



# APPLYING FOR AN ERC STARTING GRANT

PROF EDMOND SMITH

UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

# TODAY'S PRESENTATION



1. How I developed my project



2. How I prepared my application

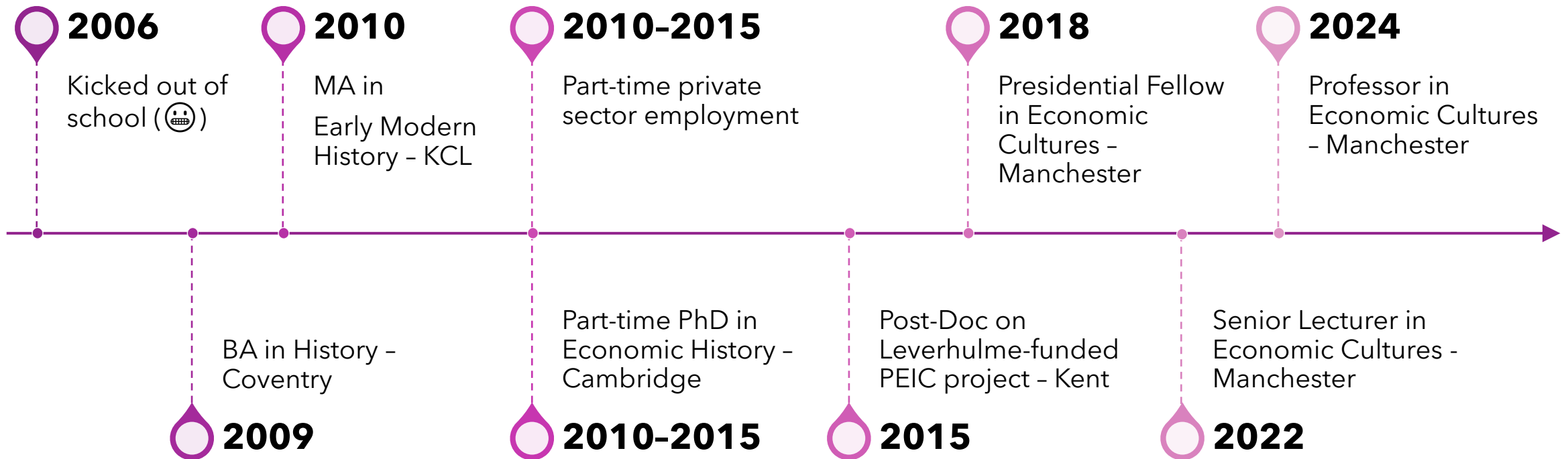


3. How I validated my application



4. The value of my Starting Grant

# DEVELOPING MY PROJECT (I)



Pre-2018	EVERYTHING
2018	Leverhulme Trust ECF (turned down to join UoM)
2018-9	JRRIL Digital Humanities
2018-9	British Academy Tackling the UK's International Challenges
2019	ESRC New Investigator Grant
2020-4	ESRC New Investigator Grant
2020-4	AHRC Standard Grant (Co-I)
2020	British Academy Knowledge Frontiers
2021-6	AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award
2022-7	Cookson Scholarship Collaborative Doctoral Award
2023-6	Australian Research Council Standard Grant (Co-I)
2022-9	ERC Starting Grant

# DEVELOPING MY PROJECT (II)



Being driven to answer the biggest questions



Establishing a clear academic identity



Developing an effective methodology



Demonstrating the necessary skills



Working collaboratively outside specialism



Building a reputation for delivery

# LIVING ON THE EDGE: EXPERIENCES AND RESPONSES TO EUROPE'S CHANGING BORDERLANDS

Our project connects new research on the experience of living in border communities in the early modern period with contemporary policy about the reformulation of Britain's and Europe's borders post-Brexit. **We question how individuals and communities living on the edges of Europe - especially in port cities and transport hubs - experienced trade, migration and sovereignty in their day-to-day lives.** Drawing on interdisciplinary methodologies we will demonstrate how borders and borderlands represent complex ecosystems, acting both as barriers and crossing-points, points of contact and conflict, and places of exchange and enforcement. This research will lead to a co-authored article for the Historical Journal and the development of a policy paper that will examine the implications of Brexit for the UK's borders with Europe. Through these outputs our project will shed new light on Europe's past and use it to shape our response to the challenges the world faces today.

