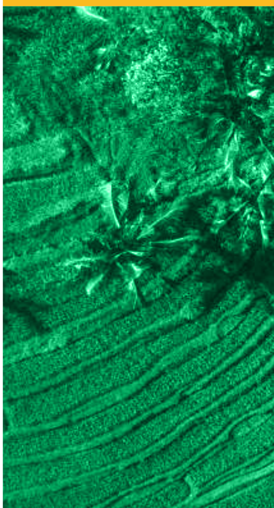

NAVIGATING EVERYDAY LEADERSHIP:

SPACES OF CONTESTATION IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

DEVELOPMENTAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

DECEMBER 2023

The **Developmental Leadership Program** (DLP) is an international research collaboration supported by the Australian Government.

DLP investigates the crucial role that leaders, networks and coalitions play in achieving development outcomes.

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ABOUT THIS PAPER

This paper synthesizes research conducted during DLP III to draw out the synergies and implications for developmental leadership across the different research projects. It builds on the individual research papers produced during this phase of DLP.

The paper was developed using a participatory process: partner learning sessions between September and October 2022 informed the development of an analytical framework used to code all DLP research outputs; DLP partners discussed emerging findings based on initial coding and analysis in February 2023; and this discussion informed the direction and structure of this paper.

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INTRODUCTION

WHY EVERYDAY LEADERSHIP?

On the remote eastern coast of Malaita, Solomon Islands, where villages are physically isolated and dislocated from the state, everyday life often hinges on local problem-solving. The people of the Lau/Mbaelelea constituency, having long suffered the hardship of carrying their goods to inland markets and their sick people to clinics, faced one of the knottiest problems: they needed a road.

Elsewhere on Solomon Islands, the seemingly intractable issue of land ownership had frequently stalled such developments. This particular road needed to pass through three tribal lands, some of which forebears had previously sworn to forbid access to. The community did not have anywhere near sufficient funding or resources. The odds were not looking good.

Fast forward to the present, and the newly completed road offers a lifeline to the community. The production of kava plants has increased, locals are operating new retail ventures that supply inland communities, and children are going to school in urban centres. The road is a success – an outlier even – with a hidden story to tell about how change happens. But what lies behind it?

This story is not about development aid. It is not about high-level political support. It is not even about securing the necessary funding and resources. More fundamentally, it is about people: people with the motivation and legitimacy to make change happen. People with the power to navigate and build the vital relationships necessary to overcome the many barriers in their way. People who could do that only because they are embedded within a locally legitimate script of ideas and meanings. In the case of Lau/Mbaelelea, those people were chiefs, church pastors and tribal leaders, who sent delegations across tribal lands to contest and reconcile disagreements and reach collective decisions that no amount of funding or support could otherwise have resolved.

Our argument, in a nutshell, is that to fully appreciate the power of leadership, we need to view it through an everyday lens. The people in this story are not 'leaders' in the typical Westernised sense. They were not formally ascribed their vital roles, but instead variously adopted, inherited, or chose them, often voluntarily and without financial reward, based on an intrinsic commitment to improve the lives of their communities. These people are the everyday agents of change, and they drive it through the political process of contesting ideas and forging relationships.

This synthesis of the third phase of the Developmental Leadership Program (DLP) brings the voices of these agents to the foreground. Based on our collaborative research across the Indo-Pacific region,

in spaces where leadership is actively contested, it asks who can make change happen, why and how. It examines what this means for how we define and conceive 'leadership' in development, how we study, experience and 'see' it, and how communities, governments and external actors can navigate its complexity without undermining its productive potential.

WHAT IS EVERYDAY LEADERSHIP?

Everyday leadership is about navigating the messy realities of politics to achieve desired futures, whether it is building a road or giving women a voice in decision-making. When we view leadership through an everyday lens, at the ground level, we can better understand what enables or blocks change, and how people navigate the complexity of power and relationships involved. In this sense, everyday leadership is not only an empirical reality – i.e. what leaders 'do' – but it is also a conceptual lens or method or possibly even a mindset that sees these processes and makes them visible.

