

## CALL FOR ABSTRACTS 2024/25

### Digital Governance Politics and Management: A view from the Global South

2<sup>nd</sup> Volume of Tayarisha Working Papers Series

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#### Introduction

[The Tayarisha African Centre of Excellence in Digital Governance](#), hosted at the Wits School of Governance at the University of the Witwatersrand, is a hub for research, education, and outreach on the challenges and opportunities presented by digitisation in Africa. Tayarisha straddles the nexus between government, business, and society, and intends to contribute to the creation of public good by conducting academically rigorous, cutting-edge research; providing world-class education; and contributing to public debate.

Tayarisha's working paper series has been supported by the Hans Seidel Foundation (HSF), a German political foundation with a commitment to democracy, peace, and development. HSF runs around 100 projects in 65 countries worldwide. The focus of these projects is on strengthening civil society, civic involvement and promoting the rule of law, education and management training, raising environmental awareness and advising decision-makers in politics, business and administration.

The first volume of [Tayarisha working papers was published in 2023](#) and included scholarly research on a wide range of topics related to African governance in the digital age. The papers were launched in public event, and authors were permitted to develop their papers for further publication. A selected set were invited into an edited book project to be released in 2024/25.

In this 2<sup>nd</sup> collection of working papers, **Tayarisha seeks to invite papers on digital governance politics, strategies and administration from perspectives in the Global South.** Accepted papers will be assembled into the second working papers volume, and a subset of relevant papers will be chosen for consideration towards a proposed Special Issue on "The international politics of AI Governance: A view from the Global South".

#### Context

As we progress into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, digitalization has continued to raise both hopes and fears of imminent political, economic, and social transformation in Africa and the broader Global South. Indeed, the landscape of digital governance on the continent is both complex

and nuanced. While some nations have made significant strides, others continue to grapple with the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital age.

Techno-optimism has given way to a more tempered perspective. The initial enthusiasm for the transformative potential of technology has been tempered by the realities of implementation. Governments have faced challenges in capitalising on the digital revolution, often hindered by factors such as inadequate infrastructure, limited digital literacy, expanding exclusion, and corruption. Meanwhile, authoritarian regimes have leveraged technology to consolidate power and suppress dissent.

The role of the state in digital governance has become increasingly central. As digital technologies have become more deeply integrated into society, governments have recognized the need to establish regulations and policies that balance innovation with public interest. However, the approach taken by different governments has varied significantly, with some embracing digitalization as a tool for development and others adopting more restrictive measures.

Tayarisha continues to play a vital role in advancing research and understanding of digital governance issues in Africa. Through its working paper series and other initiatives, Tayarisha seeks to challenge binary narratives, moving beyond simplistic views of digitalisation as either a panacea or a problem. Through our working papers series, we seek to promote both fundamental and empirical research, foster multi-stakeholder dialogue, and explore emerging trends and developments (including around emerging and disruptive technologies, and linkages to existential risks).

In addition to these trends, South Africa's upcoming presidency of the G20 presents a unique opportunity for the country to help shape the global digital agenda. South Africa, and Africa more widely, can leverage this position to advocate for the inclusion of African perspectives in regional and international discussions on digital governance, cybersecurity, and digital development. This will also require how navigating the complex interplay of local needs, global geopolitics and the corporate interests that influence the digital landscape. This struggle for technological influence has become a key dimension of global geopolitics. Major world powers are competing to establish their dominance in areas such as artificial intelligence, 5G networks, and data infrastructure. In particular is becoming a critical space where competing visions on the role, applications, and future of digital technologies are converging and where distinctive, but largely overlooked or misunderstood projects of state and nation building have emerged, seizing digital tools as opportunities to reconfigure or strengthen power relations. Corporate interests also play a significant role, often seeking to maximize profits and expand their market share, sometimes in ways that are counter to individual and public rights and good. South Africa's G20 presidency will require a delicate balancing act between promoting local interests and fostering international cooperation.

As Africa continues to navigate these digital landscapes, Tayarisha's research will be essential for understanding the complexities and opportunities presented by this transformative era.

## The Themes

We are inviting scholars, practitioners, and policy stakeholders to submit abstracts for papers that explore the multifaceted landscape of digital governance from the perspective of the Global South. Papers should respond to the key themes (and potential sub-themes) which are envisaged to include:

### **Politics<sup>1</sup>**

- Global South politics of AI governance
- Geopolitics of AI and their repercussions
- Big tech/corporate influence on digital governance
- The role of civil society and social movements in shaping digital policies
- The intersection of digital governance and traditional power structures

### **Strategic/Policy**

- Broad issues of digital public infrastructure (DPI)
- Trust and inclusion in digital governance
- The role of international organizations and multilateral cooperation in shaping digital norms and standards

### **Administration**

- Regulation of emerging technologies (e.g., AI, blockchain, IoT)
- Digital-ready legislation, and digital policy innovation
- The challenges and opportunities of digital transformation for public administration

## Submission Guidelines

Academics or practitioners wishing to contribute to the Working Paper Series should submit their abstract via this form by the specified deadline.

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<sup>1</sup> POLITICS will be the primary theme of interest given the parallel intention to develop a Special Issue on AI governance politics in Africa as mentioned in Introduction.

- Abstract length: 250-300 words
- Submission format: Via form or email [Amy.Mutua@wits.ac.za](mailto:Amy.Mutua@wits.ac.za)

We encourage interdisciplinary submissions that draw from a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches. Successful contributors will be invited to submit full-length papers for potential inclusion in the volume.

## Timelines and Terms

The Working Paper Series will inform a series of seminars and policy dialogues/public debates, collectively forming a new knowledge compendium.

Successful Contributors will be notified within a month, and will be invited to participate in authors' workshops and to submit a full draft paper (6000 words) as per the indicated Schedule:

1-Oct-24	Launch Call for Abstracts
30-Oct-24	Deadline for Abstracts form submission
Nov-24	Adjudication and notification of successful Authors
<i>Dec/Jan-25</i>	<i>Engagement and contracting with Authors</i>
<i>Mar-25</i>	<i>Virtual writers workshop</i>
31-Jul-25	Deadline for Full papers submission
2025/26	<i>Publication of working papers</i>
2026	<i>AI Special Issue Journal</i>

## Selection Criteria

Our selection process will focus on assessing:

- Relevance to the volume's theme
- Originality and contribution to the field
- Rigor and methodological soundness
- Potential for policy impact

Both conceptual and empirical works will be considered. We encourage submissions that bring new evidences and learning case studies to the fore; that discuss potential opportunities and challenges posed by geopolitical competition and corporate influence; and that make tangible policy recommendations for navigating undue influences, and promoting equitable, inclusive, and effective digital governance in the Global South.

By focusing in these ways, we aim to stimulate critical thinking and policy-relevant research that can inform the development of more resilient and sustainable digital governance practices in the Global South.

## Commitment and Remuneration

The selected contributors will be formally contracted to participate in the working papers series, confirming their commitment to:

- Author the approved chapter in accordance with an agreed schedule;
- Incorporate comments, recommendations and edits made by peer reviewers and editors;
- Attend scheduled project / review meetings where progress reporting and presentations will be expected; and
- Fully comply with the terms of contract, applicable university policies, and a prescribed Style Guide in all drafts of the work provided.

Selected paper authors will receive an honorarium of EUR 2,500 for producing their paper (amount is to be shared if more than one author).

## Editors

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