

BROWNBAG LUNCHTIME TALK

New Technologies and Fate of Blue-collar Work; A Study of Work in the Australian Transport Sector

DATE AND TIME17 January 2023,
12pm - 1pm**PROF VICTOR GEKARA**College of Business and Law,
RMIT University | Melbourne - Australia**VENUE**Meeting Room 21
(3.202)

SYNOPSIS - Despite research suggesting certain death of blue-collar work due to technological advancements, blue-collar jobs continue to be in demand. Through a study of the blue-collar dominant Transport and Logistics sector in Australia, we apply a Critical Realism framework to consider the tendencies contributing to, and limiting, technological uptake and worker displacement. Our analysis of interviews with sector managers demonstrates how technological uptake decisions to enact labour saving technologies are often constrained by other causal mechanisms and associated (counter) tendencies. Causal mechanisms related to geographical artifacts, industry structure and established business models, along with class structure, mitigate against 'big bang' technological transformation and the demise of blue-collar work. We conclude that tracking the future of work is important, but it cannot be done solely on the basis of technological capacities to displace labour or without consideration of the complex interplay of causal mechanisms and tendencies shaping employer decisions about technology.



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PROF VICTOR GEKARA is a Professor in the School of Accounting, Information Systems and Supply Chains at RMIT's College of Business and Law. He completed his Ph.D. in International Political Economy from Cardiff School of Social Sciences, following his Master of International Transportation at Cardiff Business School. Prof Gekara's research is diversely located across Sociology of work, Political Economy, and Management. Specifically, his interest lies in technology transformations in transport and logistics, and the implications for work, employment, and workforce skills. He is currently focusing on the technology-mediated future of work, particularly on the changing nature of transport and logistics work, workforce skills needs and job quality. In this context, he has developed and maintains a wide network of industry, government, and academic partners, with who he has developed and led several large-scale industry and government funded research projects. His research has generated a wide range of high-impact research outcomes, including publications in highly ranked international journals, impactful industry research reports, books, and book chapters. He has also supervised several PhD students in this area.

