



STUDENTS AS CO-CREATORS

A Disciplinary Research Collaboration

***CICC School: Imagining Otherwise - decolonial study
group for young, emerging
researchers***

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Section 1. Abstract/Executive Summary

The *Court for Intergenerational Climate Crimes (CICC): The British East India Company on Trial* reimagines climate justice. The project explores an unusual intersection of disciplines: law and art in practice-led research, examining how ‘enacting’ the law helps to reimagine conceptions of justice among social movement activists in liberal societies. With earlier court sessions in Amsterdam and Gwangju, this third iteration of the CICC in London was realised as a performative exhibition and events programme at Ambika P3, in a collaboration between the Law, Development and Conflict Research Group and CREAM at the University of Westminster, and Serpentine Galleries.

The project *CICC School: Imagining Otherwise - decolonial study group* extended workshops and seminars that have been integral to CREAM’s research approach, exploring how we may think through decolonial forms of experimental study and discussion of the Arts. Prof. Roshini Kempadoo who co-convenes CREAM Futures with Uriel Orlow, proposed that three doctoral researchers continue the discussion as part of the CICC School. The student partners worked with Roshini to make the application. Following planning meetings to identify agree dates, resources, discussing the possibility of a chair and designing of the workshop, the student partners devised 3 different methodological approaches for the workshop that interrelated with each others commonality of research, taking as their starting point their research material and/or creative work as the basis for discussion and engagement.

Through this, we developed an innovative methodology for actively engaging in the University’s PhD community’s active research, fostering exchange and debate with the public, encouraging the development of professional skills with the PhD student partners involved and providing our PhD students with a platform through which to disseminate their research projects and methods. We think that there is significant scope to this approach to be developed further as significant to public debate on approaches to practice-based research, models of study groups and engaging in complicated ongoing discussions around racism, justice, decolonial issues, poverty through conflict and inequality. The workshops engaged in active participation, explored resources that informed doctoral research, viewed aspects of their own creative research and identified how everyone concerned could participate and think creatively. In the future, care needs to be taken to allocate sufficient staff and student partners time for the level of preparation time, and effort in convening a workshop like this. A higher bursary for student partners would be necessary along with flexibility as to how the budget is managed.

Section 2. Background and Aims

Background:

The *Court for Intergenerational Climate Crimes (CICC): The British East India Company on Trial* reimagines climate justice. The project explores a refreshing intersection of disciplines: law and art in practice-led research, examining how 'enacting' the law through a performative exhibition and events programme at Ambika P3 in collaboration with Serpentine Galleries helps to reimagine conceptions of justice among social movement activists in liberal societies. As part of this, three court cases examining the eco-social legacies of colonialism were held, followed by a three-week programme of talks, discussions, screenings, workshops and walking tours, titled the *CICC School* free and available to a general audience. The Imagining Otherwise - decolonial study group was aimed at attracting young, emerging researchers as participants which it was successful in doing. The focus for the study group explored what might be meant by a decolonial approach to research creativity and explore ways in which imagination as creative material contributes in invaluable ways to envisioning a future.

Aims:

The study group developed ways to create decolonial knowledge about climate activism by convening a 2-hour session aimed at encouraging emergent and doctoral researchers to learn from each other as a collaborative exchange.

The group aimed to develop ways of sharing international geopolitical knowledge about the effects of climate crimes, through reading, writing, performing and discussing a range of experimental texts and audiovisual material.

Objectives:

The objectives of the study group were to:

Explore the role that participatory artmaking may have in exploring questions of climate justice, land reparations, resource extraction, ecocide, colonial/anti-colonial ecologies and alternative readings of landscapes.

Develop new insights, perspectives and potentials for action that might arise in relation to conversations of intergenerational climate justice.

Explore ways an experimental workshop could generate new insights and knowledge for emerging researchers involved in colonialism, climate crimes and activism.

Attract upcoming generations of researchers to contribute to further knowledge on the relationship between historical narratives and speculative poetic expressions.

Section 3. Methods

150–300 words

For this section you need to think about exactly what you did it and be able to describe it clearly.

Think about:

What exactly did you do (surveys, interviews, library & archival research etc.)?

How many participants did you use and who were they? Did you take into account any ethical issues?

How did you analyse your data (eg. Software, statistics)?

Tip: If you engaged with research participants, it would be useful to attach a copy of the Participant Information Sheet and questionnaire you used, as an Appendix at the end of the report.

The workshop was designed and realised in the following way:

The staff and student partners identified a series of resources for perusal and display for their participants. This was based on supporting more experimental published works by Iniva – The Institute of Visual Arts/The Stuart Hall Library through purchasing and display alongside other current publications that the student partners had identified as vital to their research.

An email was sent a week prior to the session to give a sense of what we intended to do in the study event, ethically how we would proceed and give a sense of how participants may prepare for the afternoon.

