



EPSRC Network+: Social Justice through the Digital Economy

Application Form

Pilot research projects can be between 6-8 months in length, costing is 80% FEC claimable.

GENERAL INFORMATION	
Lead Applicant (PI): Lina Dencik Email address: DencikL@cardiff.ac.uk Job Title: Professor Department: School of Journalism, Media and Culture Organisation: Cardiff University	Co-Investigators (names and organisations): Email address: Collaborative Partner(s): Future Generations Commissioner Project Title: Advancing Data Justice in the Future Generations Act Project Tagline:

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 (<400 words).

The Future Generations Act (FGA) was implemented in 2015 with the aim to advance social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being through the public sector. As part of this, there is a commitment to embrace and invest in ‘the technologies of the future’ as a way to provide social benefits and mitigate problems. Yet it is still not clear how this commitment will be approached and carried out in order to ensure that important social justice concerns about technology are engaged with and considered in line with the FGA’s Wellbeing Goals. In recent years we have seen a proliferation of innovative initiatives that seek to advance citizen-centred engagement with policy around emerging technologies that provide crucial insights into the possibilities and challenges of advancing civic participation and data justice. In this project, we draw from these insights in order to explore potential policy interventions in relation to the role of technology in the FGA. We do so by focusing on three strategic areas at the intersection of the FGA and data justice: 1) Models of public engagement (e.g citizen juries, task forces); 2) Public procurement processes (e.g. impact assessments, expert consultations); 3) Data governance frameworks (e.g. data trusts, public ownership). Based on document and policy analysis as well as interviews with stakeholders including policy-makers and public sector bodies and a policy-hacking workshop, the project will identify best practices and provide policy recommendations in relation to each of these three areas.



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The project will be lead by Data Justice Lab Co-Director, Professor Lina Dencik, together with researcher Jessica Brand who both have extensive experience in the area of data policy and social justice and have previously collaborated on research exploring civic participation in the datafied society. Building on this expertise with an explicit focus on the FGA and collaboration with the Future Generations Commissioner, the project will catalyse impact on policy in line with Not-Equal’s commitment to uphold social justice in the deployment of new technologies.

2. HOW DOES YOUR PROPOSAL ALIGN WITH THE THEMES AND OBJECTIVES OF NOT-EQUAL?

Please describe how your proposal responds to Not-Equal’s priorities and how your proposal enhances a cross-disciplinary way of working. (<300 words).

The project engages with the theme of Algorithmic Social Justice by identifying possibilities and challenges for enhancing policy frameworks informed by civic participation and data justice in relation to technology. The project engages not only with ways in which processes of decision-making in relation to the development and use of technology can be more democratic, but also explores different approaches to the governance of data that considers social justice in practical terms. By working in collaboration with the Future Generations Commissioner, the project will catalyse impact in relation to policy, directly involving policy-makers in potential interventions based on academic research.

3. CASE FOR SUPPORT

Please describe your proposed project. This should include your aims and objectives, the design and method of your project, context, background literature and data to be collected. Please also indicate why this research is important and for whom (<1000 words).

The Future Generations Act (FGA) was implemented in 2015 with the aim to advance social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being through the public sector. It aims to be the “greatest cultural change program the welsh public sector has ever gone through” (Future Generations, 2020a: 9) with measures of success based on wellbeing not solely economic factors and an emphasis on kindness and people’s ability to participate more in decisions that affect them (Future Generations Commissioner, 2020b: 47). As part of this, there is a commitment to embrace and invest in “the technologies of the future” as a way to provide social benefits through smart cities and homes, and to improve “digital connectivity” as a way to mitigate social problems. Yet it is still not clear how technologies might be developed, implemented and governed as it becomes embedded in social life. This is important as ample research has highlighted concerns about the ways in which emerging forms of technology can have significant implications for social justice (cf. Dencik et al. 2019). Whilst the FGA notes that automation needs to be assessed in relation to its impact on inequality (particularly with regards to work), there is still a need to consider the many different ways in which social justice concerns relate to the deployment of technology in the public sector. This is particularly relevant



