

NOT-EQUAL

EPSRC Network+: Social Justice through the Digital Economy

Micro Project Form

Micro research projects can be up to 3 months in length and should be completed by June 30th 2021. Micro research projects will be funded up to £5k (80% FEC claimable).

Please submit this form to notequal@ncl.ac.uk.

GENERAL INFORMATION	
Lead Applicant (PI): Dr Angelika Strohmayer	Co-Investigators (names and organisations): Dr Oliver Bates, Lancaster University
Email address: angelika.strohmayer@northumbria.ac.uk	Supporting Partner(s): International and Broke
Job Title: Lecturer	Project Title: Issues of precarity and interdisciplinarity for Early Career Researchers in Justice-oriented technology spaces
Department: School of Design	
Organisation: Northumbria University	

1. SUMMARY

Please provide a summary of your proposed research project. Please include an overview of the aims, impact, innovations, method, team and how it aligns with not-equal. This section should be understandable to the general public (<1000 words).

There is a growing number of ECRs and particularly precariously employed postdoctoral researchers in academia¹²³. Increasingly, these are also multi- and inter-disciplinary researchers who do not fit traditional molds and academic trajectories, for the most part ending up in non-academic roles⁴. As such, they have particular needs for support, collaboration, and peer-networking, and engaging with communities to develop funding, applications and projects. These researchers, in particular those at an early career stage (PhD, Postdoctoral scholars, Lecturers), working at various intersections of justice and digital technology are often working across sites and methods, whilst speaking to a broad variety of audiences and stakeholders through

¹ <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/facts-and-stats/data-and-analysis/Documents/patterns-and-trends-in-uk-higher-education-2018.pdf> - p.7 - growth of postgraduate studies and research, p.10 - 28.9% growth in PG researchers in full time from 2008 - 2017

² <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/staff/working-in-he> - shows a 21% growth in academic staff 2008 - 2017

³ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/staff/employment-conditions> ~13% of UK academic staff are on hourly paid contracts

⁴ https://royalsociety.org/~media/Royal_Society_Content/policy/publications/2010/4294970126.pdf - p.10 96.5% end up of completed PhDs end up outside of academia

their research. Especially when working in niche or taboo topics, on projects that are openly critical of mainstream political economies, or across disciplinary and research council remits, funding is limited. These barriers are further exacerbated by precarity of employment in the sector, making it difficult for individual researchers who are looking for a community and role models for success. These struggles are real lived experiences of researchers working in the UK HE sector, leading to a plethora of wellbeing and mental health concerns⁵.

We take an explicitly inclusionary stance to promote open-mindedness, confidentiality, impartiality, and support to those who suffer adversity in the workplace, particularly for those who are experiencing precarity. At the same time, we also acknowledge that researchers may suffer other forms of oppression in academia which may further exacerbate their needs. For example, researchers who are women, black and ethnic minority, and/or LGBT+ may face sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, or other forms of oppression systematically from their places of employment or on a daily basis from other members of staff^{6,7,8,9,10}. ~50% of researchers, research students and academics suffer from bullying and harassment; and people who face these oppressions are also more likely to suffer from bullying and harassment from their supervisors, co-workers, or institutions^{11,12,13,14}. We see zero-hour contracts and other forms of precarious employment in academia as a justice issue, and something we hope to work towards reshaping in later iterations of our workshop and community development activities. Through this building of support networks, and the co-creation of resources for survival, we aim to help researchers not only to survive, but to thrive in their academic and/or academic-adjacent futures.

With this project we aim to work towards filling this gap, and work alongside other researchers to first explore and then co-create and co-develop socio-technical resources to build solidarity and learn more about 'how to survive' in academia.

We will invite interdisciplinary researchers working on topics related to digital social justice. We expect them to be based in England, Wales, Scotland, or Northern Ireland; and will do our best to advertise the workshop across all of these nations in an attempt to have representation from all areas of the UK-HE sector. It is our understanding that while casualisation affects all of these nations, implications may differ due to differences in HE policies or requirements (eg. no fees in Scotland, or difference between HEFCE, HEFCW, SFC or HESA). Specifically, we will be working with PhD students, precariously employed post-doctoral researchers, international staff in UK HE, and Early Career Researchers who are newly permanently employed; we will first carry out a series of at least 20 interviews (spread across these four communities). In these interviews, we will collect experiences, building a rounded picture which we can then cross-analyse across these different communities.

Following the interviews, we will carry out at least 1 online design workshop, where we will bring together at least 2 individuals from each of these groups to discuss the initial findings we developed from the interviews.

At the NOT-EQUAL summer school in 2021, we will also host a dual-purpose workshop: (1) to disseminate our initial research findings; and (2) a design workshop to develop our empirical findings into socio-technical

⁵ <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2019/05/23/the-university-has-become-an-anxiety-machine/>

⁶ <https://epsrc.ukri.org/newsevents/pubs/napiersdiversityreport/> p39-41

⁷ <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/academic-racism-university-cambridge-n-word-priyamvada-gopal-a8993016.html>

⁸ https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10075/staying-power/pdf/ucu_rollock_february_2019.pdf

⁹ <https://medium.com/@lislanna/academia-is-irreparably-ableist-925fb33721ff>

¹⁰ <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-02253-9>

¹¹ <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/strengthening-our-approach/>

¹² <https://epsrc.ukri.org/newsevents/pubs/napiersdiversityreport/> p110

¹³ <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/sep/28/academics-uk-universities-accused-bullying-students-colleagues>

¹⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/nov/03/why-bullying-thrives-higher-education>

resources that people can use to advocate for themselves, their colleagues, and the wider precariously employed academic community.

