

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS IN DIGITALIZATION, MARKETS AND LABOUR

(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 post-doctoral fellowship under two research streams;

- Digital Platforms & Markets
- Digital Labour and Employment

The **Digital Platforms and Markets** 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:

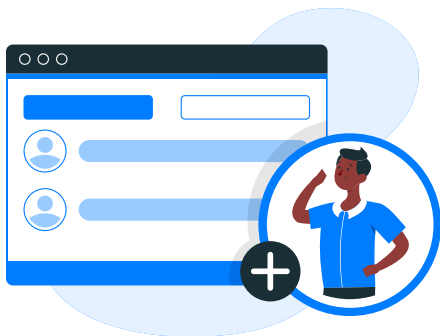
- **Platform economics & value capture** – network effects, pricing, competition, and algorithmic self-preferencing.
- **Surveillance capitalism & data governance** – commodification of personal data, privacy, and inequality.
- **Digital trade & development** – cross-border e-commerce rules, fintech,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

The **Digital Labour and Employment** research stream investigates the new world of work created by automation, AI, and platform business models. Core themes include:

- **Labour restructuring & global value chains** – employment, automation, labour displacement, and reskilling pathways.
- **Labour process & platformization** – labour flexibility, casualization, algorithmic management, and the psychological effects of surveillance.
- **Social reproduction & gender division of labour** – gender division of labour, burden of care, the regulatory and redistributive role of the state.
- **Worker power & organization** – sources of worker power, worker identities, emerging forms of organization and repertoires of action.

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 above-- and help deliver the programme's official outputs. These include a series of Baseline Studies that map current market structure, value flows, and user-behaviour analytics (Digital Platforms and Markets) and a literature review and knowledge gap report that will help to identify avenues for ongoing research (Digital Labour and Employment). Proposed research topics must clearly align with the domain and show how they complement these collective deliverables.

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: market concentration and competition, platform economics, antitrust/competition, gig work, digital trade, data governance or inequality ; OR automation and labour restructuring, platformization and algorithmic management, social reproduction and the role of the state, worker power and organization.
4. Excellent spoken and written English.

DESIRABLE QUALIFICATIONS



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

DUTIES & EXPECTATIONS



1. Produce publishable research with the Digital Platform and Markets or Digital Labour and Employment domains that advances SDDE goals and targets top international journals or equivalent policy channels.
2. Deliver a core set of deliverables (baselines studies and/or literature reviews and knowledge gap reports) that survey the landscape and help define research agenda in the assigned domain.
3. Contribute to SDDE cross-cutting outputs (annual foresight exercise, national conference, curriculum modules).

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES (max 2500 words)



- Title for the research
- Context, research problem and research approach (350 words)
- Overall objective and research questions (150 words)
- Theoretical and empirical contribution to the research agenda (750 words)
- Methodology and sources of data (be explicit about feasibility) (750 words)
- Research outputs and timeline (500 words)

CONTACT & SUBMISSION

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

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

Deadline: 15 July 2025

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.

