

Persönliches Protokoll zur Zeitschrift *K-Theory*

Wolfgang Lück

Das Anliegen dieses Artikels ist es, einige Fakten zu nennen, die die Zeitschrift „K-Theory“ des Springer Verlages und die neu gegründete Zeitschrift „Journal of K-Theory“, die von Cambridge University Press vertrieben werden soll, betreffen. Man kann erwarten, dass diese Vorgänge eine weitgehende Diskussion auslösen werden.

Um eine Grundlage für diese Diskussion zu liefern und gleichzeitig meine eigene Rolle klarzustellen, gebe ich im Folgenden die mir und Prof. Ranicki bekannten Tatsachen wieder. Eine Bewertung dieser Tatsachen bleibt der erwarteten Diskussion vorbehalten.

Begonnen hat für mich die Angelegenheit mit einem Anruf von Dr. Heinze vom Springer Verlag Ende Juli 2007. Er teilte mir mit, dass Autoren sich beschwerten, dass Ihre Arbeiten bei „K-Theory“ nicht erscheinen, obwohl sie bereits seit geraumer Zeit die Nachricht erhalten hatten, dass die Arbeit akzeptiert sei, und dass Springer selber keine Informationen über diese Arbeiten hat. Zudem würde Prof. Bak auch auf Anfrage keine Informationen an Springer mehr weiter geben, er sei nicht mehr managing editor, und er habe ein Gerichtsverfahren gegen Springer eingeleitet. Ich habe mich dann zusammen mit Prof. Ranicki bereit erklärt, mich um die Beschwerden zu kümmern und zu versuchen, die Zeitschrift „K-Theory“ weiterzuführen. Dabei haben wir die Bedingung gestellt, dass der Preis der Zeitschrift „K-Theory“ auf 50 Cent pro Seite gesenkt wird, was in etwa einer Halbierung des Preises entspricht. Springer hat umgehend zugesichert, dass der Preis ab 1.1.2009 auf 50 Cent pro Seite gesenkt wird.

Am 7. August 2007 wurde die folgende Erklärung als offener Brief vom dem Board der Editoren der Zeitschrift „Journal of K-theory“ herausgegeben:

Dear fellow mathematicians,

The Editorial Board of ‘K-Theory’ has resigned. A new journal titled ‘Journal of K-Theory’ has been formed, with essentially the same Board of Editors. The members are A. Bak, P. Balmer, S.J. Bloch, G.E. Carlsson, A. Connes, E. Friedlander, M. Hopkins, B. Kahn, M. Karoubi, G.G. Kasparov, A.S. Merkurjev, A. Neeman, T. Porter, D. Quillen, J. Rosenberg, A.A. Suslin, G. Tang, B. Totaro, V. Voevodsky, C. Weibel, and Guoliang Yu.

The new journal is to be distributed by Cambridge University Press. The price is 380 British pounds, which is significantly less than half that of the old journal. Publication will begin in January 2008. We ask for your continued support, in particular at the current time. Your submissions are welcome and may be sent to any of the editors.

Board of Editors
Journal of K-Theory

Am 13. August 2007 haben Prof. Ranicki und ich folgende Erklärung herausgegeben:

In January 2007 the editors of “K-theory” resigned, following a request by the then managing editor Professor Anthony Bak. As announced in August 2007, some of them are intending to start a new “Journal of K-theory” to be published elsewhere. Unfortunately no manuscripts submitted to “K-theory” have been forwarded to Springer by the managing editor, since April 2006. We have been asked by Springer to act as interim managing editors, in the first instance to deal with these papers. We ask authors who have submitted papers to “K-theory” which have not yet been published to please contact one of us as soon as possible.

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Am 17. August 2007 haben Prof. Ranicki and ich folgende Erklärung herausgegeben:

In this statement we, Wolfgang Lueck and Andrew Ranicki, want to give some explanations to the mathematical community concerning the journal "K-theory" published by Springer and the announcement of a new "Journal of K-theory" to be published by Cambridge University Press.

Three weeks ago we were asked by Springer to do two things.

1. Can we take care of the submissions to *K-Theory* which were delayed by the former managing editor Tony Bak?
2. Are we willing to try to reconstitute the board for *K-Theory* so that the journal can be continued?

