

Exploring the value of a geographical and critical perspective on the sharing economy

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Supervision

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Project Description

Recent years have seen a substantial growth of interest in the sharing or collaborative economy. The rapid expansion of new and highly successful sharing economy platforms (such as Uber, Airbnb, Taskrabbit, Blablacar) has attracted much media and academic attention. Enabled by digital platform technologies, the sharing economy allows households, individuals, businesses, governments and non-government organisations to engage in collaborative production, distribution and consumption of goods, services and experiences. New forms of digital platforms allow new forms of collaborative innovation, outsourced production, work and consumption. Its advocates argue that it increases employment, economic efficiency, and the sustainable use of resources, as well as facilitating new types of trust and enhancing social relationships. However, its critics argue that it leads to the exploitation of labour and does little more than provide legitimacy for digital business models. In many sectors, these new types of platforms are proving disruptive to conventional business models and create significant new challenges for legal and business regulation and policy.

There is still very little systematic understanding of the geography of the sharing economy across countries and regions, its organizational forms and their novelty, the enabling and constraining factors behind its growth, its relationships to space and place, the ways in which it adds value, and its impacts and consequences for particular industries, groups and individuals. This studentship would therefore explore the value of a geographical and critical perspective on the sharing economy. Key questions might include:

- Why and how does the sharing economy grow in particular sites and places?
- How are virtual spaces constructed and what are their effects on labour, intermediaries and consumers?

- To what extent do sharing economy platforms differ from, and disrupt, other business models?
- How can the sharing economy be best regulated and promoted?
- Are the potential environmental and social benefits of the sharing economy over-stated and what are the implications for life, work and consumption in contemporary cities?

Candidates must have or expect to gain a first or strong upper second class degree, in an appropriate discipline, not necessarily Geography. Details on how to apply are available from Julie Drewitt, email geog-pgr.fshs@soton.ac.uk. Informal enquiries may be made to Dr Brian Hracs (email b.j.hracs@soton.ac.uk). For the latest information on postgraduate opportunities within Geography and Environment, please visit our website at http://www.southampton.ac.uk/geography/postgraduate/research_degrees/studentships.page?

Funding Notes

This is one of a range of topics currently being advertised. Funding will go to the project(s) with the best applicant(s). The studentship is funded at RCUK level, currently £14,296 per annum, with an RTSG of £750, together with home rate tuition fees. The studentship is for three years. The studentship will fully support British and EU nationals only. International students can apply but they must be able to meet the difference between home/EU and International tuition fees themselves.