

ESRC STEPS Centre - Reflections

This set of reflections was collected through a Padlet, constructed through feedback from contacts and collaborators of the STEPS Centre, who were invited to give their reflections on 15 years of our work. From students to research partners and agents of change who have worked with us, the messages show the diverse ways that STEPS has made a difference in many different places and settings.

Bold

The ESRC STEPS Centre was bold in concept, execution, implementation, and outreach. It's been a 15-year run of excellence and global impact. The legacy lives on forever.

H.E. Prof. Judi Wakhungu EGH

Kenya Ambassador to France, Holy See, Portugal, Serbia, Monaco. Former Minister of Environment, Water, & Natural Resources of the Republic of Kenya. Former Chair of the STEPS Centre Advisory Committee



A great group indeed!! – ANONYMOUS

Agreed! Incredible group and experience. --Julianna Gw.

Amazing journey - Chulin Jiang – ANONYMOUS



Action Research - Activist academics

A global network of academics, policymakers, activists, working together, co-creating, envisioning and creating localised sustainability pathways. A knowledge body for current and future generations to dream with a better world without denying uncertainty and simplifying complexity, yet proposing concrete experimental engagements.

Dr Diana Velasco

TIPC Research Fellow

Ingenio CSIC-UPV (Spain)

Wonderful opportunity to get to know the different approaches towards sustainability

I attended the 2018 STEPS summer school on pathways to sustainability. The summer school was a wonderful opportunity to get to know the different approaches towards sustainability, in particular those where local communities are central actors deciding on the best way towards a more just and inclusive sustainable future. The school encouraged a close engagement between the academic staff and the PhDs who attended, this created a unique creative environment that I did not find in another summer school. The STEPS Centre leaves a legacy of inclusion and diversity. For example, the funding that the centre provided to PhDs from countries not belonging to the OECD is a wonderful way to provincialise hegemonic views of sustainability.

Dr. Lourdes Alonso S

STEPS provided a unique and enriching learning experience and community

I participated in the 2017 STEPS Summer School thanks to the generous STEPS Centre full scholarship. The immersive course content and critical discussions that we covered in those two weeks have been very impactful and continue to challenge my thinking and shape my research. I am grateful for the social interactions and the friendships I have built through my engagement with STEPS.

Refilo Joala

PhD Candidate, Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) at the University of the Western Cape.

Inspiring research agenda & great summer school!

As a PhD candidate I had the opportunity to participate in the 2013 STEPS summerschool. It was an intellectually stimulating experience and a lot of fun at the same time. I have fond memories of the vibrant lectures and group work, the workshops in the beautiful countryside and the inspiring guidance from Andy, Melissa and Ian. I have also come to appreciate the pathways approach and in the years that followed I often recommended it to students I supervised and others. Thanks for everything!

Frans Sengers

Free University Amsterdam, The Netherlands



Refreshing and Inspiring

The STEPS summer school marked the beginning of my personal journey in materializing how multiple pathways can be conceived. The discussions, approaches and practices we had were key to making my mind tick in a less "bookish" or existential way and to begin tracing the connections with

practice. I think Andy and Ian were central in creating a shared understanding as a lot of effort was placed in giving space to alternative pedagogic methods. This was both refreshing and inspiring and made me feel confident in pushing for these kinds of approaches in more institutional settings.

Linda Pappagallo, Summer School 2019

A New Horizon

I participated in the 2014 Summer School and it transformed my scholarship and ambition. It opened up a whole new horizon of theoretical and philosophical perspectives which was a source of tremendous inspiration for me. Thanks a lot!

Inspiration

I had the great opportunity to participate to the 2012 STEPS summer school. My engagement provided me with a more thorough understanding of the pursuit of sustainability in a complex and dynamic world. The pathways approach was at the core of my doctoral research. I have very fond memories of the inspiring discussions and outdoor adventures during the summer school. I am very grateful for the tremendous generosity of Melissa Leach, Andy Stirling, and Ian Scoones as well as all the guest speakers and participants in contributing their knowledge and passion.

Dr. Kathryn Jastremski, Université de Montréal (Canada)



A network of colleagues and friends

My participation in the STEPS Centre Summer School helped me to broaden my understanding of sustainability and science and technology studies. However, its greater influence was making me part of a network of like-minded researchers.

Jennifer Castañeda Navarrete, Mexico, Summer School 2018

Eye-opening and inspiring

I had the immense pleasure of attending the 2012 STEPS summer school. To this day, I still benefit from the incredible intellectual discussions, the great networking that took place and the innovative and inspiring pedagogical tools. The best of all though were the wonderful role models many of the teachers were. This combination of intellectual brilliance, openness, respect, gentleness and sense of humour will forever remain an ideal I will aspire to reach as a teacher.

Thank you for everything!

Henner Busch

Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies, Lund, Sweden

STEPS work has been so inspiring!

Dear STEPS centre people, you have been such an inspiration! Starting with reading the New Manifesto, I have closely followed your work and was so happy to attend the STEPS summerschool in 2014. The experience was great! Not only to discuss pathways to sustainability, but also to experience such an inspiring, innovative, participative format of interaction. Ever since, the spring school has served as my best practice example of an inspirational, transformative learning experience.

Your critical views on the role of science and innovation for sustainable development have influenced my PhD thesis substantially!

I am really sad that the STEPS Centre will not continue as an institution, but happy to know that institutions live through individuals involved – and I thus hope that you continue acting and thinking and researching in STEPS ways wherever your pathways continue. Thank you!

Dr. Anna Schwachula, German Development Institute, Summer School 2014

Legacy

The ESRC STEPS Centre leaves a legacy of research that embraces complexity, diversity and uncertainty. The STEPS Centre has contributed to the development of early career researchers, stimulating critical reflection and creativity in their research.

Jennifer Castañeda Navarrete, Mexico, Summer School 2018

Thinking far and wide about uncertainty

The fact that the STEPS centre has included pastoralism as a topic in its agenda shows that it is thinking far and wide about uncertainty. Aside from an archive of material which future generations can tap into, it has simply helped bring the more practical and activist spirit of academia towards interweaving ideas in practice.

Linda Pappagallo, Summer School 19

STEPS' call of the wild: Direction, Distribution, Diversity!!!

As an early research fellow in SPRU working in 2006 on bibliometrics and nanotechnology, somehow at the antipodes of STEPS Centre focus on sustainable innovation, I could have never imagined the profound impact that the STEPS Centre would have on my thinking and my work. Yet I can still vividly recall the trepidation of reading STEPS working papers in the late 2000s and then the flagship "Dynamic Sustainabilities", which has remained ever since for me a reference book. Under STEPS' influence, I shifted my research from traditional (closing down) quantitative approaches to more pluralistic mixed methods – and eventually became a sort of activist for contextualized and participatory evaluation, for Indicators in the wild. With hindsight, it is extraordinary how this 'call of the wild' (Direction, Distribution, Diversity!!!) by the STEPS Pathways Approach is still shaping the thoughts as well the actions of various generations.

Ismael Rafols, Senior Researcher, Centre for Science and Technology Studies, Leiden University

'Dynamic sustainabilities' inspires my research

I participated in the 2015 STEPS Summer School. The lectures, talks, walk-shops, discussions with other participants, a student-organised conference and chats with Ian Scoones, Peter Newell and Amber Huff, transformed my thinking around questions on just sustainability pathways. I made friends and colleagues. I was able to collaborate with Jacob Weger in organising a paper session that explored dynamic sustainabilities in the Anthropocene at the 6th Annual DOPE Conference at the University of Kentucky. 'Dynamic sustainabilities' was also a key theoretical perspective in my doctorate research. I used it to explore potential pathways for decolonising the colonial-rooted forestry policies and practices in southern African dry forest formations such as the *Miombo* woodlands. I proposed a 'transformative forestry learning' pathway that could facilitate decolonial forest policies and practices, which embrace both ecological integrity and social justice. I still use 'dynamic sustainabilities' in studying complex environmental issues such as resource conservation, charcoal production, poaching, deforestation and forest degradation. Thank you, STEPS!

Mathew Bukhi Mabele,
Department of Geography and Environmental Studies,
University of Dodoma, Tanzania



Inspiring experience

I was one of the participants in the STEPS Centre Summer School on Pathways to Sustainability 2014 batch. I was granted a very generous full scholarship by the STEPS Centre that enabled me to attend this extraordinarily exciting and life-changing graduate course, which I remain forever indebted to. My engagement with the STEPS centre inspired and shaped my academic and research career profoundly. First and foremost, the training on how we understand and address key questions around sustainability challenges was eye-opening. The STEPS centre's pathways approach to sustainability has been and remains my key reference for my research, teaching and policy engagement work, particularly around what societally relevant and social justice-oriented research means and how it can be done better. I continue to follow and benefit from the world-class research at the STEPS centre through the wealth of knowledge shared via the pathways to sustainability book series edited by the Centre's leading researchers. I have been using some of these books as required and recommended reading materials for the graduate course I teach at the ISS. During my stay at the STEPS centre, I also immensely benefited from the diverse skills, expertise and experiences brought together from all over the world, which helped me critically reflect upon my own research. The workshops, special lectures, outdoor events and interactions made my experience at the STEPS centre very rich and unforgettable. The walk-shops were incredibly amazing and innovative learning methods. The STEPS centre also provided an excellent networking opportunity.

It is a pity that the centre is closing at the time when the world is facing multiple uncertainties and its expertise and contribution to addressing global challenges of climate change and environmental sustainability through cutting-edge research and policy engagement is urgently needed more than ever.