2. NON-ACADEMIC PARTNERS

Please explain how your partners (academic or non-academic) will engage with the project e.g. In-kind time, use of facilities, etc. (<150 words).

We will be working with 'International and Broke' - an advocacy group who focus in particular on the needs of international casualised workers in UK Higher Education who have additional complications in their careers related to (for example) visa issues.

They will help us recruit the RA who will carry out the majority of fieldwork and will also help us recruit research participants.

3. DELIVERABLES AND SOCIAL IMPACT

Explain the outcomes and deliverables of your project as well as considerations for social impact. (<300 words).

This micro project brings together a range of issues faced by ECRs working on digital justice topics across the UK in order to develop a richer understanding of the issues facing this growing body of researchers and to help them develop socio-technical responses and build a network of researchers.

Through 20 interviews and a co-design workshop at the NotEqual Summer School 2021 we will facilitate a dialogue about the issues faced as well as guide the co-creation of new resources and networks for digital justice ECRs.

The outcomes of this project include: gaining detailed insight and broader understandings of the real issues faced by ECRs researching digital justice topics; shaping the co-creation of socio-technical responses to issues of precarity and interdisciplinarity; and, to start a self-organising network of ECR digital justice researchers.

We will share our findings with the EPSRC Digital Economy and Digital Economy CDTs to help them hear and act upon the concerns of digital justice ECRs, as well as the UKRI ECR forum¹⁵.

4. WORK PLAN

Please outline the work-plan for your proposed research project (<200 words).

This project will take place between April and June 2021.

Before the project:

- In January 2021, we will begin recruitment for our RA, who will commence working in April 2021.

¹⁵ <https://www.ukri.org/news/ukri-to-pilot-early-career-researcher-forum/>

During the project:

- 1 April - 10 May: The RA will conduct interviews with at least 20 participants
- 10 April - 31 May: transcription of interview and workshop audio files
- 10 May - 14 May: The RA, with support from Strohmayer and Bates, will facilitate an online design workshop
- 14 May - 31 May: The RA will conduct a preliminary thematic analysis on the transcripts from the interviews
- June 2021: Strohmayer and Bates finalise the data analysis and create an initial report of findings.
- June 2021: Strohmayer and Bates prepare the dissemination of initial findings and final data collection workshop at NOT-EQUAL summer school

After the project:

- July - September 2021: Strohmayer and Bates (and RA, if possible) collaborate to develop a manuscript to be ready for publication at ACM SIGCHI CHI or CSCW conference.
- July - September 2021: Strohmayer and Bates to produce a short briefing report for the EPSRC DE and DE CDTs on their findings.

5. HOW WILL YOU COMMUNICATE THE FINDINGS OF YOUR RESEARCH TO THE PUBLIC?

Please outline your dissemination plans e.g. White paper, events, networking with local support groups, creating vlogs, writing blogs, etc. (<200 words).

We will facilitate a workshop at the NOT-EQUAL summer school to disseminate our initial findings

We will document our outcomes in a series of design recommendations and/or initial prototypes of potential socio-technical systems that could help us advocate for ourselves and others who are precariously employed in academia

We will document the research outcomes in a project report for NOT-EQUAL

We will document the research outcomes in a high impact academic venue, such as the CHI or CSCW conferences.

We will document and share our findings with the relevant funding body (EPSRC DE) and Digital Economy CDTs.

6. BUDGET BREAKDOWN

Please provide a detailed budget breakdown and justification for your budget, e.g. Salary grade, point, duration and %FTE; specified journeys or conferences; identified items and quantities of consumables (<200 words).

We will employ a **Research Assistant** on a part-time basis for 19h per week for 8 weeks, at an hourly rate of £23.59 (£3,586)

To ensure quick turnaround on transcription notes and also to ensure the RA is able to spend time interviewing and analysing data rather than **transcribing** it, we have costed **£1,350** for transcription, which was calculated using the following formula 20 interviews at 45 mins. each, at £1.50 per minute (£1.5*45 mins)*20 interviews

7. TOTAL PROJECT COST

Please list in GBP under the headings - Overall cost, Staff, Travel and Other

	Directly incurred costs (80%)	Directly incurred costs (100%)
Staff	£2,868.80	£3,586
Non-Staff Costs: Consumables	£1,080	£1,350
Non-Staff Costs: Facilities/Equipment	-	-
Non-Staff Costs: Travel	-	-
Non-Staff Costs: Estates (RA's only)	-	-
Non-Staff Costs: Indirect (RA's only)	-	-
Overall Cost*	Total Not Equal Funding Requested: £3,948.80	Total for information only: £4,936

Directly Allocated Posts

Role	Post	Start Date	Period on Project (months)	% of Full Time	Scale	Increment Date	Basic Starting Salary	Super-Annuation and NI (£)	Total cost on grant-80% FEC (£)	Total cost on grant-100% FEC (£)
RA - hourly paid	RA-Northumbria	01 April 2021	2	50%	6.1	-	£23.59/h	-	£2,868.80	£3,586

*Please note that you are able to claim for RA time and RA relevant FTE related costs, PI/Co-I time and other non-staff costs. You are not able to claim for FTE related costs attributed to PI/Co-I time.

Further Information

If you have any further questions regarding this application and related call for proposals, please contact notequal@ncl.ac.uk or Rachel Sparks (Not Equal Project Manager) rachel.sparks@newcastle.ac.uk

