

# Call for Abstracts: School of Social Sciences Conference 2024

## Democracy in Flux: Challenges and Transformations

### in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

**Venue:** University of South Africa (UNISA), Pretoria, South Africa

**Dates:** 26-27 September 2024

**Pre-conference Workshops:** 25 September 2024

Join us in Pretoria for two days of insightful discussions, networking, and collaborative learning as we delve into the complexities of democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### Introduction

In recent years, democracies worldwide, including South Africa, have encountered unparalleled challenges and transformations that have significantly impacted societal health, governance, and the very essence of democratic institutions.

Globally, established democracies are grappling with crises such as climate change, environmental degradation, and rising inequality, exacerbated by decades of neoliberal policies. These challenges have left democracies vulnerable to the emergence of toxic leadership and the erosion of democratic values (Harris & Hughes, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic has further tested the resilience of democratic systems, revealing the critical role of health promotion and the need for robust democratic institutions to navigate crises (Crismer, 2021). Amidst these challenges, the call for a 'vibrant democratic ecology' that emphasises participatory and deliberative democratic innovations has never been more urgent (Harris & Hughes, 2022).

As we approach the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of South Africa's first democratic elections in 2024, it is imperative to reflect on the nation's journey and its role as a beacon of democracy. South Africa's transition to democracy is a testament to the power of resilience and the possibility of creating inclusive societies through well-designed democratic institutions (Lieberman & Lekalake, 2022). Despite facing its own challenges, including governance issues and socio-economic disparities, South Africa has demonstrated a commitment to democratic principles, offering valuable lessons on the importance of active citizenship and political participation (Graham, 2020; Suttner, 2014).

#### Conference Themes

We invite contributions that address, but are not limited to, the following sub-themes:

- Democratic Resilience and Health
- Evolving Democracies
- Democracy, Diversity, and Inclusion
- Rule of Law, Judicial Independence and Accountability
- Pluralism, Participation and Civic Engagement
- Freedom of Expression and Information in the Digital Age
- Socioeconomic Disparities and Political Equity
- Democratic Education for a Polarised World

- **Call:** 8 April 2024
- **Abstract Submission Deadline:** 21 June 2024
- **Notification of Acceptance:** 30 June 2024
- **Full Paper Submission (for selected presentations):** 31 August 2024
- **Registration Deadline:** 31 July 2024 [Click here to register](#)
- **Publication of selected articles:** November 2024

#### Submission Guidelines

- A concise title
- Author/s name/s
- Author(s) institution/affiliation
- Contact details
- An abstract (250 words or less)
- Five keywords

All submissions must be sent to: [sossconference@unisa.ac.za](mailto:sossconference@unisa.ac.za)

**Costs:** R 3000 per delegate, students R1500 (proof of registration is necessary)

#### Publication Opportunities

Selected papers will be considered for publication in a special issue of the **Interdisciplinary Journal of Sociality Studies**, subject to peer review.

#### Contact Information

For more information please contact the conference organisers on: [sossconference@unisa.ac.za](mailto:sossconference@unisa.ac.za)

#### References:

Crismer A. (2021). Face à la COVID-19. COVID-19 : un défi pour les démocraties [COVID-19 : a challenge for democracies]. *Rev Med Liege*. 76(4):245-247. French. PMID: 33830687. [Répercussions psychologiques de la pandémie de COVID-19 chez les enfants et les adolescents et modalités de prise en charge - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

Graham, V. (2020). South Africa's democracy: The Quality of Political Participation over 25 Years. *Journal of African Elections*, 19(1), 28-51. DOI: 10.20940/JAE/2020/v19i1a2

South Africa's democracy - the quality of political participation over 25 years | *Journal of African Elections* ([journals.co.za](http://journals.co.za))

Harris, C. & Hughes, I.M., 2022. Reimagining Democracy in an Era of Deep Transition. *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 31, p.1. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3318/isia.2020.31.7>.

International IDEA. (2022). The Global State of Democracy 2022: Forging Social Contracts in a Time of Discontent. *International IDEA*. Available <https://www.idea.int/blog/global-state-democracy-2022-forging-social-contracts-time-discontent>

Lieberman, E., & Lekalake, R. (2022). South Africa's Resilient Democracy. *Journal of Democracy*, 33(2), 103-17. [South Africa's Resilient Democracy | Journal of Democracy](#)

Suttner, R. (2014). Popular power, constitutional democracy and crisis: South Africa 1994-2014. *South African Review of Sociology*, DOI: 10.35293/SRSA.V36I2.166. [POPULAR POWER, CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY AND CRISIS: SOUTH AFRICA 1994-2014 | The Strategic Review for Southern Africa \(up.ac.za\)](#)