



CALL FOR PAPERS

II GRAJU Symposium

Democracy, Pluralism and Citizenship

University of Deusto, Bilbao, Spain

7 - 9 June 2027

Abstract submission deadline: 27 November 2026

Context and Rationale

Contemporary democracies are undergoing profound transformation and strain. Across different regions of the world, we observe processes of institutional erosion, extreme polarisation, disinformation, weakening of the rule of law, challenges to human rights, and growing civic disaffection. At the same time, new demands for recognition, inclusion, and justice are emerging from groups historically marginalised, alongside new forms of participation and civic engagement driven by civil society and younger generations.

In this context, the II GRAJU Symposium proposes as its central theme Democracy, Pluralism and Citizenship, understood as political regimes that safeguard human rights, uphold the dignity of every person, ensure citizen oversight of power, foster meaningful public deliberation, and effectively include the social, cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity that characterises our societies.

Within the intellectual and social tradition of the Society of Jesus, democracy is not conceived as an exclusively Western cultural product nor as a geopolitical instrument of imposition. Rather, it is understood as a historically situated, always imperfect and perfectible, form of political organisation that embodies universal principles such as human dignity, moral equality, justice, participation, and public accountability. Jesuit universities, present in diverse political, cultural, and religious contexts, are uniquely positioned to foster a global conversation on democracy that is both critical and constructive.

At a time when processes of democratic erosion and autocratization are advancing in many regions of the world, it is not enough to diagnose what is going wrong. There is an urgent need to identify, study, and help generate spaces of democratic resistance and renewal (initiatives, institutions, and civic practices that strengthen democratic resilience). This symposium aims not only to analyse democratic vulnerabilities but also to illuminate and support the conditions under which democracy can endure, adapt, and flourish.



Objectives of the Symposium

- To share ongoing research on democracy, pluralism, inclusion, human rights, and governance, including preliminary findings that may benefit from interdisciplinary discussion and critical engagement.
- To explore future research collaborations among GRAJU universities, particularly through comparative perspectives across regions (Europe, Latin America, Africa, Asia, and North America).
- To contribute to the institutional discernment of the Society of Jesus by offering rigorous analysis that can inform the responsible promotion of just, plural, and inclusive societies.
- To exchange experiences in civic and ethical education, identifying pedagogical practices that integrate academic excellence, social commitment, and the integral formation of students.
- To reflect on our own universities as spaces of pluralism, deliberation, and participation, examining how governance structures, organisational cultures, and inclusion policies can coherently contribute to democratic values.

Thematic Areas

The symposium is organised around five thematic areas. Proposals may address one or more of these areas, and interdisciplinary contributions are especially encouraged.

1. Democracies under pressure: Institutions, resilience, and the rule of law

This area addresses both the empirical and normative dimensions of democracies under stress. It welcomes analyses of democratic erosion, populism, polarisation, disinformation, the delegitimization of expert knowledge, and transformations in political representation and media ecosystems, as well as the role of civil society, social movements, and processes of resistance and re-democratisation. Contributions analysing ethnonationalism, xenophobia, racism, or anti-gender movements as components of populist politics and democratic backsliding are also welcome within this area, particularly when the focus is on their role in processes of institutional erosion or authoritarian consolidation. Alongside these, it engages the constitutional and legal foundations of democracy: the structural tensions between majority rule and the rule of law, institutional safeguards, judicial review, accountability mechanisms, and the limits to power.

2. Pluralism and justice: Managing diversity and exclusion in democratic societies

This area brings together two interconnected dimensions of democratic inclusion: the governance of cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity, and the structural impact of socio-economic inequality on democratic quality. It invites contributions on models of migration and minority inclusion, tensions between universalism and particularism, minority nationalism, self-determination claims, and separatist movements, and the constitutional, political, and democratic challenges they pose to plural states, interreligious dialogue, identity politics, and democratic citizenship, as well as on the relationship between economic inequality and political participation, inclusive public policies, the representation of vulnerable groups, and the links between development and democracy. Contributions explicitly addressing gender identity and



feminist perspectives on democracy, as well as the analysis of racism and xenophobia as structural barriers to full democratic inclusion and citizenship, are also welcomed within this area. We particularly encourage contributions that explore how societies can be both plural and just.

