

Protocol of the 2022 General Assembly

of the Swiss Sociological Association

Berne, December 9, 2022, 3.00–5.30 pm, Room 120
Main Building, University of Berne

Present:

Patrick Aspers (board member), Philip Balsiger (board member), Claudine Burton-Jeangros (SSA board member, president), Milena Chimienti (board member), Regula Leemann (board member, treasurer), Jörg Rössel (SSA board member, vice-president), Marlyne Sahakian (board member), Achim Edelmann (board member), Leonie Bisang, Mathilde Bourrier, Benita Combet, Gianni D'Amato, Sandra da Rin, Rainer Diaz-Bone, Franziska Dörig, Thomas Eberle, Florian Elliker, Josef Estermann, Peter Farago, Robert Fluder, David Glauser, Sandra Hafner, Kenneth Horvath, Cornelia Hummel, Lucia Lanfranconi, René Levy, Christoph Maeder, Olivier Moeschler, Eva Nadai, Riccardo Pardini, Esteban Piñeiro, Peter Rusterholz, Guy Schwegler, Mario Steinberg, Jörg Stolz, Peter Streckeisen, Ursula Streckeisen, Christian Suter, Sebastian Vincent, Bettina Weller.

Excused:

Monica Aceti, Herbert Amman, Felix Bühlmann, Sandro Cattacin, Stéphane Cullati, Roxane Gerber, Carlo Knoepfel, Ueli Mäder, Didier Ruedin, Muriel Surdez, Jean-Pierre Tabin, Peter Voll, Martin von Arx, Leen Vandecasteele.

Agenda

1. Approval of the Agenda
2. Approval of the protocol of the 2021 General Assembly
3. Report of the President
4. Accounting 2021 and Budget 2023
5. Discharge of the SSA board
6. SJS Reform (Proposition attached)
7. New Membership Fee Structure (Proposition attached)

8. New Best Publication Award (Proposition attached)
9. Congress 2024
10. Attribution of an Honorary Membership: Proposition of the Board
11. Elections of the Board Members
12. Varia
Followed by an apero

Two scrutators were chosen: Bettina Weller and Josef Estermann. The Minutes are taken by Jörg Rössel.

1. Acceptance of agenda

The agenda has been approved unanimously.

2. Approval of the protocol of the 2021 General Assembly

There is one request to change the protocol of the 2021 general assembly by Thomas Eberle. The formulation to be corrected is on p. 12, line 10: "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." This formulation should be changed into: "The journal's declared primary aims and scope are the state of Swiss sociology and the topic of Swiss society; international visibility and inclusion in the Web of Science are secondary goals."

After taking the request into account, the protocol of the general assembly of 2021 has been approved unanimously.

3. Report of the president

The president Claudine Burton-Jeangros took over the presidency with several challenges ahead. She considered it a pleasure to work constructively with the board of the SSA, she appreciated the support of the former president Rainer Diaz-Bone, and of the secretary of the

SSA, Stefanie Keller. The board met five times during 2022. The president (Claudine Burton-Jeangros) and the vice-president (Jörg Rössel) participated twice in SAGW/ASSH meetings: the general assembly of the SAGW/ASSH took place in Chur in June 2022 and the 75th anniversary festival of the SAGW/ASSH in Bern in September.

There were several noteworthy events during 2022: a conference organized by the research committees of sociology of education, the Methodenfestival and the publication of a comic on sociology. Further details on the 2022 activities will be available in Bulletin 162, published in spring 2023.

Regarding publications: three issues of the Swiss Journal of Sociology, two issues of the Bulletin and three newsletters were published in 2022.

4. Accounting 2021 and Budget 2023

The treasurer Regula Leemann presented the 2021 accounting, an update of the 2022 budget and the 2023 budget (tables were sent with the invitation to the GA). *2021 accounting*

In 2021, there were two major changes in expenses compared to 2020: the journal costs were lower because much fewer tables and figures were published, which are costly to produce. Together with the overhead of 40 percent by Seismo, this pushes up the costs substantially. Expenses for research committees were higher since they started to organize activities again after the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. There was an increase in revenues in 2021 compared to 2020: on the one hand there was an increase in membership fees (due to delayed payments by members), on the other hand the SSA received higher donations from universities. Overall, the SSA accounts show a profit for the year 2021.

