

Work and Equalities Institute Third Annual Lecture

Can workers be organised if the state isn't? Digitalisation, work and employment in emerging and developing economies

Professor Fang Lee Cooke
Monash Business School, Monash University
Tuesday 24th March
1pm to 2.30pm, AMBS Eddie Davies Lecture Theatre
Lunch at 12pm in The Hive



Abstract

The role of the state in work and employment has traditionally been examined primarily at the macro level, focusing on its role as a regulator and employer in the context of employment relations. The role of the state, directly and indirectly, in shaping work and employment in the digitally-enabled business environment has remained insufficiently understood, particularly in less well-regulated economies. Informed by the recently renewed research interest in the role of the state and governance theory, and drawing on empirical evidence of recent development in the emerging and developing economy context, this presentation explores the role of the state as a key institutional actor in shaping the adoption of digital technology at macro and micro levels, with implications for work, employment and human resource management across different sectors and segments of workforce. It examines the role of the state in promoting the adoption of digital technology in businesses on the one hand, and how its social policy may impact firms' decision in their automation and labour strategy on the other, with broader and, in some cases, significant social implications in the longer term. While not advocating statism, this presentation calls for more research attention to develop a more nuanced understanding of the diverse roles of the state at various levels and across business sectors in the light of its strategic goals and capability. It also highlights the need for state intervention in regulating new forms of labour strategy, such as that found in the digital platform economy in China.

About the speaker

Fang Lee Cooke is Associate Dean (Graduate Research) and Distinguished Professor of Human Resource Management (HRM) and Asia Studies at Monash Business School, Monash University, Australia. She is also a Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia. Fang's recent research projects include: Chinese firms in Africa and their employment/HRM practices and labour relations; employee resilience, HRM practices and engagement in the finance sector in the Asian region; the evolution of industrial relations and implications for foreign firms in South Asia; organizational practices and management models in the care sector; HRM in the care sector, including healthcare, aged care and disability care; digitalization and implications for skill, employment and HRM; and low carbon growth and future of work.

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