



Governing 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

Call for proposals 2017

Programme description

In southern Africa, the intersection of land, water and environment is central to a range of livelihood and policy challenges for the people of the region. Climate change, loss of biodiversity, land shortages, and limited water availability for crops, livestock and people in this drought stressed region mean that governing resources at the land-water-environment nexus is crucial, and a major challenge for policymakers, businesses and local people alike. Understanding governance challenges means moving beyond simplistic top-down solutions that too often fail, towards recognition of the politics of negotiating pathways to sustainability in complex resource systems.

Our starting point is the recognition that politics matter in the governance of the nexus. Understanding how different interests play out, and how different people win and lose from contests over resources, is crucial in defining a more inclusive, just approach to sustainability. This project aims to refine a framework for thinking about 'governing the nexus' for sustainable development and poverty reduction that draws on long-standing research and engagement on relevant policy issues, while at the same time developing new ideas and approaches for cross-disciplinary research on nexus governance centring on the intersections of politics, justice and sustainability.

Key questions

This means expanding our horizons beyond the very real and substantial technical challenges of managing environmental change to ask **key questions about the social and political dimensions of environmental change and resource governance** that are too often left out of the equation:

- How do different institutions, both formal and informal, 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 – of class, gender, race and ethnicity – ensure that people who are poor or marginalized do not lose out in the face of nexus challenges?

The partnership

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 below should be directed to the project administrator, **Parveen Mungroo** (p.mungroo@ids.ac.uk) at the Institute of Development Studies.

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 including international travel, 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 a Governing the Nexus conference that will be convened in 2018.

Candidates for fieldwork fellowships should be MA students, 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. To be considered, candidates should prepare the following materials and submit them as a single PDF email attachment to the project administrator, **Parveen Mungroo** (p.mungroo@ids.ac.uk) at the Institute of Development Studies no later than **Friday, 24 February 2017**. Proposals must include all of the following components to be considered:

I. An up-to-date curriculum vitae.

II. A short project proposal: Candidates should submit a concise proposal of **no more than 2,000 words** that (1) describes the resource nexus issue that will be addressed; (2) states and justifies a tractable research problem, question or hypothesis, drawing linkages to relevant theory and literature, (3) clearly and concretely describes the methods of data collection and analysis that will be used to complete the investigation, (4) briefly explains the project timeline and (5) summarises potential outputs and the significance of the proposed research activities to understanding the cross-scalar politics of nexus governance and identifying pathways for achieving justice and sustainability in southern African contexts. Project proposals should engage with one or more of the **key questions about the social and political dimensions of environmental change and resource governance** outlined in the programme description.

III. A short project budget: Candidates should include a brief outline of the budget that they are requesting to complete the fieldwork. Budgets categories should include (1) international travel costs (2) local travel costs and (3) accommodation and subsistence costs (cost per day x number of days), and any other costs that are anticipated. 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, and if so should specify whether or not co-funding has been sought or awarded for other aspects of their research project.

IV. 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, for example, questions about research design, data collection and working papers. Potential mentors may be the candidate's academic supervisor. They also 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.**

VISITING FELLOWSHIPS (CORE PARTNERSHIP EXCHANGES)

Each year, Visiting Fellowships will be awarded to facilitate exchanges between the core partner organisations. Each 1-2 month fellowship will allow staff 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 expression of interest 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 exchange. Prior to submitting the expression of interest, it is a good idea to get in touch with members with whom the potential fellow hopes to collaborate at the host institution to discuss plans and timing. This note should be sent to **Amber Huff** (a.huff@ids.ac.uk) and cc'd to **Parveen Mungroo** (p.mungroo@ids.ac.uk). Visiting fellowships may be budgeted a maximum amount £3,000 inclusive of international travel, accommodation and living allowance.