Leadership can be impactful from the local or national to the regional or international level. Indeed, making change happen requires a range of skills in navigating, traversing, and translating between these spaces. For example, Pacific regionalists need to negotiate in international fora as a group, while also navigating norms and tensions within the region, and maintaining their own constituencies of support in their home countries (Ng Shiu et al., 2023).

But no matter the fora they operate within, leaders are always acting in the 'everyday' in the sense that they make choices within the specific time and place, set of rules, norms, relationships, and power dynamics in front of them (Corbett, 2019). Whether at international negotiations in Paris, contesting elections in Indonesia, or on the margins of the state in South Fly in Papua New Guinea, they make sense of and engage with their social reality through their immediate lives, relationships and community. This much-needed everyday focus matters because it foregrounds a human centred approach, that interprets the ambitions and choices of leaders as formed in particular social and political settings, both formal and informal. This approach recognises both the primacy of agency, as well as the environmental constraints on it (Hudson and Leftwich, 2014).

Everyday leadership is about navigating the messy realities of politics to achieve desired futures … [leaders] make choices within the specific time and place, set of rules, norms, relationships and power dynamics in front of them

This is what an everyday lens on leadership adds. If we don't look at the fine-grained workings of leadership – in terms of lived realities, relationships, and how agents navigate them – then the real work of leadership is invisible. And if it remains invisible then we cannot understand how leadership works, or support it in ways that are conducive to enable it. In fact, we are more likely to miss it, mis-diagnose the pathways to leadership, or unintentionally trample all over it.

WHAT IS EVERYDAY LEADERSHIP FOR?

Everyday leadership must solve the collective action problems that pervade all societies. In other words, it must align people's interests and ideas towards collective goals. Collective action problems are those ubiquitous social dilemmas whereby the narrow pursuit of individual or sectional interests can undermine the achievement of socially desirable outcomes (Ostrom, 2010). In the Lau/Mbaelelea road construction example from Solomon Islands, landowners would occasionally block construction efforts and demand payments for the movement of materials. This may seem like a rational pursuit of individual interests, but if everyone along the entire stretch of road did this, the project would stall, ultimately undermining the whole venture.

Many of the most intractable development challenges, whether on a local, national, regional or global scale, are collective action problems. Achieving any public good, from climate adaptation, to health security, to safe cities requires individuals, collectives and nations to agree and act towards a common interest. Regionalism in the Pacific, for example, is one such vital mechanism for overcoming the challenges faced by Small Island Developing Countries (SIDCs), and of being portrayed as such, foregoing the self-interest tendencies of some national politicians (Ng Shiu et al., 2023).

Only people with the authority, legitimacy, and motivation to act can resolve these dilemmas, based on a level of trust that has to be earned. To overcome collective action problems, they articulate the common interest, provide assurances that individuals will not 'free-ride' on the benefits without contributing to their production, and establish mechanisms to coordinate community action (Booth and Cammack, 2013). They devise and enforce rules that restrain behaviours that hold back the achievement of collective goals: in Lau/Mbaelelea, they compensated individual landowners with pigs.

No matter how compelling, beneficial, or logical (from a cool-headed, distant place) collective action is, though, it is hard because of the complexity of social and political life. Scarcity, inequality, injustice, and colonial legacies all amplify the barriers to collaboration, and the potential for free riding. Not everyone who is capable of leading can lead, and those who are chosen to lead are not always best equipped to work in the collective interest. Gender and other markers of identity profoundly shape opportunities to act, which can in turn reproduce the divisions and injustices that undermine the very idea of a collective.

This is why (and how) leadership is a fundamentally political process (Hudson et al., 2018). There are always competing interests over who gets what, when and how (Laswell, 1936). Powerful interests often have a disproportionate influence leading to the invisible foreclosing of possible futures, which can serve to suppress the interests of the most marginalised communities, cultures and environments (Scoones and Stirling, 2020). Tackling these tensions and disparities, in practice, requires contestation – defending, articulating, mobilising, bargaining, negotiating, and influencing. This hidden work of contesting alternative futures is where the real politics of development happens (Mcloughlin et al., forthcoming).

