



EPSRC Network+: Social Justice through the Digital Economy

Micro Project: Application Form

We are seeking funding proposals from shortlisted candidates for Not Equal’s first call for micro projects. For full guidance please see details of the call on the Not Equal [website](#).

Micro research projects can be up to 3 months in length. We expect to fund up to 8 micro research projects of up to £5k (80%FEC) for this first funding call.

Please submit this form before the deadline of **5pm, 30th April 2019** to notequal@ncl.ac.uk.

Applicants will be advised on the outcome of their proposal by the 30th May 2019.

GENERAL INFORMATION	
<p>Lead Applicant (PI): Harry Weeks</p> <p>Email address: Harry.Weeks@edu.ac.uk</p> <p>Job Title: Teaching Fellow</p> <p>Department: History of Art</p> <p>Organisation: Edinburgh College of Art</p>	<p>Co-Investigators (names and organisations): Lucas Ferguson-Sharp, Northumbria University</p> <p>Supporting Partner(s): The Newbridge Project, Newcastle University</p> <p>Project Title: Opening Doors: Art and Inequality in the Platform Economy</p> <p>Eol Reference Number: NE65</p>

1. SUMMARY

Please provide a summary of your proposed research project (<300 words)

This project examines the current and potential impacts of technology, in particular digital platforms, on the entrenched inequalities of the cultural sector. It will consider the platform economy and gigwork in relation to art’s economies, both as an increasingly prevalent source of supplemental income for artists, and as a parallel to the precarious economies of art. Through collaboration between The NewBridge Project and Newcastle University, the project seeks impact at two scales: 1) developing practical solutions to issues of unequal access to the cultural sector through open forums for artists held at NewBridge; 2) building upon Harry Weeks’s current research into intersections between the platform and cultural economies, oriented to both academic and policy contexts.



Prioritising the experiences of artists and actors in the North East's art economy, the open forums to be held at NewBridge will offer a context for honest discussion regarding how cultural workers are financially able to produce their work. These discussions will revolve around the existing roles platform technologies play in facilitating cultural production, the potential for these technologies to either ameliorate or exacerbate existing inequalities, and how technology might be put to work in addressing cultural inequality. Academic contributors working around the platform and cultural economies will be invited to participate in these forums, bringing cutting-edge research into direct conversation with the lived realities of artists in the North East. The forums will develop NewBridge's recent focus on labour through the exhibition 'Workforce' (March-April 2019) and the long-term research project 'Workspace'. These forums will also provide a knowledge base upon which research on technology and cultural inequality will be produced. This builds upon a pilot study enacted in Edinburgh from August 2018 - February 2019.

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

Please describe how your proposal helps understand, explore or develop practical responses to social justice issues in the digital economy; and how does your proposal enhance a cross-disciplinary way of working. Please also indicate which of the Not Equal challenge areas your proposal focuses on e.g Algorithmic Social Justice, Digital Security for All and Fairer Futures for Business and Workforce (<500 words).

This project responds to the Fairer Futures for Businesses and Workforces challenge area in its commitment to addressing the entrenched inequalities of the cultural sector and thus advocating and working towards social justice in culture. We see the digital economy as being fundamentally tied up with this issue in three key respects. Firstly, as a supplementary economy to the cultural economy; secondly, as an economy with a great deal of commonalities with the cultural economy; and thirdly, in light of the increased use of digital platforms within the cultural sector, perhaps most notably embodied by Etsy.

1) Supplementary economy - The question of labour has consistently been highlighted (eg. 2018's Panic Report by Create London) as a key site in the cultural sector's drive towards addressing inequality, given the un- and underpaid work prevalent within the sector and the barriers to access this produces. The Arts Council England's 'Livelihood of Visual Artists' report (2018) highlights that only 10% of artists believe they make enough to live on from their art practice. Harry Weeks's research into the cultural and platform economies in Edinburgh has found that digital platforms (Airbnb, Deliveroo and People Per Hour in particular) are increasingly being turned to by artists seeking to supplement their income. This project seeks to further build the knowledge base for this research, whilst also offering a context in which artists can collectively address their working situations and conditions.

