

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS IN DIGITAL PLATFORMS & MARKETS

(Wits Post-Doctoral Programme – Social Dimensions of Digital Economy, Department of Science & Innovation)

As part of the Social Dimensions of Digital Economy (SDDE) partnership between Wits University and South Africa's Department of Science Technology & Innovation (DSTI), we invite recent PhD graduates to join a two-year, full-time fellowship focused on the Digital Platforms & Markets research stream. The stream interrogates platform power, competition and antitrust, value distribution, algorithmic governance and digital-trade dynamics, all with an explicit concern for inequality and inclusive development.

Core themes include:

- **Platform economics & value capture** – network effects, pricing, competition, and algorithmic self-preferencing
- **Surveillance capitalism & data governance** – commodification of personal data, privacy, and inequality
- **Gig-work & labour standards** – earnings security, organising, and regulatory gaps
- **Digital trade & development** – cross-border e-commerce rules, fintech, and platform impacts on emerging-market firms
- **Platform accountability & cybersecurity** – transparency, algorithmic fairness, consumer protection, and risk management

Fellows will be embedded in the Southern Centre for Inequality Studies (SCIS) and connected to a national network of SDDE researchers. They will pursue their own project -- designed within the themes below-- and help deliver the programme's official outputs, notably a series of Baseline Studies that map current market structure, value flows, and user-behaviour analytics. Proposed research topics

The two year fellowship is **renewable annually** on the basis of performance. The package is **R 400 000 p.a.** (tax-free) plus medical aid and a modest research-cost allocation.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS



1. PhD awarded **within the past five years** (any relevant discipline: economics, development studies, law, information systems, sociology, etc.)
2. Demonstrated **publication track record**.
3. Research experience on at least one of: platform economics, antitrust/competition, gig work, digital trade, data governance or inequality
4. Excellent spoken and written **English**

DESIRABLE QUALIFICATIONS



- Fieldwork or policy experience in South Africa or the wider **Global South**
Quantitative skills (e.g., IO econometrics, network analysis) **or** qualitative expertise (eg, elite interviews, policy ethnography)
- Ability to engage stakeholders (regulators, industry, labour, civil society)

DUTIES & EXPECTATIONS



1. Produce publishable research with the Digital Platforms and Markets domain that advances SDDE goals and targets top international journals or equivalent policy channels
2. Deliver a suite of baseline studies—concise reports that map the current state of South Africa’s digital platforms and markets, including market-share analyses of major players and user-behaviour analytics (e.g., consumer trust, platform dependency)
3. Contribute to SDDE cross-cutting outputs (annual foresight exercise, national conference, curriculum modules)
4. Mentor honours/masters students linked to the programme

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES (5–15 pp.)



- Research focus & background
- Outline of proposed research
- Aims, contribution & relevance to the Digital Platforms & Markets agenda
- Proposed methodology & data (be explicit about feasibility)
- Research plan & timeline

CONTACT & SUBMISSION

Email your CV, proposal, and host-letter in a single PDF to careers.scis@wits.ac.za

Subject line: “Post-Doc Fellowship Application: Digital Platforms & Markets”

Deadline: 30 June

WITS SUPPORTS EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES – applications from women, persons with disabilities, and candidates from historically disadvantaged groups are strongly encouraged.

For enquiries about research fit or the SDDE programme, please write to Niall Reddy niall.reddy@wits.ac.za.

