

# PREFACE

We have witnessed (heard or read about) the birth of new academic journals many times. ‘So why another academic journal?’ may be the question posed. Some immediate reasons are perhaps motivated by intellectual and political rationales, but it is also about timing. First, scholarship is about creating and sharing knowledge, and one of the most important tools for exchanging the results of research activities is the academic journal. Second, the changing social context in which we are situated requires a response of us to inform cutting-edge scholarship that addresses our context, location and our diverse positions to teaching and research. Third, a journal such as this one is a timely intervention and, if recent debates, thinking and the ideas project are anything to go by, *The Journal of Decolonising Disciplines* is in fact overdue.

The *JDD* is intended to foster an intellectual space for a broad range of voices that enable us to move beyond and transcend disciplinary boundaries. More importantly, it foregrounds the ‘decolonial turn’, aligned to the broader concept of *decolonisation*. The former is a nuanced, layered and sliding signifier. Despite its conceptual slipperiness, the insights, debate and analysis that it spurs provide a productive framework for critiquing and thinking about the knowledge project. This takes two forms: the ‘epistemological’ case in which *decolonisation* is seen as constitutive of reorganising and rethinking knowledge; and the ‘historical’ case in which decolonisation is seen as playing an unprecedented role in reviewing and reconstituting social relations and identities in contemporary society.

The *JDD*’s conceptualisation and formation has two interconnected precursors. It is spurred in part by recent developments in the social movement for transformation in the higher education landscape, as well as by a substantive Andrew W Mellon Foundation grant, ‘Unsettling Paradigms: *The Decolonial Turn* in the Humanities Curriculum at Universities in South Africa’.

We see this journal occupying a space that will reach beyond disciplinary barriers and bridge the gaps that continue to define the humanities, arts, social and hard sciences in South Africa and elsewhere. It is in fact a pioneering (and creative) space that takes seriously the intellectual debates which constitute the decolonial movement (and, importantly, the ‘decolonial turn’) in the academy and in other spaces, through being the only journal in the country to publish in three languages: English, isiZulu and Sesotho. This deliberative effort is aligned to the aims of ensuring that we move beyond merely paying lip service to decoloniality, but instead begin to develop ideas in this field that demonstrate epistemological agility to advance epistemic justice in the knowledge domain.

The *JDD* is in our view a flagship of decolonial scholarship globally and aims to be a space of international repute and to create a publishing platform that attracts scholarship from thinkers and activists on the African continent and other locations in both the global South and North. This requires our concerted and collective efforts, specifically in disciplines that are traditionally defined as outside the ambit of sociopolitical debates, to consider the political (and epistemological) position of these disciplines and *how* they can be opened up to democratic efforts of knowledge production in the context of epistemic equality.

Broadening the reach of the *JDD* into disciplines which are outside the humanities, arts and social sciences is aligned with the intentions of the decolonial tradition, which requires that each

knowledge producer reveal their loci of enunciation. This is useful for generating intellectually stimulating debates, while also facilitating a mode of critical reflexivity in the project of knowledge production in the contemporary university. We are of the view that reflexivity is important if the university is to redefine itself as a space that effectively realises the ambition of transforming the ideas project into real pluriversality, wherein a multiplicity of knowledge systems (and worldviews) may coexist in a polyphonic and epistemic dialogue.

As the administrative location of the *Journal of Decolonising Disciplines*, the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria is proud to present the journal as a space that could be viewed as a site for innovative and progressive ideas across disciplines in the global academy. We encourage, invite and welcome proposals to advance the knowledge field to also engage meaningfully with issues of *who* teaches, *what* is taught, *how* teaching and learning happen, and, importantly, *who makes decisions*. I see the journal as a point of departure that is both catalytic and aimed at building capacity in order to ensure the sustainability of the ideas project. The decolonial turn is not an 'event' but a long-term process and project.

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