Building on the definition of developmental leadership as "the strategic, collective and political process of building political will to secure pro-development outcomes" (Hudson et al., 2018: 1), analysing these processes of everyday leadership requires a fresh lens informed by local research on day-to-day practices in a range of contexts.

ANALYSING EVERYDAY LEADERSHIP

An everyday perspective on leadership makes the world looks less 'top down'. It challenges conventional understandings of leadership, such as the strict distinction between leaders and followers, recognising leadership as a shifting constellation of roles rather than a hierarchy. Everyday leadership also takes seriously the ways in which world-views, lived experiences and various aspects of identity shape perceptions and experiences of leadership – so far underexplored in leadership studies (Avis and Kituyi, 2023; Trimble and Chin, 2019).

Everyday leadership matters because in reality, spaces of power and contestation are trans-local, in that they are connected if not immediately or geographically proximate. In this sense, spaces of power and contestation are rhizomatic, like the underground horizontal structures of plants such as ginger. They are hidden, but highly connected. Not only are these spaces multiple, but the people who participate in them step in and out of the process. The socially-intensive work required to make them function can only be seen and experienced from 'below'.

To capture these hidden dynamics, the methods used to study everyday leadership must be meaningful and derived from local context. If analysts or outsiders try to understand everyday spaces using a method that is external to the cultural context, such as online surveys, there is a risk that critical parts of the story will be missed. This is why DLP's approach was calibrated to culturally accepted ways of doing things, including generating knowledge.

So, what did this locally embedded research approach look like in practice?

As part of its commitment to locally owned and locally produced research, DLP's agenda emerged out of region-wide consultations with civil society, academia, government and aid agencies, to identify a grounded set of research questions that were considered significant for broader developmental scholarship and local contexts. The researchers designed their projects to respond to the research questions, with a focus on being both locally relevant and speaking to national or global challenges. Selection criteria included methodological rigour, gender and inclusion and potential for impact. Collaborations were formed between local research teams, embedded within their communities, and local activists, organisations and academic institutions inside and outside of the research sites, to carry out the projects.

The final selection of projects prioritised the representation of local voices, diversity and inclusion: more than half of projects had a female principal investigator (PI), all engaged gender-balanced research teams, and incorporated gender and other identity markers into their frameworks and analysis. Having locally embedded teams helped to buffer the research against the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, because researchers were already on the ground, living in or around the key research sites. Because of their emphasis on positive outliers and local solutions, researchers sought to move beyond barriers to change – often perpetuated by deficit-based approaches focused on problems and weaknesses – and instead sought to identify levers for change.

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This commitment to locally owned research required navigating rigid institutional processes and funding requirements in ways that, at times, made DLP a complex, logistical operation. However, the payoff was a series of projects that strengthened working relationships between researchers from the Global North with privileged access to funding and resources, and local thinkers and researchers whose knowledge is often otherwise extracted via asymmetrical funding relationships and knowledge systems. Working to break down this power imbalance was a key driver of DLP's design and its emphasis on research co-production.

Most principal investigators from institutions in richer countries gave at least some of their time in-kind to maximize the resources available to in-country research partners. Some projects ensured everyone in the team had an opportunity to be a lead author. In other projects, practitioners and activists – who typically find themselves as research participants – helped form the research team. In addition, researchers' embeddedness in the communities where the research took place has led to rich insights and access; making visible what may otherwise have remained hidden.

Across DLP's research portfolio (see Table 1), teams worked collaboratively to enable people engaged with the leadership process to bring their own voices and perspectives and reflect on their experiences. They explored leadership across diversity of spaces and sectors, inside and outside of the state: From leaders of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in Indonesia; to school leaders in Marshall Islands, Tonga and Solomon Islands; to women activists in Sri Lanka and Indonesia; to commune councillors in Cambodia; to political, church and customary leaders in

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Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea; to leaders of regional organizations in the Pacific. Many of the projects captured perspectives of those affected by, or invested in, the leadership process, from people in the relevant community, to civil society organisations, to development agencies and ministries.

