

Protocol of the General Assembly 2021

of the Swiss Sociological Association SSA

26 November from 14.00 to 17.00 as Zoom-meeting

switched from in-person at the University of Bern to an online meeting (via Zoom).

30 Members present during the online-meeting: Rainer Diaz-Bone (SSA board member, president), Jörg Rössel (SSA board member, vice president), Regula Julia Lee-mann (SSA board member, treasurer), Marlyne Sahakian (SSA board member), Oliver Nachtwey (SSA board member), Leen Vandecasteele (SSA board member), Milena Chimienti (SSA board member), Patrick Aspers (SSA board member), Achim Edelmann (SSA board member), Christoph Maeder (Revisor), Nicolas Baya Laffite, Roland Becker-Lenz, Achim Brosziewski, Felix Bühlmann, Claudine Burton-Jeangros, Valeska Cappel, Sandro Cattacin, Sandra Da Rin, Thomas Eberle, Peter Farago, Florian Elliker, Franziska Dörig, Fiorenza Gamba, Ben Jann, René Levy, Oliver Moeschler, Peter Rusterholz, Guy Schwegler, Muriel Surdez, Sebastien Vincent.

Remark: As individual participants left the Zoom meeting during the course of the meeting, the total for the votes is less than 30.

Agenda

1. Acceptance of agenda
2. Protocol of last general assembly
3. Report of the president
4. Accounting 2020 and budget 2022
5. Discharge of SSA board
6. Journal reform (proposal for mandate)
7. Membership fees (simplifying its structure and reasonably reducing fees)
8. Election of new president, revisor, and board
9. Varia

Rainer Diaz-Bone welcomed all participants. Due to the development of the pandemic and related problems of members (with COVID-19 symptoms) to be able to attend the general assembly, the meeting had to be

1. Acceptance of agenda

Agenda was accepted.

2. Minutes of last general assembly

Minutes were accepted.

3. Report of the president

Bulletins

158: It contains an overview on the proceedings, the annual reports of the research committees for 2020 and planned activities 2021 as well as the protocol of the general assembly 2020.

159: Milena Chimienti coordinated the bulletin on digitizing academia. It will be published at the end of 2021.

Journal

The editors are Rainer Diaz-Bone and Jörg Rössel since April 2021. They stepped in as the former editors resigned. Some information had been given in the newsletters. The board and the president accepted their resignation and thanked them for their engagement. Issues of this year are published. For report on the content of the three issues see SJS 48(1), 2022. The three issues for 2022 are in preparation. The issues for 2023 and 2024 are already planned. See <http://szs.sgs-sss.ch/>

Archive of the SSA documents

Thomas Eberle has organized that the SSA documents currently stored at Seismo can be stored at the University Archive of St. Gallen. A contract will be concluded within the next weeks between the SSA and the University Archive regulating the procedure and periods of storing and giving access to the members

of the SSA and the public in general. Many thanks to Thomas Eberle for this engagement!

In the future electronic documents will be gathered by a member of the board on switch drive (currently by Regula Leemann).

Events

Due to the pandemic many events were postponed or held online.

a) Congress (Geneva, online)

The president thanks Marlyne Sahakian, Milena Chimienti, the congress team, and the two universities for the professional organisation of the online congress in Geneva "Social Justice In Times of Uncertainty", June 28–30, 2021. Despite the difficult circumstances, the event was a great success. A report will be published in the bulletin 160.

b) Research Committees

See Bulletin 160 for the annual reports 2021 and planned activities 2022 of the research committees. Planned and financially supported by the SAHS for 2022 are two conferences: a) Educational institutions in Switzerland and their paradoxical contribution to social cohesion and disintegration; b) Reinvent yourself! New ways of doing art in the face of the pandemic.

4. Accounting 2020 and budget 2022

Presented by the president

Accounting 2020

Outgoings

Real costs were lower than planned due to lower costs of the bulletin, cancelled conferences, and nearly no travel costs (pandemic). In 2020, the costs for the journal increased again as in the year before. The increase between 2019 and 2020 from around 94 000 to 112 000

amounts to nearly 18 000 CHF. The bulletin on the other hand was produced with much lower costs (7000 CHF). Part of the outgoings to the SAHS: SSA had to pay back money as it received money by mistake.