# RISKY BUSINESS: INVESTING IN INNOVATION AND BRITAIN'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The pursuit of innovation is a defining feature of our world. Over the past four centuries, innovation has been lauded as an investment opportunity, contributing to economic growth and the improvement of people's daily lives. During the economic boom of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, investors flocked to opportunities in trade, manufacturing, extractive industry, and agriculture in the hope of making their fortunes and take part in Britain's economic success. Successful innovation, through improvement or invention, depended just as much then as it does today on the willingness of individuals to undertake the risky business of overcoming uncertainty and putting their money on the line. Macroeconomic indicators do not tell us how specific projects, innovations and improvements overcome the risk-reticence of investors, nor how individual investors function within wider investment networks. Yet, despite their essential participation in productive and financial innovation, **the ways in which individual investors made decisions about where, when, and how to invest have been side-lined in the existing historiography of capitalism.**

# INTRECCI: INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION AND THE ENTANGLED COMMERCIAL CULTURES OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Globalisation is a defining feature of the modern world. Over the past five centuries, international trade has driven economic development, restructured societies, and brought about the vast movement of goods, people and ideas. Yet, as recent de-coupling from China and conflict with Russia has shown, the globalised system can be fragile. Whereas the supremacy of unipolar 'western' institutional practices defined late twentieth century globalisation, the twenty-first century looks set to see international trade take place in a multipolar institutional context.

Understanding the impact of these changes requires new ways of thinking about global institutional development: ones that recognises enduring, alternative institutional norms that have never fully been subsumed within 'western' practice. This raises important questions about how globalisation developed in the first place, as the traditional model of European imperial expansion imposing institutions on the world is unfit for purpose. **We must ask instead why global actors adapted, adopted or opposed institutional transformation and how these processes shaped and reshaped what would become the common institutions of global international trade.**



