



Studying the Life-Work Histories of Sector Boundary-Crossers

How might the findings be useful?

- There is potential value in 'cross over' experiences as a source of new learning that can contribute ideas/innovation within public sector and third sectors.
- Researchers and policy makers should give more importance to the informal and personal linkages when thinking about NGO/government relationships.
- The effectiveness of both sectors may benefit from practical strategies that challenge caricatured sector views (e.g. exchanges, secondments, immersions, and training).



Between 2005-7 a comparative study was undertaken by David Lewis to examine the experiences of people who cross between the third sector and the public sector in UK, Bangladesh and Philippines. Research was funded as part of ESRC's Non-Governmental Public Action Programme (Grant RES-155-25-0064). An independent study on the topic by Alejandro Natal Martínez in Mexico was also incorporated into the research.

Why this research topic?

Studies of the relationship between third sector organisations and government tend to focus on formal, operational issues such as 'partnerships'. Less is known about what happens at sector boundaries, or about informal relationships and exchanges among the people who work at the 'interface'. These 'sector boundary crossers' include those: (i) whose careers have led them to change jobs across sector; (ii) who are 'seconded' for a limited period; or (iii) who are simultaneously active in both sectors (such as a public sector official who serves on a third sector board).

The value of studying such people is that their stories give a distinctive perspective on

sector differences, similarities and inter-relationships, different and from accounts of people who work either in one sector or the other. We also learn more about what 'acts' of cross-over tell us about the changing policy, politics and relationships between the

sectors in particular contexts and periods.

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NGPA Programme

The Economic and Social Research Council Non-Governmental Public Action research programme is a unique opportunity to further understand the impact of non-governmental public action in reducing poverty and exclusion, and in social transformation, from an international comparative and multi-disciplinary perspective.

Public action by and for disadvantaged people, undertaken by non-governmental organisations and others, is increasingly significant at local and international levels. The focus of the programme is not just on NGOs, but on a broader range of formal and informal non-governmental actors concerned with poverty reduction and social transformation. These might include advocacy networks, campaigns and coalitions, trades unions, peace groups, social forums, rights-based groups, social movements and business in the community initiatives.

Building systematically on research to date, this programme will develop theory, generate new empirical theory, and foster beneficial linkages between researchers and users.

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