I have great appreciation and heartfelt thanks to everyone at the STEPS Centre. I wish you all the best!

Tsegaye Moreda

Assistant Professor in Agrarian Studies

International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), Erasmus University
Rotterdam

The Hague, Netherlands



Summer School 2014

I had first heard of STEPS Centre while researching zoonoses policies in India. The Centre was raising pretty fundamental (and relevant) questions and informing debates around disease dynamics and science policy responses that belied its size.

In my interactions with policy makers as well as scientists from public health, veterinary and biological sciences it was clear to me that there were major gaps in our understanding of the problems and a very blinkered approach to developing solutions. There was a disconnect between different disciplines as well as between academic and practitioner communities.

Many of these differences were explained as being products of institutional politics – which was not the complete picture. More worryingly, we did not seem to have an understanding of the overall trajectory towards which these discussions seem to be headed.

As a public health researcher, I realised I did not have the vocabulary to be able to describe the challenges of transdisciplinary, politics of expertise and different understandings of uncertainty and of sustainability. This was the reason why I applied for a PhD at IDS with STEPS Centre faculty Ian Scoones and Hayley MacGregor, and also the reason why I came with pretty high expectations to the STEPS Centre summer school in May 2014 – a few months after starting my PhD programme.

It is fair to say not all my questions were answered from the Summer School. However, as a result of the programme, I think I

got much better at asking questions!

As a freshly inducted PhD who was transitioning to social sciences, the Summer School proved a helpful experience in interacting with and learning from researchers from a wide range of disciplines including energy studies, STS, agriculture and media studies. The summer school format was very engaging and allowed us direct interactions with senior researchers and gave a lot of space for reflection and for discussions amongst ourselves.

Over the course of the two weeks of Summer School, through group discussions and workshops, I could see the similarity in the themes of our inquiries even if their contextual settings, and approaches to answering our questions differed.

I came back with some of my own concerns validated and other points of view challenged. I learnt for instance how important it is to listen to different perspectives in dynamic settings and how to avoid the urge to 'close down'. I learnt to confront my own and my discipline's blind spots and use these insights to better confront uncertainties.

So long, and thanks for all the sh!

Abbas
Institute of Development Studies

STEPS provided a unique and enriching learning experience and community

I participated in the 2017 STEPS Summer School thanks to the generous STEPS Centre full scholarship. The immersive course content and critical discussions that we covered in those two weeks have been very impactful and continue to challenge my thinking and shape my research. I am grateful for the social interactions and the friendships I have built through my engagement with STEPS.

Reloe Joala
PhD Candidate, Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) at the University of the Western Cape

Grateful to be part of this global family

It was an invaluable boost as an early career researcher based in Australia to spend two weeks immersed in vibrant debates about sustainability and democratic approaches to planetary justice with such an inspiring cohort of engaged academics. Ian, Andy and Melissa's passion and enthusiasm were contagious, and it felt like being welcomed into an extended family of warm hearts and brilliant minds.

The STEPS Summer School is now a benchmark to me for active, innovative idea sharing in imaginative formats. Walking and talking our way across the South Downs was beautiful, invigorating, and memorably congruent with the pathways metaphor. It gave me new perspectives, contacts and confidence

in the interdisciplinary approach of my PhD on inclusive climate adaptation governance.

I was even inspired/reckless enough to write some lyrics to a Beatles tune, in which ontology rhymed with technology and political ecology... and we all ended up singing it under the trees on the last day. Now that's a true sign of STEPS being a safe space to test out new and potentially controversial ideas!

Wendy Conway-Lamb
STEPS Summer School 2019
PhD Candidate, Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance, University of Canberra, Australia,
deldem.canberra.edu.au
Assistant Director, Climate Adaptation, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)



Thank you!

The work of the STEPS Centre and of Andy Stirling in particular has had a profound and lasting influence on my research. The insights into broadening out and opening up appraisal in support of more robust and reflexive decision making on contested science policy matters have guided my work from my PhD to this day. These insights have not only shaped my worked theoretically, but methodologically too, where I have an enduring fascination with the capacities of multicriteria mapping and deliberative mapping to systematically reveal the assumptions and uncertainties that underpin processes of social appraisal. The STEPS Centre leaves a phenomenal legacy not only for me, but for anyone seeking to democratise, verify and substantively improve decision making around social, technological and environmental pathways to sustainability.

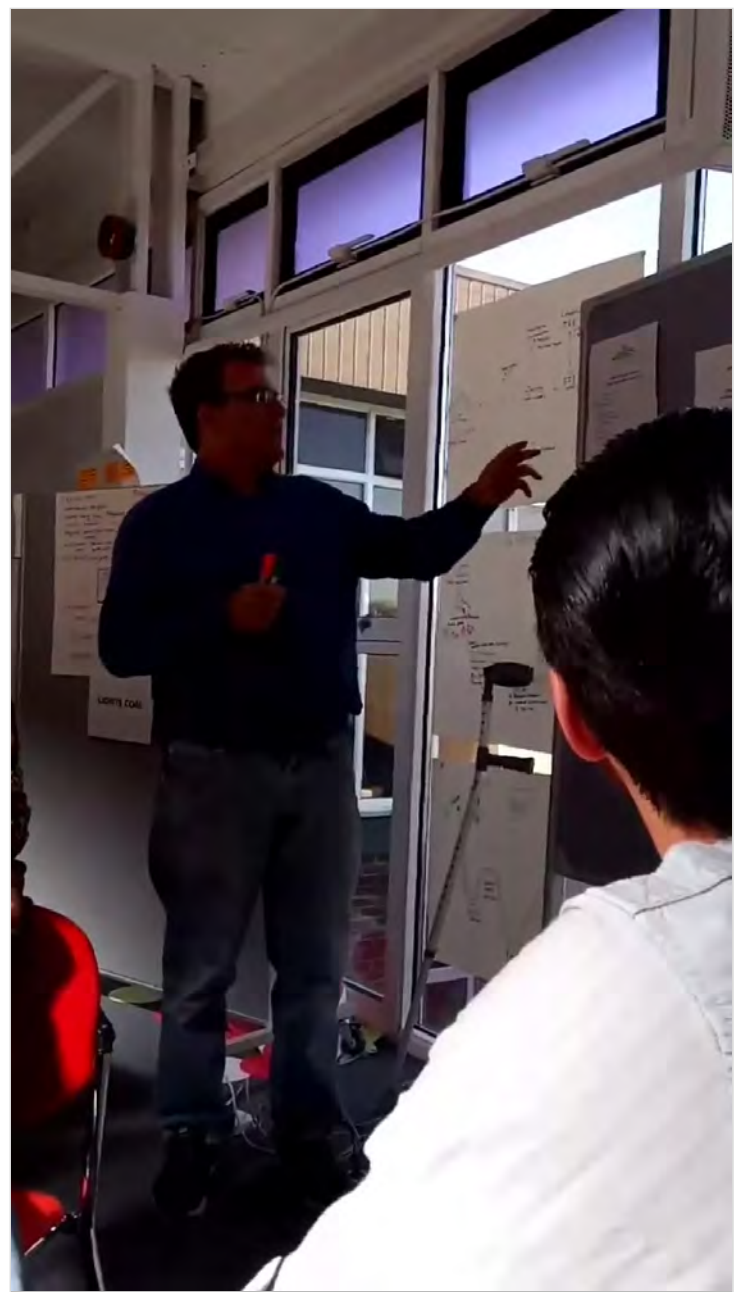
Dr Rob Bellamy, University of Manchester

An engaging and exciting two weeks which expanded the framing of my research immensely

As a participant of the STEPs summer school in 2019 near the start of my PhD on sustainable energy transitions I was completely enamoured with the intellectual environment I found at the STEPs centre. The ideas and new ways of thinking I was exposed to through creative pedagogical approaches have informed not just my research but also my understanding of the world. The conversations with members of the STEPs centre as well as other PhD students attending the summer school in workshops, walkshops and the pub have stayed with me and continue to inform my research to this day.

The steps centre and the pathways approach gave me so much confidence and theoretical grounding in advocating for more just and inclusive approaches to sustainable development. I will always treasure the memory of that experience not only for what it taught me but how it made me feel, connected to other bright and passionate people who have a desire to contribute to imagining more just, sustainable and resilient systems.

Wafa Elahi (UCL)
STEPs Summer School 2019



Learnings at ESRC steps at IDS Sussex brings alternate ways to visualise development. Working on the resource rights and politics in indigenous regions in India, it helped me to come up with new ideas to reframe forest governance that could affirm sustainable future.

Nikas Kindo
PhD Candidate
School of Development Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences,
Mumbai, India
nikas.kindo@gmail.com



Long-lasting, global impact

What precious memories the STEPS Centre invokes for me! As a Future Agricultures Fellow in 2011/2012, I had my first engagement with the STEPS Centre, but it was really as a participant in the 2014 Summer School that I became fully immersed in the work that was coming out of this global collaboration. It has been an eye-opening learning journey over the years through various encounters- from engaging with colleagues over a drink in the IDS bar to being a part of the Pathways consortium and having intellectually stimulating conversations around the world. From Argentina to Kenya, the STEPS Centre has had a powerful impact!

As well as making great friends and colleagues, the work coming out of the STEPS centre has challenged me profoundly as a researcher: to embrace plural forms of knowledge, to engage in decolonial processes in thought and action, to make power explicit and to reflect on all of the above in the research that I do. I know that I am a better researcher because of the journey that I've been on with STEPS.

