

Thinking about our research partnerships as part of our method

I have become increasingly interested in the social and institutional relations through which research takes place – and in thinking about those relations methodologically. By thinking methodologically, I mean thinking about how the particular relationships with partner organisations, colleagues, and research participants have really powerful influences on the data and interpretations yielded by our projects. It seems to me, that just as much as the choice of interview or focus group, narrative or discourse analysis, are constitutive of one's data and interpretation, so too are the partnership relations through which the research is made possible.



Led by Jude Fransman at the Open University and Kate Newman at Christian Aid, a group of people (including me) employed by universities and international development NGOs have initiated an ESRC-funded seminar series, titled '[Rethinking Research Partnerships: Evidence and the politics of participation in academic-INGO research partnerships](#)'. Research in international development depends upon some form of partnership between university staff and staff based in an international NGO. The seminar series offers an opportunity for some critical and systematic reflection on the nature of these partnerships and the kinds of evidence they produce.

Following the first seminar of the series, I wrote a blog post titled '[Partnerships or Relationships?](#)' It tries to get away from the formal, organisational description of a contractual 'partnership', and to think about these 'partnerships' as more concrete 'relationships' – relationships between situated persons, with perspectives, histories and interests. Have a read if you are interested!

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