Editorial

The Revolving Door of *Acta Politica*

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This 43rd volume of *Acta Politica* marks a number of important changes for this journal, not the least that Hans Keman has finished his tour of duty as co-editor of this journal. *Acta Politica* owes a lot to Hans. Transformation processes are always delicate to manage, and this is certainly the case for a scholarly journal. Reputation is a crucial asset in academia, and it is often important to be able to build on this form of social capital. *Acta Politica* has been transformed quite rapidly and successfully from a national, Dutch, journal into a truly international journal. It has to be acknowledged that ‘international’ in practice still largely means ‘European’, in terms of author submissions, choice of reviewers and subscriptions. But gradually we do receive more manuscripts from the other side of the ocean, and we do feel confident that this process will continue in the years ahead.

Hans Keman was the right man in the right place to guide the journal in this transformation process. For those who are less familiar with Dutch political science: Hans enjoys a solid reputation in Dutch academic life. As a good historian he also knows that internationalization of academic life should not result in some kind of free-floating research, but that the historical development of one’s own community should always be taken into account. Partly because of this quality, he was successful in convincing the Dutch Political Science Association that ‘going Dutch’ was no longer a feasible option. Going international was a major step ahead, not just for the journal but also more generally for political science in the Netherlands.

‘Going international’, however, was not an easy option, as one has to obtain the confidence of authors and reviewers. Luckily we could build here on Hans’s extensive international network, partly dating from his period at the helm of the *European Journal of Political Research*, where he too, was instrumental in creating a stronger international profile. Reviewers are sometimes difficult to find, and even more often, it is difficult to convince them to turn in their review within a reasonable time limit. More than once his international network of friends was extremely useful, if we wanted another opinion on a manuscript that had been lingering too long on someone’s desk.

On a personal note: during these past four years it has been a real pleasure to be able to work together with Hans. Our meetings were always cheerful, with the discussion ranging from copyright issues, ‘good’ and ‘bad’ reviewers, the peculiarities of life in Friesland and the Frisian language, and not to forget the

historical details of the noble art of playing cricket. But I was equally impressed by his strong commitment to the journal. Even during his stays in Australia or Firenze, I could expect his e-mails on the journal, late on Sunday evenings. And these e-mails never failed to amaze me by their talent for solid and well-informed judgment. I am therefore very pleased that Hans Keman has accepted to become a member of our International Advisory Board.

As you know (or can see from the inside cover of the journal), *Acta Politica* is managed jointly by two Ceo-Editors, on a revolving basis. This formula — which we shamelessly copied from the *European Journal of Political Research* — is meant to ensure that the journal remains young and innovating, while it simultaneously guarantees that we can benefit from past experiences. As Hans Keman disappears through the revolving door, I am very pleased to welcome Kees van Kersbergen, with whom I'll complete my editorship until the end of 2009. Kees, too, combines a deeply engrained knowledge of Dutch political science with a firm commitment to comparative and internationally relevant research. And I'm already convinced that his keen sense of judgment, and his sense of humor — two essential qualities for any journal editor — will enable us to work together to make this journal even better in the years ahead.

There are other things too, that change in this volume. First of all, until now we were blessed with a rather clumsy two-headed advisory structure. While the Editorial Advisory Board was meant to ensure an anchorage to Dutch academia, the International Advisory Board was composed of leading authorities in the discipline, and it expressed our commitment to a high international standard of academic research. This double structure reflected a hesitation that was still prevalent a couple of years ago about whether *Acta Politica* really wanted to become a fully international journal. The answer is well-known and unequivocal by now: yes we do. So we have taken the opportunity to simplify our structure: from now on, there will simply be one International Advisory Board. I would like to extend our thanks to all the colleagues who have devoted, or will continue to devote their time to the Advisory Board, as their contribution too, has been essential in ensuring the high quality of this journal.

For the authors, or future authors, the main change is that *Acta Politica* too, is adopting electronic manuscript submission. The cumbersome practice of printing out a manuscript, and putting it in a stamped envelope, therefore now belongs to the past. To paraphrase from an advertisement from the Dutch tax collection agency: we cannot make writing articles more pleasant, but we can make it easier for the author. More information on how exactly manuscripts should be submitted, can be found on our website: www.palgrave-journals.com/ap. With this innovation it should also be possible to cut the average time manuscripts take before we can provide feedback to the author, although it should be noted that turnover time for our manuscripts is already very speedy, compared to some other journals.

Furthermore, we can also announce that, in line with various other journals, we have established an annual prize for the best article in the preceding volume. We do hope that this prize can function as a further incentive, especially for younger authors, to send us their very best manuscripts. We also thank our publisher, Palgrave Macmillan, for endowing this annual prize.

I do not wish to go into philosophical, and necessarily personally biased reflections or speculations on what it means to turn 43. But at least for this journal it means that we are as vibrant as ever and ready to expand our wings further. The next couple of years will be very exciting for political science in Europe. The European Research Council has now started its activities, and it has given the social sciences and humanities a rightful place in its budget. This implies that in the years ahead we will slowly develop a truly European scientific community, and this should allow us to raise the standards of academic research further. At the same time it is important that this is a European-led initiative. Here too, internationalization does not mean that one's legacy and cultural identity are being lost, and maybe on the contrary: this cultural legacy can only be reinforced if one can conduct scientific research in the best possible conditions. During the past decades, the European Union has had a dramatic impact on commerce, industry and agriculture in Europe. It has now embarked on an equally ambitious mission to transform and improve scientific research and education in Europe, with as a clear ambition to raise quality and to promote excellence in higher education and scientific research. Although the role of our journal in this strategy is of course very limited, we do hope that we can play our role in this exciting transformation process.

Marc Hooghe
Co-editor