



Call for applications: PhD bursary

funded DST/NRF South African Research Chair (SARChI) in Social-Ecological Systems and Resilience

- PhD project duration: Three years, beginning in August 2018 or early 2019
- Bursary details: One PhD bursary, R120 000 per year for three years
- Funding source: DST/NRF South African Research Chair (SARChI) in Social-Ecological Systems and Resilience
- PhD location: Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, in collaboration with the SARChI Chair in Social-Ecological Systems and Resilience at the Centre for Complex Systems in Transition, Stellenbosch University
- Application deadline: 15 July 2018; later applications will be considered if position is not filled

PhD Project description

Thematic focus: Historical and conceptual development of Social-Ecological Systems (SES) research

The research within this PhD project will focus on the different aspects associated with the historical and epistemic development of the interdisciplinary field of SES research. During the course of the last 30 years, social-ecological systems (SES) research has emerged as a field of enquiry that spans the traditional divide between the natural and social sciences. SES research is based on the insight that human-nature relations are integrated to the extent that the delineation between social systems and ecological systems is artificial and arbitrary. Applications of social-ecological resilience thinking has evolved over time with different influences from research and practice. Studying SES from a complex adaptive system perspective has become a fast-growing interdisciplinary field which can be viewed as an attempt to integrate the theories and methods of different disciplines into a new body of knowledge that can be employed to study and understand some of the most challenging problems today.

The candidate will register in the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, and will be co-supervised by a member of this Department (Dr Lloyd Hill) and two members of the Centre for Complex Systems in Transition (Prof. Reinette (Oonsie) Biggs and Dr Rika Preiser). The three-year PhD will be funded by the South African Research Chair in Social-Ecological Systems and Resilience, based at the Centre for Complex Systems in Transition (CST) at Stellenbosch University where the candidate will be expected to partake in relevant activities and seminars in both the Department and at CST. The intention is for the PhD to take an article based format.

Applicants for this position will be screened in terms of 'minimum' and 'recommended' criteria. The minimum requirement is a master's degree in either (1) sociology or a cognate social discipline (e.g. philosophy, history or social anthropology), or (2) ecology or a cognate natural science discipline associated with the field of social-ecological systems research (e.g. geography or sustainability science). The recommended requirement for this position is a track-record of prior research situated within one or both of the following broad fields:

- Social-ecological systems research (focusing on any relevant aspects, including complex adaptive systems, resilience, ecosystem stewardship, natural resource governance, ecosystem services, etc)
- Science and technology studies (broadly defined to include S&T research in philosophy, history, sociology and / or anthropology)

What to do if you are interested...

If you would like to apply for this position or find out more information, please email Dr Lloyd Hill. The initial **deadline for submissions is 15 July**, but if the position is not filled applications received after this date will also be considered. Candidates will need to submit both a curriculum vitae and a brief concept note or research proposal (2000 words). The concept note should succinctly summarize your background experience and basic ideas for PhD research within the broad parameters outlined above.

Brief researcher biographies

Dr Lloyd Hill is a senior lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at Stellenbosch University. He has broad research interests in the politics of language & communication and in science & technology studies (STS), and a particular interest in role of languages within the South African higher education system. His current research explores language use across the functional division between research and teaching, at South African universities and within the wider domain of university-based knowledge production.

Prof Reinette (Oonsie) Biggs holds a DST/NRF South African Research Chair (SARChI) in Social-Ecological Systems and Resilience at Stellenbosch University, and is also affiliated with the Stockholm Resilience Centre at Stockholm University in Sweden and coordinates the Southern African Program on Ecosystem Change and Society (SAPECS). Prof Biggs' research aims to advance theory and understanding of complex social-ecological systems, specifically how to build resilience to deal with uncertainty, surprise and ongoing environmental and social change. Dr Biggs aims to develop practical theory, methods and insights that can ultimately contribute to facilitating transitions to more sustainable futures in Southern Africa.

Dr Rika Preiser is a senior researcher at the Centre for Complex Systems in Transition. Her research explores the conceptual development of complexity and how a deeper understanding of the features and dynamics of Complex Adaptive Systems inform novel ways for anticipating more equitable social-ecological transformative processes toward resilient Anthropocene futures. Dr Preiser's work on complexity aims to highlight how a better understanding of the features, mechanisms and behaviour of complex adaptive systems can enable researchers and decision-makers to understand the conceptual and practical implications for the appropriate application of systems thinking and practices to real-world problems.