

Encountering Hybridity: Lessons from Individual Experiences

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Introduction

In the past twenty years, the concept of the 'three sectors' in which the landscape of institutional life is divided into the public, private and 'third' sectors has become well established. From the UK Home Office to the World Bank in Washington DC, forms of this model have guided policy makers in the ways they have tried to develop and implement their ideas in both industrialised and developing country contexts. A belief in the third sector's special capacity to deliver certain types of social services, or to foster community-level participation, has been central to mainstream policy thinking across many national and international contexts. The model offers us a useful analytical framework but, as most people involved on the ground will also know from their experience, the everyday realities of life within third sector organizations are complex and messy, and, as many of the chapters in this volume suggest, may be becoming more so. Furthermore, as Billis (chapter one, this volume) argues, the structures and identities of organisations within the third sector have become extremely complex during the past decade, leaving the coherence of the very idea of 'sector' ever more open to question.

The contributors to this volume have mostly provided structural analyses of increasing organizational hybridity and sector blurring. This chapter approaches these issues somewhat differently. It explores mainly internal organizational aspects of sector blurring, analysed at the level of the perceptions and experiences of individuals, drawing on research on the phenomenon of 'sector boundary crossing', in which individuals from either the third sector or the public sector make short-term or long-term transitions over to the 'other' sector during their professional careers. Anecdotal data suggests that, in the past decade or so, there has been an intensification of cross-sector movements of this kind both in the UK and elsewhere.

There has so far been very little specific research on the sector boundary crossing issue in the UK context. One exception is Little and Rochester's (2003) useful study of six individuals brought into government in order to help inform its policy towards the third sector, which found evidence that these people could ameliorate but not influence or shape government policy. Another is Leat's (1995) formative research on the organisational implications of the movement of private sector managers from the for-profit sector to the third sector. Leat concluded that sector difference at the level of organisation and management

issues was not clear-cut, and that there was considerable diversity within the two sectors that she studied, as well as important differences between them. However, this work focused on a different area of the sector boundary to that covered within the present chapter.

The chapter aims to address two main issues in relation to the broader themes of this book. The first is to explore further the ideas set out in chapter three of this book that tensions may exist between the 'ideal model' of the sector and the everyday realities of particular organizations. The data demonstrate ways that these tensions are played out within the lives of those individuals who move from one sector setting to another, generating processes that often contribute to the shaping of hybrid organizations. The second issue is the more macro-level observation that despite, or perhaps because of, this hybridization process, the sector concept, and in particular the idea that a boundary exists between sectors, continues to play an important role in the ways individuals confront and manage different sector realities

The data presented in this chapter is drawn from a recent comparative research project that attempted to map and analyse the career trajectories of individuals who cross in both directions between 'third' and public sector¹. Some of these individuals were recruited by public sector agencies from the third sector as a source of new expertise while others sought entry to the public sector in order to try to 'make a difference' on a larger scale than they felt was possible within third sector settings. Others, moving in the opposite direction, left government or civil service positions in order to work in what they saw as a more value-driven or worthwhile organizational environment. Some were primarily motivated by the prospect of higher levels of remuneration while others were driven by social or political goals and many by combinations of all three. Some boundary crossers effectively became 'sector switchers' and decided to remain within their new sector positions, but many others became unhappy and returned to their original settings. In some cases, the intention was always to make only a short-term transition in which a person might deliberately aim to collect and share new knowledge and expertise, sometimes with an explicit aim of taking back and applying new ideas gathered from unfamiliar sector terrains.

Using a form of the life history research method, the study aimed to document the motivations and experiences of people who crossed over, and to explore broader meanings and implications of these cross-sector shifts (Lewis 2008a). The study collected, analysed and compared a set of narrative data generated through more than sixty detailed life-work histories that were collected across three contrasting country settings (the UK, Bangladesh and the Philippines). This chapter draws on the twenty detailed life-work history interviews from the UK portion of the data-set, which contained a purposive sample of boundary crossers in both directions, covering each of the types and motivations discussed above.