Looking at all these wonderful reflections, this is definitely not the end of an era, but the celebration of past achievements and an orientation towards even more amazing work to come.

Thank you for your immense contribution to my life, both personally and professionally and I look forward to what is to come next!

Laura Pereira
(various affiliations, but currently in Johannesburg South Africa :)

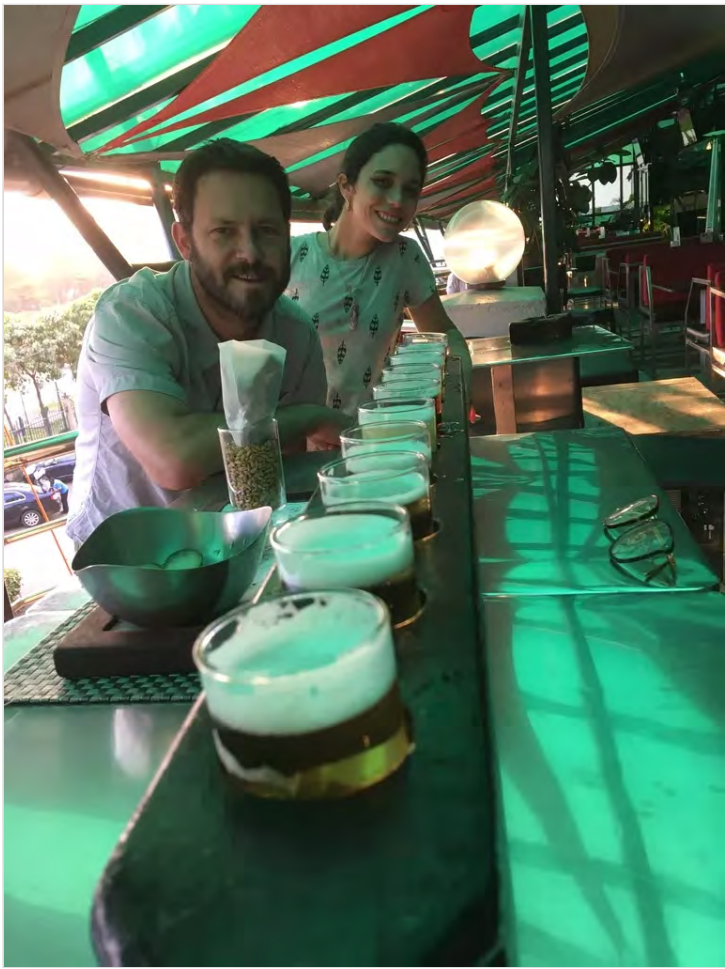
Collegial beers at Summer school 2014

Laura Pereira



Sunny days in Buenos Aires







Embracing power, politics, complexity and uncertainty

I've drawn an enormous amount from the STEPS Centre - both personally and professionally - over the past few years. The wide range of outstanding content produced (blogs, books, webinars, papers, online resources, video lectures etc.) have been highly formative in how I think about power, politics, complexity and uncertainty - and their implications for sustainability transformations.

For example, STEPS Centre work has directly influenced my research (e.g. in understanding BECCS as a complex system, and the implications of framing and uncertainty) and the operational KE roles I've held (e.g. in thinking reflexively about the practical implications of how to navigate the politics of uncertainty and challenge power).

And beyond the direct influence STEPS content has had on me, it has opened up my understanding and way of thinking, revealing all sorts of different resources and lines of enquiries for me to engage with and learn from.

Sadly, I never had the privilege of being involved with STEPS work or attending the summer school - but I have had the enormous pleasure of working closely with Marina Apgar, who has also had a huge influence on how I think and act.

I hope now to carry forward and apply all that I've learned from the STEPS Centre and those who've led it, as I embark in a new role facilitating better relationships between academics and policy professionals in Scotland.

Dave Bell

Policy-Academic Liaison Co-ordinator
Scottish Policy and Research Exchange
(SPRE)

Inspirational, life changing

— ANONYMOUS

Grateful to have connected with the inspiring and innovative STEPs Centre Family

I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to work with and learn from the inspiring colleagues from the STEPs Centre. I participated in the STEPs Summer School in 2016, which truly was one of the most incredible experiences and absolutely exceeded my expectations! Not only were all of the teaching staff experts and pioneers in their respective fields but the warm and engaging environment they created, facilitated such a conducive space for dialogue and creative thinking! I learnt so much from the teaching team, who were so passionate and inspiring and all-round wonderful human beings! Moreover, the close connections that I made with other participants has endured even today. The expert facilitation from the STEPs Centre team really exemplifies how a relaxed and creative environment can stimulate innovative thinking and genuine participation and learning. I will always treasure the memories of the connections made, the stimulating conversations during the Walk-shops in the beautiful South Downs National Park and the barbecue and jamming sessions at Ian Scoones house after a day of creative role plays, music and participatory exercises on sustainability and development!

I was also very fortunate to receive a fieldwork grant from the STEPs Centre to contribute towards the Governing the Land-Water-Environment Nexus in Southern Africa. This greatly assisted me in meeting the costs of my PhD Fieldwork in South Africa, which investigated the impact of agricultural investments between small-scale farmers and agribusiness firms on livelihoods, land rights and agrarian change. As a part of this grant, I was able to produce a working paper and a number of blog posts for the STEPs Centre. I am very grateful for the feedback I received from colleagues at STEPs Centre and other reviewers that greatly assisted me in developing the analysis for my PhD thesis and subsequent papers.

I wish all the amazing colleagues that make up the STEPs Centre family the very best of luck in your next endeavours and I hope you keep spreading your magic and creativity, brightening up academia and re-envisioning a better world for us all!

Sincere thanks and best wishes,

Brittany Bunce
Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies.
University of the Western Cape, South Africa.



Could not agree more! So glad to have learned with and from this amazing community during Summer School 2016! -- Julianna Gw.

— ANONYMOUS

Inspirational, mind blowing

STEPS Centre's Summer School 2013 was a game-changer to me. It was my second ever summer school to attend at that time. The whole setup of the summer school from workshops to discussions around pathways to sustainability and research methods shaped not only my thinking as a scholar but changed how I view, analyze and use terminologies, theories and methods in my current research. The opportunity I had to talk to leading scholars at the Centre helped me frame my Ph.D. topic and establish a strong relationship with them – a relationship that resulted in several years of collaborations in research and publications.

I considered the centre's summer school as unique and uncompetitive and for that reason, I recommended to my fellow researchers at the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS), University of Western Cape, and others in Tanzania and elsewhere and they those applied and attended could not stop sharing their amazement with the centre. While I am disappointed that this great centre is now closing, I have no doubt, that the centre has left a remarkable legacy on ways many scholars, practitioners and policymakers see issues of sustainability and its associated politics.

Emmanuel Sulle
Summer School 2013
ICCA Consortium Regional Coordinator East Africa and Horn of Africa



Great experience

When I initially applied for the STEPS Centre summer school, I think I was just looking for interactions with fellow PhDs and possible opportunities for future collaborations. While I did get all of that, I also got very much more besides. I attended the summer school during the first year of my PhD at Roskilde University in Denmark, through various lectures and conversations at the summer school, I acquired various theoretical, methodological, analytical skills and critical approaches to research, these skills proved important throughout my doctoral journey. After the summer school, I wrote a blog post about competing energy narratives which featured a lot in our discussions, I later turned the blog post into a journal article in highly ranked journal, this was only my fourth peer-reviewed article at the time and first at such a top journal, it was a huge milestone. I also made so many friends and engaged with STEPS staff afterwards. It was an absolute pleasure to be able to take part.

Dr Thabit Jacob
Postdoctoral Researcher, Roskilde University
Summer school, 2016



Nice to see you on here Thabit! Miss our community. What an incredible group it was! --Julianna Gw. — ANONYMOUS

Thank you!

The STEPS Centre has been my home-away-from-home for the last fifteen years. I couldn't have wished for better: the push-and-pull of conversation, old and now new colleagues, and proposals to be floated and grounded—all under the shelter and demands of practice. That's only possible when 15 years is seen not as a lifespan but as a human/e investment in now and ahead.

Emery Roe,
Center for Catastrophic Risk Management,
University of California Berkeley

A STEP towards a transformative research praxis

My name is Almendra and I am part of STEPS Latin America. I participated in the summer school 2016 and I have been part of the Pathways to sustainability. STEPS.

STEPS contributed to my research career by opening up new frameworks, literature, and perspectives, but specially, new networks and colleagues who keep teaching and inspiring my work. The need for new paradigms of knowledge and action and the need to include a wider range of stakeholders in the construction, dealing with power dynamics is one of the most meaningful contributions. It contributed to the world by spreading and fostering a new way of doing research.



