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Editorial

Christian Suter* and Pascale Gazareth*

With the current issue, the Editor's office of the Swiss Journal of Sociology changes from the Institute of Sociology at the University of Basle to the Department of Sociology at the University of Neuchâtel. We should like to seize this opportunity to thank Max Bergman, the former Editor-in-Chief, who was in office from 2006 to 2010, for his deep commitment to the journal. Under his leadership, the Swiss Journal of Sociology has developed in an exceedingly successful way, both in a qualitative and a quantitative perspective. We should particularly like to emphasize the three important achievements of the last few years which have enhanced the quality of the contributions and strengthened the journal itself: Firstly, the establishment of a transparent review and selection process based on anonymous peer reviewing; secondly, the introduction of theme-focussed special issues supervised by guest editors, and thirdly, the closer cooperation with the Seismo Verlag, which considerably improved the timely production and delivery of the journal. We should like to continue and strengthen this strategy of professionalization.

Thanks to a clear division of tasks between the two editorial teams in Basle (editorial supervision of contributions for Vol. 36, 2010) and Neuchâtel (review of the manuscripts received since December 2009 and editorial supervision of contributions as from Vol. 37, 2011), the editorial transition went well. The "incoming" Neuchâtel editorial team was able to acquaint itself with the editorial activities and to gain first experiences as from November 2009 with the help of the "outgoing" Basle team, the Editorial Committee of the journal and the Seismo Verlag. We should now like to take a short look back at manuscript submission and review procedures.

In the calendar year 2010, a pleasingly high number of manuscripts was submitted, namely 63 in total, which proves the attractiveness of the journal. In order to increase the transparency of the review procedures, the editorial team has developed new working instruments and built up a comprehensive documentation system, which in future will allow the periodical preparation of certain core indicators of the evaluation process, for instance, the number of manuscripts submitted and their distribution according to certain criteria, particularly with regard to language and regional origin of the contributions, sex of the authors, the methodological-theoretical orientation of the contributions, the number of reviews, the duration of review as well as the selection decisions and the rates of success.

With regard to the 63 manuscripts received in the calendar year 2010, the following developments emerged: 45 manuscripts, or 71% of all submissions, were

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reviewed and decided upon. In the review process, 113 experts were contacted and of these 83 prepared a review. Altogether the editorial team requested more than 180 reviews, of which 134 were prepared in calendar year 2010. These figures illustrate not only the considerable effort invested in the review process by the editing team, but also the deep commitment of the Editorial Committee and the reviewers. We should like therefore to take this opportunity to express our grateful thanks to all concerned.

The number of reviews per manuscript varied in 2010 between two and four. As an internal guideline for reviews, we have set a goal of three – in 60% of reviewed manuscripts this aim was achieved. The average duration of review was four and a half months, which was just above our internal guideline of four months. Almost a third of the submitted (and reviewed) manuscripts were accepted, the majority, however, on condition that corrections were made. A third of the reviewed manuscripts had to be refused and a third returned for comprehensive revision, whereby the revised versions of these manuscripts were reviewed again.

In the manuscripts submitted, a relatively balanced relationship was found between empirical qualitative (43%), empirical quantitative (32%) and theoretically oriented contributions (25%). With regard to language (40% French, 33% German, 27% English) and language region of origin too, the distribution was balanced (27% from the German-speaking part of Switzerland, 25% from French-speaking Switzerland, 17% from France, 10% from Germany and 21% from various other countries) – the figures on non-Swiss authorship confirms also the high degree of internationalization of our journal. Regarding the gender of first authors, (still) more men (about two thirds) than women (about one third) submit a manuscript. In the success rates, however, no significant differences were found.

Apart from the core business of reviewing and processing the manuscripts, a series of reforms and new projects were tackled in the past 12 months and have already been partly implemented. One of the first projects is the above-mentioned regular reporting on manuscript submission and review procedures. This reporting will, in future, be publicized on the website of the journal at the beginning of the year.

Secondly, the principles and procedures for the special issues were discussed and established with the Editorial Committee (the corresponding document is available on the website). So, in future, one special issue per year will be published, according to the decision taken by the Editorial Committee. For each special issue there will be a public call for papers and the manuscripts submitted will be evaluated and selected within the framework of the usual review process.

Thirdly, the current specific – and partly inaccurate – reference style of the journal has been reworked and brought into line with common formats. The new complete guidelines are available on the website of the journal.

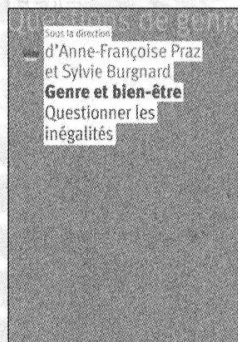
A fourth, more long-term plan concerns the indexing of the Swiss Journal of Sociology in important citation data banks, such as the Social Sciences Citation

Index. In order to preserve the attractiveness of the journal for potential authors – particularly for young colleagues, postdocs and junior researchers – the Editorial Committee has expressed its support, in principle, for a more active strategy (at present the journal is listed solely in the Francis database of INIST-CNRS). A more detailed examination also revealed that the journal already fulfils most of the conditions connected with inclusion in such data banks.

Finally, in the coming year, it is planned to create a new website that will also be integrated into the website of the Swiss Sociological Association. In this way, not only should the information flow between the Editor's office, reviewers, authors and readers be improved, but the work of the editorial team should also be made easier.

Successful realization of this strategy of professionalization requires corresponding basic conditions. We hope that these requirements can be achieved in the course of the year, in order to maintain and increase the quality and attractiveness of the journal in a competitive environment.

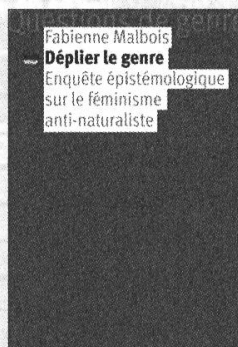
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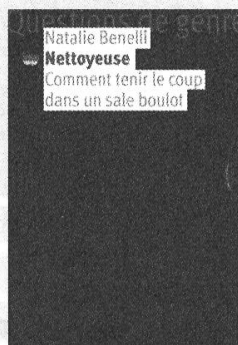
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