The data tells us more about the ways that the boundary separating the two sectors operates, from the perspective of those moving across it; and about the ways that such acts of cross-over feeds into organizational 'hybridization' processes, as new people and ideas become imported or transplanted into new sector positions. These individuals contribute to, and are in a sense 'carriers' of, hybridization. The research suggests that, while boundary crossing contributes to the erosion of third sector identities by blurring the boundaries with the public sector, leading to the importation of ideas and techniques from one sector into another, it also may also, paradoxically, maintain and solidify aspects of sector identity - as individuals either (re)identify with, revise or reject their earlier sector affiliations.

In the first section, we begin with a short conceptual discussion of the different levels at which ideas about sector operate and show the need to understand boundary as a multi-level concept. In the second section, the chapter introduces the topic of sector boundary crossing, with its wide range of types, motivations and outcomes, and suggests that this can be understood as a form of work-role transition, which has potentially important consequences for both the organizations entered and those that are left behind. This idea is at the heart of the chapter's main argument that such boundary crossing contributes to the formation of hybrid organizational environments. The third section presents data that help illustrate this point in relation to five themes: creativity; learning; identity formation; skill building; and informal linkages. A fourth section offers an analysis of the data in relation to earlier work on hybridity in public management and this is followed by the conclusion.

Understanding sectors and boundaries

The idea of sector and the nature of the boundary between different sectors both require careful unpacking. Sector is complicated in two ways: first, because sectors operate at different 'levels' and second, because it is an 'ideal type'; abstract ideas about sector are likely to contrast with people's everyday experiences and will therefore require constant mediation and adjustment. It follows from this that sector boundaries are also far from straightforward. A body of 'boundary theory' within organisational studies and geography suggests that boundaries are 'highly-charged' sites where differences meet. Exchanges between people at boundaries may generate friction, creating conditions for both conflict and creativity (Halley, 1997).

Sector boundaries are therefore rarely clear or stable, and require frequent maintenance. Sector boundaries are also permeable since they are transcended by the activities of individuals who operate across them either through professional career transitions or through informal personal relationships. The boundary between the third sector and the public sector is both 'real' in the sense that it is governed by specific rules and 'perceived' in the sense that people carry

with them a set of assumptions and expectations - both accurate and imagined - about how things should operate in each sector. Even while there may be a blurring of organisations and relationships 'on the ground', many people still tend to associate specific characteristics with particular sectors, and continue to seek these out and reproduce them. This is part of the paradox of hybridization; although sector realities may become hybridized, ideas about sector continue to carry important meanings.

Sectors

The concept of sector has meaning at three different but inter-related levels. First is the ideal model of sector, used by policy makers and understood by the general public, and which is both underpinned and critiqued by academics. This level has its origins in a theoretical model which has helped to guide the work of social science researchers (Etzioni, 1973; Billis 1993; Lewis, 2007). The ideal model has also become important as an idea that helps policy makers to develop policies in which, for example, the comparative advantages of the three different kinds of organizations can be put to work within public-private 'partnerships' (Evans 1996; Kendall, 2003). Second, as Billis (this volume) argues, is the level at which organizations actually match to varying degrees the ideal model and the way they appeal to the core characteristics of the sector as a means of securing legitimacy. Third, the model operates at the level of the experiences of individuals who may find that the first level conflicts with the second. This is of particular relevance to the issue of sector boundary crossers, who are forced to try to deal with and manage this tension, and in doing so may contribute to shaping hybridity in organizations.

Despite evidence that the idea of the third sector may be losing coherence, many of the people who choose to work in it continue to identify with it a certain set of characteristics – such as attitudes, organisational culture and values. For example, Cornforth and Hooker (1991: p. 12) have suggested that different management styles are found within each of the three sectors. They argue that a distinctive set of values which 'influence and shape how managers manage' contributes to the existence of a set of 'superordinate' goals among staff within third sector organisations. These tend to be related to underlying principles of equality and justice and may, in turn, be informed by a wide range of political or religious ideologies. These ideas help people to plan and shape their careers, including the decision to enter or to leave the sector. People try to find organisations within the third sector which allow them to put certain principles into practice and, once there, they attempt to build solidaristic working relationships with others with whom they hope share similar ideas and approaches. They may become disappointed when those expectations are unmet, they may change organisations within the sector, or they may even decide to 'cross over' into another sector. Despite hybridization, these ideas still carry important meanings at the individual level.

