

Research Project Bid:

The Ideas, Practices, and Impacts of Global Empires

1) Introduction

In recent years the empire and imperialism have regained its place in public attentions, whether through discussions of US foreign policy post-9/11, the so-called ‘clashes of civilisations’, criticisms of economic globalization, debates about migration, or popular media portrayals from *Gladiator* to *Brick Lane*. All these directly or indirectly, carry connotations of empires past, and of the continuation of forms of imperialism in the present. Simultaneously, a cross a range of disciplines encompassing diverse methodologies (ranging from liberal empiricist, through Marxist and structuralist to post-modern and post-colonial approaches), empire has become a paradigm for rethinking and historicizing a globalized world. This bid seeks to bring together these approaches to further the study of a crucial global phenomenon in Aberdeen.

2) The Empire Project Bid

For our purposes, empires are considered polities which exercise or attempt to exercise power across borders. They may be formalized by constitutional arrangements, or remain informal. The study of empire can be broken down into the examination of five interlinked themes:

- 1) Connections and networks – the ties forged and maintained by migration, communications, trade, investment, religion, and other intellectual activities.
- 2) Impacts – the economic, environmental, and social effects of incorporation into a transnational polity on either the centre or peripheries, and the capacity (or lack of capacity) exercised by those falling under its aegis to shape these impacts.
- 3) Cultures – the ways in empires were understood and also the ways in which encounters under their aegis shaped notions of difference and identity, religious life, and intellectual and artistic production more broadly.

4) Politics – the contested nature, form, and dynamics of power within and between imperial polities, including notions of hegemony and informal empire,

5) The Ends of Empires – examining the instability inherent within, and the ultimate demise of, empires.

In this context, this PGR bid brings together colleagues from History, Anthropology, IR, Hispanic Studies, and the Marischal Museum, willing to supervise Ph.D.s working on projects which explore aspects of the 'Ideas and Practices of Global Empires' (details of the members of the bid are included in an appendix). Through their work they draw on a range of traditions and practices. Thus the bid programme seeks to locate itself at the intersection of a critical set of transformations in the humanities. Particular geographical and thematic areas of supervisory strength within the bid include: British Empire (especially in South Asia and the settler societies); empires past and present in Latin America; Russia – including Russian informal empires; cross cultural encounters; trade, migration, and empire; empires *within* Europe; ideologies of empires; and the ends of empires.

The bid will advertise for 6 M.Litt_ or M.Res and 6 Ph.D. students (with funds for maintenance to be distributed to some or all candidates) interested in projects within one or more of these disciplines, and areas of thematic and geographical interest. We will be flexible on the projects so long as they can be tied to some or all of the aspects of the study of empire outlined above. This gives the bid flexibility to draw in a wide range of outstanding candidates while retaining thematic focus.