

Acta Academica, Critical views on society, culture and politics

A *Acta Academica* has been in existence for more than 30 years. During this time the political and social world around us has changed. South Africa is a 20-year-old democracy; globalisation has prompted redefinitions of culture and identity; new manifestations of the political are emerging in different countries; technology is challenging the classical separation between the public sphere and the private realm; financial crises are pointing to the urgent need to re-examine the bases of capitalist production. At the same time academia is being permanently re-invented not always in palatable and productive ways, and the very conceptualisation of university education is under scrutiny. It seems only natural that under these circumstances a journal that is based at a university that is also undergoing profound institutional change should stop to think about its focus, its public and its purpose.

The new focus of the journal responds to two equally important intellectual demands. First, it is the engagement of research and thinking in the humanities with themes that allow us as academics to contribute to the international conversation in the humanities from our local experiences. *Acta* seeks to attract a more globally representative public and authors and become a site of debate and contestation for humanities research. Second, we believe that the humanities themselves require attention, not so much because there is a declared crisis in our disciplines, but because there is a buoyant intellectual production in different humanities fields that is pushing theoretical and methodological ground and is inviting disciplines to enter into dialogue with themselves and among each other. Moreover, crossing disciplinary boundaries is happening in the “field” and it is becoming more and more clear that the greatest problems that humanity is confronted with in the 21st Century can only be tackled from a multidisciplinary perspective.

Acta Academica does not believe in the neutrality of knowledge or in its innocence in relation to power. Located in the global South we hope for an intense interaction with the debates that occupy our colleagues in the rest of the African continent, Asia and Latin America as well as the polemics and intellectual searches taking place in the post-colonial North. As a first step we have opened *Acta Academica* to a wider group of authors and audiences in the South African academy and we have chosen English as the post-colonial means of communication for the journal, fully aware of the importance of debating and exploring the role of local languages in the construction of democracy.

All of this taken into account, our new brief is as follows:

Acta Academica is an academic journal dedicated to scholarship in the humanities. The journal publishes scholarly articles that examine society, culture and politics past and present from a critical social theory perspective. The journal is also interested in scholarly work that examines how the humanities in the 21st Century are responding to the double imperative of theorising the world and changing it.

Acta Academica will appear, as in the past, four times a year. At least two of its issues will be thematic ones edited by guest editors. The journal will carry a book review section in order to bring to our readership current trends in thinking and research in the humanities. We hope that the change in the look of the journal heralds its change in orientation and helps as a reminder to the editorial team to keep true to a new intellectual identity.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of our advisory board for their willingness to support this project; my fellow editors, Andre Keet and Helene Strauss, need to be thanked for their contribution to making possible the transition between *Acta Academica* past and future. Last but not least, I would like to thank Rene Eloff, the assistant editor, without whose work none of this would have been possible.

Lis Lange

Editor: Acta Academica