Boundaries

The operation of the 'boundaries' between sectors also reflects the messiness of the fit between sector ideas and real life. They are rarely clear-cut and they are ambiguous. This ambiguity can generate anxiety about the political cooption of activists or critics, or about creeping government influence, as long-running UK public concerns about the proliferation of quasi-governmental organisations (Quangos) indicate. But ambiguous sector boundaries have sometimes also been associated with far more positive outcomes. In her influential study of development and policy change in Northeast Brazil, Tandler (1997: p. 146) observed that, while 'the assumed clear boundary between government and non-government is actually quite blurred', the shifts of key personnel between sectors was an important factor in improving health services.

From the life history data it became clear that, for many individuals, boundary crossing is a dynamic act that may unlock or generate change at various levels. When individuals cross over the boundary they are forced to engage in a process of 'sense-making' within a new work setting. Whether this process is felt to be 'positive' or 'negative', it is likely to bring about a change of perspective. This can be observed on one or more of three levels. First, there may be a changed perspective on *sector*, such as a more negative view of the third sector from a new vantage point within government. Second, there may be the acquisition of new learning or knowledge which can be deployed in new *organizational* settings, such as the idea that elements of the policy process operate in different ways than was previously assumed. Third, there may be a changed or reinforced *individual* work identity, as in the case of a person who crossed over and had a disappointing experience in government, a discovery of the fact that the third sector was where a person really 'belonged'.

For some 'successful' boundary crossers, work on the other side of the boundary offers solutions to problems or discomfort that they might have been experiencing. For example, the discipline and organisation of the public sector is sometimes contrasted with the lack of order or consistency found in the third sector. For less successful or unsuccessful boundary crossers, a dislike of the new organizational environment (such as the rigid roles and rules in the public sector, or the need to follow a political line regardless of personal values) may simply confirm their identity as a person most comfortable with the values and organisational culture of the third sector.

Levels and meanings of boundary crossing

Boundary crossers provide a unique source of comparison between the sectors, since their distinctive trajectories offer insights into the way the sector boundary is experienced, and into the way that hybridities are shaped. Boundary crossing

can be seen as a form of what organization theorists call 'work role transition' (Nicholson 1984). In such transitions, a person must try to make sense of their new environment and adjust, either by changing it via 'role development', or by altering their own values and identity in order to *absorb* change as 'personal development'.

Wrzesniewski and Dutton's (2001) concept of 'job crafting' is a useful way of analysing how a person actively seeks to build a new work role by drawing on previous experience and on the resources that they find in the new context. People engage in a process of 'organizational role taking', in which a previous role becomes 'unlearned' and a new one produced by synthesising from the available palette of organisational, personal and inter-personal resources encountered within the new context (Austin, 1989). Role taking may be significant for both individuals and their organisations, and may constitute a major 'turning point' in a person's professional life.

There are usually two different *types* of cross-over role: the 'crosser' and the 'spanner'. The career of the 'crosser' involves one or more sequential sector shifts, which one can visualise as a kind of vertical zig-zag pattern across the sector boundary. By contrast, the trajectory of the 'spanner' is better expressed as a horizontal 'presence' across more than one sector at any one time. Here, a person transcends a boundary by simultaneously being active in both sectors (as in the case of a person who works in the public sector but who also sits on the board of a third sector organisation). In such cases, the two roles may not be entirely distinct but may reinforce each other. For example, a person may take a new job in a different sector but still interact and do business with former sector colleagues.

In the UK, there has long been some cross-over in both directions, but the movement of third sector people into government has grown more common since the New Labour government came to power in 1997. This may be part of a 'big tent' inclusive policy-making process to stimulate new thinking on key social policy issues. People may be involved initially on secondment but some of them later opt to stay on (such as Louise Casey from Shelter moving to government to work on homelessness). Alternatively, involvement may be part of a specialised recruitment of people with appropriate expertise and experience (such as the Department for International Development's [DFID] expansion of work in conflict and humanitarian zones, which has attracted people from NGOs into new DFID adviser posts).