Incomings

The SSA did not receive the total sum for the Journal from the SAHS (40 000 instead of applied 43 000).

In 2020, the membership fees declined again as in the year before. The loss between 2019 and 2020 amounts to 4000 CHF.

The donations increased by 4000 CHF because the board members sent letters to institutions of sociology asking for funding.

There is again a negative difference between incoming and outgoing for 2020. The deficit amounts to 15 000 CHF. This is a structural deficit the SSA faces more or less every year.

Budget 2022

The board aims at reducing the costs for the journal to 100 000 CHF. Nevertheless, the board expects again a substantial deficit of 13 000 CHF. The SSA has a structural financial problem since several years.

The board is in charge of the financial situation of the SSA and was reminded at the GA 2020 to approach the task to reduce costs. A first evaluation of other production opportunities shows that the journal can be run with 70 000 CHF on a higher standard. Seismo has been informed about this.

Questions and remarks of the GA

The planned costs for the bulletin (8900 CHF) could be reduced. It is up to the board not to allow costly figures in the layout (Maeder).

Membership fees are underestimated. In 2021, they are already higher. (Rusterholz).

Journal costs should be compared over several years. These had already been high in the past (Bühlmann). The budget was accepted by the general assembly (20 acceptance, 1 no acceptance, 8 abstention).

5. Discharge of SSA board

Agreed on with unanimity.

6. Journal reform (proposal for mandate)

Presented by the vice-president

The Board has concluded that there is a need to reform the production of the Journal SJS for a number of reasons and has formulated a request for a mandate.

Aims

- › Cutting of costs due to a budget deficit over several years. The journal is the biggest part of the expenses (assignment by the GA in 2019, 2020)
- › Increase international visibility (indexing) by inclusion in Web of Science Impact factor (assignment by the SAHS).
- › Increase efficiency (e.g. submission platform as support for editors and secretary).
- › Comply with OA standards of SNSF and SHAS
- › Becoming an even more important platform for the discussion of Swiss sociology

Mandate

- › Give a mandate to an internal working group within the board
- › Negotiate with different publishing houses (Seismo included) and compile propositions for the production of the SJS based on the above-mentioned aims

On the basis of these premises, the SSA board works out recommendation(s) to the SSA general assembly, which will decide about this outcome in the next general assembly in 2022.

Discussion

Eberle: Appreciates the initiative to start a working group for the evaluation of the situation of the journal but requests that first all options should be scrutinized with and together with Seismo. Seismo was founded at the end of the 1980ies by the SSA to publish its own the journal due to various problems with external publishing houses. Since then, the journals production and the publishing house is a success story. The close cooperation between the board, the SSA members, and Seismo therefore should continue. The journals aims and scope is the state of Swiss Sociology and the topic of Swiss society, and therefore does not need an inclusion in the Web of Science. In case of changing the publishing house Seismo would be weakened economically and symbolically, and demolished. He proposes to change the mandate: Managing director of Seismo and other experts must be included in the working group. Different scenarios for the production of the journal by Seismo need to be worked out.

Diaz-Bone: The aim of the SSA should be advancing sociology first, to find the best solution for scientific purposes, and not funding and supporting Seismo. Moreover, the cooperation in the last years with Seismo was rather difficult and not productive. Nevertheless, Seismo is not excluded in the mandate and we aim for transparency by comparing options.

Rössel: Strong relation of SSA and Seismo is a fact. But including one publishing house into this working group that has to negotiate with several publishing houses would be strange. Regarding Web of Science: Internationality of the journal is important especially for younger scholars to make a career.

Dörig: Summarizes the quality that Seismo has guaranteed so far in the publication production process. Mentions problems with international publishing houses

that can be expected. Explains future opportunities to integrate a submission platform.

Nachtwey: The production was so far very professional, good quality of the journal, but Seismo was not very transparent and open to his questions as a treasurer regarding optimising the cost structure of the production. If Seismo makes an offer that is comparable to other offers in terms of cost structure, visibility etc. we should stick to Seismo. But Seismo cannot be part of a working group that has to decide on this.

Elliker: The SJS is a steppingstone for younger scholars. Making it an international journal would inhibit this. It is necessary to have explicit and reflected criteria. In a first step the working group should go with Seismo and a documented process should report why it didn't work with Seismo if this were the case. This report should be sent out to the members before a decision is taken by the GA.