3. The democratic psyche: Polarisation, moral judgment, and political culture

This area examines the cognitive, affective, and cultural processes that underpin democratic attitudes, behaviour, and commitment. It welcomes work on political polarisation, social trust, prejudice, moral judgment, identity formation, and collective memory, as well as on narrative framing, symbolic structures, and the cultural imaginaries that shape democratic participation. Contributions exploring the psychological and cultural roots of epistemic populism — including motivated reasoning, identity-protective cognition, and the affective dimensions of distrust in scientific authority — are particularly welcome here when the focus is on individual and group-level processes rather than on political actors or institutional dynamics. Contributions are encouraged to illuminate how individuals and communities come to embrace or abandon democratic norms, and what conditions foster civic solidarity, cross-cutting dialogue, and shared democratic commitment.

4. Digital democracy: Platforms, algorithms, and the future of the public sphere

This area focuses on the far-reaching transformations that digital technologies are producing in democratic life. It invites contributions on the impact of artificial intelligence, digital platforms, and algorithmic governance on information environments, political deliberation, public opinion formation, and citizen participation. Papers may address disinformation and platform accountability, the concentration of technological power, digital divides, new forms of civic engagement enabled by technology, and the regulatory and institutional responses required to safeguard democratic deliberation in the digital age. Contributions examining how digital platforms function as infrastructures for the amplification and spread of science scepticism and epistemic populism are also welcome within this area, particularly when the analytical focus is on technological affordances, algorithmic dynamics, or platform governance.

5. Educating for democracy: Universities, youth, and civic responsibility

This area explores the role of education, and higher education in particular, in cultivating democratic competence, ethical responsibility, and civic engagement. It welcomes contributions on pedagogical approaches to democratic education, service learning, deliberative classroom practices, and civic ethics, as well as on the institutional cultures, governance structures, and inclusion policies that shape whether universities themselves embody democratic values. Given the Jesuit mission of integral formation, special attention is given to experiences that integrate academic excellence with social commitment and to research examining the civic attitudes, participation, and democratic orientations of younger generations.

Symposium format

The II GRAJU Symposium will combine the presentation of academic research papers with spaces for discussion on future collaboration projects. Interdisciplinarity and the development of sustained research networks will be actively encouraged. The symposium will run over two days



and will include plenary sessions, thematic panels, and dedicated time for networking and collaborative projects among GRAJU partner institutions.

Call for Collaboration Activities

Beyond traditional academic presentations, the II GRAJU International Symposium aims to provide a dedicated space for networking and exploring future collaborations among alliance members.

We warmly invite proposals for cooperation activities designed to strengthen our network, spark interdisciplinary dialogue, and enable meaningful co-creation among our researchers.

Please submit your ideas via this [online form](#) (see guidelines below).

Submission Guidelines and Instructions

At this stage, we invite submissions of extended abstracts as well as proposals for future collaboration projects via the indicated submission forms. All materials must be written in English, include a brief *bionote* and must not exceed the indicated number of words (500-600 for abstracts; 300 for collaboration activities; 150 for *bionotes*).

In the case of abstracts, each of them should clearly indicate: (1) the research question or problem addressed; (2) the theoretical framework and/or methodology; (3) main findings or expected contributions; and (4) the thematic area(s) to which the proposal relates.

All proposals must be submitted via the online forms for each thematic area. If the proposal also aligns with other thematic areas, please indicate this in the forms.

Submission forms

TA1 - [*Democracies under pressure: Institutions, resilience, and the rule of law*](#)

TA2 - [*Pluralism and justice: Managing diversity and exclusion in democratic societies*](#)

TA3 - [*The democratic psyche: Polarisation, moral judgment, and political culture*](#)

TA4 - [*Digital democracy: Platforms, algorithms, and the future of the public sphere*](#)

TA5 - [*Educating for democracy: Universities, youth, and civic responsibility*](#)

[*Call for Collaboration Activities*](#)

Language: English (only)

Submission deadline: 27 November 2026

Review process: Committee review

Notification of acceptance: 12 February 2027



Organization

The II GRAJU Symposium is organized by the University of Deusto (Bilbao, Spain) in collaboration with the Global Research Alliance of Jesuit Universities (GRAJU).

We look forward to welcoming scholars from across the GRAJU network and other Jesuit higher education institutions to Bilbao in June 2027.

For further information, please contact graju@deusto.es and/or visit [our website](#).