2) Parallels - The digital economy, and especially the platform economy, is a relatively new and swiftly evolving field, fraught with barriers to solidarity, collective organisation and workers' protections. New perspectives are urgently required in order to address and resolve these tensions. Given the many similarities between the cultural and platform economies - precarity, freelancing, lack of unionisation, informal contracts etc. - as well as the shared demographics of the two sectors, we see knowledges to be gained regarding the cultural sector as eminently relatable to digital contexts.

3) Platforms in culture - The digital economy is already embedded within the cultural sector through platforms such as Etsy which provide a marketplace for atomised freelance cultural producers. The insights gleaned from the forums and subsequent research would provide considerable grounds upon which to propose ways in which



these platforms might protect the interests of producers. These will feed into debates regarding platform cooperativism as espoused by the likes of Trebor Scholz and Frank Pasquale.

The project's responses to these three issues are necessarily interdisciplinary. We will bring together researchers and academics from the fields of sociology, economics, geography, art history and theory, as well as art practitioners and organisations representing cultural producers. Specifically, we will invite to participate in forums: Janie Nicoll and Ailie Rutherford, artists whose 'In Kind' project examined the use of free labour within the arts; Dr Orian Brook, Dr David O'Brien, and Dr Mark Taylor, authors of the 'Panic!' report; as well as local organisations North East CVAN and A-N that advocate for cultural worker rights, and national workers' rights organisations, Artist Union England, Independent Workers Union of Great Britain, and the Precarious Workers' Brigade.

3. 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 NewBridge Project is a leading contemporary arts organisation in Newcastle and a forum for social impact. As an artist-led organisation it is responsive to its socio-political surroundings and is focused on community collaboration. NewBridge has the infrastructure to deliver a project of this scale, having a public facing gallery space, bookshop, workshop, meeting spaces and expertise. It has a well known public facing programme and is an ideal venue for research and creating social change in the arts having recently programmed research projects looking at social deprivation and climate change. The NewBridge Project community of over 100 studio members, 50 associate members and hundreds of yearly visitors will be an accessible audience for the project and will be invested in the research outcomes.

4. DELIVERABLES AND SOCIAL IMPACT

Explain the outcomes and deliverables of your project as well as the expected social impact. Please ensure this answer is suitable for a lay audience (<300 words).

The forums will be of direct benefit to NewBridge and its immediate creative communities, offering a context for stigma-free discussion of the working conditions of artists, as well as productive conversation with local and national organisations towards remedies to art's ingrained inequalities. This will indirectly serve the wider creative communities of the North East and it is hoped beyond, by actively pushing for a more accessible, less homogenous cultural sector.

The forums will also work towards the production of a digital resource pack which will be freely shared online so that confessional and conversational workshops on labour and inequality are reproducible. This pack is inspired by the Precarious Workers' Brigade's 'Training for Exploitation' facilitation tool which helps educators working on 'professional practice' programmes to lead critical and reflective workshops on issues such as precarity and employability. This is viewed as a simple yet constructive means of using the digital as a means of directly intervening in real-life practices. Given the parallels between the cultural and platform economies, the tool is seen as being eminently applicable to similar ventures directed towards gig workers.



Research based on the conversations during the forum is designed to produce academic discussion on the almost entirely neglected question of the supplemental labour that supports art, as well as inform policy and practice in the art sector through collaboration with organisations such as NECVAN and a-n. It is expected that the research will contribute an evidence base to underpin future updates to the Artists' Union's Rates of Pay for Artists guidelines.

5. WORK PLAN

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

Sept

Discussion Group

The project will begin with an open discussion with artists from different communities to discuss working conditions, how artists support themselves. This initial discussion will be lead by Teresa Cisneros who has valuable experience working with arts organisations on diversity and accessibility, as well as creating stigma free space.

