



Biopolitical Platforms: The Perverse Virtues of Digital Labour

Monday 4 November 12pm – 1pm

Speaker

Dr Jathan Sadowski

The University of Sydney

Location

Larry Saha Room

Haydon-Allen Building #22, Room 2175,
University Avenue, ANU

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public.

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By mediating everyday activities, social interactions, and economic transactions, digital platforms play an increasingly dominant role in contemporary capitalism. These platforms have excelled at extracting value from assets and labour that have been deemed un(der)productive. While the burgeoning literature on platform capitalism and digital labour has focused on these systems of value extraction, there has been much less attention on how platforms have also undertaken a project of capital development and subject formation. By theorising empirical research with people who work as food delivery riders for Deliveroo, we show how platforms, specifically those that provide services

in urban places, encourage, even require, workers to develop what we call three perverse virtues that make them more productive, more desirable workers: flexibility, vitality, and legibility. We then analyse the operations and implications of these biopolitical platforms—by which we mean platforms that create and administer a biopolitical governance regime in order to cultivate and accumulate capital, both human and data. This paper is based on research conducted with Karen Gregory (University of Edinburgh).

Dr Jathan Sadowski is a postdoctoral research fellow in smart cities in the School of Architecture, Design and Planning at the University of Sydney. His work critically analyses the techno-politics of “smart” things and spaces that are data-driven, networked, and automated. Jathan’s new book – *Too Smart: How Digital Capitalism is Extracting Data, Controlling Our Lives, and Taking Over the World* – will be published in early 2020 by The MIT Press.

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