

Project Proposal Application

To be completed by the lead proposed supervisor,
with input from the non-HE Partner Organisation(s).



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council

SECTION 1: PROJECT SUMMARY AND APPLICANT DETAILS			
Proposed Project Title:	Interrogating colonialism, climate crisis and mass human migration through decolonial curating		
Project Summary: <i>(Maximum 100 words)</i>	Rooted in decolonial curatorial theory and practice, this PhD interrogates the idea of the Anthropocene by critically examining interconnections between colonialism, climate crisis and mass human migration. It will do this through building collaborative relationships with impacted international visual artists. Working with Northumbria and partners, D6: Culture in Transit , a Newcastle-based visual arts organisation with international reach, the candidate will: work with international visual artists to co-produce multi-faceted interpretations of the nexus between colonialism, climate crisis and mass human migration; interrogate and reflect on the extent to which such artistic interventions can contribute to social justice through decolonial curatorial practices.		
Host University:	Northumbria University		
Name of Non-HE Partner Organisation(s): <i>(Add more lines if needed)</i>			
1. D6: Culture in Transit			
2.			
Contact(s) at Non-HE Partner Organisation(s): <i>(Add more lines if needed)</i>			
Name:	Clymene Christoforou	Email:	clymene@d6culture.org
Name:		Email:	
Primary AHRC Subject Area: <i>Select one subject area from the list here. Do not add or amend subjects - there will not be a corresponding Subject Area panel to assess the application.</i>	Applied Arts: History, Theory and Practice		
Does the project include a Creative Practice component?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you consider the project to be interdisciplinary?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
If you consider the project to be interdisciplinary, please state why: <i>(Maximum 100 words. Note, all applications will be assessed by the appropriate primary subject area cross-institutional panel.)</i>			

SECTION 2: PROJECT PROPOSAL AND CASE FOR SUPPORT

Please provide full details of the proposal and make your case for support below:

(Maximum 750 words)

The concept of the Anthropocene has been critiqued for its depiction of “humanity” as universal and undifferentiated, and its consequent failure to acknowledge that the racialisation of the peoples and ecologies of the Global South through colonialism, has fuelled capitalist political economies. And it is the unrelenting march of capitalism that has led to appropriation, dispossession, extraction, and waste production (Davis, et al, 2019; Pulido, 2018, Bartell, 2021), that is today’s climate crisis. This understanding of the underpinning racial logics of the climate crisis led Verges (2017) to argue for the replacement of the Eurocentric notion of ‘Anthropocene’ with that of the ‘*racial Capitalocene*’. Yusoff (2018) similarly contended that while colonialism and imperialism have been ‘ending worlds’ for centuries, it is only recently that the ‘Anthropocene’ is acknowledging the ‘extinction’ that its quest for modernity and freedom has visited particularly on the poorer countries of the Global South. Davis (2017, p. 763) noted that our world is now governed by ‘ecodical logics’ which are neither inevitable nor innate to “human nature” but instead result from decisions that originate in colonisation. This concept of the racial Capitalocene attests to the intricate link between colonialism and the climate crisis. An important consequence of the climate crisis is its effect on mass human migration, and it is surprising that there have not been more critical theorisations of this link (Black et al, 2011; McLeman, 2014). This project submits that not only has the relationship between the climate crisis and mass human migration been under-theorised, but crucially that the colonial underpinnings of these social justice concerns have been largely neglected. This PhD will (1) interrogate the colonialism/climate crisis/mass human migration interrelationship through decolonial curating, thereby contributing deeper, more creative insights to this complex nexus; and (2) through decolonial curating, develop a model for how such critical curatorial practices might contribute to decolonial processes.

Curators, as pivotal figures in cultural production, have historically had the power to decide whose histories are told and how these are narrated. Recognising the continued coloniality of curating, decolonial curating advocates for epistemic disobedience and the manifestation of plausible alternatives to dominant Eurocentric paradigms and practices (Muñiz-Reed, 2017). There has however been limited engagement with decolonial curating, how this might be used creatively to interrogate and theorise the relationship between colonialism, climate crisis and mass human migration, and its potential contribution to processes of decolonisation.

Research Questions

RQ1: How can the interconnections between colonialism, the climate crisis and mass human migration be critically theorised through decolonial curating?

RQ2: How can the working practices of impacted international artists manifest the colonialism/climate crisis/mass human migration nexus, and can these practices contribute to social justice?

RQ3: How can decolonial curating create models for interrogating artists’ practices innovatively, ethically and with care?

RQ4: What are the problematics associated with decolonial curating and can this contribute productively to processes of decolonisation?

