

MSc Opportunity, 2020-2021

An MSc opportunity is available as part of the South Africa-Norway BlueConnect Project. The successful candidate will be based at the University of Cape Town Environmental and Geographical Sciences Department.

BACKGROUND

Climate-driven impacts in global ocean ecosystems are widely seen. Uniquely, a consequence of climate change for South African and Norwegian kelp forests is that they are expanding. This is in stark contrast with the situation elsewhere in the world, where kelp forest ecosystems are generally threatened and are undergoing range contractions. The expanding South African kelp forests creates the potential for interesting new dynamics around kelp forest utilisation and its management.

In spite of the significant ecosystem goods and services provided by kelp forests, public awareness of kelp forests is low. Furthermore, valuation of the world's kelp forests remains largely sparse, incomplete, and inadequate. The biggest drawback of the available studies is their failure to value kelp forests outside of the economic valuation framework. Even though sufficient market, economic and accounting models and tools have been developed to date, these have not been comprehensively applied to kelp forests, requiring researchers to delve further into the perceived non-market value. There are also a number of emerging kelp uses that extend the concept of value.

PROJECT DETAILS

This transdisciplinary MSc project will undertake a perception study that is capable of yielding insight into strategies to value kelp forests holistically, and so include neglected components of non-market value, including the untraded intangibles across the biophysical space and socio-cultural values such as the principles, importance or preferences expressed by people towards kelp forests.

The successful applicant will have a strong theoretical background in biological, environmental and/or geographical sciences, preferably with an interest in the marine and coastal realm. A great curiosity about the relationship humans have with their environment is essential.

SUPERVISORS AND ADVISORS

A/Prof. AJ Smit, University of the Western Cape

Dr. Philile Mbatha, University of Cape Town

Dr. Chantal Ramcharan-Kotze, Gordon Institute of Business Science and The Water Research Commission

ENQUIRES AND APPLICATIONS

Please submit electronically in a combined PDF the following documentation:

1. CV and academic transcript
2. A letter of motivation
3. Referee letters obtained by three employers/academics familiar with your work ethics and quality
(to be sent directly from these persons to the email indicated below)

*Application documents to be sent to A/Prof. AJ Smit, Biodiversity and Conservation Biology Department,
University of the Western Cape (ajsmit@uwc.ac.za)*