Such people are of course still far from typical (the study has not tried to quantify cross-over trends) but it was not difficult to find people who had direct experience of cross over in both the third sector (including both its domestic and the international development sub-sectors) and in government departments such as the Home Office, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Treasury and DFID, as well as in local government.

Importing ideas and people between the sectors

Sector boundary crossers embody, at the individual level, elements of the bigger picture of sector hybridity and blurring. A detailed analysis of key themes within their career trajectories can tell us more about the shifting landscape of the third sector in terms of the experiences they encounter; the expectations they carry; and the hybrid organisational environments which they help to create. Five such themes have been identified from the life histories.

Creativity

Creativity, whether in relation to improving organization performance or to everyday problem-solving, is part of the life-blood of any organization. While it is perfectly possible for it to be fostered within 'pure' forms of organization, an important contribution can be made by boundary crossers. The data suggest that there may be a link between innovation and the collision of ideas and practices which may occur when a person carries ideas from one sector into another. Sector boundary crossing may prompt the production or application of new knowledge, such as in relation to the management of information. A common complaint among long-term third sector staff is a routine lack of efficiency in this area. This may become more visible from a vantage point outside the third sector, and a person may then attempt to remedy the problem when they eventually cross back by bringing in new more effective methods of reporting or documentation learned from inside government.

Innovation can also be explored within a third sector setting and then later transferred to the public sector. One boundary crosser had spent the first part of his life working with policy units in several local authorities from the 1970s onwards, where he had been engaged in a range of innovative projects with local community groups. When made a sector shift into a Chief Executive position in a health and disability charity during the 1990s, he was able to draw on a range of lessons and experiences from this public sector work to innovate successfully within the voluntary organisation. With staff and service users in his organization, he developed new and improved approaches to care that more fully empowered patients. These innovative ideas also eventually began to find their way back into the public sector, and were taken up by government:

We also developed a lot of user-led services, including a self-management programme which the basic concept was people with [chronic conditions] ... learning to manage [these] themselves through exercise and relaxation and better communication with their doctors... We got contracts with local authorities and health authorities and the whole initiative became quite influential, and then it led the Department of Health to set up something called the Expert Patients Task Force which was based on the principle

that people who've got long-term conditions like arthritis and asthma and diabetes ... are in a sense the experts in the condition ... So it felt like quite an achievement that something that [we] pioneered became part of NHS thinking ...

Here, an idea that had been developed within the third sector had been carried over by a boundary crosser and successfully 'transplanted' within the public sector.

Learning

Organizational learning is another process which may be stimulated by boundary crossing. It may lead to the challenging of 'normal' expectations and received wisdoms through experiencing work within unfamiliar environments. One informant was seconded from an NGO, where he had been active in policy advocacy work, into DFID. He was struck by the inaccuracy of much of the 'policy knowledge' he and his organization had previously been working with, once he had gained access to these processes 'from the inside'. For example, he found that the amount of time and effort that his and other organizations had been putting into lobbying at international trade talks now appeared disproportionate or misplaced. From a new vantage point within government, he saw more clearly that key decisions were in fact being taken earlier in the process, and that such public meetings offered little or no chance of success for third sector lobbying. Armed with this knowledge, he was able on his return to the third sector to begin a process of rethinking advocacy strategy. The shock of finding that the 'policy process' worked very differently than that assumed within the third sector was an important and ultimately creative moment, both for both himself and the organisation that he went on to work for.

Similarly, people who cross over into the third sector from government may bring new, or more accurate, technical knowledge about the way government works and how things can be achieved within its decision-making processes. Although many voluntary sector organisations claim to be trying to influence these processes, they are sometimes surprisingly unaware of details. A former government insider is in a good position to bring in more up to date or accurate knowledge. One informant, who had a long and successful career as a senior civil servant, moved into the third sector three years ago to run a leading UK national charity:

[From working in government] ... you know how government works ... my knowledge of Whitehall has allowed us to become much more influential in terms of changing government ... For example, some charities get very excited about 'early day motions' [in Parliament] ... I can't tell you how much they are seen as a joke in government! ... I think some charities have now woken up to the fact that government is a complex place, and that you need someone with Whitehall savvy ...