Unfortunately, Hope was unwell on the day and could not attend the workshop. Christina, Nadia and Roshini revised the session prior to the workshop. Roshini, Christina and Nadia introduced the session to reiterate the workshop plan and that all were in agreement. Hope's film was screened in the space so that a discussion might include her work. Christina and Nadia worked with the participants in two groups which rotated halfway through the session. Each group worked in a circle with Christina then Nadia (and vice versa), prompted by introductions to their research, their creative thinking, their writing, their ideas. Resources were referred to and looked at and open conversations involving all participants were managed by both Christina and Nadia. Nadia referred to her writing to prompt discussion, Christina introduced a participatory workshop to imagine together as a space of possibility that was devised by the group.

The conclusion led by Roshini, Nadia and Christina – asked for feedback for improvement, ideas to take forward and ensured that ethically we had adopted a robust code of conduct around divulging confidential information, photographs of the event and how participants might contact the convening group in the future.

Section 4 & 5. Results and Discussion

The work of our CICC School study group has resulted in the following:

- Resources digitally would be developed by the group that may be offered to the participants who signed up to receive further information. This resource would be associated with doctoral research work envisaged as decolonial in framing and planned to act as an ongoing resource further workshop development.
- Added professional experience for the student partners involved.
- Better understanding of how staff research projects might involve student partners research in the future.

Section 6. Conclusions and Future Work

A key finding of the process of working with the CICC School decolonial study group is that the project allowed student and staff partners to develop and design methodology that took into account current research by doctoral students to 'sit' alongside and within staff led research projects. The process of inviting PhD student partners to creatively and critically respond to practice-based research and public events developed by staff members can thus create vital opportunities for counteracting these limitations on visibility and building a stronger research culture overall.

The study workshop engendered additional levels of conversation, but also added to the research professionalism and experience of the student partners. CVs were enhanced, conversations were nurtured and contacts were made. We think that the approach that was developed as the CICC school could be very productively employed and developed further in the context of future significant public exhibitions or events organized by staff researchers.

Section 7. Lessons Learned

(200–600 words)

What did you learn from working in this partnership? Where there any novel techniques you employed?

Tip: Think about how you are going to get your research across to your stakeholders. Be realistic about this and consider whose help you may need in the process

The contribution offered creative experimentation of design for workshops and study that focused on the creative making process and this is an area that could be explored further. There is scope in this regard to actively encourage a broader range of research approaches and going forward deliver this over a longer period of time for the workshop itself. As a sole staff member, it would have been good to have included other staff. In the original plans, a chair for the workshop was envisaged and budgeted for. This it was felt would contribute to ensuring that handling more taxing discussions may be better met. Employing a chair from outside the university with different specialism in the end did not take place as it was felt by the student partners that this would be too hierarchical in format. Unfortunately the funds originally secured for employing the chair were unable to be re-allocated to the student partners. In retrospect – as a staff member, I felt that new ways of working with professional discussants, moderators or evaluators would still be invaluable to future designs of workshops going forward. Adding voices who have experience in moderating and developing guidelines of how to have a conversation is still an invaluable ambition and we could all learn how to be better listeners, facilitators of public discussion by those who do this for a living.

Staff and student partner time required for planning and realising the event was severely underestimated and with a limited budget. We could have also devised a better method for documenting the event and delivering feedback/evaluation of the workshop. A planned de-briefing session for the event itself has yet to take place due to family commitments and all being time poor.

Section 8. Group Reflection

It was felt that the student partners and staff member/s could work together in the future to devise and continue conversations amongst doctoral researchers and staff committed to exploring how decolonial research may evolve and in what ways creative work becomes integral to knowledge making of this kind.

It was felt that the workshop supported the process of student partners synthesising their research work in progress in order to present to the public.

The amount allocated for the student bursary is an issue that has been raised at several points. We do understand that funds are limited, that it is desirable for the University to support a wide range of projects with the Students as Co-creators fund, and that the amount paid to participating students is a bursary rather than remuneration for their work. At the same time, the PhD researchers participating in our project have produced work independently and to a high professional standard, and a higher payment to acknowledge this would be desirable. One future possibility might be to allow for a range of rates of student bursaries, which could be chosen from by those applying for the fund, to reflect the varying degrees of extent and intensity of the work conducted by participating student partners on different projects. Having been in discussion with the student partners and the co-creators team, a series of recommendations around transparency of how and when the student partners get paid, timely pay (pay on delivery of the event/material for example) are absolutely necessary for the reputation of the fund and student goodwill. Two out of 3 student partners have young families and found it very difficult to arrange care cover out of school term. This will be taken into account in the future.

All in all, we have found this to be a positive experience of student-staff collaboration, which has allowed the facilitation of exchange between students and staff, getting to know more about each other's research and knowledges.