Unity Workshop

The unions that bind our workforces together will play host to this discussion. We will bring together a range of interested parties together namely the Artist Union England, The Independent Workers Union of Great Britain, North East CVAn and A-N to discuss the similarities between gig-economy workers and creative workers, the role of unions and strategies that can be used to empower workers.

Oct

Beyond Etsy

A workshop examining the role of platforms such as Etsy for artists to sell their work and the potential positives and negatives of these technologies of further implementations of these technologies

In Kind Workshop

This workshop will look at the prevalence of In Kind labour in endemic in the arts and how to fight it with Janie Nicoll and Ailie Rutherford. The workshop will examine their research and explore strategies in fighting these trends.

Nov

Panic!

A discussion group run by writers of the *Panic!* report. The workshop will examine the findings of the report and discuss policy changes within the arts sector that can address the issues of diversity, accessibility and lack of equitable pay.

Precarious Workers Brigade



This workshop will focus on exploring and developing practical solutions to the previously discussed issues. It will be hosted by the Precarious Workers Brigade which already has experience in creating tools for workers to engage with precarity in their working lives.

Research emerging from the events will be completed between September 2019 and January 2020

6. 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 forums at The NewBridge Project will constitute both a form of dissemination, and a collaborative elaboration of findings, to the creative communities surrounding The NewBridge Project. This constitutes the project's 'narrow-yet-deep' engagement. Broader engagement and dissemination will emerge from the research based upon these events. This research will lead towards academic publication in *Cultural Sociology*, and towards a report written for the public and professionals in the sector. Based upon the Scottish Contemporary Art Network's collaboration on a similar report emerging out of the Edinburgh pilot study for this project, it is expected that a-n would be keen collaborators on a report, but contributing towards its production, and crucially its dissemination. In the spirit of the honesty which underpins the project's attitude towards artists' working conditions and reliance on second incomes, a substantial portion of this report will be devoted to personal reflections from participants on their own experiences, in the belief that this opening up will encourage more open discussions on artistic labour more broadly.

7. EXISTING FUNDING

Will any existing funding be used for this project (e.g PhD funding)?

The project builds upon research enacted in Edinburgh by Harry Weeks as part of the *Platforming Creativity* project. This project was supported by a £5000 grant from the University of Edinburgh's Innovation Initiative Grant as well as £1000 funding from the Scottish Contemporary Art Network. This supported two public events as well as payment for a research assistant to conduct interviews. Although this project is now complete, the proposed research picks up on many of the strands that emerged from *Platforming Creativity*, most significantly the focus on inequality and social justice.

We will be applying for funding from Arts Council England to further expand on the research, as well as the reach and public outcome of the project.

8. 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).



Please see the attached spread sheet for a full budget break down,

The workshop facilitator fees are based off of A-N guide for artist fees and day rates that can be found here: <https://www.a-n.co.uk/resource/guidance-on-fees-and-day-rates-for-visual-artists/>

Most of the artist we will be commissioning will have 10 years experience thus charging a day rate of £250.

We will deliver 6 workshops with an extra £50 reserved for workshop consumables

For the recording of workshops £160 has been allocated for equipment to record the workshops. A further £450 has been allocated to both the creation of the digital tool kit and the practical tool kit. For the travel expenses we have allocated £80 per workshop facilitator for daily expenses and £60 for travel to and from Newcastle. Finally the space rental will be given in kind from the Newbridge Project.

9. 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	2240	2800
Non-Staff Costs: Consumables	240	300
Non-Staff Costs: Facilities/Equipment	928	1160
Non-Staff Costs: Travel	768	960
Non-Staff Costs: Estates (RA's only)	0	0
Non-Staff Costs: Indirect (RA's only)	0	0
Overall Cost*	Total Not Equal Funding Requested: £4000	Total for information only: £5000

Directly Incurred 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 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 Kate Kelly (Not Equal Project Manager) on 0191 2088268.

