

## Minutes of the Editorial Board Meeting of the Czech Sociological Review

On 27 May 2003, the first meeting of the new Editorial Board of the Czech Sociological Review was held at the Villa Lanna in Prague. Board members present at the meeting were Zdenka Mansfeldová, Petr Matějů, Stein Ringen, Michael Steiner, Iván Szelényi, and Georg Vobruba; absent and excused from the meeting were Joseph S. Drew, Georges Mink and Marek Skovajsa. Jiří Večerník, Editor-in-Chief, chaired the meeting and set the agenda for discussion.

In addition to covering the regular board duties, the agenda tabled a number of specific points for discussion, including an assessment of 'where we are now' – the CSR's new mission statement, co-operation with the Czech sociological community and foreign authors, and the composition of the editorial board and the distribution of regions and specialisations – and questions relating to content, thematic orientations, determining the journal's market, ways to increase readership, the situation of other sociological journals in the region publishing in English (for a list of Central and Eastern European sociological journals in English, see p. 906), and a number of other issues of vital interest to the CSR, such as the question of the trade-off between quality and survival, whether to turn the focus more towards academic debate or policy issues, how to increase the journal's appeal, and whether to include special issues and guest editors.

The ensuing discussion was recorded in the minutes of the meeting, presented below.

### Introduction

Jiří Večerník opened the meeting with a welcoming statement and asked all members present to briefly introduce themselves. Zdenka Mansfeldová welcomed board members to the meeting on behalf of the Institute of Sociology, provided a brief introduction of the Institute as the official publisher of the periodical, with background information on the Institute's structure and research projects, and apologised for the absence of the

Director of the Institute, who was participating in the round table on Czech sociology held at the same time.

### The mission statement of the CSR

Jiří Večerník initiated the discussion by asking members of the board to comment on the new mission statement of the CSR, how realistic it is with regard to the CSR's market and how best to fulfil the mission's aims. Copies of English-language journals published in other post-socialist countries were presented for consideration and comparison.

### Proposed joint venture

Iván Szelényi tabled a proposal on behalf of the *Hungarian Review of Sociology* that the two journals pursue a joint venture, noting it would be easier to obtain subscriptions. It would be possible to occasionally publish special, 'national' issues. Stein Ringen cited the example of the joint Scandinavian, English-language sociology journal. He raised the question of the size of the CSR's market and said that there is a need to appeal to non-transition countries and attract names and articles beyond the limits of the Czech sociological community and transformation issues.

Georg Vobruba proposed putting off the idea of joint ventures for the time being. The CSR should be the *flagship of Czech sociology* and a platform for exchange. He questioned the longevity of transformation issues and suggested the CSR not limit itself. Petr Matějů countered that transformation issues will long continue to be relevant and one of the journal's missions could be to cover these issues. He added that if the Hungarian journal, with its larger sociological community, is sending a message to Prague, the board should take it seriously.

### Contributors

Georg Vobruba noted that the intellectual exchange suggested in the mission should

mean that scholars from abroad publish in the Czech edition and scholars from the Czech community in the English edition. Petr Matějů indicated the need for Western contributors in order to increase the citation index of the journal. A specialisation in transformation issues could be a means of attracting foreign contributors. Zdenka Mansfeldová pointed out that foreign post-graduate students often must publish in their own journals. Jiří Večerník described the rather gloomy situation of the Czech sociological community, and the lack of pressure or need to publish in English (or to publish at all). He explained the rule he had introduced of including 50% Eastern and 50% Western authors in each issue. Georg Vobruba noted that there is a logical basis for using the CSR as a platform for bridging the communities.

#### *Options for increasing the submissions rate and the role of the Editorial Board*

Jiří Večerník raised the problem of the continuing lack of articles for publication. Petr Matějů informed the board that the success rate for submissions is 100% and that there is a need to maintain a pool of articles to choose from in order to maintain a high-quality journal, and to achieve this, the CSR must determine its market. Georg Vobruba responded that it is necessary then to attract authors from abroad, where there is huge pressure to publish in indexed journals like the CSR. Michael Steiner suggested stressing that the CSR is cited in the Social Science Citation Index and that it publishes on specific key issues. These could be publishing incentives for foreign students. Jiří Večerník agreed there is a need to determine the 'added value' of publishing in the CSR.

