

Call for Papers: Democracy from Below: Decolonizing and retheorising democracy in Africa Virtual Colloquium

1-2 February 2022

The Centre for Social Change and the Centre for Sociological Research and Practice at the University of Johannesburg in collaboration with the South African Centre for Digital Language Resources, invites papers for an online or hybrid colloquium that interrogates the understanding and practice of democracy in the African context.

The colloquium seeks to bring together scholars who are interested in decolonising and retheorising democratic thought in the African context, and in asserting the importance of conceptualisation of democracy from below. Our approach to a decolonial project is to emphasise a pluriversal approach to history and ideas. Thus we understand democracy and democratic spaces to be a site of contestation.

Although democracy is a contested concept, in general, definitions and measures of democracy are often drawn from the canon and experiences of the global North. As a result, bodies of knowledge that exist in postcolonial societies about the conceptualisation, practice and struggle for democracy are often excluded from the canon of democratic theory. This colloquium intends to overcome this exclusion by advancing scholarship that incorporates the knowledge, history and experiences of ordinary people into the canon of democratic theory. It foregrounds the development of democratic thought from below as a necessary step in challenging the dominance of the global north in the theorisation of democracy.

We particularly welcome papers that consider, but are not limited to, the following themes.

- The conceptualisation and expressions of democracy in indigenous languages.
- The practice of democracy in the everyday.
- The analysis of democracy in the context of particular struggles such as land, community struggles, labour struggles, LGBTIQ+ rights and beyond.
- Local histories of democratic thought and political/liberation struggle.
- Explorations of democratic thought and practice from an African perspective.

We welcome abstracts between 250-500 words. Papers can be written and presented in any of South Africa's official languages but please provide an English translation when submitting the abstract.

Abstracts can be submitted to boitumeloma@uj.ac.za by 30 August 2021, and acceptances will be emailed by 16 September 2021. Full papers should be submitted by 10 December 2021. We intend that papers presented at the colloquium will be considered for publication in an edited collection.