As Leat (1995) reported in her work on business managers working within the third sector, inaccurate or stereotyped views of sector values or practices may be common. Crossing over may usefully challenge such stereotypes (conversely, when a person has an unsatisfactory cross-over experience, it may also reinforce them).

Another interviewee had made an effort to share new knowledge in a strategic way. He had prepared a detailed set of presentation notes to educate his colleagues on returning to his old third sector organisation after an eighteen-month (and largely unsatisfactory) period of employment in a government agency. Entitled 'Confessions of a civil servant', the presentation aimed to challenge members of the organisation and their assumptions about how government worked, both in terms of accessing future funds and influencing policy. Government's emphasis on concise and effective briefings between departments and its 30 minute meeting default time were both useful disciplines which he suggests have improved the performance of the third sector organisation where he works.

Identity formation

We have already seen that the sector operates at the level of ideas and expectations as well as at the level of structures. There have traditionally been many people in the UK who characterise themselves as a 'voluntary sector person' or as 'a public servant through and through', suggesting that the idea of sector is often strongly bound up with a person's personal and/or professional identity and values. These identities may be disrupted by boundary crossing, and may become altered in temporary or lasting ways.

There may be a disillusionment with, or reinforcement of, sector identities when they are viewed and reflected upon from the vantage point of another sector. Some people from the third sector may find a stronger sense of organisation and purpose within government and, as a consequence, may gain a 'diminished' view of the third sector. One person found that a spell in government made him feel that many of the development NGOs where he had previously worked lacked the discipline to offer feasible alternatives to government policies:

[It] had challenged some of my perceptions ... because there didn't seem to be an understanding amongst the NGO sector that what they had to propose had to be realistic for government ... I still believe that government cannot do things that are completely unrealistic just because I think they are a good idea ...

There are also people, however, who do not accept sector-based identities. Instead, a 'role-based identity' is dominant, in which a person's priority is simply to follow the job, either as an activist seeking leverage to bring about change or,

at the material level, seeking better pay or conditions. For these people, there is no long-term concept of a preferred sector as a chosen work space or a special loyalty to the idea of a particular sector and its values. One life work history was taken from a woman, currently a chief executive in a large public sector organisation, who had crossed between public and third sectors several times during her career. She described being motivated from an early age by the idea of 'trying to change the world through what you did' and had sought out organizational environments 'that have got the levers to do that at any one time'. Resisting simple generalisations about sector comparative advantage or inherent characteristics, she viewed the strengths and weaknesses of both sectors as being mainly contingent on wider politics and policy.

Finally, sector identities themselves can be highly subjective. One example of this is the case of DFID. For people in the world of development NGOs, DFID is usually (and correctly) seen as an archetypal public sector agency characterised by strict formal rules, rigid hierarchies, and the need to follow hard-headed government policy priorities. Yet for civil servants in other sections of UK government such as the Foreign Office or the Treasury, there is a tradition of looking upon DFID rather differently - as an anomalous government agency, NGO-like in what many perceived as its preoccupation with what they saw (incorrectly) as charitable, 'do-gooding' work.

Skill building

The role of the third sector as a site of skill-building is increasingly recognised by government in schemes such as the Workforce Hub funded through the ChangeUp initiative (now Capacitybuilders) that seeks to strengthen human resource capacity. The third sector serves as an important training ground for work in the public sector (and vice versa). One sector creates a reservoir of skilled and motivated people who may then be recruited by organizations in another, in a process that contributes to the creation of hybrid organizational environments. Many of today's government and opposition politicians have the third sector as part of their life-work histories. There is an unusually large number of New Labour senior government ministers who have some kind of background in the voluntary sector (including Patricia Hewitt, Tessa Jowell and David Miliband) suggesting that an increasingly important function of the third sector is as a training space for future political leaders, particularly within social welfare. Knowledge about the third sector within government may be higher than in previous administrations because of this direct experience, although there is also plenty of evidence that lack of knowledge and distrust of the sector remains prominent among civil servants.

