Middle East with formation of MCSBE in Egypt during critical times of the „Arab spring“ and its aftermath.

Again more recently Argentina, in the wider context of the Mercosur network („Red Pymes Mercosur“), under the active leadership of Ruben Ascuá (elected ICSB President 2014/15) became an affiliate, thus broadening ICSB’s presence and representation in Latin America.

Not the least and quite important as potential „heavyweights“, the global specter of ICSB members more recently has been extended by affiliation of the PR of China in 2010 and Russia (as a chapter) in 2013.

In 2014 ICSB Korea led a Board initiative, passed by the membership in 2013, to create regional councils to enable greater collaboration among ICSB affiliates and chapters. Thus, the Asia Council for Small Business (ACSB) was established under the umbrella of ICSB and ICSB Korea. Korea hosted both the first and second ACSB regional conference in Seoul 2013/14, followed by ICSMEE Malaysia hosting the 3rd conference 2015 in Miri as mentioned above, and ICSB Indonesia hosting the 4th edition 2016 in Jakarta/Bandung – all well attended, highly representative and publicly recognized events.

As more recent a newcomer in the context of the evolution of ICSB membership figures Dubai, immediately having been charged – on short notice – with organizing, in place of PR of China, the 60th ICSB World Conference (2015) which it has taken on with verve and „grandezza“ in most laudable and forthcoming an attitude.

At the 61st annual World Conference in June 2016, ICSB convened a Small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) Ministerial Roundtable at the United Nations Headquarters. Seven distinguished ministers were in attendance from the United States, South Korea, Egypt, Indonesia, Kuwait, New Zealand, and Argentina. Under the theme of “The Role of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),” ICSB brought international attention to the importance of SMEs in a globalized economy. Cooperation with the United Nations being a longstanding goal, the conference achieved a key step forward for our organization. In addition to working with the UN, ICSB enjoys close relationships with the OECD, the World Bank Group, and other major international stakeholders.

All in all, ICSB members in 2016 comprise a record number of 14 affiliates and 5 chapters, with several more proposals under consideration and in various stages of processing. In 2015 four countries – Mexico, Indonesia, Myanmar and Bangladesh - were joining ICSB, thus bringing the number of affiliates/chapters to a record of 19; quite proud an achievement indeed.

ICSB also has a long history of internationally recognized publications; above all, The Journal of Small Business Management (JSBM); a quarterly, first published in 1963 and soon attaining wide spread distribution as the very first English speaking academic journal in its field. There were ups and downs over the years under varying editorships, until under the able stewardship of Sandra King-Kauanui (ICSB president 2004-05) full ICSB ownership of the Journal has been secured with Wiley-Blackwell as the new publisher and distributor. Following such consolidation, an ambitious relaunch of the Journal was undertaken in 2010 under George Solomon as the new Editor in Chief with active support from ICSB’s International Office; thus quickly reestablishing both scientific acknowledgement and enhanced market position. An acceptance rate currently of about 7% and an impact factor of 1.937 (2-year), 2.868 (5-year) places JSBM 65th out of 192 journals in Management and 8th in Entrepreneurship and Innovation. The Journal now reaches well over 4,257 institutions

worldwide, enjoys a renewal rate of 94% and an increase of text downloads in 2015 of nearly 14% - a remarkable record!

A regular „Bulletin“ informs members, affiliates, practitioners and others on current ICSB related issues and events (for some time now available also in electronic form in the context of a well designed ICSB website). In addition, the International Office now is connected via What'sApp on optional basis for fast replies, breaking news and regular updates (website What'sApp phone app: <https://www.whatsapp.com/>).

Special SME related studies and volumes by individual members further appeared under the ICSB flag; to mention here, in particular, the representative collection „Keystones of Entrepreneurship Knowledge“ published on the occasion of ICSB's 50th anniversary in 2005 as a kind of state of the art reflection on entrepreneurship research.

Continuous outreach and broadening of activities in recent years, needless to say, has entailed organizational measures, necessary administrative adaptations and support in order to cope with growing tasks as well as forward looking challenges. It is against such background that over the last decade or so important steps, activities and decisions had to be taken; among those being highlighted, in particular:

- Setting up an Executive Committee to prepare and streamline ICSB board agendas and related decisions.
- Properly staffing and strengthening ICSB's International Office to effectively meet with steadily growing and widening terms of reference, including getting office premises housed on a long term contractual basis with George Washington University, Washington D.C., as ICSB's now permanent address; quite an accomplishment and feat in itself!
- Adaptation of By-Laws in accordance with changing administrative, organizational and legal requirements.
- Broadening financial resources by way of enhanced sponsorship and networking with global reach.
- Laying the groundwork, under the able guidance of Dale Meyer, toward establishing an ICSB Foundation with view to enhance and bolster ICSB's finances over the long run for projects and objectives of essential international concern and relevance.
- Establishing a new, more effective Board structure for decision making (as decided at the AGM of 2013) by way of taking cognizance of growing affiliate members with diverse patterns and membership potential.
- Successful launching of the ICSB Academy with the first cohort of participants at the 2015 World Conference in Dubai; addressing more specifically topical aspects/policies as related to SME and entrepreneurial development under global perspectives (cf. also website: <http://www.icsbacademy.com/inaugural-cohort-2015/>).
- Finally, designing a „Vision and Strategy“ as a future oriented policy tool and guidance for ICSB's activities, direction and objectives in the longer run.