In addition to the funded projects, DLP also partnered with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD). Three studies, led by a postdoctoral research fellow, were published through this partnership: a global look at legislative leadership in the context of COVID-19; an analysis of how MPs work for inclusive legislation; and how legislatures have passed key environmental legislation. DLP also supported research looking at social protection and state legitimacy in Timor-Leste, where a collaborative approach was engaged throughout the research process.

A variety of methods were employed to capture the in-depth stories and experiences of (would-be) leaders themselves. At the regional level, the Pacific Leadership project carried out in-depth oral history interviews with leaders of Pacific regional organizations.[1] In the Disability Leadership project in

1 Taholo Kami, Leota Kosi Latu, Manumatavai Tupou-Roosen, Dame Meg Taylor, Fe'íloakitau Kaho Tevi, Sir Collin Tukuitonga, Fekita 'Utoikamanu, Andrew Valentine, Dr Donald Wilson

Indonesia, leaders undertook autoethnography to reflect on how they had overcome barriers in their own lives and wider institutional setting. In the Cambodian water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector project, leaders self-evaluated their journeys, reflecting on how their skills and legitimacy enabled them to successfully mobilise communities to adapt their health behaviours.

Incorporating indigenous ways of sharing knowledge was essential to capture authentic lived experiences of leadership. Locally-based research teams across the Pacific engaged in a variety of indigenous orality – traditional, conversational forms of communication (Kovach, 2010). Talanoa was employed in Tonga; bwebwenato in Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI); and tok stori in Solomon Islands (refer to Box 1 for definitions). These were vital to ensuring a safe space for dialogue where experiences, emotions, beliefs, and reflections could be expressed. Local researchers with appropriate linguistic skills led these dialogues to facilitate trust-based exchanges. While mostly undertaken in situ in communities, some oral research was also carried out virtually, for example through online tok stori.

Researchers tested and refined analysis with local decision-makers and affected communities. In Indonesia and Sri Lanka, this was done through research-driven dialogues with local stakeholders. In Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste, through engagements with government officials and development partners in face-to-face meetings. Such activities were essential to ensuring that each project arrived at grounded conclusions that made sense to those involved. They also collapsed the traditional, and often hierarchical, split between data collection and analysis in that both were carried out as part of the same process.

Autoethnography may be understood as the practice of doing identity work – simultaneously the presentation of self to others through the outward projection of biography and experience, and a presentation of self to self - deliberately, in order to understand or represent some worldly phenomenon that exceeds the self (Butz and Besio, 2009); it is "a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context" (Reed-Danahay, 1997: 9).

BOX 1: DEFINITIONS

Tok stori is a Melanesian term for what Solomon Islanders do every day – telling stories, creating a joint narrative and making sense of life. It also creates and maintains relationships, as well as revealing people as experts in their own lives (Sanga and Reynolds, 2020).

Talanoa usually refers to a conversation between two or more people. The relationship and trust between those participating, as well as the formality of the conversation determines what kind of talanoa is possible. There is rich discussion on the talanoa principles and ideal characteristics, such as respect, care and humility, that set it apart from more Euro-centric modes of interviews and focus group discussions. See Fa'avae et al. (2016) for more.

Bwebwenato is a Marshallese oral tradition, defined in the Marshallese-English dictionary as talk, conversation, story, history, article, episode, lore, myth, or tale (Jetnil Kijiner (2014) cited in Jim et al., 2021).

NAVIGATING EVERYDAY LEADERSHIP

Grounded methods meant the research was agile and captured the diversity of lived experiences. Yet, there were also striking commonalities in the themes that emerged across contexts. These commonalities reveal the inner workings of everyday leadership, and by extension, the approaches and practices via which it may be supported to achieve desired futures. Through this in-depth locally embedded research approach, DLP also makes a methodological contribution that can be applied beyond the Asia-Pacific context.

