



Foreword

Jannie Malan

Dear Readers

In the totally unusual time of the Covid-19 pandemic in which we happen to be, I cannot but share an unusual foreword with you. Before, as usual, saying something to introduce the contents of this issue, I feel urged to say something about our existence and co-existence in this period of upheaval and renewal.

All of us are probably committed to obey the regulations imposed to safeguard us against the life-threatening virus. But how are we reacting to the economy-depleting challenge of the virus? Are we deploring the passing away of phenomena that have been taken for granted by the haves? Or are we orienting ourselves to an inequality-defying economy that will embrace current haves *and* have-nots? Here in South Africa, President Cyril Ramaphosa has strongly emphasised the urgent need for such a revolutionary system.

Aren't we therefore called to undertake comprehensive rethinking and revaluing? Could it be that the virus is driving us in two directions – on the one hand, to social distancing in order to prevent infection, and on the other hand, to social rapprochement in order to become liberated from the poor-rich divide?

As if by coincidence, (five of) the articles in this issue (from four countries) are propagating the revisiting of traditional conflict resolution methods of

the austere past – the past before the poor-rich divide became so prevalent and predominant. Those methods came into being in the contexts of local everyday life, local experience and local expertise. They continue to have worthwhile advantages over contemporary top-down methods, although they may uphold some outdated aspects which obviously have to be modified.

These five articles are focused on conflict situations in which a *talking* approach is feasible and recommendable. The sixth article, however, is relevant for situations in which war-lords are compelling conflict interveners to resort to a *fighting* approach – although eventually all wars are ended by talks. In this article, the discussion is about strategies and their advisability. The comparison is between a few recently introduced mechanisms and a situation-oriented method, and here too, the more localised option is propagated.

All these articles were written before the pandemic, but important aspects of their messages should remain relevant during the pandemic and in the transformed future. Now, during the pandemic, it is for us as readers to reinterpret where necessary and to imagine ourselves into our uncertain future.

On the uncertain road forward, however, there is one thing that may become part of our journey: a mind-set of being oriented to our co-survivors. Shouldn't we therefore commit ourselves to an equality-friendly co-existence and an equality-friendly co-economy?