

NOT-EQUAL

EPSRC NetworkPlus: Social Justice through the Digital Economy

Project Final Review Form

Please submit this form within one month of completing your project to notequal@ncl.ac.uk.

GENERAL INFORMATION	
Lead Applicant (PI): Dr James Muldoon	Co-Investigators (names and organisations):
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Job Title: Senior Lecturer	Julian Siravo, Autonomy
Department: Politics	Supporting Partner(s):
Organisation: University of Exeter	Project Title: Co-Designing a Food Delivery Co-operative
	Project Reference Number: RES 0550 / 7461 / 199
	NE02.002

1. SUMMARY

Please outline the research challenge and question your project aimed to address, in less than 100 words.

This research project examined whether platform co-operatives offer a fairer model of doing business which offers improved conditions for workers, a more equitable distribution of profits, democratic governance over the business and genuine engagement with stakeholders. As an emergent model of doing business more research is needed to better understand the challenges and possibilities of platform co-operatives, particularly as they could operate in the food delivery industry. This project aimed to develop an understanding of the challenges facing a food delivery platform co-operative and to co-design principles, strategies and systems to overcome these challenges. It provided a road map for the creation of the systems and democratic governance structure of a platform co-operative that would draw on the best practices and ideas within the digital co-operative economy in addition to creating new innovations.

2. APPROACH

Please provide a summary of the approach of your research project, including any deviations from your work plan, the reasons for this and how you addressed any issues.



The research project has been successful in achieving its major research objectives and produced two important outputs: a policy paper and a report for co-operatives. The policy paper is entitled “[Delivering Rights: Alternatives in the Online Food Economy](#)” and was the result of extensive desk research and interviews with workers at co-operatives concerning how to best support their businesses and the co-operative sector. The second major output produced by the project was a report, “[How to Launch a Food Delivery Co-operative](#)” which brings together all of the evidence we have collected from emerging businesses in this field in the form of a practical and user-friendly guide for new co-operatives.

The process of producing these reports required a long lead up period in which we engaged in an initial literature review on platform co-operatives to learn from existing theoretical approaches. We synthesized this information to better understand what advantages the co-operative model could offer over traditional venture-capital-backed corporate platforms. We also reviewed the literature on food delivery platforms in order to understand why these workers were looking for a more ethical alternative.

Following this initial literature review we reached out to new platform co-operatives in the sector through our project partners Co-operatives UK and the European federation, CoopCycle. These two organisations put us in touch with all of the new co-operatives in this sector who also became partners in this collaborative project.

Our research team engaged with and gathered data from five UK based co-operatives: the Doorstep Collective in London, Chorlton Bike Deliveries, Manchester CoopCycle, the York Collective and Bristol CoopCycle. We conducted semi-structured interviews with member from each of the co-operatives and gathered data from them about their business operations. This covered questions such as how much they charged, when they operated, how many riders they had, how many customers, was their business growing, what were their plans for future growth, etc. We also organised a collaborative discovery workshop with all of the co-operatives in which participants collectively discussed shared problems and potentials for future collaborations. In addition, we engaged with policy specialists who have worked on creating new co-operatives in the UK from the New Economics Foundation and Co-operatives UK.

Once we had completed these initial engagement activities, we began working on drafting the two reports and maintained close contact with our stakeholders throughout this process. We held another workshop in which we discussed with the food delivery co-ops what kind of resources they thought would be useful for new co-operatives starting out and how these resources should be structured. On the basis of feedback and support from these co-operatives we put together an initial design structure for the “How to Launch” guide and shared drafts of this report with our stakeholders. Following a couple of rounds of feedback and some more discussions we decided that the How to Launch guide would be collaboratively released by Autonomy think tank, CoopCycle and Co-operatives UK to ensure that it was disseminated widely through each of the organisations’ networks and so that each organization could contribute to the production of the document.

3. ACTIVITIES & OUTPUTS

Please list any outputs from your project to be entered in the Not-Equal Researchfish submission. These include events, publications, workshops, webinars, invited talks, media coverage and tools (please include links to open source, git-hubs if relevant) that have resulted from your project.

Please include the following for each entry:



Title: Delivering Rights: Alternatives in the Online Food Economy

Date: 17 May 2021

Type of Event: Report

Primary Audience: policymakers, online food delivery companies, co-operative community

Key Outcomes/Impact: new proposals for reforming the online food delivery sector

URL: https://autonomy.work/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/NOTEQUAL_PT2_MAY17.pdf

Title: How to Launch a Food Delivery Co-operative

Date: 17 May 2021

Type of Event: Report

Primary Audience: co-operative community, potential new startups, international audience interested in food delivery industry

Key Outcomes/Impact: user-friendly guide to starting a cooperative in the UK

URL: https://autonomy.work/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/NOTEQUAL_PT1_MAY17.pdf

Title: App-Based Corporations Can't Just Ignore Labor Law

Date: 12 August 2021

Type of Event: Op/Ed

Primary Audience: general, gig economy stakeholders

Key Outcomes/Impact: Op/Ed which writes about stakeholders of this project, in particular the platform co-operative, Wings.

URL: <https://jacobinmag.com/2021/08/spain-delivery-platforms-glovo-gig-economy-employees>

4. INSIGHTS & IMPACT

Please describe the findings of your project and their significance in relation to potential or actual social impact.

The two major reports of the project outlined the reforms that would be needed to the gig economy in addition to providing a practical guide for new startups on how to develop and support their own food delivery co-operative. In addition to these reports being published, out work with one of our key stakeholders in London also led to this co-operative being awarded a large start up grant from Islington Council.

Wings is a collective of delivery riders who came together to deliver free food parcels during the Covid pandemic, working with a south London charity to deliver food to more than 800 households in need. While working on the idea for Wings before the pandemic struck, its founder Rich Mason - a former Deliveroo rider - was based at Islington Council's Fonthill Road affordable workspace run by worker co-operative Outlandish. Rich worked with us on creating the 'How to Launch' guide and on providing key insights for the reforms that could be made to the sector and the regulation urgently needed from government. More information is available here:

<https://www.islington.media/news/islington-council-backs-new-ethical-food-delivery-co-operative-wings>



5. REFLECTIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Please list the key highlights from your project, summarize any lessons learned from this work and outline any future directions or plans to continue activities beyond this project.

The highlight of the project was working directly with the co-operatives themselves and learning from their experiences. We had so many illuminating and insightful conversations with co-operative worker/owners who provided important grounded analysis to our report. Through this work we hope to continue working with these co-operatives and producing more studies of their journey. The PI of this project will be writing a Monitoring and Evaluations report of the 6 month trial of the Wings Co-operative with Islington Council which will be used as an evidence base for more grants from local councils in the future.

Further Information

If you have any further questions regarding this form, please contact notequal@ncl.ac.uk