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as we have seen the proliferation of different initiatives that have sought to engage with such issues based on civic participation and the advancement of data justice, such as citizen assemblies, digital rights campaigns, the establishment of oversight bodies, and institutional reforms. These different approaches have highlighted both the possibilities of citizen-centered and social justice-oriented forms of participation in relation to emerging technologies as well as the significant challenges in meaningful intervention in policy processes (Hintz et al. forthcoming). Based on extensive research into these questions, this project therefore explores how they might apply to the policy processes relating to the FGA. In order to analyse concrete strategies for civic participation, the project focuses on three strategic areas at the intersection of the FGA and data justice. For each of these areas, the aim is to explore the opportunities and challenges of applying different models of civic participation and data governance to technology developments relating to the FGA:

1) Public Engagement

A prominent feature of the FGA is the encouragement of public bodies to include citizens in decision-making processes, especially from minority groups. However, it is not clear how this translates to the deployment and uses of new technologies. At the same time, there is a growing recognition for the need to engage citizens more in these developments with several different models of such engagement being proposed. These range from mechanisms such as citizen juries, online consultations to more comprehensive forms of participation such as community task forces and oversight boards.

2) Procurement

The FGA is promoted as the overarching framework for public procurement in Wales with a vision of sustainable procurement that moves towards an “outcomes based” approach for community benefit as opposed to cost-saving imperatives (Future Generations, 2020b: 128). This coincides with procurement of new technologies in the public sector becoming a key point of intervention for civil society organisations to advance data justice concerns. Such interventions range from developing appropriate safeguarding mechanisms such as impact assessments, non-industry expert consultations, and accounting for experiences of professionals and impacted communities.

3) Data Governance

The FGA proposes a scaling up of data-intensive technologies seen to sustain ‘smart cities’ and other forms of ‘digital connectivity’. However, it is not clear what the data governance framework for such a proposal would be and how it will align with the seven Wellbeing Goals outlined in the FGA. At the same time, a range of civil society organisations and research institutes that focus on democratic governance and public ownership of data have proposed different data governance models. These include suggestions of data trusts or data commons, nationalisation strategies, and cooperative reforms.

In order to explore the potential for data justice interventions and policy recommendations in these areas, the project will deploy the following methods:

- a) Desk research (particularly document and policy analysis)
- b) Interviews with stakeholders, including policy-makers involved in FGA and public sector bodies
- c) Policy-hacking workshop with stakeholders

Outcomes of the project will include 1) a project report and 2) a set of policy recommendations.

References:

Dencik, L. et al. (2019) Exploring data justice: conceptions, applications and directions. *Information, Communication and Society* 22(7): 873-881



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Hintz, A. et al. (forthcoming) *Civic participation in the scoring society*. Project Report. Data Justice Lab, Cardiff University.

4. INNOVATION

Please explain the innovative aspects of the proposed research project (<150 words).

The project will apply known initiatives to a particular regulatory mechanism, identifying evidence-based innovative ways for advancing civic participation and data justice.

5. NON-ACADEMIC PARTNERS

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

The aim is for the Future Generations Commissioner to provide time for interviews and participation in the policy-hacking workshop along with other colleagues involved in realizing the FGA.

6. SOCIAL IMPACT

Please describe the expected social impact of your project (<300 words). This should be understandable to the general public. To what extent does the proposal:

- 1) Consider and respond to the needs of a community (e.g. provide an example of the beneficiaries of your project and the value it would generate for them);*
- 2) Help to overcome/reduce/avoid barriers to access and participation in technology and services (e.g. provide an example of the barriers and how your project addresses such barriers);*
- 3) Support new connections between communities of interest (e.g. provide an example of how the project creates opportunities for new connections between people and/or fosters community building).*

The project will significantly help reduce barriers to access and participation in technology and services by identifying concrete pathways for enhancing civic participation with regards to a significant regulatory framework in Wales. It will particularly benefit impacted communities in the context of public sector technologies such as 'smart cities' by focusing on ways in which their experiences and voices can be better integrated in to the policy process and oversight of the deployment of new technologies. The project will also help establish a significant connection between policy-makers in the Welsh government, public sector workers, civil society organisations and researchers by actively engaging these actors in policy interventions pertaining to the role of technology in Welsh society. This will help provide insights for future government actions on policy processes surrounding uses of technology in the public sector.



