

INSTANT JOURNAL

**Exploring what the
future holds for
practice-based PhDs**

ISSUE THREE

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Design Research Society Conference

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foreword

PhD by Design is a forum where to vocalise, discuss and work through many of the topical issues of conducting a practice-based PhD in design and to explore how these are re-shaping the field of design.

The Instant Journal is dedicated to gathering materials produced during PhD By Design events.

Issue #3 has been produced during the Design Research Society conference held in Brighton from the 28th - 30th June 2016. The Call for this issue was formulated as 31 questions (page 49) generated during the PhD By Design day on the 27th June, at the start of the conference. The resulting materials have been collected throughout the conference.

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POST-DOC SURVIVAL

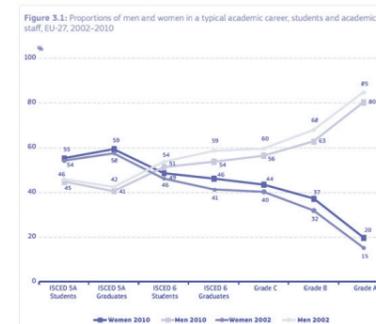
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With the academic and industry-based research environment firmly embedded in neoliberal politics, precarious working environments are a problem even for those who manage to complete a doctorate. In many countries, early career academics face harsh prospects with low wage, insecure sessional teaching work and precarious fractional contracts. Post-docs are vulnerable in times of extreme cost cutting measures by universities. We can work hard and hope to get that elusive permanent position that pays a living wage – but many of us feel like we can't afford to risk the precarious work that we might have by campaigning for better working conditions. In this workshop we discuss working conditions for designers and design researchers. We will start with a panel that will discuss post-doc working conditions. This panel will catalyse a collective conversation on survival as an early career design researchers. *What comes after the PhD? How does this differ across countries and shape this reality collectively? Opening up discussions about what kind of environment this creates is timely, especially as ever more designers opt for research-led trajectories. What do we want and need to do our jobs well and have economically sustainable and emotionally satisfying lives? What kind of practices, skills and collective actions can help us in creating this environment?*

Post-doc Survival #drs2016 #phdbydesign



Leaky pipeline at the #postdocsurvival workshop @phdbydesign #drs2016 #research #gender ec.europa.eu/research/scien ...



1/2 I certainly cannot commit all my evenings and weekends to working on publications as I have family commitments

6:31 am - 27 Jun 2016

Can't apply for most funding while post-doc, but need successful funding bids to get permanent post #catch22 #postdocsurvival

2/2 and am exhausted from preparing all the teaching and admin from my temporary fixed contract teaching jobs! #postdocsurvival @phdbydesign

Self-help Guide: The Post-doc Researcher

- Survive on your own, use a map or build a raft together with others!
- Get together with peers and supervisors to map the post-doc landscape and the possibilities that your PhD can open up for you.
- Make sure you can explain what design has to offer. Potential employers or collaborators might not understand how design can help.
- Play the impact card when collaborating with people from other disciplines.
- Use your time as a PhD student to build a network.
- Apply for funding even if the funders are not narrowly focused on design. Learn to describe how design can contribute to a wide range problem solving tasks and research agendas across disciplines and sectors.
- Align your practice with what is called for, e.g. speculative design can align itself with public engagement. This can help you secure funding for your work.
- Make your salaries known and don't leave room for hidden negotiations.
- Lobby your design school to invest in their graduates.

Institutional Guide: The Design School

- Institutions should offer seed funding for developing research projects.
- PhD consortia should contain post-doc possibilities.
- Survey other fields for supportive structures. What practices could be leveraged?
- In the UK, engage HEFCE and RCUK (or equivalents) to create post-doc possibilities.
- Make sure all staff are aware that it is unethical to ask someone with a PhD to work for free. Compulsory payment for post-docs to be paid for any work they do.
- Create a budget to pay visiting post-docs for any work they are asked to do.

Network Guide: The Design Research Society

- The DRS should invite design research institutions to adopt a Concordat to support the career development of early career design researchers.
- The DRS can create a category of membership for reduced price for post-docs. Post-docs on very low salaries or hourly wages and insecure contracts should not pay the same DRS membership price as professors.
- Post-docs members can complete a survey each year reviewing institutional practice. Design schools will be rated by the degree of support they offer PhDs and postdocs. This will take a form similar to the People and Planet League Awards (UK).
- Reward good practice by giving HR and other awards each year to the design schools that with the best employment practices and career paths in compliance with Concordat. (This will be based on the survey completed by post-docs).
- The DRS can create a specific post-doc best practice statement and group.
- The DRS should publish a statement requesting members to pledge to stop asking unsalaried or part-time postdocs to do free talks, lectures, etc. All teaching staff must be paid. If there is no budget, professors should use their own salaries to pay postdocs. Or whatever. Stop this now!
- The DRS should develop a strategy to encourage institutions that are setting up new Masters-level courses in design to hire PhDs in design. Design research degrees should be developed by design researchers with PhDs, not people from other disciplines who suddenly like design.

These proposals are outcomes of the Post-doc Survival Workshop run by Bianca Elzenbaumer and Joanna Boehnert at the PhD by Design event on 27 June 2016 with contributions by Dan Lockton and Cameron Tonkinwise (along with the workshop participants). Many thanks to everyone who contributed.