To summarise the commonalities across projects, we draw on the metaphor of navigation, or finding a way. Leaders must navigate through contested rules, interests, and ideas to resolve collective action dilemmas. So too does any decision-maker, authority or organisation seeking to enable change. In the Pacific tradition, 'wayfinding leaders' – the master navigators who guided their waka crews across millions of kilometres of ocean – used their deep understanding of themselves and their connection to the environment to steer a way through uncertainty (Spiller, Panoho and Barclay-Kerr, 2015).

The parallel with everyday leadership is striking. Developmental leaders must use their legitimacy and relationships to find a way to reach collective goals. As coined by Dan Honig (2018), they navigate by 'judgement' – using their skills and creativity to solve problems, rather than focusing on narrow, pre-set targets. For outside observers of this process, too, navigating implies reflecting on starting assumptions, knowledge, and mindsets, and being willing to adapt them. In particular, jettisoning the preoccupation with instrumental and often pre-defined concerns, targets and endpoints, and considering how change happens in a more holistic way – one that embraces its unpredictability and uncertainty (Schomerus, 2023; Scoones and Stirling, 2020).

Ancient wayfaring leaders had no compass, nor map. Rather, they had an understanding of tides and stars, and a holistic connection to the environment that enabled them to interpret shifting seascapes. Likewise, there is no set of guidelines, tools or blueprints that can be applied to understanding everyday leadership. What DLP can offer from our findings are, instead, a set of navigational waypoints.

Wherever a process of everyday leadership is happening, there are three key points of reference, or waypoints, that help us decipher and navigate it:

- **Ideas** – all the ideas, worldviews, beliefs, traditions, conventions and narrative practices that shape how people think and act. These are the key ingredient in how leaders make sense of lived realities and persuade and mobilise communities to work towards shared or divisive futures. They underpin how problems are constructed, how they gain social meaning, and the legitimacy to act.
- **Relationships** – the people, community, kin, social ties, norms of reciprocity, ties to land, sea and place, that influence when and how people relate to one another. They underpin the opportunity to act collectively, and the overlapping networks of power and influence that enable or constrain this.
- **Materials** – including money, time, technology, labour, force, goods and services, or gifts. These are not the end-goal but the means to realising shared ideas, and the outcome of relationships.

Identity both shapes and is shaped by these navigational waypoints. Our identity is constructed and reinforced through our relationships and interactions with others and our environment. For example, how leaders perceive their identity influences their ideas about who they can relate to, and how. In turn, how they relate to others shapes their identity as a leader.

Navigating leadership means purposefully reflecting on how, and why, these waypoints – ideas, relationships, and material goods – operate and interlink in a holistic sense; i.e. with the tides, stars and environment. The answers we get when we do that can challenge our assumptions about how change happens. If, for example, we ask what leadership means in different contexts, we might think of how inherited, inter-generational belief systems underpin certain forms of indigenous leadership. But in some of the contexts we studied, leaders are often more keenly evaluated on what they can deliver, materially, to their communities.

If we ask where leaders come from, we might immediately think of materials and ideas – how money politics, plus discriminating gender norms, block women from holding political office, for instance. But this neglects the importance of the relationships women form, both within their communities and to self, that may either encourage or deter them from running for office.

Thinking about what motivates people or communities to lead – why the road in Solomon Islands was built – we might assume the instrumental benefits are front and centre, without appreciating that the deeper value and meaning of goods lies in the ideas about place, identity, and inter-generational responsibility they represent.

Or, if we ask how leaders collectively make change happen, we might intuitively assume that relationships matter, but perhaps pay less attention to how relationships themselves may need to follow a legitimate script of shared beliefs or values to generate any mutual benefits.

In these ways, each of these waypoints hinge on the other. If we neglect to understand any waypoint, we cannot understand any change process in its entirety, and risk misunderstanding what is driving it, or opportunities to support it. Projects with material inputs but no shared ideas will fail to reach their potential. Ideas are generated and shared through trusted relationships embedded in communities. And relationships that do not deliver material rewards in the short-term or for future generations are ultimately hollow to communities who value them.

