



UFS Reflections Series

South Africa in COVID-19 Times



The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the fracture lines in societies worldwide. South Africa is no different. The poor are less able to protect themselves from the danger posed by the virus. Workers in factories, mines, and the service sector went back to their places of work following the lifting of the strictest lockdown measures, while office workers, typically better paid, can generally work from home. Living conditions in informal settlements make social distancing all but impossible, while the middle class can largely stay at home and stay safe to a much larger extent. With many businesses shutting down, downsizing or rethinking their business models, it is often small and medium, as well as informal sector businesses that are most affected.

The impact of COVID-19 comes on the back of a society and economy that was already under significant pressure following years of low economic growth and poor government performance. Many commentators have already questioned the social compact South Africans made in the mid-1990s, which marked the end of the apartheid regime. These divisions have become more glaring, with some civil society organisations considering challenging the Minister of Finance's adjustment budget in the Constitutional Court, because the budget might result in a roll-back of the progressive realisation of the socio-economic rights mandated in the Constitution.

In this first of four webinars, academics from the UFS as well as invited experts reflect on the constitutional commitment South Africans made to one another two and half decades ago. Is it time for a new deal? Should we collectively recommit ourselves to our existing deal? Do we interpret that deal in the same way today as we did more than two decades ago? How does the economic reality we face, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, affect that deal? What are the economic realities we face, and whose are they? And how should we think about human development in the context of our deal?

Speakers

- Prof Danie Brand** 'New deal' or collective recommitment?
The Constitution under COVID-19 and beyond

- Prof Melanie Walker** Human development and the capability approach in
COVID-19 times

- Prof Lochner Marais** Reflections on continuities and discontinuities after COVID-19

- Prof Philippe Burger** Viewing the realisation of socio-economic rights in a
post-COVID-19 South Africa through an economic lens

Come and join us from 14:00 to 15:30 on 21 July.

RSVP to Sibongile Mlotya at MlotyaS@ufs.ac.za no later than 19 July, upon which you will receive a Business for Skype meeting invite.

Please also mark the following dates in your diaries for the second through fourth Reflection webinars:



Gender Inequalities and Gender-based Violence	28 July 14:00-15:30
The quality of our democracy under COVID-19 and beyond	13 August 14:00-15:30
Urban living post-COVID-19	27 August 14:00-15:30