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STUDIES

Florence, 3/11/2020

VACANCY NOTICE for a RESEARCH ASSISTANT

The EUI has a vacancy for a Research Assistant in the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies.

Reference number: V/RA/RSC/47/2020 (please quote in all correspondence)

Department:	Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies
Length of contract and % of full-time:	Starting 16 January until 31 August 2021. Full-time
Salary indication:	<p>Basic monthly net salary approx. 2250 EUR</p> <p>More information about conditions of employment is available here.</p>
Director of project:	Prof. Brigid Laffan
Title of project:	<p>The European Research Council (ERC) project “Blockchain Gov”, directed by Primavera De Filippi is an interdisciplinary research project that will study the impact of blockchain technology on new and existing governance systems, and its consequences for legitimacy and trust. The project is a 5 year long (2021-2026) EU-funded (ERC grant of €2M), hosted at the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique (France) and the European University Institute (Italy), with Principal Investigator and advisors from the Berkman Klein Center at Harvard University.</p> <p>The project will investigate the governance of existing blockchain systems and analyse the power dynamics at play within these systems. This will be done through the study of formal and informal governance practices in existing blockchain communities, analysed in light of legal and political theory. The project relies on both an empirical and theoretical approach, with a view to develop a theoretical framework for distributed governance. It will explore the use of blockchain technology to support new models of distributed governance characterised by more decentralized and participatory decision-making, greater transparency and accountability. Drawing from these insights, the project will elaborate new distributed governance practices for blockchain communities that will be tested and implemented</p>

	<p>by selected pilot communities. Finally, the project will assess and support the adoption of the new governance models at the community level, at the institutional level and at the global governance level.</p> <p>Blockchain Gov is building an interdisciplinary research team comprising legal scholars, social and political scientists, who will work in close collaboration with computer scientists and blockchain engineers. All team members are expected to already have acquired a proper understanding of blockchain technology. All should be interested in exploring the potential that blockchain technology offers in the field of distributed governance, while nonetheless maintaining a critical stance towards the technology.</p>
Job description:	<p>The Principal Investigator is looking for a legal scholar with expertise in legal theory, political theory, collective action theory and/or commons-based governance to investigate the governance of blockchain networks and decentralized blockchain-based applications. The research will be mainly focused on analysing collective action problems in blockchain governance, by exploring the interplay between the “rule of law” and the “rule of code”.</p> <p>The scope of the post-doc position comprises the following research activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Blockchain as a source of trust and confidence <p>The post-doc will explore the multiple meanings of “trust” in different disciplines: trust as security, trust as relationship, trust as the flipside of risk, etc. Drawing from the distinction between “trust” and “confidence”—as theorized by Luhmann and others—the researcher will investigate the impact of blockchain technology on both confidence and trust and the inherent limitations of a “trustless” technology.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Collective action, Ostrom and commons-based governance <p>Collective action problems amongst blockchain participants will be analysed in light of Ostrom’s work on commons-based governance, as an alternative to public choice theories like Olson’s theory of collective action. In particular, Ostrom’s Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework will be used to investigate ways in which a blockchain-based system can be managed as a commons-pool resource, and whether it can work as a self-governing system that operates in between the market and the state.</p> <p>Incentives and power dynamics will be studied through the lenses of Benkler’s work on commons-based peer-production, the governance of open source software and other online</p>

	<p>communities—and contrasted with more mainstream economic approaches based on game theory and mechanism design, which often ignores the complex range of non-economic factors affecting the behavior of different stakeholders.</p> <p>3. Blockchain and distributed governance</p> <p>The research will explore new and existing governance tools (on-chain or off-chain) to design a series of decentralized governance models for blockchain communities, with attributes of transparency, accountability, representativity and inclusion. Each model will comprise three interrelated layers: (a) the code and protocols that define the governance by the infrastructure; (b) social norms that define the governance of the infrastructure; and (c) economic incentives or disincentives embedded into the platform that determine the overall pay-off structure. The work will draw from existing attempts at distributed governance—ranging from traditional market-based approaches (e.g. proof of work, proof of stake, futarchy) to more meritocratic and experimental approaches (e.g. liquid democracy, quadratic voting, etc.)—adjusting them or revisiting them as needed. Beyond actual decision-making, this research will also prototype alternative dispute resolution systems, combining on-chain and off-chain tools to ensure some form of due process. Some of these models will be tested by the communities piloting the Participatory Action Research, providing essential data points regarding the extent to which these models do in fact contribute to achieving decentralized and participatory decision-making.</p> <p>The post-doc researcher will also be expected to undertake the following tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Guide and support the work of doctoral students in investigating the operations of both formal and informal governance structures in blockchain communities; ● Work with a multidisciplinary team of legal scholars, political scientists, computer scientists, to support pilots communities experimenting with new governance structures. ● Present the main outcomes of the research in international conferences, and publish in leading research journals. ● Maintain fluent communication with international academic groups, blockchain projects and the developer community to facilitate collaboration and to promote cross-pollination.
Place of work:	To be agreed

Qualifications:	<p>Essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PhD (completed or planning to be submitted in less than a year) in legal theory or political theory, ideally focused on collective action, commons-based governance or related fields - Demonstrated interest and pre-existing knowledge in any of the following topics: blockchain technology, peer-to-peer technologies, distributed governance, commons-based peer-production, science and technology studies, Internet governance. <p>Desirable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Research publications in relevant conferences and/or journals -Demonstrated interest and previous experience with blockchain technology, active or passive participation in existing blockchain communities or projects. -Good teamwork and interpersonal skills, collaboration, empathy and adaptation. -Ability to work in multidisciplinary teams, autonomous and critical thinking -Interest or experience in social movements, activism, commons-oriented initiatives, co-ops, and/or open collaborative communities -Underrepresented minorities in the blockchain space to increase the team diversity
Languages:	-Fluency in English, excellent writing and presentation skills
Contact details	<p>For more information contact Maria Elena Cau</p> <p>MariaElena.Cau@EUI.eu</p>
Deadline	The closing date for applications is: 17 November 2020 at midnight (Florence time)
How to apply	Fill in the on line application form and upload documents as requested