Lovely to see this memory and you on here Alemendra! What an incredible group and experience it was! --Julianna Gw

A Broader Philosophical Outlook

I have engaged with the STEPS Centre in various ways. I started as an Early Career Fellow on the Political Ecologies of Carbon in Africa Project in 2011; engaged further with the Centre on the same project in 2014; and attended the STEPS Summer School on Pathways to Sustainability in 2017. All these engagements have been an opportunity for me to figure out my research philosophy and improve upon my academic writing skills. Prior to my STEPS life, and especially coming from a natural science background, my philosophical outlook on sustainability was skewed towards biophysical vulnerability. However, in the course of working on the Carbon Credit Project in Ghana's Transitional Zone during my fellowship, I came to appreciate

how socioeconomic factors, especially differential access to resources could make a huge difference in the vulnerabilities and sustainable livelihood outcomes of farmers trying to cash in on carbon forestry in the same biophysical context. Attending the Summer School in 2017 further broadened my philosophical outlook as I exchanged lessons and ideas with colleagues from across the world on the socioeconomic pathway to sustainability. These experiences further impacted on my PhD study in terms of study location, philosophy, and even the write-up. My PhD study, just as my STEPS research project, focused on Ghana's Transitional Zone –a zone where previous studies have predicted that farmers will abandon cocoa and switch to cashew due to worsening climate vulnerability. However, drawing on my STEPS experiences, I was able to argue and demonstrate that farmers' decision to continue to farm cocoa or otherwise in the Transitional Zone is largely underpinned by socioeconomic factors such as access to land, capital, and markets rather than climate risk perceptions. Another invaluable benefit I have gained from the STEPS Centre is in the area of academic writing. I was able to publish a working paper, book chapter, and policy brief, thanks to the mentorship and constructive feedback I obtained from Ian, Melissa and others. Although the STEPS Centre is scheduled to close at the end of 2021, I believe the positive impacts the Centre has made on me and many others will live on.

Ishmael Hashmiu
PhD Candidate
KNUST, Kumasi, Ghana.

Enriching interdisciplinary environment

In 2014, I attended STEPS summer school. As I was new to critical studies linked to sustainability and development, I found it a unique opportunity to enrich my thinking on these issues. I also appreciated the school's interdisciplinarity, the diversity of the researchers'/peers' backgrounds and geographical areas of research. I highly benefited from the interactions with my instructors and peers, and I have enjoyed meeting several of them in other conferences and schools. It is always great to feel like we had been working together for several years.

Beyond the research and the experience on the academic side, I am always happy to meet the instructors/professors, my peers and colleagues from my own generation and others in other conferences and events because that means our passion for critically contributing to sustainability unites us and also makes us work together. For me, the experience of creating a community of people I can work with around the world is probably one of the most inspiring moments.

Tania Martinez-Cruz, Mexico.
STEPS 2014



SHEERAZ AHMAD ALAIE Post-Doctoral Fellow, DST Center for Policy research, Panjab University, Chandigarh INDIA. Summer School Visitor 2018.

Just Transformations to Sustainability

It is difficult to imagine a world desperately in need for critical thinking about Transformations to Sustainability without the STEPS Centre with us. I did my PhD in IDS back in the late 1990s and was witness to the birth and evolution of the Centre. I took part of the Innovation, Sustainability and Development Manifesto and was fortunate to go back to the STEPS Centre for a post-doctoral visiting fellowship in 2011. I was also a regular participant of the STEPS Centre's conferences, which were always a fertile ground for collective thinking on Transformations to Sustainability. I use many of the publications of the STEPS Centre in my teachings and I know many of my students have benefited thoroughly from the STEPS Centre's summer courses. But I think that was most influential to me was the way the STEPS Centre helped me develop a line of research and work that puts JUSTICE at the centre of Transformations to Sustainability. I will be eternally grateful to the STEPS Centre for this. Those, like me, who had the privilege to learn from the Centre's pioneering contributions to Just Transformations thinking now have the obligation and challenging task to build on this work to pass it on to future generations. I have no doubt that the STEPS Centre's legacy which will continue to impact for years to come the way we think about a more just and sustainable world.

Iokiñe Rodriguez
Senior Lecturer, School of International Development
University of East Anglia

STEPS was an amazing experience, teaching a different approach to critical thinking

questioning dominant frames and narratives, and also providing a caring, collaborative and diverse environment and long-lasting network to develop new ideas.

Hanna Brauers,
Technical University Berlin,
Germany



The walkshops were an amazing part of the summer school and should be a much more common practice in research and collaboration. (Hanna Brauers, TU Berlin, Germany)

Inspirational

Your work has been nothing short of inspiring. I had the huge privilege and pleasure to attend one of your early summer schools - and it was by far the best programme/event I attended as a PGR and ECR. I still collaborate closely with a contact I met at the summer school, and I am in touch with another. Perhaps more importantly, the perspective developed by STEPS did not just provide some tremendously useful conceptual anchors for my work, it also continues to inspire me as an academic who is now asked to 'play the game' in a discipline that at times struggles to see a need for impact. I always felt encouraged by the diversity of views and careers within the STEPS. As we continue to re-evaluate what challenge-driven research means, what it involves and how it can succeed, I am sure we can learn (and have learnt) a lot from your experience. Thank you!

Lena Jaspersen (nee Kruckenberg)
Leeds University Business School

STEPS Centre has significantly contributed to the policy debates on environment and development at the regional and global level

The closing of STEPS Centre after 15 years of productive engagement with diverse sets of people and institutions across the world is an end of a wonderful institution. STEPS Centre has significantly contributed to the policy debates on environment and development at the regional and global level through their research, advocacy coalitions and training programmes. I was fortunate to be part of this 'story' in my limited capability through diverse ways over the last more than 14 years. The ideas and work supported and advocated by STEPS centre were extremely crucial for democratising the science and technology policies in several contexts and the overall development debate.

STEPS centre ideas significantly influenced my own research work over the years. For me, STS is incomplete in the global south, without analysing its entanglements with developmental discourse. It was reassuring to see STEPS researchers continually engaging with the broader debates on STS and development. Similarly, the politics of sustainability and the critical and reflexive engagement with the environmental debate is another major STEPS centre research line, which I greatly admired. The closing of STEPS centre is a significant loss to the academic world and indeed quite unfortunate. In today's time, we needed a robust, dynamic and growing STEPS Centre. I hope, the ideas propagated by STEPS and the networks created by leaders (especially, Melissa, Ian and Andy) and many other researchers from STEPS will continue to grow and will help create a just, egalitarian and sustainable society.

Aviram Sharma, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, School of Ecology and Environment Studies,
Nalanda University, Rajgir, Bihar, India

Pathways and Travelling Ideas

For many years the STEPS Centre has been highly influential as a pacemaker of sustainability research and development. And it still is, even when the project finally comes to an end in 2021. I had the opportunity to be one of the STEPS Centre's first visiting fellows in 2008, and later again to be invited to the symposium on uncertainty in 2019, both very enjoyable experiences. In the meantime I followed the scientific activities of the centre from a distance, from which I gained valuable inspirations for my own work. This is shown, for example, in an edited volume on „The Spatial Dimension of Risk. How geography shapes the emergence of riskscapes“, published in the Earthscan Risk in Society series in 2013. More recently, some thoughts resonating with the pathways concept have influenced the design of the collaborative research centre "Future Rural Africa" in Bonn, Cologne, and several partner universities across the African continent. Even if the STEPS Centre ceases to exist, the ideas it helped to generate continue to travel around the world.

Detlef Müller-Mahn

Professor of Development Geography
University of Bonn

Flipping the classroom



STEPS Centre Theoretical Eclecticism

I had an opportunity to be part of the 2018 STEPS Centre Summer School. It was a rare opportunity for me to travel abroad, and meet fellow young researchers in development studies from the Global South. This experience sensitised me to common development issues we are grappling with in our local contexts and the shared approaches we have in terms of theoretical foundations and wider visions. At the Summer School, through photo browsing at IDS, I had a real sense of the institution's history of engaged scholarship since the 1970s, which resonates with my work and others in the Global South. My experience with the STEPS Summer school also challenged me to be open minded, especially with regards to theoretical eclecticism and progressive theoretical convergence.

Mnqobi Ngubane,
Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies.
University of Western Cape.

A journey of sincerity and true partnership

My encounter with the STEPS Centre marked the beginning of an exciting and thrilling research journey in my life. I came in touch with the Centre in the year 2011 when I just concluded my MSc in Resource Management from Bonn University. I was ushered into the Centre as an Early Career Fellow under the Future Agricultures Consortium. What followed was a thrilling mentorship around opening up the alternative thinking on sustainability issues.

Through STEPS Centre mentorship, I wrote my first working paper on the Politics of Carbon Finance looking at dominant and alternative narratives –something that provided an interesting view on how to argue options and thoughts. In the process of writing the paper, both Prof Ian and Prof Melissa Leach guided me on writing arguments and presenting facts in diplomatic and compelling manner. These great mentors ensured they understood what I wanted to communicate in my writing and through step-by step engagement – helped me on how to frame ideas. This was the beginning of writing inspiration and what followed was that I was now capable of writing various thought provoking blogs and research pieces co-developed with colleagues at the Centre.

The writing and mentorship experiences were further strengthened through my participation in the 2013 summer school which inspired and trained me on thinking out of the box and presenting more coordinated arguments around complex issues. Listening to the pathways thinking and presentation rigour and passion by STEPS mentors such as Prof Andy Stirling not only inspired passion in me in terms of the way to present things but also how to do so with a passion that keeps an audience yearning for more.

Both the summer school and mentorship have today built into a true inspirational partnership through a long line of co-produced research projects and the subsequent launch of the Africa Sustainability Hub as a way of leveraging best practices from the North to the South. Several collaborative and research funding opportunities have also opened up through the STEPS engagement including one flagship funding from the UKRI-GCRF which colleagues from the Centre (Marina Apgar and Lars Otto) clearly created linkages. Several other interesting projects has also been inspired by Centre's colleagues including Dave Ockwell, Adrian Ely, Amber Huff, Saurabh Aurora, Nathan Oxley among others. All these collaborative research initiatives have enhanced research portfolios of many upcoming researchers in Africa.

Building on the STEPS concepts and collaborative projects around opening up spaces for alternative methods, solutions and dialogues, we are now convening the Africa Research and Impact Network within which several research voices from the South are profiled and dialogued. This is creating impact by strengthening peer learning and thought leadership for most young researchers across the continent.