Methodology

The research will be underpinned by decolonial curating, a critical form of curating which the project locates within wider arts-based research (ABR) methodologies. Decolonial curating is fluid, open-ended and meaning making is co-produced. Here the curator is a “cultural agent of social change” (Fraser & Ming Wai Jim, 2018) and engages in activism/social justice work.

Decolonial curating challenges dominant Eurocentric discourses and creates spaces for the voices of the marginalised and silenced. Examples of decolonial curating include Cristiana Abrahams’ 2019 exhibition - [Protests and Pedagogy: Representations, Memories and Meanings](#) - which manifested the previously silenced experiences of those students of colour involved in the 1969 student uprising at Sir George Williams University in Canada: and Chandra Frank’s 2016 exhibition ‘[Re\(as\)sisting Narratives](#)’ which questioned and reframed the underexplored legacies of slavery and colonialism between South Africa and the Netherlands.

Drawing on decolonial curating, this project similarly seeks to manifest the voices of international visual artists to co-produce conceptualisations of the complex interconnections between colonialism, the climate crisis and mass human migration. The candidate will collaborate with these artists through open, honest, and reflective dialogues individually and/or in groups; and will undertake public engagement events.

Essential for this project is the candidate’s embeddedness in the culture, environment, and methodologies of the CDA partner, D6: Culture in Transit, and their sister organisation [D6: EU](#). Both organisations are research-based visual arts producers that facilitate regional, national, and international artists (often artists experiencing forced migration) whose practice as research represents an exploration of heritage at the intersection of migration, environmental sustainability, gender, social justice, race, institutional practice, and decolonisation as exemplified in their programme [Contested Desires](#).

Provide details of any resources and facilities, including equipment, fieldwork, training, etc., that will be required to complete the project successfully. NBC has limited Research Training Support Grant funding, which may affect the feasibility of high-cost projects. Please note where you might also secure additional funding, (e.g. partner organisations; department or school). Include estimated costs:

(Maximum 200 words)

Northumbria University will provide access to/use of:

- Bespoke studio space, specialist workshops and a technical resource centre for advanced AV equipment.
- Public-facing, research-based exhibition/workshop/conference spaces (BxNU Experimental Studio, Gallery North, BALTIC)

D6 will provide in-kind costs:

- Access to regional, national, and international networks across arts and culture.
- Spaces (desk space, studio, and meeting space), facilities and AV equipment for the student to meet and work alongside artists and practitioners as part of their fieldwork, throughout the duration of the PhD.
- In-house mentoring/training with D6 staff, Board, and Associate Artists in methods of co-production with international artists (including support for artist-led research, collaborative working methods and network development) and organisational practice (duty of care, impact assessment, grant writing and evaluation).

Additional costs include:

- **Access to networks:**
Attendance at European/International capacity building events: £1200 (£400 pa Northumbria QR funding)
D6 Capacity Building workshop on Social Inclusion, (Feb 2026) Amsterdam £800 travel and accommodation (NBCDTP)

- **Public engagement:**

Co-production of public engagement events and associated dissemination of research Year 2/3 - £2,000 (NBCDTP, with associated programme funds to be raised by D6)

- **Training:**

Decolonial methodologies in cultural contexts. £1,500 (for NBCDTP peer group)

Outline the arrangements for communication between the non-HE partner organisation and the academic host institution in regard to project management and monitoring academic progress:

(Maximum 200 words)

Northumbria University (NU) and D6 will liaise quarterly, with progression meetings planned between the First Supervisor, Professor Donna Chambers and D6 Advisor, Clymene Christoforou, located at either NU City Campus or D6 premises (both located in central Newcastle). Additional input may be offered from the Second Supervisor (Professor Fiona Crisp), D6's Lead Producer (Andrea Carter) and the project's External Advisor (Dr Sophia Hao) as appropriate.

Clear milestones will be set with the candidate through a working framework aligned with relevant programme activity at D6. A fixed agenda will ensure the benefits and impacts for all partners are captured through regular feedback from all involved. D6 can offer administrative support to centralise internal communications between the academic team and the candidate. A full workplace induction at D6 will be offered to the candidate, along with ongoing mentoring, reflection, and critical dialogue in a more informal capacity, which forms an intrinsic part of D6's organisational practice in the engagement of artists and audience groups. The project's Ethics and Risk Assessment processes will be overseen and monitored by NU with additional fieldwork risk assessment provided by D6.

What benefits will there be for the candidate and the non-HE partner organisation as a result of your collaboration?