Discussion of the 2021 accounting

Question from Cornelia Hummel: The SSA's share of Seismo was originally 60 000 Swiss francs. Why does it appear in the budget nowadays only as 1000 francs? Peter Rusterholz answers that this is a normal depreciation, that is usual in accounting. Cornelia Hummel: But what is the value of the shares for the SSA? It should have increased and this should show up in the account. Peter Rusterholz: The value of the shares indeed should have increased, but this does not have to show up in the account because in accounting the original share value is depreciated. The open market value does not show up in the account. Thomas Eberle supports this argument and adds that the current value of the shares is difficult to determine because they are not traded at the stock exchange. Furthermore, the low value of the shares in the account is an insurance in the case Seismo should go bankrupt, because this reduces the potential liabilities for the SSA.

Rainer Diaz-Bone emphasizes that this was the best presentation of the SSA accounting he has ever seen since being a member of the association.

The 2021 accounting was unanimously approved.

Updated 2022 budget

The accounting of the journal costs has been changed according to transparent standards of accounting. The revenues of subscriptions are not anymore deducted from the journal costs but are now accounted transparently as revenues. In previous years, budgets included a reserve of 7000.– CHF. This amount was retained by the accountant Peter Rusterholz, in case the secretariat would be affiliated with Seismo. At that time, it was also not clear if certain bills were not yet paid. This reserve is now abolished, with the amount added to the revenues. In 2022, the journal costs have risen compared to 2021. Therefore, in 2022 the SSA expects a

loss of about 6000.– CHF despite the above-mentioned revenue of 7000.– CHF.

2023 Budget

Besides the donations by universities, the SSA got a donation of 5000.– CHF from the organizers of the last congress in Geneva for the creation of a publication award. For budgeting this means that on the one hand we have a revenue that was not planned, and on the other hand we must make a reserve of this amount. For the year 2023 the board has decided to set a ceiling of 60 000.– CHF on the costs of the journal and thus expects a profit of about 3000.– CHF.

Discussion of the 2022 and 2023 budgets

Peter Rusterholz mentions that it was mentioned several times that the SSA had a structural deficit. However, in the four years discussed, the SSA accounting on average did not show a substantial loss. Regula Leemann explains that the overall balance of the budget is driven by the production costs of the journal. In case the costs in 2023 are again at 75 000.– CHF (like previous years) instead of 60 000.– CHF we will have a loss of around 13 000.– CHF. Jörg Rössel reminds that the general assembly has twice reprimanded the board of the SSA to take care of the structural deficit. It is not admissible to focus on a year where the finances developed rather positively. In the longer term there is clearly a structural deficit and the SSA has seen a decrease in the size of its bank account. Rainer Diaz-Bone emphasizes that the SSA has a decreasing capital stock and was reminded by the SAGW/ASSH to cut the costs of the journal, which are comparatively high. An alternative to cutting the journal costs suggested by the SAGW/ASSH was to raise membership fees.

The 2023 budget was unanimously approved.

5. Discharge of the SSA board

The revisors, Christoph Maeder and Ben Jann, report on their revision of the budget. Christoph Maeder explains that the revisors are not trained accountants, but lay persons. They can only check if the money that should be available in the bank account of the SSA is indeed available in the bank account. And they spot-check if spendings have been properly done. Both checks have shown no irregularities.

The board has been discharged with a unanimous vote.

6. SJS Reform (Proposition attached)

The president Claudine Burton-Jeangros explained the challenges of the journal reform. The aim is to build in a fruitful collaboration between the editors, the journal manager and the publishing house to develop a strong journal representing sociology in Switzerland. Based on the criteria recorded in the protocol of the 2021 general assembly, a working group was formed. This working group included members of the board (Claudine Burton-Jeangros, Achim Edelmann, Patrik Aspers), a former editor (Christian Suter) and one of the new editors (Kenneth Horvath). The working group had several meetings over 2022, including with several external experts: editors of the journals SCOM, SPSR, representatives of the platform SOAP2, Franziska Dörig and the president of the Seismo board Sandro Cattacin, representatives of the Schwabe publishing house and the board of editors of the Swiss Journal of Sociology. The working group came up with three propositions. First: use SOAP2 as a Swiss online publishing platform. Second: decide on the publishing house (either Seismo or Schwabe). Third: The institutionalization of a monitoring body, that oversees the reform the journal and evaluates its progress. The second proposition is put to the vote of the General Assembly.