1. We agreed to do this without really knowing how urgent and unpleasant the problem was. On August 13th we issued a statement on the internet to ask authors of papers submitted to "K-theory" whose papers had not yet been published to contact us, so that we could take care of them. From the answers we have received so far it is clear that not only had Bak deliberately withheld papers from Springer, but he also withheld information about the papers from editors and (worst of all) the authors themselves. By contrast, when the entire editorial board of *Topology* resigned from Elsevier in 2006 they made sure that all submitted papers were handled correctly, and to our knowledge no author suffered any delay.

We were also informed that Bak has started a legal proceedings against Springer, demanding a certain amount of money for himself. The editorial board of "K-theory" were not informed of the lawsuit. The details will only be revealed once the lawsuit is finished. Although we do not know the details, we dislike the idea of an editor starting a legal proceedings against a publisher. There are more elegant ways of handling conflicts.

2. When Springer asked us to relaunch *K-theory*, we requested that the price should be reduced to 50 cents per page. Springer readily agreed. Incidentally, Bak never discussed the price of "K-theory", either with Springer or the editors. However, since it seems to be clear that the new "Journal of *K-Theory*" will be launched anyway, we have decided not to try to continue "K-Theory", but simply to make certain that all the papers which have been delayed by Bak can be published in a final issue of "K-Theory". Authors of such papers are free to publish their papers anywhere they choose.

We think that this is the best solution for the community, which would not be best served by two journals in the field.

In view of the mess we are encountering and trying to clean up, we ask the question whether the new "Journal of *K-Theory*" can be launched with Bak as Managing Editor? This should not detract from the excellent work Bak did in setting up "K-theory" in 1988.

We want to emphasize that we have no personal gain from our actions.

Wolfgang Lueck

(Editor *Topology* 2002–2006, *Journal of Topology* since 2006, *Math. Annalen* since 1998 (Managing

Editor since 2004), *Comment. Math. Helv.* since 2003, *Geometry and Topology* since 2005, *Groups, Geometry and Dynamics* since 2006)

Andrew Ranicki

(Editor *K-Theory*, 1990–2007, *Forum Mathematicum* since 1998, *Algebraic and Geometric Topology* since 2000)

Bis heute hatten Prof. Ranicki und ich Kontakt mit den Autoren von ungefähr 30 Arbeiten, die nach April 2006 bei „K-Theory“ eingereicht und akzeptiert worden sind, aber nicht in „K-Theory“ erschienen sind, und von denen uns Springer versichert, dass sie nie an Springer weitergeleitet worden sind. Die Verzögerung in der Veröffentlichung, die dadurch entstanden ist, beträgt in einigen Fällen mehr als ein Jahr. Nach meiner Information ist Springer nie über diese Vorgehensweise des managing editors von „K-Theory“ Prof. Bak informiert worden. Aus Email Korrespondenzen mit Mitgliedern des alten Boards von „K-Theory“ entnehme ich, das zumindestens einige der Mitglieder des alten Board von „K-Theory“ vor August 2007 nichts davon wussten.

Einige Autoren haben mich davon informiert, dass sie davon, dass das Board von „K-Theory“ zurückgetreten ist und eine neues „Journal of *K-Theory*“ gegründet worden ist, erst im August 2007 erfahren haben. Mehrere Monate oder ein Jahr zuvor sind sie aufgrund von Email-Korrespondenzen mit Editoren oder dem managing Editor zu dem Schluss gekommen, dass die Arbeit bei „K-Theory“ angenommen worden sei. Wenn man die Emails von Prof. Bak allerdings genauer liest, enthalten sie nicht die explizite Aussage, dass die Arbeiten bei „K-Theory“ angenommen worden sind. Hier ist ein Beispiel, das mir ein Autor berichtet hat. Der Autor hat Juli 2006 von einem der Editoren die Nachricht erhalten hatte, dass der Referent die revidierte Fassung akzeptiert hatte und ist September 2006 von Prof. Bak zur Übermittlung der files aufgefordert worden. Der Autor hat dann im September 2006 Prof. Bak per Email gefragt, ob die Arbeit bei „K-Theory“ angenommen worden ist. Diese Email wurde von Prof. Bak für acht Monate ignoriert. Der Autor hat dann im Mai 2007 noch einmal bei Prof. Bak nachgefragt und die Antwort erhalten „the paper is beeing accepted“, allerdings ohne explizite Angabe, für welches Journal.

Nach meinem Erkenntnisstand hat es kein Verfahren (Rundbrief, etc.) bei „K-Theory“ gegeben, wie der managing editor Springer und die anderen Editoren darüber informiert hat, welche Arbeiten eingereicht worden sind, wie die Entscheidung ausgefallen ist und auf welcher Basis sie stattgefunden haben.

