

## Partnering and Frugal Innovation

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Frugal innovation involves (re)designing products, services or systems to significantly cut costs, without forfeiting user value, in order to include consumers at the Base and Middle of the Pyramid (Knorringa et al., 2016). Scholars approach frugal innovations from multiple angles, for example: conceptually versus empirically, top-down versus bottom-up, and as similar or divergent from forms of innovation such as Jugaad, inclusive, grassroots and reverse innovations. Altogether, these efforts aim to better our understanding of, and develop discussions on an embryonic concept – its processes, prospects and constraints, majorly in developing and emerging settings. Of recent, frugal innovation has received increasing attention from scholars and practitioners alike because of its assumed potential to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (Pisoni et al., 2018; Rosca et al., 2018). Considered as an important tool for sustainable development, frugal innovation is assumed to require “combined efforts, competences, resources, and motivation of several groups of stakeholders, including private sector actors, governments, development agencies, and civil society” (Rosca et al., 2018, p. 152). Partnerships between businesses and actors from civil society and/or government are found to improve business responsiveness to customer needs in BoP contexts and are considered crucial for commercially successful and scalable marketing strategies (Lashitew et al., 2018). It is assumed that by combining unique resources and capabilities in partnering processes, outcomes can be delivered, which exceed those of any one sector acting in isolation (Googins & Rochlin, 2000). Hence, the suggested synergy between business interests and development goals seems to be contingent on partnering processes, which requires a careful unpacking of such processes evolving in frugal innovation contexts. Therefore, this panel aims to address questions like:

- Under what conditions can partnering processes contribute to more impactful frugal innovation processes?
- How does partnering relate to scaling processes of frugal innovations?
- What role does partnering play in embedding frugal innovations in different contexts (including business ecosystems)?

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### **Panel Co-chair biographies**

**Greetje Schouten** is a senior research fellow at the Partnerships Resource Centre, Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University. Her research focuses on cross-sector partnerships and sustainability standards in the context of global and regional agricultural value chains, with the aim of understanding processes of inclusive and sustainable development. Most of the research projects she is involved in have an explicit action research component and are conducted in close cooperation with practitioners.

Read more at: <https://www.rsm.nl/prc/about-us/team/dr-greetje-schouten/>

**Dr. Winfred Onyas** is a Lecturer in Marketing at the University of Leicester, School of Business. Her research, influenced by the social studies of markets and anthropology, investigates the market practices contributing to construct and shape markets in global value chains, mobile money, and frugal innovation contexts. She is the Principal Investigator on the project Exploring the Nature and Prospects of Frugal Innovation in Uganda funded by the British Academy International Partnership & Mobility Scheme – a partnership between the University of Leicester and Makerere University Business School, Uganda.

**Peter Knorringa** is Professor of **Private Sector & Development** at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) of Erasmus University Rotterdam. His main interest concerns the diverse roles and impacts of business on development. He investigates to what extent socially responsible and environmentally sustainable forms of development are possible under capitalism. His empirical research focuses on global value chains, industrial clusters, private governance and sustainability standards, and more recently on the developmental relevance of frugal innovations. He is one of the co-founders and the present Director of the Research Centre on Frugal Innovation in Africa, an initiative of Leiden University, Delft University of Technology and Erasmus University Rotterdam.