

## NEWS FROM:

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## UCT climate change researcher honoured by National Research Foundation

Dr Gina Ziervogel of the University of Cape Town has been named as one of only two researchers in the country to be awarded a P-rating by the National Research Foundation.

The P-rating singles out up-and-coming researchers under the age of 35 as potential national and world leaders in their fields. Dr Ziervogel is a lecturer in the Department of Environmental and Geographical Science at UCT and works closely with the Climate Systems Analysis Group (CSAG). She focuses on climate change adaptation and how institutions and communities respond to the risk of climate variability and change. She is the principal investigator in the newly launched, three-year initiative of UCT's African Centre for Cities (ACC), which will explore options for a collaborative response to urban flooding and sea-level rise in the Western Cape. Cape Town's Philippi (a high flood-risk area that has been hit hard by storms in recent winters) will be a case study.

Ziervogel and ACC staff will work closely with a range of stakeholders, including the City of Cape Town and community groups in Philippi, to see how risk management and response may be strengthened by getting all these stakeholders to work together as equals, towards the same goals. "At the moment, the response to floods and climate-variability risk is managed in a very technical, top-down way by the City of Cape Town," says Ziervogel. "We believe there's room for a multilevel, interactive response."

The study will involve examining flooding issues related to climate change, urban development, vacant land and housing.

The project is funded by Canada's International Development Research Centre and the UK's Department for International Development. It falls under the Climate Change Adaptation in Africa programme. Other partners at UCT are the African Security and Justice Programme in UCT's Centre of Criminology; and the Geomatics department and the Cape Urban Observatory, which fall under the ACC. External partners include the City of Cape Town, Shack-Dwellers International and the Stockholm Environment Institute.

Ziervogel's interest is in how to make science applicable in society: her doctoral thesis looked at whether smallholder farmers in Lesotho found any value in seasonal climate forecasts issued annually by the Meteorological Services. "It's clear that we need to respond better to current climate variability and climate risks," she says. "And we have information that can help us to do so, but we're not using it very well at the moment."

It's a problem she's tackling on many fronts. That includes working with and in communities, with municipalities and international partners, speaking at conferences and meetings, getting involved in outreach projects, and teaching. Professor Bruce Hewitson, the head of CSAG, said: "Arguably, one of the single biggest challenges around climate and society is enabling an informed and wise response to impacts from climate variability and climate change. Gina's work directly contributes to this challenge and is of substantial value to society."

**Photo attached: ziervogel264.jpg. Please credit UCT.**

**Caption:** Dr Gina Ziervogel of UCT has been awarded a P-rating by the National Research Foundation for her work in communities affected by climate change.

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