Springer hat die Mitglieder des alten Board von „K-Theory“ gebeten, Prof. Ranicki und mir Informationen über die Arbeiten zu geben, die von ihnen seit April 2006 behandelt worden sind. Zwei der Editoren haben uns Auskunft gegeben, von den anderen haben wir keinerlei Information bekommen. Ebenso wurden explizite Anfragen von Prof. Ranicki und mir, Informationen zu schicken, nicht beantwortet oder abgelehnt.

Meines Wissens ist Springer von keinem der Editoren des alten Boards von K-Theory vor Mai 2007 in irgendeiner Weise darüber informiert worden, dass sie zurückgetreten sind. Erst auf explizite Anfrage von Springer hin haben einige der Mitglieder des alten Boards von K-Theory Springer im August 2007 offiziell davon in Kenntnis gesetzt. Insofern gehe ich davon aus, dass die Verhandlungen mit der Cambridge University Press über das neue „Journal of K-Theory“ bereits abgeschlossen waren, bevor Springer überhaupt davon in Kenntnis gesetzt wurde, dass das alte Board von „K-Theory“ zurückgetreten ist.

Die Ankündigung des neuen „Journals of K-Theory“ ist im August 2007 veröffentlicht worden. Normalerweise braucht man mindestens sechs Monate, bis man einen Referentenbericht eingeholt, im positiven Fall eine revidierte Fassung erhalten hat und dann die endgültige Druckversion vom Verlag erstellt wird. Das Board des „Journals of K-Theory“ hat angekündigt, dass die Publikation noch in 2007 beginnen wird. Es bleibt abzuwarten, ob es sich herausstellt, dass der überwiegende Teil der Arbeiten, die in der ersten Ausgabe in dem „Journal of K-Theory“ erscheinen sollen, ursprünglich bei „K-Theory“ eingereicht worden sind.

Prof. Bak gibt als Beweggründe die durchaus nachvollziehbare Begründung an, dass der Preis für „K-Theory“ zu hoch ist. Prof. Bak erwähnt außerdem Probleme bei der Produktion bei Springer und ein Backlog, zu denen ich nichts sagen kann, da ich nicht im alten Board von „K-Theory“ gewesen bin. Wenn das Gerichtsverfahren zwischen Prof. Bak und Springer vollständig abgeschlossen ist, bin ich sehr daran interessiert, Einzelheiten zu erfahren. Zu diesen Problemen und dem Gerichtsverfahren sollten sich andere zum gegebenen Zeitpunkt äußern, die darüber im Gegensatz zu mir informiert sind.

Da ein Vergleich zur kürzlich unter meiner Mitwirkung erfolgten Neugründung des „Journal of topology“ durch das vorher zurückgetretene editorial board der vom Elsevier-Verlag herausgegebenen Zeitschrift ‚Topology‘ naheliegt, will ich diesen Vorgang kurz rekapitulieren: Nach einer Beratung aller beteiligten Editoren von „Topology“ haben wir Mitte August 2006 El-

sevier und die Öffentlichkeit davon informiert, dass wir zum 31. Dezember 2006 hin geschlossen zurücktreten. Wir haben auch versichert, dass alle Arbeiten, die bis zum 31. 12. 2006 hin bei uns eingereicht werden, bearbeitet werden. Meines Wissens sind alle Arbeiten, die Elsevier bisher in „Topology“ nach dem 1. 1. 2007 publiziert hat, noch von den alten Editoren von „Topology“ abgewickelt worden. Ich habe keine Erkenntnisse vorliegen, die darauf hindeuten, dass es überhaupt ein neues Board bei „Topology“ gibt.

Die Neugründung der Zeitschrift „Journal of Topology“ wurde im Januar 2007 angekündigt. Alle Arbeiten, die im „Journal of Topology“ erscheinen werden, wurden von den Autoren nach diesem Termin bei dem neuen Journal eingereicht.

Folgende Erklärung der Cambridge University Press wurde mir auf Anfrage hin am 5. 9. 2007 von Roger Astley übermittelt:

Cambridge University Press was invited by Tony Bak to provide services for a new journal to be founded in K-theory and we have reached an agreement to do so. The details of this agreement are, like any similar agreement, confidential.