Two members of the working group were then asked to provide their input, Patrick Aspers and Kenneth Horvath. Patrick Aspers emphasized that the working group worked excellently according to Habermasian communicative principles, it worked intensely, people listened to one another and so the group was extremely productive. However, according to the basics of Luhmannian organizational theory, we have to make the alternatives very clear and be responsible and accountable for the decisions we take. According to Meyer and Rowan organizations have to adapt to changing contexts, currently the market context is characterized by uncertainty because of the huge changes in the publishing market, especially with regard to digitalization and open access. Taking a narrow look, Schwabe might be a better alternative based on the current experiences. However, we, as general assembly and as sociological association are also responsible for the position of Seismo. Therefore, we should stick with Seismo and make it an even better publisher.

Kenneth Horvath joined in on Patrik Asper's arguments: The working group was very intense and had very constructive discussions. Basically, Patrick presented all relevant arguments. But Kenneth Horvath emphasized the perspective of the editorial board. Communication with Schwabe has been extremely professional and transparent, it is a state-of-the-art publishing house, questions were answered quickly and precisely. Communication with Seismo has been less quick and less precise, the division of labor is often unclear. Therefore, the journal reform would be easier with Schwabe. He states that as a general assembly we have to decide if we want to develop the journal or to develop Seismo.

Discussion

Cornelia Hummel asks if our situation has been compared to the situation of the journal Tsantsa, that is

also published by Seismo. Answer by Claudine Burton-Jeangros: There was no meeting with representatives of Tsantsa. Jörg Stolz asks how big the cost differences between the current offers by Schwabe and Seismo are. Patrick Aspers and Kenneth Horvath answer that the working group now has a very good overview of cost structures and that current offers do not differ so much in prices. Jörg Stolz also asks how big the cost difference to other social science journals supported by the SAGW/AHHS are. Claudine Burton-Jeangros and Regula Leemann estimate that the costs of other journals in the section is about one third lower than those of the Swiss Journal of Sociology. One SSA member argues that we should stick to Seismo, because we are also interested in publishing books. This argument is supported by Claudine Burton-Jeangros, she emphasizes, however, that we have to deal with the publication of the journal today. Peter Rusterholz wants to know how publishing with Schwabe would be good for the visibility of the journal. Kenneth Horvath answers that with Schwabe everything necessary for things like digitalization and internationalization is already in place. This is not so clear with Seismo, where the division of labor is not clearly defined and the editors will have to take more responsibilities for these processes.

Rainer Diaz-Bone raises two issues: SSA is the founder and main owner of Seismo, therefore SSA also has to take responsibility for the publishing house. However, he emphasizes that we are not discussing the SSAs relation to Seismo today, but the publishing house of the society's journal, which should be split from Seismo. Seismo is not the best choice, because tables and figures could be published in a less expensive way, furthermore, Seismo is not up to date with online publishing. Therefore, we should vote for Schwabe, because the new editors will have better opportunities to reform the journal if they work with this new

publishing house. Peter Farago asks if there are really no routines for doing editorial work at Seismo. One solution could be to solve the problems with Seismo and establish better routines. Especially, because it is not clear, that Schwabe will be as good as promised, there could be surprises. Kenneth Horvath answers to Peter Farago: Schwabe has the advantage that most routines for digital publishing are already in place and there is transparent and quick communication if information is demanded. With Seismo these routines have to be developed and currently, everyday email exchange does not work so well with Seismo. Answers take longer and are often not sufficiently clear. Question by another SSA member: Why should we choose Schwabe, it does not have a sociological profile. Achim Edelmann answers that Schwabe is able to publish in all Swiss languages and English, it is internationally oriented, but located in Switzerland. Actually, there are not many publishing houses which fulfill these criteria. Patrick Aspers adds that the profile of the publishing house is not so important for journals, mainly for books.

