

Another milestone reached:
New Agenda on the road to renewal

By the New Agenda editorial collective

As described in previous issues of *New Agenda*, the publishers of the journal, the Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA), are taking active steps to ensure that *New Agenda* retains its accreditation with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

These moves follow the recommendations of academics on an expert review panel assembled by the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) who said *New Agenda* – in the period 2017 to 2019 – did not meet the proper standards for research-led academic publishing.

IFAA accepted this as a welcome challenge, and as an opportunity to tighten up the academic standards of *New Agenda* articles and the publishing process as a whole.

The first milestone in the improvement journey was for IFAA to enter into a formal memorandum of agreement with the Institute for Social Development at the University of the Western Cape to “collaborate on the publication of *New Agenda: South African Journal of Social and Economic Policy*, flagship journal of IFAA, on matters relating to accreditation, editorial board, peer review processes and monitoring, sharing of databases, and the use of digital platforms to expand the readership and reach of the magazine”.

UWC now provides academic guidance and an academic home for the journal, while IFAA will retain its publishing independence in a partnership to publish and manage *New Agenda*.

In August and September 2023, Scholarly Communications at the Research Support Services at the UWC main library trained the editor and *New Agenda* staff on Open Journal Systems (OJS) – the world’s most widely used journal management and publishing software. The software manages and monitors the entire scholarly publishing workflow from submission to indexing.

Peer review has always been part of the process for checking the quality and suitability of articles submitted to *New Agenda*, – but it has been managed manually, and less formally than is now required by current academic standards. The software does not do the work itself, but it steers every article through all the required stages and produces the necessary paper trail required for accreditation.

Discussions have been taking place on how *New Agenda* will preserve its traditional dual character as an academic and activist journal. There are examples of other journals that successfully follow a ‘hybrid’ model, where peer-reviewed academic contributions appear alongside opinion and policy comments, interviews and book reviews which do not go through a peer review (although they are subjected to a full process of editing, fact checking and quality control.)

The last nine months have also been an active time for expanding and defining the role of the *New Agenda*, editorial board. Up to now, the board of directors of IFAA, the publisher, have acted as the editorial board. We now are in discussion with a number of international scholars who will take over as the editorial board, to advise and assist the collective who edit and produce the journal.

We are extremely grateful to the following academics who have agreed to come 'on board':

Dr Juan Manuel Arbona (Universidad Mayor de San Andres, La Paz, Bolivia) Prof Amiena Bayat (University of the Western Cape)

Prof Rémi Bazillier (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne)

Emeritus Prof Anthony Black (University of Cape Town)

Prof Risikat Dauda (University of Lagos, Nigeria)

Prof Mulugeta Dinbabo (University of the Western Cape)

Prof Mondli Hlatshwayo (University of Johannesburg)

Prof Razack Karriem (University of the Western Cape)

Prof Julian May (University of the Western Cape)

Dr Phiona Mpanga (Makerere University, Uganda)

Prof Dafe Otobo (University of Lagos) Prof Steven Robins (Stellenbosch University)

Dr Mike Smith (University of Cape Town)

Dr Tzehainesh Tekle (University of Ferrara, Italy)

We welcome advice and feedback from readers as we re-position *New Agenda* in a new digital publishing environment.

Send your comments to production@ifaaza.org.za