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 Helen Pallett **Email address: h.pallett@uea.ac.uk** **Job Title: Lecturer in Human Geography** **Department: School of Environmental Sciences** **Organisation: University of East Anglia**	**Co-Investigators (names and organisations): Professor Jason Chilvers (UEA), Simon Burall (Involve)** **Supporting Partner(s):** **Project Title: Just Public Algorithms** **Project Reference Number: NE30**

1. SUMMARY

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

The project aimed to explore ways to improve the democratic oversight and socially responsible development of algorithms in public services. It did this by piloting a new methodology for mapping diverse cases of public engagement with the topic across the UK, and analyzing the cases found to identify broader patterns and to distill citizen hopes and concerns in relation to these approaches.

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.

There were three main aspects to our approach:

1. We reviewed existing work on algorithms in public services, current responsible research and innovation (RRI) frameworks around algorithms, and emerging literature on public observatories.
2. We mapped existing examples of public engagement around the use of algorithms in public services in the UK identified through our literature review, web searches, and through suggestions from our stakeholders. These 77 cases were analysed for a number of descriptive characteristics – location, public service area, date, organisations involved – and analytical categories – issue framing and object, publics engaged, model of public engagement, technical affordances – in order to comprehensively map the

current field of public engagement in relation to these approaches. We also mapped and analysed the public hopes and concerns about these emerging approaches articulated within and across the cases.

3. We used our mapping and review work to conduct initial foresight around algorithms in public services, and to create a series of proposals for improved democratic oversight and socially responsible development of approaches to using algorithms in public services in partnership with stakeholders who were engaged through a 1-day workshop in February 2020.

The only deviation from our work plan is that outputs have taken considerably longer to produce than originally planned. At the time of writing there is one article from the project which is still due to be submitted for peer review (hopefully to the journal Big Data and Society).

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: Just Public Algorithms: How can we democratically govern algorithms for more socially-responsible public services?

Date: 06/02/2020
Type of Event: Stakeholder workshop
Number of People Reached: 20
Primary Audience: Professionals working in government, civil society, public engagement and academia with a strong interest in public engagement with the use of algorithms in public services.
Key Outcomes/Impact: Fed into analysis and findings of project. Communicated project findings to key stakeholders.
URL:

Title: 'Digitising pregnancy: the use of algorithms in NHS maternity care'.

Date: January 2020
Type of Event: Algorithms for Her Conference, Kings College London, UK.
Number of People Reached: Presentation to 50 people
Primary Audience: Academics
Key Outcomes/Impact: Communicated emerging project findings.
URL:

Title: 'Just public algorithms: How can we democratically govern algorithms for more socially-responsible public services?
Date: May 2021
Type of Event: Exploring Social Justice in an Age of Datafication conference, University of Cardiff, UK.

Number of People Reached: Presentation to 50 people
Primary Audience: Academics and civil society

Key Outcomes/Impact: Communicated findings to a new audience.
URL:

Title: 'Just public algorithms in UK healthcare'
Date: September 2021
Type of Event: Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers Annual International Conference 2021, London, UK.
Number of People Reached: Presentation to 20 people
Primary Audience: Geography academics
Key Outcomes/Impact: Communicated findings to a new audience
URL:

Title: 'Just Public Algorithms'
Date: 24/02/2021
Type of Event: Public Attitudes to Data and AI workshop with UK civil servants (run by the PADAI network)
Number of People Reached: Presentation to 60 people
Primary Audience: civil servants
Key Outcomes/Impact: Communicated findings to a new audience
URL:

Title: Public engagement with algorithms in public services
Date: April 2021
Type of Event: Briefing note
Number of People Reached: 99 downloads, 102 page visits
Primary Audience: academics and other professionals
Key Outcomes/Impact:
URL: https://uea3s.files.wordpress.com/2019/10/public-engagement-with-algorithms-in-public-services.pdf

4. Insights & Impact

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

Key findings of the Just Public Algorithms project:

1. Public engagement with the use of algorithms in public services was already widespread and diverse – even pre-covid – with examples going back to 2013. This shows that citizens already have the capabilities to engage with and foresee potential problems and benefits of these emerging approaches, and are already raising issues which need to be taken into account in their governance.
2. Healthcare and policing are the public service areas where we have seen the most public engagement around the use of algorithms.
3. Institutionally orchestrated and issue-focused forms of public engagement with the use of algorithms in public services are most well-known and influential in shaping governance, however, other more action-oriented or more citizen-led forms of engagement are also emergent and need to be listened to.
4. Citizens foresee some potential benefits to the use of algorithms in public services, particularly around information provision and enabling more efficient use of resources, yet they also raise a large number of

concerns many of which have been explored in the data justice / digital ethics literatures, including issues around discrimination, privacy and consent. In addition to this, in some cases of public engagement participants appear to be raising broader issues in relation to the adoption of algorithms in public services, such as the foreclosing of other forms of service provision.

5. There is a need to continually monitor and learn from cases of public engagement with these approaches in order to ensure that they are developing in a socially responsible manner, and to foresee potential problems and challenges. This work of mapping public engagement is also beneficial to multiple actors involved in developing or orchestrating public engagement with these approaches in order to see broader patterns across and connections between discrete cases of engagement.

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.

We feel that this project demonstrated the value of mapping diverse forms of public engagement with algorithms in public services, in order to show the centres of power orchestrating these engagements and to spot broader patterns in citizen responses and concerns. We are actively seeking funding to extend this pilot project in order to map the explosion of public engagement with the use of algorithms in public services and beyond which we have seen since the start of the pandemic, and to more broadly contribute to agendas relating to the responsible innovation of algorithms and related technologies. We are creating new collaborations with computer scientists and health researchers, as well as local technology companies, in order to do this work.

Further Information

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