The impact around research dialogue spaces is felt globally through the STEPS consortium partners (hubs) across the world. Ultimately, the STEPS experience is one of its kind and a model of how sincere and true North-South partnership should work in line with the SDG 17. While the physical STEPS Centre is winding up in 2021, the intellectual STEPS Centre is here with us to stay and to help the world tackle emerging complex global challenges. I will forever remain grateful to the Centre.

Joanes Atela
Convenor
Africa Research and Impact Network



Relationships between science, knowledge, farming discourse and power (STEPS Summer School 2019)

I participated in 2019 STEPS summer school programme and engaged with other participants and members of the STEPS center. I can reflect on my memories about STEPS summer school in three different ways. First is, how can we adopt a better science policy approach for the environmental project in Kerala drawing on the summer school teaching and discussions? I had this goal in mind while attending the lectures. Throughout my involvement in the ten-days programme and from reading the published papers of STEPS members, I realized that creating an environmental policy when there is no consensus on the science question in the public domain is quite a challenging task. Professor Andrew Stirling suggested a different approach in his lecture. It was a collective approach which was quite influential in EU and the UK for some time. But such discussion on scientific practice and decision making or the relationship between science and politics is does not sync with philosophical debate on “why democracies need science” in the first place. Questions remain as to how to understand the complexities of environmental science and how they can be measured? Or what is the validity of the scientific claims about nature?

Secondly, I would argue that there is no definite way to scholarly analysis on science and science-based decision making within science, technology and society studies (STS) or other disciplines for that matter. It depends on the individuals and how they are looking into their society and how responsible are they towards their fellow citizens. In that sense, the training of STEPS on a pluralistic approach may be quite successful where governments are wedded to democratic values.

Finally, getting funding for the summer school participation is a major burden these days. The STEPS center provided enormous funding for the Indian scholars in order to express their academic ideas in a common platform at IDS. Now STEPS center is going to close. This will easily restrict the participation of poor (Minorities, Dalits and Adivasis) Indian research scholars. Participation in STEPS summer school programme was a turning point in my life and I think the same would also apply to other researchers from disciplines such as sociology, history and philosophy of science and political science, among others.

Blesil T K

Doctoral Candidate

Centre for Studies in Science, Technology and Innovation Policy
School of Social Sciences, Central University of Gujarat

Working with and in uncertainty

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JrNLBZMmcE>

Silvio Funtowicz

Centre for the Study of the Sciences & the Humanities (SVT)
University of Bergen (UiB)

Twitter: @SFuntowicz



Nurturing minds in research environment

I would like to thank the STEPS Summer School organisers for conducting such great mindful, deep philosophical and scientific training workshops to add value on the existing knowledge of

large number of researchers throughout the globe. My experience from the program is that I came across a large number of ideas, information and knowledge regarding the sustainable development approaches. The environment created by the resource persons was really amazing to get more attracted to research and knowledge, taking science while talking and walking thereby promoting the ideas of knowledge sharing. Through this program I got a well recognition across few scholars throughout the globe to have long term knowledge discussions.

Dr Sheeraz Alaie

Postdoctoral Fellow at Department of Science and Technology, India.



Relationships to cherish for a lifetime

I attended the STEPS summer school in 2012. It was my rst experience of interacting with an international and interdisciplinary group of scholars, in a foreign country. Yet, the set-up made me feel so much at home. I was in the rst y ear of my Ph.D. during this time. The formal and informal discussions, excellent mentorship, and ways of creative expression and engagement at the school opened a world of theoretical and empirical possibilities for me. The concepts of opening-up, knowledge politics, pathways, justice, and citizen science continue to shape my research approach to this date. Along with these concepts, the school gave me networks, collaborations, and relationships for a lifetime.

I still keep in touch with many participants of the school and have worked with a few of them on different projects. On numerous occasions, I have turned to the mentors of the school - Ian Scoones, Andy Stirling, Melissa Leach, John Thompson, James Sumberg, Fiona Marshall, and Lyla Mehta - for academic advice, collaborations, recommendations, and solidarity. And on every single occasion, I have received tremendous support and encouragement.

It is difficult to say goodbye to STEPS Centre, a space that has, over the past nine years, shaped my scholarly experiences in fundamental ways.

Poonam Pandey (Ph.D.), Policy Research Fellow
DST-Centre for Policy Research, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore

Impactful

I think STEPS Centre will be remembered for bringing early-career researchers and practitioners together to discuss alternatives/framings/pathways to environmental sustainability. Ultimately, these researchers and their prospective students will be its legacy.

Maruf Sanni, PhD

Marie-curie fellow, Milan, Italy. Summer School, 2016

Bringing together interdisciplinary/cross disciplinary researchers

The STEPS centre will be remembered for bringing together interdisciplinary/cross disciplinary researchers every other year to discuss and foster the future of sustainability through sharing research experiences and lessons learnt from practice. I now strongly believe and advocate for multiple pathways to achieving sustainability. But also most importantly, researchers and practitioners need to become aware that sustainability is more of a process than an end-goal in itself. We have to value the process and approaches we employ to achieve sustainability in the short and long term. My engagement with the STEPS Centre influenced my view of sustainability and how it can be achieved. I learnt to integrate principles of sustainability in my research and practice. I have also expanded my network and now collaborate with a STEPS Summer School-2018 alumni in research. Together we use knowledge acquired from the Summer School-2018 to reflect on our research projects.

Amos Ochieng (PhD), Makerere University, Uganda. Summer School-2018

Life changing

I had the opportunity to be part of the Steps Summer School 2013 while I was in the third year of a PhD in Science and Technology Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Before coming to STEPS, I knew nothing about sustainability. My PhD was focused on innovation systems. The reading material, the special lectures, the STEPS team, completely changed my conception of innovation. I could not have better training to learn about the urgency for pathways to sustainability, inclusive governance, the doughnut economy explained by Kate Raworth herself. Having discussions with Melissa Leach, Andy Stirling, Ian Scoones, James Sumberg, and Lyla Mehta, changed my innovation purpose perception and research career.

In a personal note, the STEPS members took us to their houses, specifically Melissa's and Ian's. Andy took us for a walk. We, the students, were from all around the world. Latin America, Africa, Europe, India. The formal and informal discussions were vibrant. I would not change anything of the experience. Thanks to the STEPS Centre for allowing me to be part of this wonderful journey!

Dr Diana Velasco
TIPC Research Fellow
Ingenio CSIC-UPV (Spain)



Unforgettable experience

My experience with STEPS Center is one of the most memorable adventures in my academic and career life. I recall when I attended the Summer school in 2018, I had just enrolled as a PhD Student with the University of Malawi and I had little understanding of how to shape my theoretical framework and the arguments of my PhD. However the summer school offered a lot. The interaction I had with my colleagues and also the Professors at Sussex provided me some insights of how to take forward my work. Additionally, the resources that I have been accessing from STEPS website have been instrumental in my work as a development consultant but also as food rights activist in Malawi. STEPS will always be part of my life.

Tamani Nkhono-Mvula
National Director
CISANET, Malawi

A Broader Philosophical Outlook

I have engaged with the STEPS Centre in various ways. I started as an Early Career Fellow on the Political Ecologies of Carbon in Africa Project in 2011; engaged further with the Centre on the same project in 2014; and attended the STEPS Summer School on Pathways to Sustainability in 2017. All these engagements have been an opportunity for me to figure out my research philosophy and improve upon my academic writing skills. Prior to my STEPS life, and especially coming from a natural science background, my philosophical outlook on sustainability was skewed towards biophysical vulnerability. However, in the course of working on the Carbon Credit Project in Ghana's Transitional Zone during my fellowship, I came to appreciate how socioeconomic factors, especially differential access to resources could make a huge difference in the vulnerabilities and sustainable livelihood outcomes of farmers trying to cash in on carbon forestry in the same biophysical context. Attending the Summer School in 2017 further broadened my philosophical outlook as I exchanged lessons and ideas with colleagues from across the world on the socioeconomic pathway to sustainability. These experiences further impacted on my PhD study in terms of study location, philosophy, and even the write-up. My PhD study, just as my STEPS research project, focused on Ghana's Transitional Zone – a zone where previous studies have predicted that farmers will abandon cocoa and switch to cashew due to worsening climate vulnerability. However, drawing on my STEPS experiences, I was able to argue and demonstrate that farmers' decision to continue to farm cocoa or otherwise in the Transitional Zone is largely underpinned by socioeconomic factors such as access to land, capital, and markets rather than climate risk perceptions. Another invaluable benefit I have gained from the STEPS Centre is in the area of academic writing. I was able to publish a working paper, book chapter, and policy brief, thanks to the mentorship and constructive feedback I obtained from Ian, Melissa and others. Although the STEPS Centre is scheduled to close at the end of 2021, I believe the positive impacts the Centre has made on me and many others will live on.

Ishmael Hashmiu
PhD Candidate
KNUST, Kumasi-Ghana



Enlightening

STEPS Centre really gave me more clarity about context, power relations, legitimacy and sustainability. Since then, I have always considered these concepts in my research. Andy Stirling's discussions on uncertainties and alternative pathways were inspiring. By the way, it was during the summer school that I first heard about walkshop!! Interesting learning concept! I am going to introduce my students to it very soon.

Maruf Sanni, PhD
Marie Curie fellow, Milan, Italy
Summer School, 2016

Grateful for the 'thinking time' with amazing people!