Cattacin: To his experience with the journal of political sciences the costs will rise when changing the publishing house. Introduction in the SSCI costs. DORA declaration stresses that impact factor is not the main evaluation criteria.

Diaz-Bone: We are aware of the traditions and relations to Seismo. But we should not exclude other options as several speakers propose. Who is afraid of transparency? There are no pre-decisions made.

Asper: The group should not make up with Seismo, i.e. preset this option but work closely together in evaluating the opportunities of reforming the production process.

Maeder: He does not agree with the mandate which is treating Seismo in a market game like any other publisher although the SSA is owning the majority of the shares of Seismo. Cost cutting is a weak argument. We should negotiate with SAHS to get more money. The mandate is an intransparent attack to Seismo. It

would weaken sociology and the SSA. The working group must be broader.

Farago: Supports the proposal for enlarging and compose the working group wisely. We should analytically entangle three topics: The future of the journal, the editor, and the SSA.

Levy: Seismo and the journal are one of the main pillars of the SSA. It was hard to build them up and stabilize them. The SSA should try to involve more the academics of the universities of applied sciences as members. The working group should be enlarged and the collaboration with Seismo should be prioritized.

Eberle: There is not much identification of the board members with Seismo. There is much more support for Seismo in the GA than it is in the board. Therefore, there should not only be board members in the working group but experts, e.g. Felix Bühlmann, and Seismo. It is our own publishing house, our asset.

Surdez: The expert group should collect and compare the costs of other associations concerning the costs they have for their journal. SAHS finances less if we reduce the costs.

Vincent: Emphasizes the importance of this decision on the reform for sociology in Switzerland.

None of the members submitted a written proposal adding or revising the proposal of the board.

1. Voting: Mandate as presented or revised procedure

If no → revised procedure to be decided in 2. Voting

8 participants for the mandate as presented

17 participants for a revised procedure

1 participant abstention

2. Voting: Enlarged expert group or internal (within the board) working group

19 participants for an enlarged working group

7 participants for an internal working group

0 participant abstention

7. Membership fees (simplifying its structure and reasonably reducing fees)

- › Streamline the categories: 50 CHF students, 160 CHF regular members (plus 50 CHF for the hardcopy of the journal), 300 CHF for the institutional academic members.
- › Increase institutional outreach to expand institutional donations (letters have gone out this week)
- › Devise a communication strategy in 2022 for attracting and retaining members, including benefits given to (institutional/individual) members.
- › Conduct a survey to gauge interest in receiving the hardcopy of the journal, from among members, along with other questions on membership expectations.

As the time was quite late, this point of the agenda was only briefly presented by Marlyne Sahakian. She explained that there will be a new strategy to attract new members, especially young members. Institutes are also to be asked for more donations. There was no further discussion due to lack of time.

8. Election of new SSA board members and revisors

Rainer Diaz-Bone and Oliver Nachtwey are leaving the board at the end of 2021.

Elections:

New president: Claudine Burton-Jeangros (Geneva): 2022–2023) has been elected with 27 votes and one abstention. She accepts the election.

Revisors:

Christoph Maeder (Zurich)

Ben Jann (Bern)

They were elected as revisors for the period 2021–2022 with one abstention and 26 votes in favour.

Board members:

New board member: Philip Balsiger (Neuchâtel): from the beginning of 2022 on and for the term until the end of 2023.

Reelection: Milena Chimienti, Jörg Rössel, Marlyne Sahakiana and Leen Vandecasteele from the beginning of 2022 on and for the term until the end of 2023.

23 votes, 4 abstentions.

Therefore, in 2022 the SSA board will be:

Patrick Aspers (St. Gallen), Philip Balsiger (Neuchâtel), Claudine Burton-Jeangros (Geneva, president), Milena Chimienti (Geneva), Achim Edelmann, (Bern), Regula Julia Leemann (Basel, treasurer), Jörg Rössel (Zurich, vice-president, representative of the journal editors), Marlyne Sahakian (Geneva) and Leen Vandecasteele (Lausanne).

9. Varia

The vice-president thanked Rainer Diaz-Bone for his engagement and his great commitment in the last years as a member and as president of the SSA.