René Levy asks about the experience of former editors with Seismo. Christian Suter explains that the current situation is difficult to compare to previous situations. We have a new situation, with new editors, a new board and new challenges on the publishing market. The new publication model with platform solutions is very important and different from the past. He was always happy with Seismo, but the budget for the journal was higher in the past, so there was more leeway in the division of labor. To reduce the journal costs, a new division of labor between editors and the publishing house has to be established. René Levy viewpoint is that we should do both things, develop the journal and develop Seismo, because Seismo is a valuable asset of the SSA. Sandra Da Rin has the impression that, comparable to the last general assembly, the decision

will not be made on the basis of the better argument but will be an expression and result of power relations within the SSA (social capital). Bettina Weller argues that the general assembly should support the young generation of editors and their engagement for the SSA and the journal, and thus we should look towards the future and thus go with Schwabe. Thomas Eberle has a longer contribution to the discussion: the working group has done a lot of work and this work has not been in vain. Our discussion as SSA general assembly should not only look at the journal but put this question into the context of the broader SSA strategy. The SSA is a major shareholder of Seismo and the shares are likely to currently have a value of several hundred thousand Swiss francs. If we leave Seismo with the journal, this would damage the publishing house financially and symbolically and this would decrease the value of Seismo. If we really want to leave Seismo with the journal, we should first sell the publishing house. In addition, we would also damage the brand of our journal, not the least because a journal needs continuity. And leaving Seismo could be a decision that leads to a cascade of consequences, not expected. With Schwabe it is not so clear, what we will get. We have to rely on promises and there is an uncertainty if Schwabe will hold up to these promises. Thomas Eberle quotes Jean-Pierre Tabin who had a catastrophic experience in publishing a book with Schwabe. On the other hand, Seismo clearly shows progress with regard to digital publishing. Therefore, we should return to a collaborative relationship and work with Seismo. Josef Estermann reminds that in the end the SSA is represented in the governing board of Seismo and thus should influence the strategy of the publishing house here. Claudine Burton-Jeangros answers that Patrick Aspers is indeed member of the governing board and is trying to contribute to the discussion about Seismo's future. Jörg Stolz asks if it is not

a better strategy to influence Seismo via the governing board. Patrick Aspers agrees and mentions that we will have to reform Seismo anyway. In the past years, SSA had a very indirect way of steering “its” company, but it should steer it more directly in the future and tackle ongoing problems in this way. Oliver Moeschler adds that leaving Seismo will mean a difficult situation for the SSA. Actually, we should remind ourselves that the situation is not about the publishing house, but mainly about establishing digital publishing for the journal. Peter Rusterholz brings in Seismo’s position: Seismo is actually reforming, it is increasingly collaborating with other publishing houses, e.g. Nomos. A new online platform has been established, it is working and it will increase the visibility of the journals. Ursula Streckisen mentions that this could also be a generational problem. She clearly thinks that it would be wrong to leave Seismo. Another SSA member adds that Seismo is an asset for the SSA. Therefore, we should use the reform of the journal to reform Seismo. Kenneth Horvath answers that this means that the editorial board who works unpaid and voluntary has additional responsibilities and tasks beyond the ordinary responsibility of editors. Furthermore, there will be uncertainties what the future will bring both with Schwabe and with Seismo. Claudine Burton-Jeangros brings the discussion to a close and distributes voting papers to decide through a secret vote whether the journal will be published in the future with Seismo or with Schwabe.

Thirty-nine votes have been cast: 21 votes for Seismo, 17 votes for Schwabe, 1 vote is invalid.

The general assembly has therefore decided to continue publishing the journal with Seismo.

7. New Membership Fee Structure (Proposition attached)

Marlyne Sahakian explained the proposed new membership fee structure. The basic idea is to streamline the membership categories, make membership less expensive and more attractive. With a new membership recruitment strategy based on congresses and social media an increase in membership should also increase SSA revenues. Achim Edelmann explains that the current membership fee is too expensive for students. The new fee structure makes it easier to identify different income brackets. Overall, the revenues based on membership fees should rise.