# DEVELOPING MY PROJECT (III)

## Pilots and Publications

PhD/Post-doc Work

- Monograph and methodological articles

JRRIL Persianate DH Grant

BA "Living on the Edge" Grant

- Specific pilot project articles

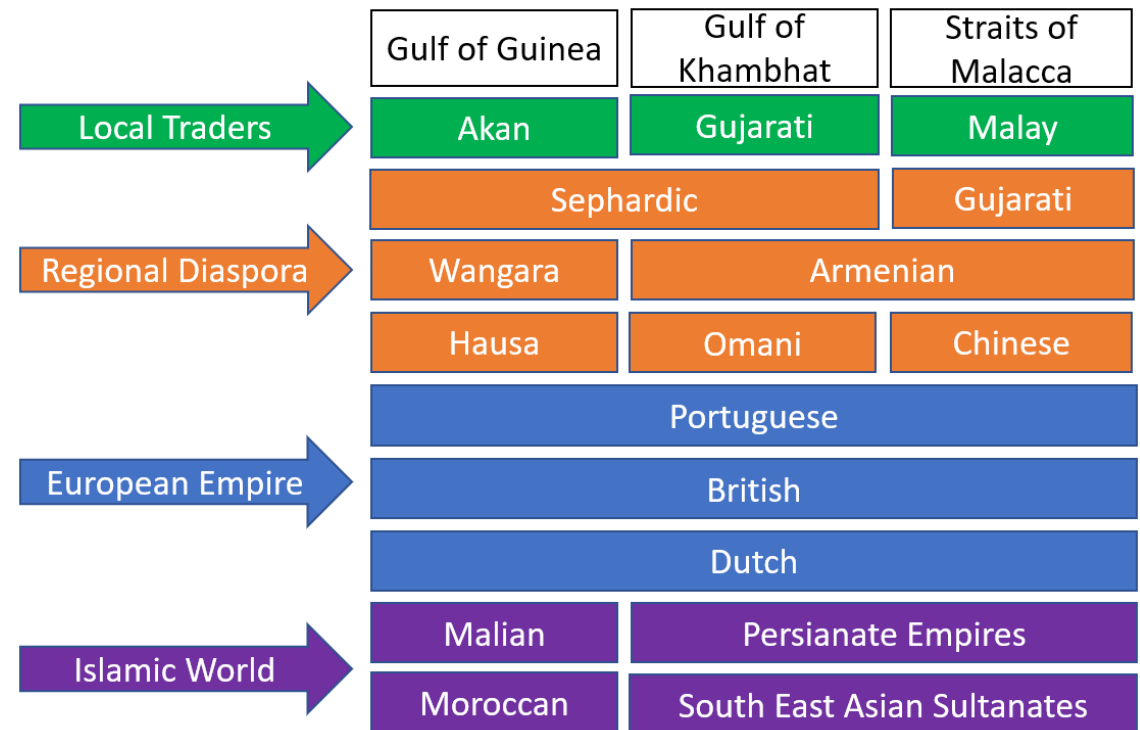
ESRC "Risky Business" Grant

- Leading a team

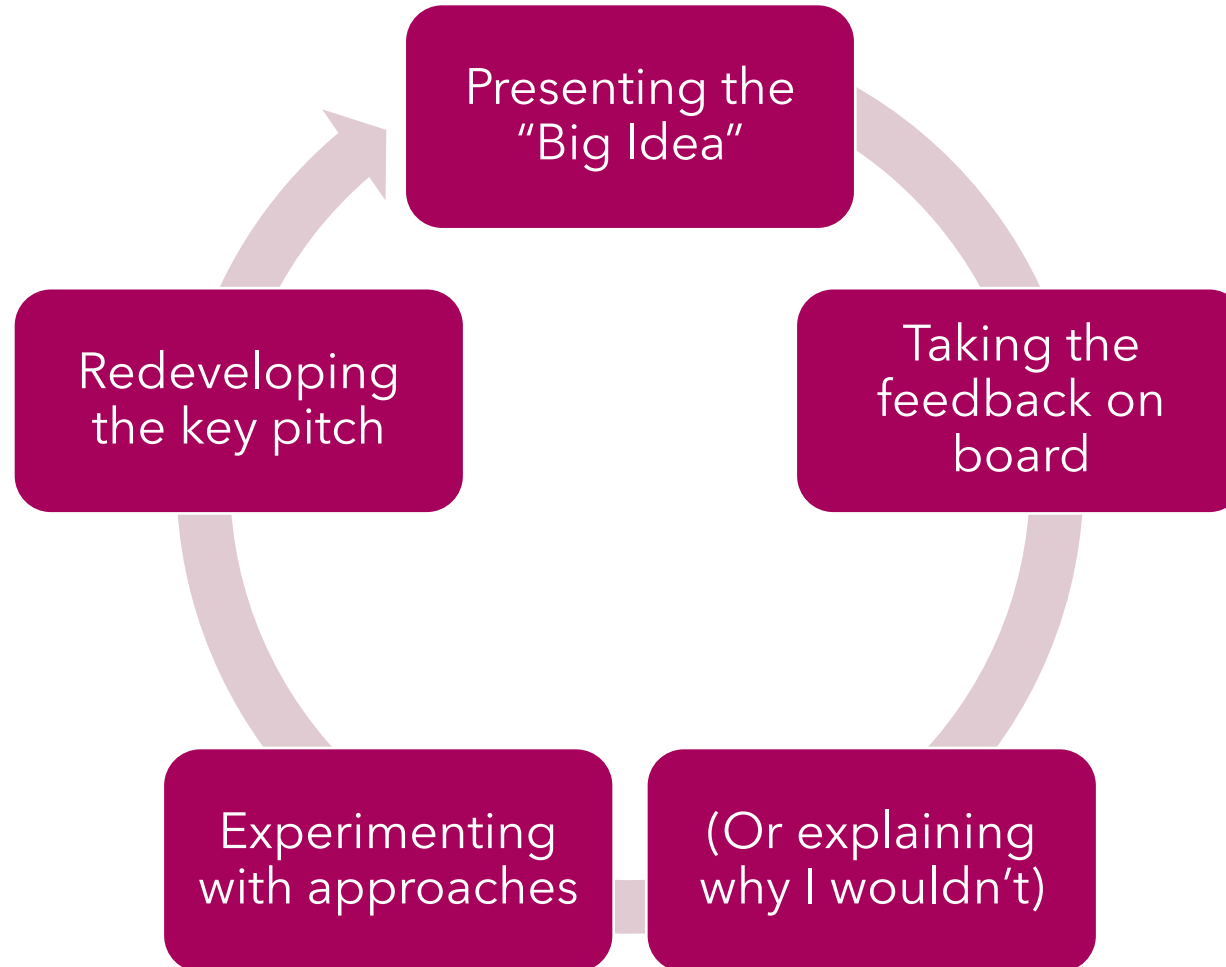
AHRC "Legacies" Grant

- Leading on a "big" project

## ERC Project - INTRECCI



# PREPARING MY APPLICATION (I)



# PREPARING MY APPLICATION (II)

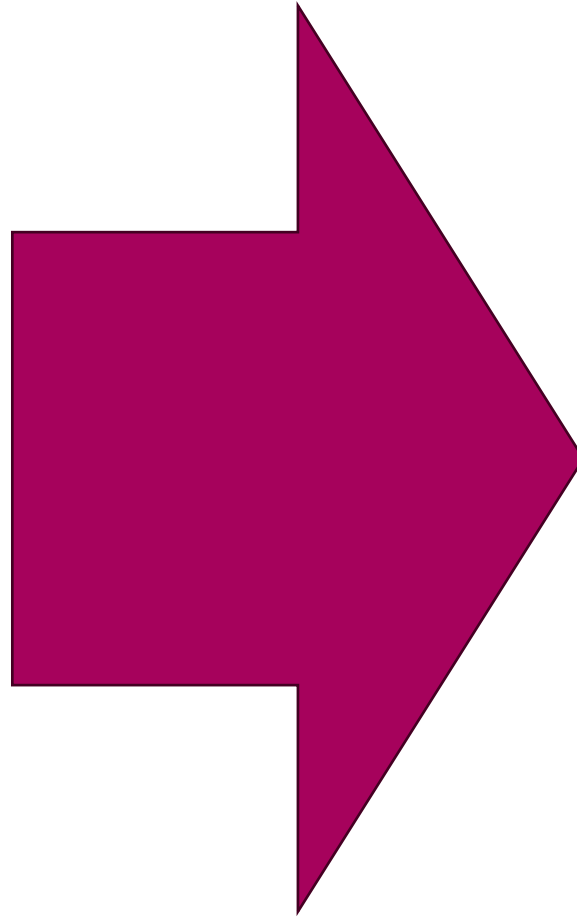
Year:	1				2				3				4				5			
Quarter:	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Planning and recruitment	Yellow																			
Post-Docs join project, training and teambuilding		Yellow																		
Methodology and literature reviews: WP 1		Green	Green																	
Workshop 1: Launch of Project			Blue																	
Fieldwork 1: WP 2, 3, 4				Green	Green															
Process results, present working papers to team: WP 2, 3, 4						Yellow														
Submit 1 methodology focused article: WP 1						Orange														
Workshop 2: WP 5						Blue														
Edit volume of papers from Workshop 2: WP 5						Orange	Orange	Orange												
Fieldwork 2: WP 2, 3, 4							Green	Green												
Write and submit Post-Doc monographs, WP 5 and 6									Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange								
Process results, present working papers to team: WP 2, 3, 4									Yellow	Yellow										
Submit 3 case-study focused articles: WP 2, 3, 4										Orange										
Workshop 3: WP 5										Blue										
Edit volume of papers from Workshop 3: WP 5										Orange	Orange	Orange								
Fieldwork 3: WP 6											Green	Green								
Process results, present working papers to team: WP 6													Yellow							
Submit 3 articles on institutional transmission: WP 6														Orange						
Workshop 4: WP 6														Blue						
Edit volume of papers from Workshop 3: WP 6														Orange	Orange	Orange				
Disseminate project findings to scientific community, WP 1-6															Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