These blended realities reflect the unavoidable messiness of the social world, and the unpredictability of change. But understanding is the basis of action. To that end, the following sections use these navigational waypoints to unpack the inner workings of everyday leadership. We show how the ideational, relational and material work, together, to address DLP's 4 Research Questions: (1) How leadership is understood in different contexts, (2) Where leaders come from, (3) how leaders collectively influence development, and (4) how leadership can be supported.

—

DLP III's RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. **How is leadership understood in different contexts?**
2. **Where do leaders come from?**
3. **How do leaders collectively influence development outcomes?**
4. **How can leadership be supported?**

TABLE 1: FUNDED PORTFOLIO

Research projects	Country	Researchers	Institutional partners	Methodologies
Non-elite pathways to women's political leadership in Sri Lanka and Indonesia	Sri Lanka Indonesia	Tanya Jakimow (Principal Investigator – PI), Ramona Vijeyarasa, Asima Siahaan, Aida Harahap, Yumasdaleni, Mario Gomez, Viyanga Gunasekera, Nadine Vanniasinkam	Australian National University, University of Technology, Sydney, Universitas Sumatera Utara, International Centre for Ethnic Studies	Key informant interviews; focus group discussions; research driven dialogue
Disability leadership	Indonesia	Lis Jackson (PI), Ekawati Liu (PI), Erin Wilson, Sen Sendjaya, Yuyun Yuningsih, Cucu Saidah, Joni Yulianto, Ishak Salim, Nur Syarif Ramadhan, Surya Sahetapy, Robandi	La Trobe University, Bandung Independent Living Centre, Swinburne University of Technology, PerDIK and SIGAB	Interviews; autoethnography
Appreciating Pacific understandings of school leadership	Marshall Islands Solomon Islands Tonga	Seu'ula Johansson Fua (PI), David Fa'avae, Kabini Sanga (PI), Martyn Reynolds, Richard Robyns, Danny Jim	University of the South Pacific, Victoria University of Wellington, University of Waikato	Key informant interview; tok stori
Leadership journeys and outcomes of Civic Champions Program	Cambodia	Tum Nhim (PI), Long Heng Orng, Adrien Stehly, Panhaka Nou, Sodany Saing	WaterSHED, WaterAID Cambodia	Surveys, in-depth interviews; documentation application transcripts) review
Leadership beyond state limits in Papua New Guinea	Papua New Guinea	Mark Moran (PI), Baia Warapa, Geua Gorio	HWJ Pty Ltd, Kokoda Track Foundation	Key informant interviews
Citizen-state engagement: learning from pockets of developmental leadership	Solomon Islands	Claire Mcloughlin (PI), Gordon Nanau, Tony Hiriasia, David Hudson, Chris Roche, Ujjwal Krishna	University of Birmingham, University of the South Pacific, La Trobe University	Key informant interviews; tok stori; media analysis; survey analysis
Transnational leadership	Regional (Pacific)	Jack Corbett (PI), Roannie Ng Shiu, George Carter, Edmond Fehoko	University of Southampton, University of Auckland, Australian National University	In-depth interviews; text analysis

TABLE 2: ADDITIONAL PROJECTS

Project title	Country	Project lead	Methodology
Social protection and perceptions of state legitimacy	Timor-Leste	Kate Pruce	Single-country case study, field experiment, interviews
Embedded Research Impact Project	Australia	Ujjwal Krishna	Observation, interviews, network analysis
Parliamentary leadership in times of crisis	Brazil Nepal Ukraine	Rebecca Gordon and WFD	Analysis of democracy indexes, key informant interviews, website and media analysis
How can MPs support inclusive change?	22 countries, including Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Australia and New Zealand	Rebecca Gordon and WFD	In-depth life story interviews, in-depth case studies of 6 examples of successful legislative change, analysis of parliamentary documentation and media coverage
Legislative leadership on single-use plastic bans	32 countries including Australia, Solomon Islands, Indonesia, Thailand and Sri Lanka	Petra Alderman and WFD	Analysis of legislation from 32 countries; in-depth single-country case studies, key informant interviews

HOW IS LEADERSHIP UNDERSTOOD IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS?