Stein Ringen suggested the CSR stress that it is publishing good papers on social issues and aiming to introduce Czech sociology into the international mainstream, and then any specialisation in transformation as the focus of the CSR would emerge on its own. He suggested expanding the board to include more

Czechs and more people from the region, and maintaining constant contact with the board. Jiří Večerník cited the journal's previous experience with a larger board but with the same (if not worse) results. Georg Vobruba agreed the size of the board should be limited, and that, instead, current members of the board should be actively engaged in the search for submissions.

Michael Steiner noted that there might only be limited interest abroad in reading about the Czech Republic alone and suggested expanding the focus beyond transition issues to include for example EU integration. He proposed creating a two-tier system in the editorial board, with a higher group of editorial advisors, and aiming for a selection rate of 25% of submissions by: (1) using guest editors (e.g. board members); (2) targeting and contacting collaborative research projects and conferences as sources. Petr Matějů suggested that this could be the responsibility of the editorial board.

Stein Ringen agreed the board should be engaged in this and asked whether the Czech Sociological Association could play a role. Zdenka Mansfeldová reported that the CSA exists but is actively declining and is unable to attract young scholars. Jiří Večerník explained some of the problems in the Czech academic community that inhibit incentives to publication and noted there is no link between research and politics and a lack of practical impact. Georg Vobruba agreed this is a widespread problem and supported the idea of contacting panel and conference organisers, which should be the task of the Editorial Board. He also rejected the idea of special issues and suggested any focus remain implied by the selection of articles. Jiří Večerník responded that this is the existing policy. Petr Matějů noted that special issues are a useful medium for publishing work drawn from specific projects, citing the example of the June conference in Prague on higher education reform.

Michael Steiner agreed that short-term shortages of articles could be more easily

addressed with special issues. He suggested viewing the composition of the board from the perspective of regional distribution, having current board members cover different regions, but noted the existence at present of some regional gaps (e.g. Poland). He proposed drawing up a new, *more concise mission statement*. Jiří Večerník agreed and added that the board membership is not closed. He suggested determining value-added incentives for publishing in the CSR, an example of which could be a multidisciplinary focus, e.g. between fields or between science and policy.

Stein Ringen expressed the view that co-operation between the CSR and the CSA would create a better impression abroad and the CSR could take the initiative in this. He suggested publishing *short, 2–3 page articles* in the CSR and proposed considering a section on research notes, and including articles on the history of Czech sociology and biographies of former Czech sociologists as a source of local motivation. He also suggested including a 'call for papers' on the editorial page of each issue, with a list of topics requiring papers. Jiří Večerník added that there is a need to include *more book reviews*. Zdenka Mansfeldová drew the board's attention to a sociological website run by students, which covers research results in the field of sociology and which has generated a strong interest.

#### *The next issue of the Czech Sociological Review 6/2003*

Jiří Večerník presented the contents of the next issue of the CSR and the reviews of the submitted papers. Michael Steiner reported that the article by Wilderer needed re-writing and should be re-written. Jiří Večerník reported that the article by Vetterlein would be re-written, and that the article by Nissen needs reviewers.

#### *Journal content*

Jiří Večerník tabled the issue of forming a strategy towards the information section of

the CSR. He suggested that students could be asked to write book reviews. Zdenka Mansfeldová proposed circulating a leaflet with information on publishing in the journal and its search for publications. Jiří Večerník stated that he was not much in favour of having special issues when there are only two issues of the journal a year. The board decided against publishing special issues.

#### *The CSR's market*

Jiří Večerník raised the question of how to increase the CSR's level of publicity. Georg Vobruba suggested exchanging advertisements with other journals. Stein Ringen added that word of mouth is still the main medium. Petr Matějů suggested addressing policy issues and policy-makers as a potential target group. Stein Ringen agreed and suggested encouraging a running discussion of articles, either within the same issue or in subsequent issues. He cited the *Journal of Democracy* as an example of an excellent journal with a mixture of high quality papers, not all of which are strictly academic. Petr Matějů proposed distinguishing between *academic papers* (which could be sent to academics for review) and *policy papers* (which could be sent to other, non-academic reviewers), and mixing policy, research reports, and academic work, and he agreed that policy-makers could be invited to comment and publish along with other papers.

Jiří Večerník noted that in the West there is a bridge between academic and policy institutes, while in the Czech Republic there is little opportunity to co-operate. Georg Vobruba drew the board's attention to a meeting of the ASA next year on the subject of 'public sociology', intended to define what sociologists do. Zdenka Mansfeldová suggested expanding the board to include, for example, representatives from Croatia. Jiří Večerník suggested seeking out countries where no journal similar to the CSR exists, e.g. Slovenia, but added that there is no hurry to invite just anyone.