Write and Submit PI monograph, WP 5 and 6															Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange

*Post-doctoral Researchers are part of project team*

# VALIDATING MY APPLICATION (I)

## Get the format right from the start

- Attend events like this one
- Carefully read the application guidance
- Think about B1 and B2 together
- Stick to the wordcount!
- Remember that presentation matters



## Get feedback on the application as you're writing it

- Take advantage of internal support where it's available
- Lean on personal networks for feedback (you can trust friends to tell you you're wrong!)
- Get feedback from people who don't naturally care about the topic

# VALIDATING MY APPLICATION (II)



Accept that judgement represents judgement



Peer review from people who know the ERC



Give informal peer review yourself and/or sit on panels



Take on board peer review from previous projects



Be more brutal about your project than anyone else might be!

# VALIDATING MY APPLICATION (III)

- ✓ Take time (and responsibility) for finalising the final draft
- ✓ Consider whether (after multiple drafts and reviews) the application is still clearly yours
- ✓ Absolutely ensure that your vision and identity are clear - this is *your* project
- ✓ Think about whether you have made your preparations for the project clear enough
- ✓ Focus on every section separately - different reviewers care about different things
- ✓ Make sure every section matches across B1 and B2
- ✓ Take care that images, tables and other supplementary material adds specific value and clearly communicates that value
- ✓ Remember to submit it on time! Then sit back, have a well-deserved cuppa, and move on to the next thing...

# THE VALUE OF MY STARTING GRANT



Doing the research!



Career development



Building more networks



Building up to bigger things...  
it is the *starting* grant after all!

A close-up photograph of a cave wall covered in numerous handprints. The handprints are in various colors, including red, orange, yellow, and white, and are scattered across the surface. The word "QUESTIONS?" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters in the center of the image.

**QUESTIONS?**