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7. WORK PLAN

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

Proposed timeline: Start date 01.02.2021 – End date 01.07.2021

- Month 1: Background research, identifying useful examples pertaining to the three strategic areas
- Month 2-3: Conduct interviews and analyse interviews
- Month 4: Policy-hacking workshop
- Month 5: Write up project report and policy recommendations

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

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

The project report and policy recommendations will be professionally designed and printed and sent to targeted policy-makers. In addition to this, the project report and recommendations will be publicly accessible on the Data Justice Lab website and disseminated through social media, newsletters, and mailing lists. The policy-hacking workshop will also provide an avenue for dissemination and discussing initial findings with a core group of stakeholders.

9. EXISTING FUNDING

Will any existing funding be used on this project (e.g. PhD funding)? If so, please provide information about these and how they will be used for the project (<150 words).

10. EXPERIENCE & INTERACTION OF TEAM

Please indicate any previous relevant experience, qualifications and publications of the lead applicant and team. If applicable, please detail how the PI-postdoctoral partnership will be beneficial (<300 words).



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Professor Lina Dencik is a leading scholar on digital media and the politics of data and has written extensively on how technology and social justice intersect, particularly in relation to the public sector. Her recent publications include *Digital Citizenship in a Datafied Society* (w/ Hintz and Wahl-Jorgensen, Polity Press 2018) and *The Media Manifesto* (w/ Fenton, Freedman and Schlosberg, Polity Press 2020) that both engage with questions of technology, democracy and governance. As Co-Director of the Data Justice Lab, Dencik has led on previous research on public sector algorithms and is currently doing research on civic participation in the datafied society together with other colleagues, including Jessica Brand. Jessica has worked as a researcher for the Data Justice Lab over a number of years, carrying out research in areas of digital rights, civil society activity, and data governance. These previous collaborations will provide an invaluable foundation for the project.

11. BUDGET BREAKDOWN

Please provide a detailed budget breakdown and justification for your budget - for example: salary grade, point, duration and %FTE: specified journeys or conferences; identified items and quantities of consumables (<300 words).

- PI at 0.1 FTE for 5 months (£3,945)
- Research Assistant (Grade 5) 1.0 FTE for 3 months on casual contract (£9,165)
- Consumables (£5,000):
 - transcription of 20 interviews (£2000)
 - policy hacking workshop (£2000)
 - design/printing of report (£1000)
- Estates (£284)
- Indirect costs (£2,316)

Total: £20,716 (100% FeC) or £16,572 (80% FeC)

12. 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	£10,488	£13,110
Non-Staff Costs: Consumables	£4,000	£5,000
Non-Staff Costs: Facilities/Equipment		



Non-Staff Costs: Travel		
Non-Staff Costs: Estates (RA's only)	£227	£284
Non-Staff Costs: Indirect (RA's only)	£3,156	£3,945
Overall Cost*	Total Not-Equal Funding Requested: £16,572	Total for information only: £20,716

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 (£)

**Please note 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, please contact notequal@newcastle.ac.uk

Privacy Notice

Not-Equal is collecting your data to record submission of your application, and we will only contact you to provide you with information about the application and related Not-Equal activities.

You have provided your consent for the University to process your personal data for the purposes detailed above. You have the right to request that the University deletes this personal data at any time, noting if you do so, the University will be unable to provide you with information relating to Not-Equal. On an annual basis we will ask you to confirm that you wish to continue to receive this information: if you don't or you do not respond, we will delete your personal details within one calendar month.

We won't share your data with anyone outside the University, unless required to by law, and it will be stored securely within Open Lab at Newcastle University.

If you would like to discuss this further, please contact rec-man@newcastle.ac.uk

If you would like more information about how we manage personal data more generally, including your rights under law, and the contact details of the University's Data Protection Officer, please see our website: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/data.protection/PrivacyNotice.htm>



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