



Australian
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ANU PhD Supplementary Scholarship: Cultures of the Cryosphere



We are seeking PhD applicants from a range of academic backgrounds to join an exciting international project on the European Research Council Synergy Grant project "The Cultures of the Cryosphere: Infrastructures, Politics and Futures of Artificial Cooling". The project investigates the cultural preconditions and consequences of the use of artificial cooling and freezing technologies in nutrition, health and reproduction, air conditioning, data processing, laboratory research and other everyday practices. This interdisciplinary research project aims to investigate the far-reaching socio-ecological effects of this energy-intensive planetary "cryosphere" and identify possible alternative sustainable futures associated with artificial cold.

The project consists of four international research groups at the Technical University of Darmstadt (Germany), the University of Paderborn (Germany), the University of Duisburg-Essen (Germany), and the Australian National University, Canberra, as well as three participating project partners at the University of Hamburg (Germany), the University of Halle-Wittenberg (Germany) and the Institute for Social-Ecological Research Frankfurt (Germany). For more information about the project, see: [Cultures of the Cryosphere: Infrastructures, Politics and Futures of Artificial Cooling](#)

The PhD projects are:

1) Air conditioning overload: The politics and futures of artificial cooling in urban Australia

This doctoral project will involve a qualitative study of cultural relationships to air conditioning and other technologies of environmental cooling. The PhD will explore the uneven use and accessibility of these technologies in private households, offices, hospitals, schools and recreational facilities, with a focus on conducting fieldwork in Sydney. How do these 'thermal divides' between excessive use and lack of availability manifest in relation to class, race and other factors? What alternative practices are being deployed to cope with extreme heat? How are local state actors in urban planning, housing and public health reacting to the rising demand for air conditioning and heat shelters in the face of increasing urban heat stress? Using a qualitative and/or ethnographic approach, the candidate will explore the demands, values, attitudes and practices of residents in relation to artificial cooling, particularly as they are shaped by normative ideas of comfort, health and well-being (Höhne 2022). The PhD will be supervised by Professor Bronwyn Parry, (ANU) in close cooperation with Professor Stefan Hohne (KWI Essen), and by an interdisciplinary panel comprising leading scholars from relevant fields.

2) Biobanking and cryogenic cultures of reproduction

This doctoral project focuses on tracing the logistics of cryobank supply chains worldwide. The research will involve an ethnographic and/or qualitative study of the infrastructures, practices, norms and cultural contexts of distributing cryopreserved biospecimens or bioresources (such as frozen human embryos, bull sperm or cell lines) across national borders. This may include tracing the circulation of such commodities between cryobanks, public health departments, biolabs, farmers or customers of a fertility treatment, for example. The project will involve theorising the specific forms of value produced by cryobanks (or their 'cryovalue' (Friedrich, 2020)) as it relates to concepts such as availability, temporality and reproduction. The PhD candidate will engage with key actors and stakeholders to study the technical, logistical and administrative requirements of cryobiological cold chains and their energy demand, including a case study of these logistics in Mumbai, India. Familiarity with India and/or Indian languages desirable, but not essential. The PhD will be primarily supervised by Professor Bronwyn Parry (ANU) and by an interdisciplinary panel comprising leading scholars from relevant fields.

Working relationships

Successful candidates will work closely with ANU faculty, research teams at the other lead institutions, project partners, and other relevant stakeholders in the government, industry and community sectors. Candidates will be exposed

to cutting-edge methodological approaches and conceptual frameworks, and benefit from diverse disciplinary and substantive networks both internationally and locally. The successful applicant will be located at the ANU School of Sociology during the tenure of their program, which was recently ranked in the world's top 20. Candidates are expected to have capacity to travel within Australia and internationally for fieldwork, project meetings and conferences.

Application information and eligibility

To be eligible for these exciting PhD opportunities, you will be a domestic student, and have achieved a First-class Honours or equivalent degree in Sociology, Anthropology, Geography, Science and Technology Studies, or a related field, but preferably a Master's degree with an extended thesis or equivalent in these fields.

We are currently seeking expressions of interest for this scholarship on a rolling basis. Ideally candidates would commence study in August/September 2026. Expressions of interest should be emailed to Rebecca.williamson@anu.edu.au and include:

- 1-2 paragraphs outlining your expertise, most recent research experience, qualifications and how the project fits with your interests,
- A short CV,
- A copy of your academic transcript (undergraduate and postgraduate study),
- A writing sample (e.g. your Honours or Masters equivalent research thesis, or a publication).

If successful, you will be invited to submit a formal application to ANU School of Sociology HDR programme and your application will be considered for the ANU PhD Supplementary Scholarship: Cultures of the Cryosphere (The Politics and Futures of Artificial Cooling in Urban Australia) or the ANU PhD Supplementary Scholarship: Cultures of the Cryosphere (Biobanking and the Cryogenic Cultures of Reproduction). For the base of the scholarship, a project-funded pro rata PhD stipend (equivalent to a full-time [AGRTP PhD](#) stipend) will be available until 31 December 2026, and applicants will be considered for the ANU AGRTP from 2027. For more information see: [ANU PhD Supplementary Scholarship: Cultures of the Cryosphere | The Australian National University](#)

Enquiries to: Rebecca Williamson Smith, Rebecca.williamson@anu.edu.au

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