I attended the STEPS summer school in 2016 a year after I moved from academia to the conservation NGO world. It was so wonderful to have the opportunity to step back, slow down, and immerse myself in the critical and boundary-pushing thinking and research that the STEPS Centre offered. The way I talk about and frame my work on power and politics in sustainability is very much influenced by all that I learned from STEPS. I will also be eternally grateful for the wonderful connections I made during the program - connecting with such a diverse set of brilliant thinkers from around the world was truly a remarkable experience that I will never forget!

Shauna Mahajan, World Wildlife Fund, Washington DC, USA.
STEPS Summer School Participant 2016

The legacy of the STEPS Centre Lives on.

The STEPS centre has been an inspiration for my life as an academic. I first learned about the STEPS pathways approach as I was beginning my PhD at Oxford. My review of "Dynamic Sustainabilities" by Leach, Stirling and Scoones and all the body of research associated with the approach was influential in shaping my research questions and scope of study. This was highly enriched by the opportunity of attending the 2016 summer, where I had the chance to interface in formal and

informal settings with researchers that I so admired. The opportunity to exchange with other like-minded scholars from around the world was yet another highlight of the summer school. The impact of the STEPS Centre on my views and research carries on until today. Having finished my doctoral thesis two years ago, I am now turning it into a book that will be published by Routledge in the second semester of 2021: "The Politics of Food Provisioning in Colombia". The book uses the Pathways approach and brings politics to the analysis of food provision narratives in Colombia. It is through these things that the STEPS Centre legacy will continue to live on.

Felipe Roa-Clavijo
Researcher, University of Oxford

just wanted to leave a <3 – ANONYMOUS

Lives on indeed. You Felipe are a true testament to that. So inspired by you and so many others through the STEPS Centre. Honored to know you and call you friend. --Julianna Gw.

Ripples & reverberation

Everyone who has been to the Summer School has come back changed.... Thoughtful, critical, and connected. STEPS will live on with this footprint in the lives of all those directly involved as fellows, or influenced in turn, as critical ideas about development reverberate into pockets of excellence elsewhere in the world. Thanks, STEPS team!

Prof. Ruth Hall
PLAAS, University of the Western Cape, South Africa



A beacon of interdisciplinary thinking and practice

For 15 years, the STEPS Centre has been a beacon of interdisciplinary scholarship, practice and advocacy—and has shone a bright light across UK and international research systems.

I first enjoyed the opportunity to work with Melissa, Ian, Andy and the STEPS team back in 2006, when in my then role at the think-tank Demos, we were delighted to publish The Slow Race—a cogent argument that retains its force today. Later, when I was at the Royal Society, and then at SPRU, it was always a huge pleasure, and a source of restless intellectual stimulation, to collaborate with STEPS colleagues—both through big joint initiatives like the ESRC Nexus Network; and informally, in all sorts of ways.

The STEPS Centre will be greatly missed, but I'm confident that its legacy will persist for many years to come, through the richness and creativity of its ideas, the power of its methods and models, the strength of its networks—and above all, the brilliance and passion of the many people whose work it touched, influenced and inspired.

James Wilsdon, University of Sheffield (UK)



Citizen engagement
is vital to ensure
that science and
technology **respond**
to the challenges
of international

The%20Slow%20Race.pdf

PDF document

WWW.DEMOS.CO.UK

A different game

As I started my PhD research on system innovation and transitions in 2006, I learned that transitions were very complex processes. The governance seemed a surprisingly familiar and easy game, though, with strikes and counter-strikes between challengers and 'incumbents'. STEPS people did a lot for me, getting me to re-think transitions governance as a quite different game. Thank you!

Bonno Pel,
Université Libre de Bruxelles
Belgium

Trailblazers and pacesetters

What a short summary of a very long list of accomplishments of STEPS Centre -- 15 years of a brilliant history readable in 15 minutes! It's a very-happy-at-the-same-time-very-sad reading. I could not think of any comparable centre in the world with comparable financial resources that could come close to STEPS Centre in terms of overall impact in the academic, policy and activist circles. It's definitely not just about the volume of output in terms of research, publications, and training (which is truly exceptional), but more importantly the quality of such intervention. Many of the publications were trailblazers and pacesetters in the field – they challenged, provoked and inspired subsequent research – and researchers. How they have done such incredibly high volume-highest quality output within a very short period of time is perhaps partly explained by the approach to work that they have embraced and developed – ‘engaged research’ that is truly diverse and global. It's not just an elite detachment somewhere in Brighton; rather it tends to be one of the key hubs of a far more polycentric global community of engaged researchers, with heavy presence in the Global South – no doubt a conscious design and method of work by people behind the centre... The Centre and its many brilliant publications, and how they work, have been a critical intellectual-political compass for me for the past 15 years. The massive impact of the 15 year old STEPS Centre – big and small, academic and non-academic – will be impossible to measure. But one thing is certain: it has contributed very significantly to changing not only the boundary of knowledge in the field, but the very convention on how brilliant work could be, ought to be, done. These are all happy stuff to think about when thinking of STEPS Centre. That makes it so sad to realize that 2021 is its final year. Very sad

Saturnino ('Jun') M. Borras Jr
Professor of Agrarian Studies at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS)



Place, people and diversity matters and this is STEPS legacy!

My first contact with STEPS Centre was between 2013-2014, when I first went to Brighton for a short period as a visiting student at SPRU. I was really impressed with the centre and all subjects it was dealing with. Therefore, I started participating in public discussions and started to follow all the centre activities online after then. In 2015 I applied for the summer school, and it couldn't have been at a better moment. I was able to develop my understanding and research skills around the pathways to sustainability approach that I started in 2013 and learn much more.

The writing of this brief text about my engagement with STEPS just brought me all the best memories built with people, with places and with knowledge. This is the reason I have chosen three pictures. One or two were not enough, and together, they represent a word that does not exist in English, just in Portuguese – my mother language: **SAUDADES!** When I came across the news that the STEPS Centre would close at the end of 2021, I couldn't believe it. STEPS had a real impact inside and outside academia, amazing products and a wide global outstanding network that has been bringing concepts to real world public policy impact to real people dealing with real problems. And this how STEPS also impacted me individually and in academic terms: how I look to scenarios and to risk discussions, how I understand and engage stakeholders (mainly the more affected by the questions and problems I address in my researches since then), how methodology is essential to look to the past, the present and the future, that we don't have a unique pathway to the future, and we must make this fact visible. In my opinion, this is the most important legacy of the STEPS project: the ability to connect people (physically and virtually), to connect research-policy-and-action, looking to what can be general and what is specific.

The pictures I share represent all this, that only could be possible together with STEPS faculties and community. Place, people and diversity matters in academia, in policy, in action!

Ana Paula Camelo
Centre for Education and Research on Innovation CEPI FGV São Paulo Law School
Brazil
Alumni SUMMER SCHOOL 2015



All matters Sustainability!

I first engaged with the STEPS Centre back in 2018 while I was still new to the research world. This was through the *Transformative Pathways to Sustainability: Learning across Disciplines, Contexts and Cultures* project, which pursued action research on what transformations are associated with mobile enabled payments and how challenges facing such transformations can be addressed based on co-learning. I was privileged to steer Africa Sustainability Hub's (ASH) Transformation Lab (T-Lab) 2 under this project. Through this work, I closely interacted with the STEPS Centre research team with whom we have worked on several publications ranging from blog articles, working papers, journal articles, and a book. These were my first publications that marked the beginning of an interesting journey in research, not to mention the numerous lessons I learnt from working with the STEPS team: Adrian, Marina, Andy, Rob, Dave, Nathan, and many others (the most

brilliant, humble, sincere and passionate international team I know!).

I was also lucky to participate in the 2018 STEPS Summer School, which opened my mind into the very interesting world of transformation pathways and sustainability, lessons which I still carry along through almost all my research work.

Our partnership with the STEPS Centre team has born numerous opportunities, are we remain indebted and keen to pursue this partnership beyond the tenure of the Centre. I've grown so much professionally and personally from this platform.

Victoria Chengo, ASH member and Fellow at ARIN, Nairobi, Kenya.



Understanding uncertainty, meeting stimulating researchers and learning with/about innovative methodologies

I had the luck to participate to the STEPS centre Summer school in 2019. This experience was unique and formative for me for three main reasons. First, the lectures by Andy Stirling and Ian Scoones really gave me a framework to understand the political nature of knowledge production and helped me to understand the relevance of acknowledging uncertainty in policy making. Certain events can simply not be predicted and certain risks cannot be calculated in such a complex world. Embracing this, has huge, massive implications for policy making that should

flexibly adapt to an ever more uncertain world. Often, knowledge rooted in different territories is key and for this reason the classic 'one size fits all' policies are not effective if not dangerous. In this regard, it is crucial to think about different pathways to sustainability rather than single solutions to calculated problems.

Second, a great richness of the summer school, was the wide array of innovative methods used. I learnt a lot by doing and I also discovered many new methods during the specific day dedicated. I found myself going back to the STEPS centre website to read more about different research methods. The available material is truly valuable and I hope it will be available for the future.

Third, we had a fantastic opportunity to exchange concepts, ideas, practice and struggles with a stimulating and inspiring group of people coming from all around the world. These people also became friends and I am thankful we still have an active whatsapp group where we sometimes exchange projects, ideas, articles and news.