(Maximum 300 words)

For the candidate:

- (1) A rare opportunity to critically interrogate the complex nexus of coloniality, mass human migration and climate crisis, *through decolonial curatorial practice.*
- (2) Working closely with D6, the candidate will access /influence an extensive programme of research, exchange, and production within which to frame their doctoral enquiry.
- (3) Access and contribution to D6's unique networks including their European affiliate in Cyprus (D6:EU) and global partners, created from a large 'alumni' community thus increasing the student's future opportunities for post-doctoral research, funding, and employment.

- (4) Bespoke training in co-production with international partners, decolonial methodologies, network development, advocacy, impact, ethics, and public-sphere grant writing. They will gain experience ranging from local engagement to international collaboration which will include access to platforms for national and international strategic cultural policy e.g. [Culture Action Europe](#) and [On the Move](#).

For the non-HE partner:

- (1) D6 will be able to reflect on its practice, influence methodologies of future working, widen organisational knowledge and capacity and give visibility to the histories and practice of D6 within academic as well as professional spheres.
- (2) This CDA, along with D6's new [Associate Artists programme](#) (launched in 2021), seeks to capture how the co-production of new knowledge contributes to urgent contemporary questions. The Associate Artists group aims to identify and challenge sectoral gaps, addressing the role of culture in social and environmental justice relating to intercultural relations and international perspectives. The programme provides an environment of care for peer support and learning. D6 sees this CDA as extending their understanding and articulation of their real-world impact and embedding their research activity within academic discourse. This CDA will enable a strengthening of their ability to contribute to, and sub-contract within, international programmes and add to their work in advocacy/contribution to policy change at national and international levels.

State what financial (if any) or in-kind contribution the non-HE partner organisation will be making over the duration of the award:

*(Maximum 100 words. A financial contribution is **not** a requirement. However, the AHRC expect that **non-HE partners based overseas** will make a financial contribution to the costs of the student's return travel and accommodation when visiting.)*

D6 affords the student access to a dynamic network of regional and international practitioners and arts organisations via closely embedded fieldwork. In-kind contributions have been calculated across 42 months totalling £30,233:

- 1) Project supervision (D6 Director) and delivery support (D6 staff) in-kind (£27,888 - £664 per day @ 42 days) including:
 - dedicated desk / studio space;
 - access - AV equipment and software;
 - internal training - co-production, network development, ethics, advocacy, grant writing
- 2) External training opportunities (£455 - £130 @ 1 day pa)
- 3) Access to hybrid hosting space and catering (£1890 - £135 @4 days pa)

Describe the nature of the collaborative arrangement and the activities the candidate will be undertaking with the non-HE partner organisation:

(Maximum 300 words)

The candidate will be embedded in D6 and D6:EU throughout the doctoral project and will collaborate with international artists with lived experience of the conditions of the research (e.g., forced migration) through access to D6's residency programme. Further, the candidate will access the multiple partner organisations/artists engaged in D6 and D6:EU's international programmes including: Contested Desires: Constructive Dialogues (CDCD), [Sanctuary & Culture](#), [ACT](#) and [\(Re\)Grounding](#). CDCD explores how artists/arts organisations can work with communities to create dialogical exchanges and other activities that can build shared understanding of the colonial past. It is a partnership between D6:EU (CY), D6: Culture in Transit (UK) and a consortium of 14 international partners. D6:EU will host residencies, an exhibition of artworks, an international capacity building event around environmental justice and the impact of coloniality, and lead a cross project working group on ethics and creative practice.

Timeline

Year One (RQ1)

- Review and scoping of project; Candidate to observe/participate in the work of the CDCD Ethics Group; NU ethical approval.
- Lit review: Critical exploration of the interconnections of colonialism, climate crisis, mass human migration; theories and practices of decolonial curating as an ABR methodology.

- Participation in CDCD 'capacity building' workshops - 2 online: *Environment and Coloniality* D6:EU -Feb 25; *The Gender Perspective and Coloniality*, La Bonne in Barcelona -Sept 2025.

Year Two (RQ2,3)

- Dialogues with artists (individual & group work) and [D6 Associate Artist](#) Group.
- Public engagement events/exhibitions, with D6 including active dialogues with audiences.
- Participation in national and international fora for the advancement/advocacy of cultural policy - facilitated and supported by D6
- Participation in CDCD third 'capacity building' workshop *Social Inclusion*, D6 in Amsterdam - Feb 26.
- Engagement with CDCD Ethics group

Year 3/4 (RQ4)

- Reflections on exhibition/events and researcher's own decolonial curatorial practice with D6/artists/publics.
- Engagement with CDCD Ethics Group
- Write-up thesis.