Tony Bak has set up a limited company, at his own risk and expense, to be the owner and publisher of the new journal until its ownership can pass to a non-profit foundation. This will oversee all editorial matters in conjunction with an Editorial Board from receipt of submissions through to finished typeset papers ready for press. Cambridge will play no part in the editorial process before it receives finished papers ready for distribution online and in print.

This is much like many other agreements we have with many organisations for whom we publish or distribute. Cambridge commits to provide a range of services, in this case printing, marketing, subscriptions and distribution, whereas editorial policy and processes such as the appointment of Editorial Board members are entirely the responsibility of the journal owner and Managing Editor.

As with any journal we would expect that papers are submitted to it and are accepted (or rejected) in line with common peer review practice. Cambridge has to date received no papers accepted for publication in the new journal and in line with accepted practice will not consider any paper that has been submitted elsewhere unless formally withdrawn in writing by the author(s).

Cambridge has entered into this publishing arrangement in good faith. We wholeheartedly support the launch of this new journal which we believe will be a success backed by a strong Editorial Board, and which we expect will resonate with the wishes of the mathematical community. Our intention is to publish from early 2008, and to make forthcoming articles available online as soon as possible. Our aim is to achieve a price of around GBP 0.30 per page.

Folgende Erklärung wurde von den Editoren des Boards of „Journal of K-Theory“ am

5.9.2007 herausgegeben (siehe <http://www.institut.math.jussieu.fr/~karoubi/Statement>)

After several public statements and news articles regarding the Springer journal "K-Theory" (KT), and the new "Journal of K-Theory" (JKT) to be distributed by Cambridge University Press (CUP), the mathematical community has become aware of ongoing changes. On behalf of the entire Editorial Board of the new JKT, we want to give as precise a picture of the situation as we can at the moment, especially to the authors.

It is very important to us that the authors should not suffer as a result of the transition. Those authors who submitted papers to KT before August 2007, regardless of whether the paper has already been accepted or is just awaiting review, have three choices:

- 1) Choose another journal.
- 2) Maintain submission with KT for final review if necessary and publication if accepted.
- 3) Transfer their article to the new JKT.

All authors who have not yet done so should please notify Professor Bak on the one hand, Professors Lueck and Ranicki on the other hand, about their choice, as soon as possible. For those who opt for choice (2), Professors Lueck and Ranicki have promised to take over the remaining editorial duties. We can guarantee that the authors who choose option (3) will have a smooth transition, with their articles progressing as if there has been no change. We will also do everything we can to help those who choose options (1) and (2). In particular, if the authors instruct us, we will be happy to forward to the journals of their choice the full information regarding the status of their articles.

In 2004, because of growing dissatisfaction with Springer, the editorial board of KT authorized Prof. Anthony Bak, the Editor in Chief, to begin negotiations with other publishers. The editorial board was unhappy with the poor quality of the work done by Springer, for example the huge number of misprints in the published version of the articles, the long delay in publication and the high prices Springer was charging. The negotiations came to a conclusion in 2007. A new journal, entitled "Journal of K-theory"

(JKT) will commence publication in late 2007. It will be printed by Cambridge University Press. Papers will appear earlier online, as 'forthcoming articles'.

The title of JKT is currently owned by a private company. This situation is only meant as a temporary solution to restart publication of K-theory articles as soon as possible. It is the Board's intention to create a non-profit academic foundation and to transfer ownership of JKT to this foundation, as soon as possible, but no later than by the end of 2009, a delay justified by many practical considerations.

This shift towards more academic control of journals is not new. We follow here a path opened by *Compositio Mathematica*, *Commentarii Mathematici Helvetici*, and others (see for instance the interesting paper of Gerard van der Geer which appeared in the *Notices of the AMS* in May 2004). We believe that such changes can help keep prices low.

We trust in Prof. Bak's leadership for the launching of JKT and forming, together with the editorial board, the foundation to house the Journal. The statutes of the foundation will provide democratic rules governing the future course and development of the journal, including the election of the managing team.

We hope to have provided a fair picture of the current situation, and we plan to issue another public statement when new developments come up. In case of further questions, please contact any of the signatories.

Let us conclude from a broader perspective: The editorial board is committed to secure the journal's quality and long-term sustainability.

Signatures

A. Bak, P. Balmer, S. Bloch, G. Carlsson, A. Connes, E. Friedlander, M. Hopkins, B. Kahn, M. Karoubi, G. Kasparov, A. Merkurjev, A. Neeman, T. Porter, J. Rosenberg, A. Suslin, G. Tang, B. Totaro, V. Voevodsky, C. Weibel, Guoliang Yu

Der Springer Verlag hat mich informiert, dass er in Kürze eine Erklärung herausgeben wird.

