



South African Sociological Association annual Congress 2019

**Call for Abstracts**

**Work, Life & Society: Meanings, Manifestations and Trajectories of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in Africa**

University of South Africa, Sunnyside Campus, Pretoria

Dates: **15 – 17 July 2019**

This 26<sup>th</sup> South African Sociological Association (SASA) Congress seeks to interrogate the meanings, manifestations and trajectories of the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution within the African context and the global South at large. This congress invites papers to discuss, engage and challenge this phenomenon as pronounced by the World Economic Forum in 2015. Whether this phenomenon forms a continuation of the industrial revolution started in the 1700s remains unclear for the African continent. This is why SASA Congress seeks to provide a space to interrogate its meaning for the continent struggling with continued structural challenges in terms of inequalities, food shortages, gendered power relations, environmental challenges, institutional degradation and systematic governance.

These are among the developmental questions still facing the continent and the global South at large. The 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution is said to be automation of the highest level that will force the global economies and its workers to rethink their daily routines and general meaning of the work society. However, Sociologists have argued as early as in the 1970s about the nature and influence of automation to society, life and work in general. Whether this 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution symbolises a 'radical' shift from the past or a continuation of the capitalist economic shifts which are simply part of the different forms of production remains to be seen.

This 26<sup>th</sup> SASA Congress aims to unearth and interrogate the meanings, manifestations and trajectories of the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution within a global environment plagued by high income inequalities, growing workless population, environmental challenges, higher education curriculum changes, heightened gender violence and global political extremism. It seems that the challenge for Sociology today is to review and imagine a society that is ‘non-human centred’ as once articulated by Manuel Castells. If indeed we are heading towards a non-human centred life, what does this mean for the future post-human society? What sort of power relations should be guiding this kind of society? In the highly automated world, how should power be occupied and defined? Does the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution symbolise a real revolution or just continuation of the technological progression that contributes to social change? Or, does this mean we need to redefine and rethink how we conceptualise progress and time? What could be the role of trade unions in this fast-paced changing society? Is this part of capitalist exploitation of workers, the poor, women, and the environment? And what will this mean for global South emerging power blocs such as BRICs?

**Themes for the congress include, but not limited to:**

- Technological Histories in Africa
- Land, Labour and Women
- Information Technologies, Social Media, and Citizen Journalism
- The Future of Work in Society
- Skills and Human Development of the Future
- Global Inequalities and the Digital Divide
- Children, Family and Genetics
- Youth, Politics and Entrepreneurship
- Food, Social policy and Governance
- Education, Science and Industrial Development
- Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Technological Futures
- Social Movements and Digital Technologies
- Digital Storytelling and Creative Methodologies

**Keynote Speaker:**

Prof Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga (MIT)

The author of *Transient Workspaces: Technologies of Everyday Innovation in Zimbabwe* (MIT Press, 2014), which received honourable mentions in the Turku Prize (European Society for Environmental History) and the Herskovits Prize (African Studies Association) in 2015. His second book is an edited volume entitled *What Do Science, Technology, and Innovation Mean from Africa?* It explores STI in Africa from an archaeological, historical, philosophical, anthropological, STS, engineering, development, and policymaking perspectives.

**Local Organising Committee:**

Malehoko Tshoaedi (Chairperson), Babalwa Magoqwana, Trevor Ngwane, Trevor McArthur, Ipeleng Chauke and Ntokozo Mthembu.

**Abstract submission guidelines:**

All abstracts should be submitted online. See SASA website for more details (<http://www.sasaonline.org.za/sasa-2019-conference.html>) Online abstract submissions open on 1 February 2019. Abstracts should be no more than 250 words, including full contact details and affiliation of all presenters.