SECTION 3: SUPERVISION AND EXTERNAL ADVISORS

Primary (or Co-) Supervisor: [Professor Donna Chambers](#)

School or Department:	ADSS/Department of Arts	Email Address:	donna.chambers@northumbria.ac.uk
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Secondary (or Co-) Supervisor: [Professor Fiona Crisp](#)

School or Department:	ADSS/Department of Arts	Email Address:	fiona.crisp@northumbria.ac.uk
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Name of the Advisor based at the Non-HE Partner Organisation: [Clymene Christoforou](#)

Organisation/Institution:	D6: Culture in Transit and D6: EU	Email Address:	clymene@d6culture.org
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Organisation/Institution:		Email Address:	
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Name of Additional Internal or External Advisors or Academic Supervisors, if any: [Dr Sophia Hao](#)

Organisation/Institution:	Cooper Gallery at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, University of Dundee	Email Address:	s.y.hao@dundee.ac.uk
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Explain how the expertise of the supervisory team and external advisor(s) will allow them to support the proposed project and the selected candidate:

(Maximum 500 words)

[Donna Chambers](#) is Professor, Critical Cultural Studies, and Director of EDI in the Department of Arts at Northumbria. Most recently, she was her Faculty's Research Lead at the University of Sunderland. She has 20 years' experience in higher education teaching and research. Her work draws on critical and decolonial methodologies to understand how people and places are represented, primarily in cultural and heritage tourism (as a form of human mobility).

Chambers has supervised 8 PhD's to completion (7 as Principal Supervisor) and is currently the Principal Supervisor for two others. She has examined 12 PhD theses in the UK, Belgium, Jamaica, Malaysia, Ireland, and Canada. She is a member of the Peer Review College for the UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship Programme.

As an experienced doctoral supervisor and examiner, Chambers is uniquely placed to be the Principal Supervisor and will apply her extensive knowledge of decolonial and critical methodologies to lead the project's critical/theoretical enquiry.

[Fiona Crisp](#) is Professor of Contemporary Art at Northumbria. Over the last 18 years she has been instrumental in shaping the practice-based research culture of the institution, most recently as Academic Impact Lead for Arts. Crisp has supervised three PhDs to completion as Principal Supervisor and has been external examiner for two PhDs. She is currently Principal Supervisor for three PhDs and has managed and mentored three ECR Research Assistants.

Crisp, as an artist and long-term Board member of D6, will serve as the academic conduit between the partner organisations bringing her embedded knowledge of D6, along with her extensive skills and experience of cross-disciplinary and collaborative practice-based research (see [Material Sight](#)).

[Clymene Christoforou](#) is co-founding Director of both D6: Culture in Transit and D6:EU and will be the lead partnership mentor/advisor for the CDA. She has advocacy and mentoring skills in arts and culture, delivering training to 732 individuals in the past 10 years, led projects with 31 countries in the last 5 years, and initiated 60 commissions that gave voice to marginalised communities and changed attitudes. She is a former Board Member of Res Artis - Worldwide Network of Arts Residencies which operates across 51 countries.

Christoforou will contribute to the CDA by drawing on her experience of running an international programme of commissions, residencies, and events for over 28 years. As lead for the live research environment at D6 she will enable access to international networks and policymakers.

[Sophia Hao](#) is Director and Principal Curator at Cooper Gallery, Duncan and Jordanstone College of Arts and Design at the University of Dundee. Her work positions the role of the curatorial as a mode of critical inquiry that engages with culture and the political as an open question. In her role she leads an internationally recognised programme that has positioned Cooper Gallery as a distinctive platform in Scotland for its radical curatorial research, international approach and focus on critical inequities in contemporary art and culture. Hao will contribute her extensive knowledge, expertise, and practice in radical curatorial methodologies.

SECTION 4: RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

Please provide details about the research environment the selected candidate will be joining and its suitability:

(Maximum 500 words)

The candidate will join a flourishing postgraduate research culture at Northumbria where PhD studentships in Arts and Design increased from 39 (REF 2014) to 87 (REF 2021), of which 20 were awarded in the final year of the last cycle. A considerable factor in this achievement is our longstanding reputation in supporting practice-based doctoral research, such as the proposed CDA. In REF2021, 100% of the research environment in Arts and Design was rated as world-leading or internationally excellent.

