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Complex  
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## Call for Applications: Masters fellowship for 2018

### *Re-imagining Anthropocene Futures*

SARChI Research Chair in Social-Ecological Systems and Resilience  
**Centre for Complex Systems in Transitions, Stellenbosch University**

#### Project introduction

Increasing disconnect between people and nature, widening inequalities, and potential planetary tipping points are amongst the new and diverse challenges that characterize the Anthropocene. There is a growing recognition that novel socio-cultural, political and technological changes are required to address these challenges and facilitate transformations towards more just and sustainable futures. Above all we are challenged to create resilient futures that meet the deeply intertwined development and environmental challenges that mark a world profoundly shaped by human actions. Navigating the Anthropocene challenges requires novel ways of thinking and doing to engage in transformative processes. Social-ecological transitions require deep systemic understanding for interventions to be transformational and to bring about novel worlds.

The *Re-imagining Anthropocene Futures* project aims to explore how a shared, interdisciplinary understanding of the linkages between the imagination and a deeper understanding of the future could answer questions such as: ‘What is the role of the imagination in triggering, supporting or preventing social-ecological transformations in response to complex problems, such as presented by the SDGs?’ and ‘Are we left only with a “negative universal history” in responding imaginatively to the crisis of climate change, or is there time still for envisioning new utopias, time for imagining other revolutionary transformations in environment and society?’

The *Re-imagining Anthropocene Futures* project aims to examine how the role of art and creative art-science collaborative processes can be used to create transformative spaces in which the imagination can be activated as a capacity to build resilience and to bridge knowledge systems (or ways of knowing) concerning social-ecological change.

The *Re-imagining Anthropocene Futures* project will explore the following research questions:

- Can art-science collaboration help shape transformative spaces in which negative or apocalyptic framing of socio-ecological futures can be re-imagined through conceptual and practical re-framings of human-nature interactions?
- Can art-science collaboration contribute to the bridging of knowledge systems?
- Can art-science collaboration help activate and employ the imagination as an essential capacity of individuals and societies to create, design and bring about resilient future SES trajectories?

The *Re-imagining Anthropocene Futures* project is coordinated by Dr Rika Preiser and Prof Reinette (Oonsie) Biggs, who holds the DST/NRF South African Research Chair in Social-Ecological Systems and Resilience. The Chair and associated researchers and students are hosted by the recently established NRF Flagship initiative on 'Complex Systems in Transition' (CST) at Stellenbosch University. The CST builds on a strong history of transdisciplinary research and complexity studies, and hosts several leading scientists and students from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, providing a vibrant hub for solution-oriented, transdisciplinary, sustainability science. The Chair and CST are also partners in an exciting new collaborative research program, *Guidance for Resilience in the Anthropocene: Investments for Development (GRAID)*, working together with the CSIR and the Stockholm Resilience Centre in Sweden. The primary objective of the CST is to provide transformational knowledge on the dynamics of multi-scale social-ecological change, and strategic insights into the new modes of research and governance that can bring about a just transition to a more equitable and sustainable society, in southern Africa and globally.

### Call for applications

We seek a motivated individual to undertake research on the level of an MPhil degree that would contribute to the research questions as stated above. Candidates must have a keen interest in social-ecological systems and resilience thinking, an interest and ability to integrate across the social and natural sciences, and enjoy collaboration. The candidate should be an independent thinker and have an interest in inter-disciplinary approaches to research. Successful candidates will be co-supervised by Dr Rika Preiser and Prof Oonsie Biggs. Degrees will generally be registered within the School for Public Leadership in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at Stellenbosch University, but other options can be considered.

**Value:** Masters full-time over 2 years: R 70,000 pa

**Requirements:** All students applying for a Masters degree should have completed a four-year undergraduate degree or equivalent to be eligible. All candidates should show evidence of strong scholarly performance and commitment to publishing.

Applications are particularly invited from South African nationals, especially women and candidates from previously disadvantaged groups. Preference will be given to students who can work independently, are well organized and who will be willing to participate in the regular activities of the CST.

**To apply:** Interested candidates should send:

- a motivation letter (detailing your previous experience, your general area of interest, as well as an outline of potential research topics of interest),
- a detailed CV that includes your academic record, previous work experience, any scientific publications on which you have been an author, and the names of at least two academic referees,
- transcripts of academic qualifications,
- at least one example of recent written work (e.g. a paper, report, thesis chapter).

Please submit your applications electronically to our dedicated email address:

**rika@sun.ac.za.**

We encourage you to submit your application as soon as possible, but latest by

**30 September 2017**