COUNCIL OF SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH IN PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA

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My department was called Natural Resources and Environment - Earth Observation.

Using remote sensing, specifically using Sentinel-1A satellite data, we would study the changes in biomass of our earth.

My project focused on studying changes due to fire.
RESULTS

Ultimately, the data was inconclusive. It seemed to suggest two different results. On one hand, the fires are detectable manually. However, the signal was lost in error when automated on larger scale.
The loss of signal is good news for their existing models. It means they do not need to worry about correcting for error due to fire.

I helped create a systemized method for processing the dataset.

My project established a foundation for future projects.
I received really great feedback from my peers on any work I did over the summer, including presentations and reports.

It also felt really good when they would turn to me for advice and suggestions on their projects. I liked that I was not the “trainee” but really a collaborator.
I considered continuing with scientific research in graduate school. It reinforced the importance of collaboration between science and policy. None of our research meant anything unless it could be translated into policy. Similarly, science is important in order to develop effective policies. As such, I’ve also started considering working in environmental law. It also reminded me that there are career opportunities, not just internships, outside of the US too.
I’ve been fortunate enough at Princeton, where the research question would dictate what data we would obtain. But, I really came to appreciate how often times it is the exact opposite, where access to data can drive a research field.

One of my favorite things about South Africa was the linguistic diversity. I would never go a day hearing only one language.

From talking to my peers, I developed a greater interest in politics. It also pushed me to think more about the source of personal biases and how they might impact our decisions and interactions.
Watching the sunset from CSIR