Governining the Nexus in Southern Africa
A partnership for understanding politics, institutional dynamics and challenges at the intersection of land, water and environmental governance in southern African contexts

In southern Africa, the intersection of land, water and environment is central to a range of challenges for policymakers, businesses and local people. Our starting point for this project is the recognition that politics matters in the governance of complex resource systems, and thus understanding how different interests play out, and how different people win and lose from contests over resources, is crucial in defining a more inclusive and just approach to sustainability. This means expanding our horizons beyond the technical challenges of managing environmental change to ask key questions about the social and political dimensions of resource governance that are too often left out of the equation:

- How do different formal and informal institutions influence access to resources?
- How can different mechanisms, state-led, market-led or citizen-led, contribute to the creation of sustainable solutions?
- How does the interaction of different governance regimes across scales, from the very local to the national to the global, influence decision-making and relations at the nexus?
- How do different governance arrangements impact local ecologies, landscapes and livelihoods?
- How can understanding questions of social difference related to class, gender, race and ethnicity ensure that people who are poor or marginalized do not lose out in the face of nexus challenges?

In developing the Governing the Nexus Framework, the partnership aims use evidence from a variety of different cases to extend and clarify approaches to understanding nexus governance issues in southern Africa. Different governance styles, whether technocratic, market-led, state-led or citizen-led, imply different mechanisms of governance, different actors’ involvement, and different narratives aimed at explaining problems and prescribing solutions. While each carries different implications for poverty reduction, conflict, inequalities and sustainable development, they do not operate in isolation from one another. Rather, different governance styles overlap and combine in different ways in different contexts along key axes of politics related to knowledge and evidence, institutions, social difference and ecology. By asking how the underlying and cross-scalar politics of governance is associated with different outcomes in different contexts and in relation to different land-water-environment dynamics, we hope to draw out comparative lessons, develop synthetic insights and generate new hypotheses for further research through a number of project activities.

This project is co-funded through a grant from the ESRC and the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa and brings together three leading organisations working at the interface of research and policy and with long track-records in internationally recognised social science work on environment and development. The core partnership is between the ESRC STEPS Centre at the University of Sussex, the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) at the University of the Western Cape and the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS) in Nairobi. Broader engagement with policymakers, civil society activists, business and local communities will allow us to build a widely relevant conversation around nexus governance issues and dynamics throughout the southern African region.

Questions about the partnership or the funding opportunities described below should be directed to the STEPS Project Coordinator, Parveen Mungroo (p.mungroo@ids.ac.uk) at the Institute of Development Studies.
Announcing three partnership funding opportunities: small grants, visiting fellowships and STEPS Summer School bursaries

1. Governing the Nexus Small Research Grants (Fieldwork Bursaries)

Too often a lack of funding means that dissertations, theses and other research projects are not supported by extended fieldwork. In the interest of developing new ideas, approaches and an empirical base for cross-disciplinary research on nexus governance centring on the intersections of politics, justice and sustainability, the Governing the Nexus in Southern Africa project includes a ‘small grants’ component that will support a number of young fellows, including PhD students and recent post-PhD researchers, to conduct fieldwork and publish working papers that apply the ‘Governing the Nexus Framework’ to address emerging or on-going issues around nexus governance in particular contexts in southern Africa.

Candidates selected for the fellowship can receive a maximum bursary of £2,500 to cover fieldwork related expenses, such as international and local travel, subsistence and accommodation. Fellows will be expected to complete a working paper within six months of the completion of the funded fieldwork, to write a blog and to participate in the Governing the Nexus conference that will be convened in 2017.

