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Research Statement for Clayman-Fulford JRF St Anne's College (498 words)

My research agenda focuses on looking at how core normative concepts used to study politics and development in Africa contested in real life political contestation. Thus it lies at the intersection of African politics, International Development and Political Theory. My thesis argued that politics in southwest Nigeria provides a window into the current crisis of legitimacy affecting democracies around the world: technocratic ideals of governance fail to meet popular conceptions of good governance and thus opens space for populist challengers.

Three subsequent articles extend this. The first, accepted for publication at *Governance*, takes a core concept from the good governance agenda – transparency - and argues that it should be understood as a concept which can apply to people as much as to data. The second argues that through ideas of the 'middle class development' leaders in southwest Nigeria tap into ideas of aspiration and sacrifice to legitimate otherwise destructive urban renewal policies. My third article uses in-depth qualitative fieldwork to show how, in the run up to an election, patronage must be carefully packaged in locally intelligible principles for it to be legitimate.

Two further papers, currently under review, do not draw on my dissertation research but continue to explore core concepts from political and social theory through an examination of ideas in African politics, whether inter-faith social contact or similarities between Kenya and American conservatives. I have mentored a variety of young scholars from Africa and the UK to produce papers for a special issue on ideas, ideology and values in Africa which is under consideration at *Review of African Political Economy*. The ideas explored in this workshop and my publications so far will form the basis for my book which I will write in the first year of the fellowship.

My next research project starts from the premise that public-private partnerships highlight the fundamental disagreements that persist over the ultimate aims of governance reform. Where the pro-market good governance camp sees PPPs as a way to harness the efficiency of the private sector for the goal of public interest, the institutionalisation perspective sees it as a liability for corruption and disruption to rule-bound decision-making by a Weberian state. In Nigeria configurations of state and non-state actors and institutions defy simple dichotomies of public and private: diverse actors come together in a patch-work or 'bricolage' to deliver services, arbitration and governance.

Nigerian sub-national governments have enthusiastically embraced the concept of PPPs. What makes these remarkable is that unlike in traditional PPPs, the resulting relationship between the state and the private sector is not codified in contractual obligations, but remains fluid leading to multiple outcomes from the same 'on-paper' institutional arrangements: ranging from philanthropic old boys groups to highly professionalized partnerships. Following in-depth qualitative fieldwork in my second year I will use the final year to publish articles and apply for funding. Through an empirical study of the lived realities of how PPPs play out in Nigeria, my research will offer fresh insights on good governance and corruption.