A big thanks to the STEPS centre for organising such enriching experiences

Giulia Simula,
Italy
PhD student, PASTRES, IDS
Summer School 2019

Valuing Justice & Practicing What We Preach

I was really saddened to hear the pending closure of the STEPS Centre. Frankly the STEPS team and the wider STEPS programme/network had such a seminal impact on me personally and professionally and I have been utilizing what I've learned over the years from this amazing community in everything I do. Your work inspired and guided me in completing my dissertation in which I adapted the STEPS pathways approach/framework as part of a transformative capacity building model I developed. The deep dive training I received through my participation in the STEPS Centre's remarkable Summer School program was the best I have experienced in my entire career and the nearly quarter century of education I have obtained. That was one of the few times in academia where I was invited to unapologetically claim my intersecting identities and responsibilities to our socioecological environments as a scholar, practitioner, AND activist. I credit so much of what I have done since—including successfully earning my PhD—to the support, transformative insight and inspiration I gained during that summer 2016 with the STEPS Centre.

To this day I continue to preach the pathways approach for transformations to sustainability in my work—be it with ASU's Global Futures Laboratory or my wide range of global collaborative engagements and beyond. This framing has influenced not only how I approach my work in strategic visioning, initiatives development, transformative engagement, leadership and capacity building, but it has guided me in determining what pathways to pursue in life. Just transformation pathways and sustainability transitions are now permanent

additions to my vocabulary and the foundations of my inward and outward narratives.

Though I wish the STEPS Centre did not have to close (I still secretly want to work for you!), I am grateful for the many ways in which becoming a part of this collaborative, passion-driven community has personally and professionally enriched my life over the years. Perhaps more importantly, I am blown away by the powerful impact STEPS has had on the world. There is no other institution quite like the STEPS Centre. Its greatest gift was the example it set for all of us scholar-practivists to stand firm in our values, practice what we preach, and put justice back at the heart of education, research and action for sustainability transformations, regardless of the pathways needed to get there. In short, I owe the STEPS Centre team and community a great deal of gratitude and wish you all the best in whatever pathways come next for you.

NOTE: The photo is from the unforgettable Summer School walkshop in the downs. One of my many fond memories of my time with the STEPS Centre.

Julianna Gwiszcz, MSSW, PHD
Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory, Arizona State University
United States of America
STEPS Centre Summer School Alumna, 2016



A Turning Point

In the institutional settings where I belong as a rural development researcher and educator, the world is seen through different yet parallel knowledge systems, with little interactions in between. Those who try to understand issues such as farmers' vulnerability and adaptation to climate change would see the connections in the ecological and socio-political worlds where these issues are very much embedded in but would not dare to expose the structural underpinnings of these seemingly natural problems, let alone give primacy to the lifeworlds of the rural communities. In STEPS Centre's thinking and groundwork, I found the language on how to grapple with these complexities particularly in the context of my PhD research on transformational adaptation. STEPS gave me the confidence to pursue questions that address the root causes of the

sustainability problems head-on. At the same time, it brings me to this liminal zone where I struggle to communicate what I do, in mobilizing funds from institutions that shy away from research that values emergence and uncertainties. If there's one thing I learned methodologically as I reflect on my experience of applying the STEPS' Pathways Approach in my research, it is this: it is the rural communities who can easily appreciate and understand what the Pathways Approach is about and how it relates to their everyday life, not the academics or the funding agencies or the policymakers. And that thought gives me comfort and the motivation to carry on.

Winifredo Dagli

STEPS Centre Summer School Batch 2018; PhD Candidate (Rural Studies) University of Guelph; Assistant Professor of Science Communication and Development Communication, University of the Philippines Los Baños

STEPS Centre at Sussex University changed the way I see and interpret the world!

I was so fortunate to participate in the short course on "pathways to sustainability" organized by the STEPS Centre at Sussex University in 2014. I was very impressed by the way knowledge was co-generated between the participants from across the world and the world-class trainers from the STEPS Centre. The ambiance was jovial and the environment was conducive to learning new ways to understand and interpret the complex world we live in with all its multitude challenges. Often as young scholar, one of the biggest challenges that we face in our career pathing is the intellectual isolation and the lack of collaboration and partnership opportunities that impede our own personal growth to become seasoned authoritative voices in our respective academic fields. The STEPS Centre at Sussex University created a powerful and an effective platform to overcome these challenges, not only through learning and training processes that facilitate cross-fertilization of experience and expertise, but also through creating golden opportunities for young scholars from around the world to collaborate and build strong and lasting partnerships necessary to breaking down the divide before the so-called global north and global south academia. This is one of the most valuable legacies, among many, that some of us who have been fortunate enough to engage with the STEPS Centre at Sussex University will cherish for many years to come; and incorporate it in our own ways and efforts to interpret and change the world we live in to make it better and sustainable not only for us but also for the future generations.

Cyriaque Hakizimana

Institute for Poverty, Land, and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS)
University of the Western Cape, South Africa
2014 STEPS Centre alumni

STEPS Centre theoretical eclecticism

I had an opportunity to be part of the 2018 STEPS Centre Summer School. It was a rare opportunity for me to travel abroad, and meet fellow young researchers in development

studies from the Global South. This experience sensitised me to common developmental issues we are grappling with in our local contexts and the shared approaches we have in terms of theoretical foundations and wider visions. At the Summer School, through photo browsing at IDS, I had a real sense of the institution's history of engaged scholarship since the 1970s, which resonates with my work and others in the Global South. My experience with the STEPS Summer school also challenged me to be open minded, especially with regards to theoretical eclecticism and progressive theoretical convergence.

Inspiring intellectual agenda & great summer school

As a PhD candidate I had the opportunity to participate in the 2013 STEPS summerschool. It was an intellectually stimulating experience and a lot of fun at the same time. I have fond memories of the vibrant lectures and group work, the workshops in the beautiful countryside and the inspiring guidance from Andy, Melissa and Ian. I have also come to appreciate the pathways approach and in the years that followed I often recommended it to students I supervised and others. Thanks for everything!

Frans Sengers
Free University Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Pathways onward!

It is difficult to think of the STEPS Centre as closing – perhaps we should think of this milestone as another disjuncture, bend, or momentary pause along the complex pathways of transformation that were initiated 15 years ago, and will surely continue on through all the lives, like mine, that became intertwined and inspired along the way. I have been personally challenged and moved by the STEPS' call to act, with passion and conviction, to counteract the injustices and inequities in the world I inhabit, and through my own work, create and make space for new or otherwise neglected narratives, advance novel approaches to understanding and engagement, and challenge my own thinking and place. I feel so fortunate to have had the opportunity through STEPS to engage with all my incredible colleagues in the Global Consortium (photo below from our first meeting in Buenos Aires), and be inspired by their work and ideas about transformative change. The work of the STEPS Centre and its international affiliates now permeates my teaching and approach to research, and serves as an inspiration for my students – several of whom had the opportunity to join the STEPS Summer school. The STEPS Centre was, is, instrumental in “opening up” the possibilities about doing work in the name of sustainability differently, critically, compassionately and with the humility and humor that must accompany any effort to address the challenges of the present and future. I have learned so much, and will look forward to seeing how the seeds of transformation inspired by STEPS bear fruit throughout the global network that has been created.

Hallie Eakin, School of Sustainability, Arizona State University



:) – ANONYMOUS



The two weeks summer school at STEPS had greatly inspired me to engage in sustainable solutions of environmental and social transitions.

I participated the STEPS Summer School in 2012 while I just finished my PhD in Gender Studies at the Australian National University and became a junior researcher at Beijing Normal University. Prior to my PhD, I also held a Master's degree on Sustainable Resource Management from the Munich University of Technology. The two weeks summer school at STEPS had greatly inspired me to engage in sustainable solutions of environmental and social transitions. I've established a long-term working relationship with Adrian Ely, a great and inspiring colleague, after my participation of the Steps Summer School, which allowed our team in China to promote just transition in China. This is a picture we took in one of our T-lab activities to bring multiple stakeholders together to identify the developmental problems in environmental and social transition and work out more comprehensive policy pathways with consideration of marginalised social groups. We will keep going with this new methodology in our future research. It is very very hard for me to face the closure of STEPS, which I have received enormous support, inspirations and friendship

Lichao Yang
Associate Professor
Beijing Normal University



Sustainability is for everyone

I had the privilege of attending the STEPS summer school in 2018. It was the first academic event I've attended in Europe that properly emphasized having a diversity of participants from both the Global South and North, which had a significant impact on the richness of discussions. Sustainability is an issue that concerns us all; equitable participation in these scholarly forums is important as we shape the direction of sustainability science. It was such a refreshing, inspiring experience and I've been mindful of doing what I can to lift up other scholars from the Global South ever since. Thank you!

Niak Sian Koh, PhD candidate in Sustainability Science, Stockholm Resilience Centre at Stockholm University

STEPS CENTRE - a true ocean of knowledge, captivating diversity

I came to know STEPS center back in 2007, while I was working as a research assistant at the African Centre for Technology studies in Nairobi. My first impression when we worked together on issues 'Maize Innovation in Kenya' was how they had framed the particular project with knowledge that represented those included and minimized the usual conflicts.

I did pursue my Master's degree at IDS-SPRU that was fully supported by the centre in 2007-2008, with a focus on development, science and society. This is where I learned more about the centre, having a clear understanding on why knowledge takes a number of pathways in the uncertain world. It is in the same interactions that I learned more on the arguments relating to 'no bullet magic or solution to global challenges'

I sincerely am grateful to Ian Scoones, Andy Stirling, Melissa Leach, Adrian Elly, John Thompson who were both my faculty members and also partners in the project.