Discussion: Rainer Diaz-Bone argues that the SSA should in general try to attract more students and have more events and activities for students. In Germany, there is a regular congress of sociology students and journals also cater to students. These are good incentives for students to become members of sociological associations. Regula Leemann emphasizes that it is important to attract with appropriate activities also members in institutions and positions that do not carry out research but use sociological knowledge (e.g. in teaching, writing reports).

The proposed new membership fee structure was supported with a unanimous vote.

8. New Best Publication Award (Proposition attached)

Philipp Balsiger explained the new “best article award” proposed by the board of the SSA.

Discussion: Josef Estermann asks if a person applying for this award really has to be a member of the association. Philip Balsiger answers that the award should make membership in the association more attractive. Since the award will be paid by profits generated by the upcoming congresses, Eva Nadai mentions that she

is not sure that the next congress will produce a large enough profit. However, Marlyne Sahakian informs that the next ten years of awards are already guaranteed. The proposition was unanimously, with one abstention, supported.

9. SSA Congress 2024

The president Claudine Burton-Jeangros informed that the next congress will take place in 2024 at the University of social work at the University of applied sciences and arts northwestern Switzerland (FHNW). Eva Nadai from the local organizing committee at the FHNW presented an overview of the current state of the planning of the congress, which has the title "Vulnerable Societies. Risk and Responses". The congress will focus on empirical and theoretical research on vulnerable societies on different levels, not only the level of human actors, but also of vulnerable systems. Since the term vulnerability also includes a moral dimension, this calls for reflection and actions, therefore, the congress will also deal with the responses to vulnerabilities. The congress will take place from September 9 to 11, 2024, at the Campus in Muttenz (near Basel), which offers good facilities. A preliminary homepage already exists. The organizing committee has started the process of fundraising to get financial support for the congress beyond the usual supporters like SNSF, SAGW/AHHS. Due to administrative rules, it is difficult for the organizers to have the congress homepage in French also. René Levy deplores this. Marlyne Sahakian explains that at the last congress in Geneva the homepage was also only in English, however the calls for organizers and abstracts were in French, German and English. This will also be done at the FHNW.

10. Honorary membership

The board proposed Christoph Maeder as an honorary member of the SSA (laudatio by Claudine Burton-Jeangros). The general assembly supported this proposition unanimously, with one person abstaining.

11. Board elections

Three board members were proposed for a reelection for a two-year term: Patrik Aspers, Achim Edelmann, Regula Leemann. Stephanie Steinmetz was proposed as a new member for a two-year term, as a replacement of Leen Vandecasteele who stepped down. All board members were unanimously (re)elected – with three abstentions of the three people to be reelected.

12. Election of the revisors

Christoph Maeder and Ben Jann have been reelected for the 2023 revision by a unanimous vote.

13. Varia

No Varia.

Appendices

Swiss Journal of Sociology reform:
Proposition to the 2022 General Assembly of the
Swiss Sociological Association
December 9th 2022, University of Bern

In the protocol of the SSA 2021 General Assembly, a mandate has been given to reach the following aims:

- › Cutting of costs due to a budget deficit over several years.
- › Increase international visibility (indexing) by inclusion in Web of Science Impact factor.

- › 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.

The mandate to meet these goals was defined as

- › Give a mandate to an enlarged working group (beyond the SSA board).
- › Negotiate with different publishing houses (Seismo included) and compile propositions for the production of the SJS.

On the basis of these premises, the SSA board works out recommendation(s) to the next SSA general assembly.

At the beginning of 2022, an enlarged working group including Patrick Aspers (board of SSA; board of Seismo), Claudine Burton-Jeangros (president of SSA), Achim Edelmann (board of SSA), Kenneth Hovarth (SJS editor), and Christian Suter (previous SJS editor) was constituted. The group met with:

- › The editor and former journal manager of Studies in Communication Sciences, published by Seismo and using an online open source platform;
- › The editor and journal manager of the Swiss Political Science Review, published by an international editor;
- › Thomas Henkel, managing editor of a new inter-university online publishing platform, Shared Open Access Publishing Platform (SOAP2);
- › Franziska Dörig, executive committee of Seismo;
- › The board of SJS editors;

Quotes for publishing the SJS along a number of detailed criteria were obtained from Seismo and Schwabe.