Candidates for fieldwork fellowships should be MA and PhD students or recent post-PhD researchers. Candidates who have not received substantial fieldwork funding, who are based at African institutions, and women are particularly encouraged to apply. Candidates should prepare the following materials for consideration:

I. A short project proposal: Candidates should submit a concise proposal of no more than 2,000 words that (1) describes the nexus issue that will be addressed; (2) states and justifies a tractable research problem, question or hypothesis, (3) briefly explains the project timeline, and the methods of data collection and analysis that will be used to complete the investigation, (4) states how they intend to apply the ‘Governing the Nexus Framework’ in the context of the project and (5) summarises potential outputs and the significance of the proposed research activities to understanding the cross-scalar politics of nexus governance and to identifying pathways for achieving justice and sustainability in southern African contexts.

II. A short project budget: Candidates should include a brief outline of the budget that they are requesting to complete the fieldwork. Budget categories should include (1) international travel costs (2) local travel costs and (3) accommodation and subsistence costs (cost per day x number of days). The maximum amount of bursaries will be £2,500. The candidate should indicate if they are requesting funds for fieldwork that will be carried out as part of a larger or on-going field project. If so, they should disclose whether or not co-funding has been sought or awarded.

III. The name and contact details of a potential mentor (MA and PhD students only): Candidates who are students should also submit the name and contact details of a potential mentor who agrees to offer the candidate, should they be funded, advice and support on questions about research design, data collection and working papers, for example. Potential mentors can, but do not have to, be members or affiliates of core partnership organisations – the ESRC STEPS Centre at the University of Sussex, the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) at the University of the
Western Cape and the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS) in Nairobi. Candidates should contact and seek the support of potential mentors prior to submitting proposal materials.

Materials should be submitted via a single email attachment (Microsoft Word or PDF document) to Parveen Mungroo (p.mungroo@ids.ac.uk) by 31 January 2016.

2. Visiting Fellowships (Core Partnership Exchanges)
Each year, two Visiting Fellowships will be awarded to facilitate exchanges between the core partner organisations. Each 1-2 month fellowship will allow staff who are working on nexus themes to work with other members of the partnership to develop new ideas and complete work on existing projects. All Visiting Fellows will present a seminar at the hosting institution to share the work conducted under the fellowship, and will be expected to produce two novel outputs (e.g. funding proposals, journal articles, policy roundtables, etc.) based on fellowship activities. Staff who would like to participate in a Visiting Fellowship should prepare a brief note that describes (1) the overall purpose and timing of the fellowship exchange, (2) an overview of specific activities that will be undertaken over the course of the fellowship and (3) intended outputs of the fellowship. Visiting fellowships may be budgeted a maximum amount £3,000 inclusive of international travel, accommodation and living allowance.

This note should be sent to Parveen Mungroo (p.mungroo@ids.ac.uk) by 31 January 2016.

3. Governing the Nexus ESRC STEPS Centre Summer School Bursaries
The STEPS Summer School that is held each May at the University of Sussex is an opportunity for those completing PhDs or post-doctoral research to attend an intensive two-week course on the politics of sustainability. We have around 40 participants each year, with last year’s coming from 25 countries. During each year of the project, Governing the Nexus Summer School bursaries worth £3,100 each (to cover travel, accommodation, subsistence and tuition) will allow up to five PhD students and postdoctoral researchers from organisations in southern Africa who are working on nexus themes to attend the Summer School. Entry is highly competitive, with over 300 applicants. Only those who apply, and are selected, will be offered support.

Candidates who would like to be considered for a Governing the Nexus ESRC STEPS Centre Summer School Bursary should submit an online application to the STEPS Summer School (http://steps-centre.org/engagement/steps-summer-school/), indicating on the application that they would like to be considered for funding through the Governing the Nexus ESRC STEPS Centre Summer School Bursaries programme.

To be considered for Governing the Nexus summer school bursary, the candidate must send an additional email expressing interest to Parveen Mungroo (p.mungroo@ids.ac.uk) prior to 27 January 2016 with ‘Governing the Nexus ESRC STEPS Centre Summer School Bursaries’ indicated in the subject line. Bursary decisions will be made and recipients notified within two weeks of the selection of 2016 STEPS Summer School participants.