Münster, den 6. 9. 2007

Zum obenstehenden Beitrag von W. Lück ging uns noch der nachfolgend wiedergegebene Brief von Prof. M. Kreck, Direktor des Hausdorff Research Institute for Mathematics an der Universität Bonn an die Herausgeber der Zeitschrift „K-Theory“ zu, nachdem diese ihm ihre Stellungnahme vor der Veröffentlichung mit der Bitte um einen Kommentar zugesandt hatten. Sowohl dieser Brief als auch der obige Bericht von W. Lück geben ausschließlich die Meinung des jeweiligen Autors wieder. Die Mitteilungen sind gerne bereit, die Diskussion durch den Abdruck von Meinungsäußerungen weiterer Beteiligter fortzuführen. (RSP)

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for sending me your text and giving me the chance to send you my comments before you publish it. I shall try my best to write in a way that can reach you.

In such a situation it is worth summarizing as objectively as possible where we agree and where we do not. Of course I partially have to guess.

I guess that we are all concerned about the price of journals. It was I who initiated the

discussion at the Banff Center in August 2005 which led to the Banff protocol. I have talked to all the expensive publishers I met and blamed them harshly for having such high prices. I have talked to many editors asking them to do the step you have now done.

Our disagreement concerns the way such a step has to be done. For me the editing of a journal is a great honor and a high responsibility. The honor needs not to be commented: we all like to see our name on the front page, but there might be different views of the responsibility. Editors are responsible for a high quality of refereeing and after the paper is refereed for immediately passing the paper to the publisher who is responsible for timely publication (although you are aware of this, I would like to point out that problems with production are often related to an enormous backlog - and the main reason for a backlog is that editors accept too many papers!). You accuse Springer of mistakes in the production, and if this is the case, this is completely justified. But as long as the contract with the publisher is not terminated the publisher has not only the duty but also the RIGHT to publish the accepted papers. And one has to give the publisher the possibility to improve their record (this can be checked).

I ask you, was the contract with Springer ever terminated (according to my experience, such contracts can only be terminated in a written form, ask for a copy of the corresponding letter and the contract)? If so, how long is the period according to the contract in which the rights of both sides are unaffected (normally this is a rather long period)? I suspect that the rights of Springer are still valid. If this is the case (and this can be checked by you) the managing editor has violated one of the fundamental rules by withholding the papers for a long time and by offering authors the right to publish a paper submitted to *K-theory* in *JKT*. For you this might look like an old fashioned formal point of view, but for me credibility and honesty are indivisible!

We have a second disagreement. I know from numerous discussions (also with several of you) that most mathematicians agree that the service offered by different publishers is of very different quality. Most of the people I talked to agree that Springer is one of the best publishers, who in the past has taken care of the publi-

cation of excellent books and journals. Most of us complain about their prices, and I am here in the front row. But I think that a publisher of this quality has the right to be treated as a partner, from whom one can separate, but in a dignified way. I ask all of you and would be grateful if you let me know your personal opinion, do you think the way Professor Bak acted with Springer, is dignified? That is also my requirement of Springer and I will ask them the same question, if they think their behavior in this case was dignified.

After this I come to your statement. There are two parts where I am dissatisfied. When you write that it is very important that the authors do not suffer from this transition it sounds to me dishonest. Objectively, all authors whose papers were accepted suffered by the withholding of their papers. At least online their papers could have been published by now in a journal with a good impact factor (a criterion, I personally hate, but know that it is more and more applied; your new journal will naturally for a while have impact factor 0). They could write in their list of publications: accepted by *K-theory*, which for all of us counts as a published paper in this journal. (If I write a letter of recommendation I naturally look where the papers are accepted and I would feel misled hearing afterwards that it appeared in another journal).

The second part concerns your trust in the leadership of Professor Bak. I cannot imagine that you all have the opinion that he acted as a good leader, and trust comes from experience. Above, I mentioned points where I suspect a violation of the contract (regulated by law) by Bak, and you have the possibility to check this. But even if this turns out to be false, is he in your eyes a leader to be trusted?

After all my fights for good journals for a fair price I fear that if you proceed, this process is compromised. If you can understand my doubts, please give yourself the necessary time to work towards a good outcome.

Sincerely

Matthias Kreck
Director
Hausdorff Research Institute for Mathematics,
University of Bonn