After reviewing the information gathered over this process, the working group proposed to the SSA board

the following plan, with two scenarios regarding the publishing house:

1. Move the management of the journal to *an online platform* to improve the submission, reviewing and online publication of SJS. SOAP2 is considered as an appropriate solution, offering required services and being accessible at a reasonable rate (estimated at about 1000.– CHF/year). Marion Beetschen at UNIL, the current journal manager, will continue her role in the process, with adjustments made to the new online environment. This online platform will ensure a professionalisation of the manuscript submission and peer reviewing process, improve the continuity between the different stages of publication, and support on-line publication, including online first publication.
2. A: Keep publishing SJS with *Seismo*, at reduced costs, better aligned with current market quotes in Switzerland. This ensures continuity to and support of Seismo, the long-standing SSA publishing house. B: Move SJS publishing to *Schwabe*, a Swiss publishing house offering to produce the journal at more competitive costs and with up-to-date processes in academic publishing.
3. Establish a *monitoring body* to evaluate whether this reform is in line with the previously identified goals, while moving towards a journal that meets current standards in academic journals. This monitoring will be based on the following criteria:
 - › Perspectives for developing the journal in line with the strategic objectives of increasing international visibility, strengthening the journal's OA profile, and becoming an even more important platform for Swiss sociology;
 - › Costs of the journal;
 - › Workflows and efficiency;
 - › Communication and transparency;

- › Quality and productivity of the working relationship between editorial board, journal manager, and the publisher.

This monitoring body will include one member of the SJS editorial board and two members of the SSA board. It will provide results on a yearly basis, to be reported at the General Assembly. If needed, these results will be associated with further propositions to reach the goals of the SJS reform.

This plan will be presented at the SSA 2022 General Assembly. Members will be asked to vote about options 2A and 2B.

Best Article by a Junior Scholar – Award of the Swiss Sociological Association (SSA Prize)

The goal of this award is to give visibility to SSA and to attract new junior members. A 1000.– CHF award will be attributed at each SSA congress. Applicants must be junior scholars (up to 6 years after PhD / MA). Any scholar with SSA membership and having done a PhD in Switzerland or working in a Swiss research institution (Universities, Universities of applied sciences and teacher education (UAS/UTE), research institutions domiciled in Switzerland) can apply.

A call will announce the award before the SSA congress in fall. Applications will be evaluated by three scholars, appointed by the SSA board. Retired professors are welcomed to participate in this committee. A prize ceremony will be held during the SSA congress.

The award will be financed by congress profits and donations.

This proposition was prepared by Philip Balsiger, Milena Chimienti and Marlyne Sahakian.

New membership fees structure

This new fee structure has been prepared by Achim Edelmann and Marlyne Sahakian. They looked into the changing SSA membership fees over the years and compared current SSA fees to that of other associations in Switzerland. An update of the current categories of SSA membership has been considered and opportunities for increasing institutional donations have been discussed. It has been observed that the rates were increased in 2011 and have not been increased since, however SSA is quite expensive compared to other associations. SSA membership categories are complex (> 100 k income category, couples category [tied to journal hardcopy]). It is known that members in permanent positions are not necessarily paying the higher fee; since status is self-declared. High fees were also tied to the print version of the journal. The fee for institutions/libraries (300.– CHF) to access hardcopies of the journal should not be changed. Department/institution heads are contacted to support the tasks of SSA. Some Universities and Universities of applied sciences recently joined in this effort. To respond to these different observations, new fees are lower and the number of membership categories has been reduced.

New fees, as of January 1, 2023

Categories	Fees
Students	50 CHF
Regular member	150 CHF
Tenure/permanent/fixed contract	200 CHF
Journal (print issues)	50 CHF
Collective membership	300 CHF