This increasing level of 'exchange' between the sectors has become an important part of UK public life, although it has probably not yet reached the point at which it blurs the boundaries of individual, private and public interests to such an extent that it raises concerns about 'revolving doors' – which provide

privileged access to policy for individuals who operate in both sectors. Instead, it may have a positive effect in providing public sector people with more accurate knowledge about the third sector, and vice versa.

Informal cross-boundary links

Finally, hybrid organizational environments may be maintained through sets of cross-sector personal linkages and relationships. Some of the life-work histories collected throw light on the ways in which friendships and networks formed in early career persist over time and continue to inform the relationship between third sector and government in less visible ways. One of the most interesting examples of this is the role of what one informant termed 'ex-fams'. These are people who used to work for Oxfam GB, but who now hold posts in government. Such people may play the role of 'boundary spanners', oiling the relationship between government and third sector behind the scenes. For example, when Oxfam needs information about a particular issue from within the Foreign Office or DFID (where many such people are positioned) they can sometimes secure a privileged point of access and invoke some kind of 'sector loyalty'. If they are planning a campaign and wish to explore how it may be received, or identify a possible point of potential influence in the policy process, the advice of such people can be very useful. As Howard and Taylor (chapter nine of this volume) report, boundary spanning can also place pressure on such individuals, since they may need to balance competing demands.

Some individuals deliberately position themselves to span boundaries through a 'straddling' strategy and this may also contribute to hybridity. One informant who combined a very successful public sector career with voluntary work, speaks in her narrative of the value of operating 'on the cusp' of the third sector and the public sector. With extensive experience in a wide range of public sector and third sector organisations, she gained, in her words

an enormous experience and understanding of both sectors and was therefore able to make a unique contribution...

By refusing to be limited to a single sector for any length of time, she has developed a sophisticated understanding of both sectors, and suggests that this strategy has helped her to influence policy and practice in her field. Power can be derived from operating on the boundary and from facing both ways. Boundary crossing is not therefore only a sequence of movements taking place across the boundary but can also be seen as an accumulation of positions and networks which contribute to work, career and identity.

Boundary crossing, hybridization and accountability

Sector boundaries, once conceptualised in relatively unambiguous terms, are now routinely problematized. At the level of organizational relationships, we see how there are both tensions and opportunities that open up as the sector boundary becomes blurred as, for example, Howard and Taylor (chapter nine of this volume) describe in their analysis of governance spaces within government-third sector partnerships.

Such issues need to be analysed within the wider context of so-called 'new public management' which continues to generate anxiety about the shifting relationships between sectors, particularly between the public and private sectors. For critics on the political right, closer relationships across these sectors are sometimes felt to promote collusion which can reduce efficiency and result in higher levels of public expenditure. For critics on the left, sector blurring is seen as helping private interests to gain control of the state and weaken its capacity to regulate the private sector effectively. Wright (2000: 164) suggests:

The most general phrase that can be applied to the changes in the public sector is "hybridization". Rather than having clearly defined sectors, most public activities are now delivered through mechanisms involving both sectors... In biology hybrid species are often thought to be particularly hardy. In public administration these species may well be excessively hardy, given that they are also more than a little dangerous (p.164).

What is the source of this danger? Wright argues that hybridization does not merely affect the ways that public services are delivered, but that it also impacts strongly on the *personnel* who work for government. One major result of this impact in many societies has been a trend towards 'the end of public service as an exclusive career, and the increasing recruitment of outsiders to major posts in the public sector' (p.166). This trend towards a movement of people in and out of government brings certain tensions. These include differences in terms of organizational culture (around, for example, confidentiality norms, particularly when people leave); unhappiness about internal wage differentials created by the high salaries often negotiated personally by new entrants; and problems resulting from the erosion of institutional memory and continuity by this rise in human traffic.

