

***HKU-WES International Symposium:***

***Worlds of Work: Implications of Urbanisation, Technology and Sustainability***

*(Two-day symposium [9 – 10 Sep 2019] + Meeting with the WES editors [11 Sep 2019])*

*Work, Employment and Society* is looking to fund an Early Career Researcher<sup>1</sup> to participate in a two day symposium in Hong Kong during 9-10<sup>th</sup> September. As part of the journal's outreach in Asia, we will be engaging with academics looking at issues around the sociology of work. The ECR will be invited to present their research at the symposium and join the Editorial Team members in a Meet the Editors session and discussion on September 11<sup>th</sup>. The ECR will be invited to contribute to the Team's report to the WES Editorial Board.

The costs of participation (travel and accommodation up to a maximum of £1500) will be funded by the BSA/WES.

Applications should be submitted to [wes.journal@britsoc.org.uk](mailto:wes.journal@britsoc.org.uk) by July 5<sup>th</sup>. Please submit a 1-page abstract of the proposed presentation, a 1-page summary of your research interests, your CV, and the name of a current member of the BSA in support of your participation of this event.

Applications will be considered by a panel of up to 5 members of the full WES editorial board. The successful candidate will be the one judged to be the highest quality in terms of empirical and theoretical contribution with a particular focus on one of the selected themes of the Symposium.

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<sup>1</sup> An individual who is within seven years of the award of their PhD or equivalent professional training.

## **Symposium**

What might the world of work look like in 2050, and what is the relationship between the transformations and futures of work, urbanisation, changing urban forms and economies? There has been considerable debate about the nature, patterns and consequences of mega-urbanisation, migratory movement, urban forms linked to and produced from technology, and their impact on social relations, spatial inequalities, and individual wellbeing in the context of work. Asia and Africa currently have the highest rates of urbanisation. China and India have strived to seize the urban moment, legitimize the building of hundreds of new cities as national economic priorities; in particular, China has aimed to move nearly 300 million more people into ‘green, smart and sustainable’ metropolises by 2030. ‘Smart’ cities, or variants of this urban form, exemplify utopian ideals of technology-driven efficiency and innovation. Yet technologies embody specific forms of power and authority, and the role of technology and the world of work has a long history which is dynamic and contested. Will the new waves of technological advancement – such as artificial intelligence (AI), robotics and digital platforms – radically change the meanings of work and the place of work in people’s lives? Will the social dimensions, processes and conditions of work be altered by technology and the changing nature of the urban, and if so how? Will new technologies eventually bring about a utopian ‘post-work’ society where humans are free from work, smart cities become sustainable, and the deep-seated problems of inequality, exploitation and environmental degradation disappear? Or will people become redundant as AI outperforms our physical and cognitive abilities, creating unforeseen socio-economic and environmental harms?

Entitled ‘Worlds of Work: Implications of Urbanisation, Technology and Sustainability’, the two-day international symposium will bring together an array of UK, Asia and Australia-based world-class social science scholars, to dialogue and critically reflect on the rapidly changing dynamics and multi-faceted effects of urbanisation, climate change, technological change and mass migration in the context of work. This international symposium will uniquely span across divergent academic disciplines and geographical and social contexts, offering new insights into the social relations and problems derived from the emerging worlds of work, the changing nature of the urban, and the intensifying complexity of cities across the global North and South divide.