STEPS centre brought a dynamic change in many lives by introducing a better way policy makers, advisors, institutions and even financiers of development can look at knowledge in an uncertain world. The centre has also invested in making this knowledge available all over the world as a reference to practical alternative framework in addressing some of the global challenges.

Andrew Adwera Ochieng
MASSD01

Invaluable experience

I participated the STEPS Summer School in 2016, and it was an amazing opportunity to tackle sustainable development issues with transdisciplinary researchers around the world. What a great experience!! The two weeks Summer school at STEPS had greatly impacted me to engage in sustainable development and social justice. I have involved in the research work in The China Sustainability Hub since then, which is part of Pathways to Sustainability Global Consortium. I believed that the STEPS Centre have influenced me in many ways, and those experiences further inspired me not only for my PhD study, but also for my research career in terms of thinking and methodology. It's unbelievable that the Centre will be closed soon. However, its leading role and its legacy in Sustainable Development field will keep on inspiring more people in the wider world.

Chulin Jiang, Associate Resaercher, Guizhou Academy of Social Sciences, Guizhou, China.



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Chulin Jiang, Associate Researcher, Guizhou Academy of Social Sciences, Guizhou, China.



Valued partners with shared values

The STEPS Centre has been an important part of the Transformations to Sustainability (T2S) programme of the International Science Council since its early days in 2014, when the STEPS global consortium won a seed grant that went on to become the 'PATHWAYS Transformative Knowledge Network'. At that time, the T2S programme was a flagship activity of the International Social Science Council (ISSC), funded by the Swedish Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), and we, like the STEPS Centre, were trying to put the social and global dimensions of sustainability at the forefront of sustainability science. The PATHWAYS consortium members were and will hopefully remain close friends and partners in the ISC's efforts to advance diversity, inclusivity and equity in science and social outcomes. The closing of the STEPS Centre will be a real loss to science, society and the environment.

Sarah Moore
Science Officer, International Science Council, France

Grassroots innovations

I attended the first summer school organised by STEPS centre in 2012. I was working on grassroots innovations for my PhD and was perhaps clueless what next!!! Then that workshop and various activities opened new avenues for learning and research for me. I learnt a lot of things during the stay at the centre and even today I use them for my research and teaching activities. The way faculties interact with students was a great experience for me and helpful for me to interact with my students. Further 'walkshop' is one of the best practices I have adopted from the summer school for my MPhil and PhD students, and I take them

for different types of walkshop. Not only that, but sometimes I do my own modifications like 'cycleshop' we conducted to explore Adalaj stepwells nearby our university. This has not only helped me to discuss issues with students outside the classroom, but also bring them closer and trust me as a mentor. Some of them have also attended the summer school later. I feel that STEPS centre has done lots of work in terms of creating new theoretical as well as practical dimensions of understanding the issues of sustainability. The vibrant faculty at STEPS have already made lots of contribution through their research, consultancy and mentoring of students. The summer school has also created a huge network of like minded scholars and most of them are already doing good in their respective field. I hope this network would be helpful in extending the ideas and activities of the STEPS Centre further.

Hemant Kumar (PhD)

Assistant Professor and Coordinator, Centre for Studies in Science, Technology and Innovation Policy, School of Social Sciences, Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar, Gujarat

Pluralism, Pathways, and Critical Thinking

I am an Alumni of the STEPS Summer School in 2018. Before the Summer School I also engaged in STEPS work, learning about the Pathways Approach and applying it in my own PhD research (See link below & image). One of the main insights this has lead to is that it is important for us to engage in landscape management in a way that engages the patchiness of landscapes, and the relational agency and politics of local people and processes.

Other than this useful conceptual contribution to my work, I think my main take-homes from engaging with the STEPS work has been a greater awareness and attention to, and ability to practically engage in the ideas around PLURALISM, MULTIPLE PATHWAYS, and CRITICAL THINKING.

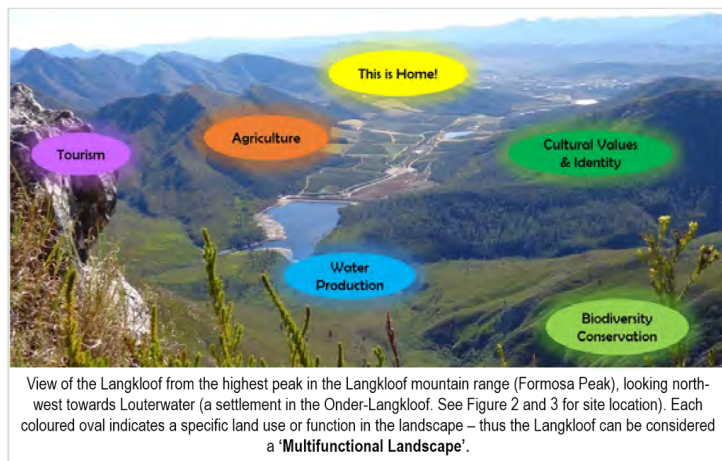
I am also inspired personally by the warm, open, creative and caring way in which all at the STEPS centre engage in teaching and leading in the sustainability space. Thank you!

Wherever I go, I keep finding that the most thoughtful and critical and kind thinkers are almost always, somehow, linked to STEPS! It's a big family, and I'm so grateful to be part of it!

Jessica Cockburn

Lecturer, Department of Environmental Science, Rhodes University (Makhanda, South Africa).

<http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol24/iss4/art32/>



Networks of sustainability praxis

My first engagement with the STEPS Centre was during the Summer School of 2016, one of the best courses I have had the opportunity to take. There, besides learning a lot and feeling quite excited with the Pathways approach and the importance of questioning the rationales behind the methods, I met inspiring people, both from the centre, and from the visitors-participants of that year (and I thank Hallie Eakin who was the catalyst for this adventure).

I remained in constant contact with the STEPS Centre and its Global Consortium, mainly through the work we did with the T-Labs in Mexico. The diverse, intense, and deep interactions that happened throughout this period in such a plural and interesting multi-cultural group have not only created friendships and incredibly impacted my academic endeavor (and new non-academic initiative), but have transformed me deep inside... Those conversations, approaches, practices, relationships, and learnings still permeate and shape how I want to keep on working and living in this planet ... And it is definitely not the end, just a different beginning, full of engaged people caring and contributing for a better world. Cheers and all the best!

Lakshmi Charli-Joseph (LANCIS-IE-UNAM, México)



An amalgamation of ideas and expertise!

It is not common to see lively workshops and active participants for close to ten days. The mystery is the multiplicities of ideas and modalities they are transferred really matter, which characterizes the STEPS summer school. Singularity is old-

fashioned here; a plurality of views is reflected and entertained – all opinions are worth reflecting. The pathways approach provides an aha moment to think differently. The problems we face are varied so do the solutions looks at the motto of STEPS summer school. Seminars, discussions, activities, and interactions are not the 'normal' or 'formal' procedures we used to know.

Meeting new people is common in such workshops, but mostly, you end up talking to someone with a similar expertise/background to you. But during summer school, I sat and discussed a wide range of issues and learned what others conceive pathways to sustainability from different disciplines.

Masresha – PASTRES, IDS
STEPS Summer School 2019

New insights and deeper questions

Every time I engaged in discussions and debate at the STEPS Centre, I came away with new insights and deeper questions – you can't ask for more than that.

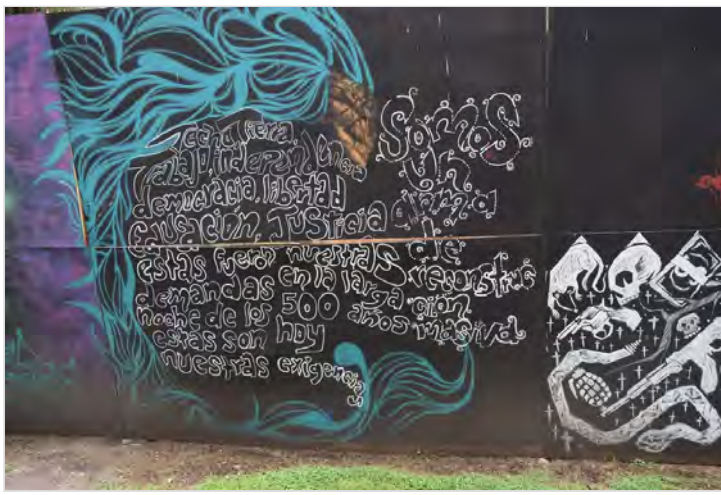
Kate Raworth



Courage!

It takes courage to make eye contact. Even more courage to stare at the souls lingering behind the eyes of others. This is the type of courage that STEPs has enabled and fostered in many of us. Now it is the time to let the momentum unfold and take over outdated institutions and shallow relationships that no longer serve us. Thanks for throwing the first stone to the pond! Enjoying the ripples!

David Manuel-Navarrete
North American Hub



closure, I am confident that STEPS will be reborn, in new form, led by some of those who have written to this board on this occasion.

Ed Hackett
 Professor Emeritus
 School of Human Evolution and Social Change
 Arizona State University
 Editor
 Science, Technology & Human Values

Enduring contribution and rebirth

STEPS has made an enduring contribution through the minds and hearts it has touched and through the good deeds it has accomplished. I was involved in launching the ISSC-funded Pathways project, a project unique in the breadth of ideas and perspectives brought together in productive collaboration. STEPS is rare, in my experience, in its ability to motivate people to contribute deeply and selflessly in a collective endeavor. There's a moral force coupled to powerful ideas in STEPS work, and it makes for lasting change in those who experience it. STEPS collaborations are unmatched in breadth and coherence, which may explain their efficacy. Saddened as I am by its