The other potential danger area highlighted by boundary crossing centres on the blurring of accountabilities and, in particular, what is sometimes referred to as the 'revolving door'. The formal model of sector difference suggests that there is a different principle of accountability operating between public sector bureaucracies and third sector organizations (Billis, this volume). Boundary crossers therefore need to manage their engagement with these different accountability systems and this can make for particularly difficult role transitions. This is one reason why there are often reports of disillusionment, particularly among those crossing from the third sector into government, as reported by Little and Rochester (2003) in their account of a group of mostly disappointed

voluntary sector entrants into government agencies. But the possible accountability problem does not end there. Some boundary crossers leave an 'accountability trail' of informal relationships that may continue to operate and which may blur further blur and perhaps even compromise the lines of accountability. Potential questions of compromised accountability may arise in the case of the boundary crosser who derives power from straddling the boundary between the sectors or in the web of 'ex-fams' that stretches into many different departments of government, often at quite senior levels.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have explored two main issues in relation to the broader theme of hybridization in the context of the third sector. First, by studying the experiences of sector boundary crossers, we have gained insights into tensions that exist between the 'ideal model' of the sector and what actually goes on in particular organizations. These tensions are played out within the lives of these boundary crossers, whose activities and changing ideas also contribute to the shaping of hybrid organizations, as they go about the task of trying to reconcile sector expectations and sector realities in their everyday lives. Second, at a macro-level, we identify a paradox; even while the hybridization process moves forward, fed in part by the growth of boundary crossing, ideas about sector and boundary continue to play important roles in the ways individuals view organizational landscapes.

Is the idea of 'sector' still a coherent one under these conditions of increasing hybridization? The data on boundary crossers lends support to those researchers who question the sector idea. For example, Evers (1995) advocates the idea of an 'intermediate area' rather than a clear-cut sector, in which hybrid roles and identities are constructed by state, market and household. Deakin (2001: p 26) warns that an excessive emphasis on 'sector' can unhelpfully draw attention away from important issues of policy content. Yet despite, or perhaps because of, these hybridization processes, our data suggests that the sector concept, and in particular the idea of the boundary between sectors, will continue to play an important role in the ways such individuals confront and manage their work. At the macro-level, the growth of boundary crossing probably does not suggest that the third sector, or ideas about it, are likely to disappear. This argument reinforces Abrams' (1981) view that 'the state' – and by extension, we might say, the third sector - operates and is manifested as 'an idea' as well as a set of real world structures and policies, and supports views of sector that refuse a rigid conception of its boundary. Perhaps paradoxically, 'ideas about sector' remain important in the way that they continue to motivate both those who move and those who stay. The data suggest that the idea of sector – at the level of individuals and their work and careers – remains strong in the ways that it continues to shape people's ideas and expectations, whether these are met or unmet. The argument that 'hybridization' provides an increasingly more

appropriate metaphor than 'sector' for understanding change within the third sector in the UK brings useful insights, but is perhaps ultimately contradictory, since there can be no 'hybrid' without 'sector'.

Since 1997, new forms of UK third sector career have emerged that encompass periods spent in both the third and public sectors, as job mobility has increased, and strategies of 'secondment' across different types of organisation have become more common. Certain people have built distinctive careers in the fields of UK social service provision, or in international development, which have involved moving across the sector boundary from the third sector into the public sector, or vice versa, sometimes more than once. We have seen that such boundary crossing harbours both opportunities and dangers, for both organizations and for individuals. The opportunities centre on the possibility of promoting creativity, innovation and learning within organizations. At the individual level, some boundary-crossers may even experience a form of epiphany that leads them to completely re-evaluate their ideas and perspectives. The dangers lie in the blurring of sector accountabilities, the unsettling of individual expectations, and in the missed human resource opportunities when they fail to harness the potential of employees who make unsatisfactory 'role transitions' or fail to 'craft' their jobs successfully.

The data discussed in this chapter allow us to reflect further on the ways that some of the tensions arising from hybridization within the new public management play out at the level of these individuals who cross between the public and third sectors. This is not a subject that has so far received much attention from researchers and, as we might expect, the initial findings that are presented here raise some potentially important further questions. For example, to what extent does boundary crossing predominantly take place between already relatively hybridized organizations, within which there is already common ground? At the level of sector and organization, how far can the potential accountability challenges raised by increased boundary crossing be managed within an increasingly hybridized sector? Finally, what are the conditions under which third sector managers can ensure that boundary crossing leads to creativity rather than disillusionment?

Notes

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