

## TSRC seminar series

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**Seminar 2: 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2pm**

**Room 58/3017, School of Social Science, University of Southampton**

### **'Action across boundaries: conceptualising the interface between state and third sector'**

The 'three sector idea' – government, private and 'third' – has become firmly established as a theoretical model used by social science researchers. It has come to act as a 'policy model' that helps to map institutional landscapes and structure policies among governments and funders. It also forms a cornerstone for the idea of public–private partnerships that have become 'a key tool of public policy across the world' since the 1990s. For example, it informs the concept of partnership between government agencies and NGOs that remains central to the 'good governance' and poverty reduction policy agendas of the World Bank, whilst in the UK the post-1997 'compact' between the voluntary sector and the government has been a key element of New Labour policy. Research on the 'third sector' has also grown into a significant social science sub-field.

While it may be analytically convenient to separate the three sectors, the realities are more complex. There has been little research to date on the types of relationships and forms of power that link structures and processes across the sectors. This paper is based on a boundary-crossing study which aims to learn from the career trajectories and experiences of individuals who travel between the third sector and the public sector. It documents the motivations and experiences of those who have crossed over, and it seeks to explore the broader meanings and implications of these movements.

#### **About the researcher:**

**David Lewis** is professor at Department of Social Policy, LSE. He specialises in development policy and management, with particular expertise on NGOs and civil society. An anthropologist by training, he has undertaken extensive field research in South Asia (particularly Bangladesh) and has advised and consulted for a wide range of international development agencies, NGOs and private sector organisations.