

# MELISSA RENAU CANO, PhD

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## PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCHER AND ANALYST

**PhD holder with +7 years of experience** supporting civic tech, healthcare, and nonprofit organizations in **community engagement, research and policy analysis**. I partner with local community-based organizations to support their research and organizational development needs.

## WORK EXPERIENCE

### **Research and Evaluation Consultant** | *Seattle, US*

August 2024 – Current

I plan and execute projects focused on building resilience, rethinking service and program delivery in a moment of crisis. How?

- **Informing programs and policies** through participatory research, centering the voices and experiences of impacted communities.
- Conducting **program evaluations** not just to measure impact, but to recommend change and spark innovation.
- **Improving digital experiences** through user research and service design.
- Facilitating **co-creation processes** that help organizations adapt services to constrained resources.
- **Planning and implementing funding strategies**, from crafting innovative crowdfunding campaigns to designing and writing competitive grant proposals.
- **Organizing and participating in events** that build bridges across nonprofits, local governments, academia and social enterprises creating alliances that can respond to today's complex challenges.
- **Clients:** University of California Irvine (UCI), Holon Design Agency.

### **United States Digital Response (USDR)** | *Remote, US*

**Researcher** | April 2024 – December 2024

- Worked in three projects for **various U.S. government agencies**, providing training to government partners through documentation and clear explanations of methodologies, techniques, and approaches.
- **Designed and led research**, including tree testing, heuristic analysis, user interviews, and Google Analytics reviews, to inform the redesign of a local government's **Healthcare and Human Services website**.
- Conducted content testing research for **Spanish-speaking users** to enhance form design and **improve access** to unemployment benefits.
- Performed user interviews and developed a service blueprint to identify **key pain points and bottlenecks** in the procurement process for women and minority owned small construction businesses.

### **Suara** | *Hybrid, Spain*

**Research and Evaluation Analyst – Research & Development Department** | April 2022 – November 2023

- **Directed a strategic digitalization research project** for the company's most critical branch, impacting 3,600 workers and influencing 65% of company revenue (\$76M). Analyzed market context, company capabilities, and user needs to **guide policy development and the agile rollout of five technical pilots** now in the product-market fit stage.
- Led **user research** to identify pain points, developing user stories, scenarios, and sprint-ready requirements. Worked with designers to test and deploy a redesigned UI, reducing turnover by 20%.
- Co-created an onboarding manual and troubleshooting guide with designers, developers, and operations teams, **streamlining processes** and cutting customer resolution time from 60 to 20 minutes. Later integrated onboarding directly into the platform UI for scalable impact.
- Led the **co-design, testing and implementation of scalable solutions** that reduced onboarding time from over a month to one week.

**Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC) | Hybrid, Spain**

**Scientific Researcher – [Internet Interdisciplinary Institute](#) | November 2018 – March 2022**

- Conducted **qualitative and quantitative research techniques** (e.g., interviews, focus groups, workshops, surveys, and statistical analysis) with over 150 participants across 4 international cross-cultural projects.
- Developed **reports, policy briefs, statistical analyses, artifacts (journeys, service blueprints) and presentations**, providing evidence-driven recommendations that influenced the European Platform Work Directive, the Riders Law in Spain and HR practices in three companies, enhancing onboarding efficiency and job satisfaction.
- **Built and coordinated an interdisciplinary cross-sectoral network of 150+ members**, securing \$520k in funding and leading a 30-person team to ensure objectives were met, impacts were achieved, and coordination across multiple working groups was seamless.
- Delivered **strategic recommendations** and disseminated findings to public and private stakeholders via **reports, press releases, public speeches, and advisory sessions, fostering community engagement and influencing policy and organizational change.**

## **EDUCATION**

**Ph.D. in Society, Technology and Culture (Internet Studies) | Open University of Catalonia, Spain | June 2024**

- “Platform Work: A Holistic Analysis of Platforms' Business Models and a Focus on Riders' Flexibility”

**MS. Sociology | University of Barcelona, Spain | July 2019**

**B.A. Business Administration | Pompeu Fabra University, Spain | July 2017**

Erasmus Exchange: Maastricht University, Netherlands (2016)

## **LANGUAGES**

- Spanish (native), Catalan (native), English (proficient, C2 level)