Northumbria's award-winning library facilities has a bespoke 'Research Commons' space and research methods training programmes for PhD researchers, including training for Impact/Theory of Change. The candidate will access generous studio space, technical and workshop facilities across Art and Design and AV technical support/equipment hire through the University's excellent Technical Resource Centre. Located in the [Department of Arts](#), the candidate will join a cross-subject grouping of practice-based staff and doctoral researchers including within the [Creative and Cultural Industries Research Peak of Excellence](#). Particularly relevant to the student and this CDA will be the critical mass of decolonial scholarship (including PhD studentships), accrued from Dr Susan Ashley's AHRC-supported project [\(Multi\) Cultural Heritage](#) as well as within the [Global Development Futures Interdisciplinary Research Theme](#).

With researchers from within and beyond the department, the candidate will be able to disseminate and test ideas throughout each year of the CDA at the [Contemporary Arts Research Forum](#) (CARF) – a research hub that hosts creative and critical exchanges between the university’s academic staff, graduate researchers and visiting national and international artists, curators, theorists, performers, critics and historians. The candidate will also be able to join the [BxNU Institute of Contemporary Art](#) research partnership between BALTIC and Northumbria University, directed by Baltic Professor [Andrea Phillips](#). This Institute provides an international platform for current and alumni researchers to disseminate their work, benefitting from its events and symposia and the opportunities for networking and peer-training in socially engaged forms of public-facing research. Similarly, BxNU’s [Experimental Studio](#) on the main campus provides space for the candidate’s live research to be trialled, critically appraised, and archived.

At [D6](#), the candidate will have open access to an ambitious and internationally facing visual arts organisation with artists and partners across local, regional, and international settings. This creates a live and dynamic research environment which is shaped by the exchange of new ideas, understanding and dialogue, employed in the development of partnerships, practice and programmes. D6 has a committed [Board of experts](#) across arts, heritage, environmental sustainability and global exchange, a wealth of international partners focussing on social and environmental concerns, and a team of [Associate Artists](#) with embedded practice across the themes of this CDA proposal. At D6 each member of staff oversees different elements of the relationships and/or formal partnerships (these typically include project research and implementation; communications and audience development; professional development; evaluation; advocacy).

In addition to the training delivered by the partners, the student will benefit enormously from Northern Bridge Consortium training events, including the suggested group training in decolonial methodologies.

SECTION 5: RECRUITMENT INFORMATION

In the event that your project is successful it will be advertised on the Northern Bridge Consortium website to aid recruitment: <http://www.northernbridge.ac.uk/applyforstudentship/cda/>

Please therefore complete the following Applicant Criteria so that advertising can begin immediately following the outcome of the competition:

<i>For further information about this Collaborative Doctoral Award and to submit an Expression of Interest, please contact:</i>	
Lead Supervisor (or Alternative Contact):	Professor Donna Chambers
Email:	donna.chambers@northumbria.ac.uk
Expressions of Interest must be received no later than:	Monday 29th January 2024
Expressions of Interest must take the following format:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Statement • 2-page CV • evidence of practice (e.g., up to three online links/ PDF portfolio of up to 10 pages – max 5MB) • Names of two referees 	
Interviews for shortlisted candidates are expected to take place:	Week commencing 19th February 2024

APPLICANT CRITERIA

Candidates must also meet the criteria for acceptance on a doctoral programme as set out by the host institution's Postgraduate Admissions Service. The successful candidate will be required to submit a postgraduate application to their host institution following notification that they are to be awarded a conditional CDA studentship, and meet the conditions of the offer of a place on the doctoral programme.

Education and Professional Qualifications	Essential Criteria	Undergraduate degree (2:1) in Art, Design, Media (or cognate subjects) MA in Arts, Design, Media, curatorial practice, or similar area and/or relevant experience in professional practice
	Desirable Criteria	Knowledge of ethics of engagement
Research and Impact Experience and Training	Essential Criteria	M-level (or equivalent professional experience) of critical and creative research
	Desirable Criteria	Evidence of creative/critical research activity in the community or other public sphere Ability to undertake desk-based research Ability to write research-informed outputs
Professional Practice and Job-related Experience	Essential Criteria	Experience of working as an artist/curator and/or in association/ with an arts-based or related organisation developing co-produced programmes Excellent written and oral communication

	Desirable Criteria	Work experience within / with public/NGO/community sector arts-based organisations Experience of work with marginalised groups (within UK and/ or internationally)
Interpersonal Skills	Essential Criteria	Good intercultural communicator Good organisational skills Ability to work as part of a team in an often fast-paced and responsive environment
	Desirable Criteria	Ability to prioritise tasks and work to deadlines Other languages (across different competencies)
Other Factors	Essential Criteria	Understanding of different perspectives and sensitivities related to intercultural and international working environments.
	Desirable Criteria	Demonstrable knowledge and understanding of the nature and impact of colonialism and its effect on marginalised populations Demonstrable knowledge and understanding of social justice models