CONTEXTUALISING LEADERSHIP

Much research on leadership starts from a standardised – and usually 'western' – perspective. It tends to focus on elites, often political or business leaders, as the principal decision-makers in societies (Avis and Kituyi, 2023). As a result of the colonial legacy that defined leadership as a hierarchical arrangement of formal roles and titles, leadership is often tacitly assumed to be an easily transferable set of orientations, dispositions, and practices, based on this standardised model.

However, being a 'leader' is fundamentally socially constructed, not preordained (Hudson and Mcloughlin, 2019: 7). The *Appreciating understandings of school leadership in the Pacific* project shows why a pre-set model is flawed: it overlooks the culturally-specific practices of leadership, and in particular the blurring of rigidly conceived boundaries between personal and professional. School leaders in the Tongan context, for example, are not playing out leadership roles, but living them through every facet of their lives.

> *"the life of a school leader is very transparent because there is no division between your personal life and your professional life. You are judged 24/7. What you do after hours, you are still going to be accountable for that as well as what you do inside the classroom."*
>
> (Sanga et al., 2023: 13)

Everyday leadership is not a hierarchy but a shifting constellation of individuals. Depending on the night, and where you are looking from, constellations take different forms. People step in and out, sharing and nurturing ideas, and – importantly – making way for others. Leadership is a practice, not a role, as articulated by this regional leader, in the *Transnational Leadership in the Pacific Islands* project.

> *"everyone is called upon to act in a leadership role depending on circumstances. I think the jargon is called adaptive leadership or contextual leadership. Leadership in my mind is not about one person sitting at the top of the tree and telling everyone else what to do"*
>
> (Ng Shiu et al., forthcoming)

Such practices of everyday leadership form in situ through these fluid constellations that hinge, ultimately, on local ideas and customs that govern all social relations. The ideas, rules and customs that confer authority are contested and negotiated between institutions.

In Solomon Islands, this plurality manifests in the 'three masters' of church, state and customary institutions. Here and elsewhere across the Pacific region, the meaning and values ascribed to leadership are indistinguishable from customary institutions, such as the wantok system in Solomon Islands or fatongia, the Tongan concept of interweaving obligation. Leaders are socialised into ways of thinking and acting through ideas and practices that stem from village, clan and/or tribal roots (Sanga et al., 2022b).

A critical aspect of contextualising leadership is understanding how these underlying ideas and customs influence who has legitimacy to act in any given setting. Authority can only be legitimate when it has a moral foundation in shared values or ideas. Embeddedness is key. Leaders must demonstrate their connections to these values if they want to influence change.

BOX 2: SITUATING LEADERSHIP

Wantok is a system of "informal institutions [that] facilitate cooperation and increased social capital within extra-familial groups such as clans, and - at times - within larger groups, such as language groups, or people from the same island" (Mcloughlin et al., 2022: 7)

Fatongia "is about obligation that is entered into freely: it involves the giving of a gift that is enjoyed and reinforces mutual obligations. It is reciprocal and symmetrical and leads to stronger sense of community" (Tofuaipangai & Camilleri, 2016: 60 cited in Sanga et al., 2023)

In the *Non-elite pathways to women's political leadership in Sri Lanka and Indonesia* project, for example, political candidates cannot suddenly engage with the community and expect people to vote for them. They must be familiar to the community, not solely in the sense of being known, but of having an empathetic and emotional connection to its values. Such connections can then drive material outcomes. As the *Leadership journeys and outcomes of Civic Champions Program in rural Cambodia* project showed, these connections enable leaders to form trust-based relationships through which they can nudge ideas and change behaviours towards desired outcomes (Nhim and Pruce, 2022a).

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THE PROMISE AND PERIL OF PERFORMANCE

Trust and embeddedness, built on ideas, is central to how people perceive leadership in context. This does not mean the material or instrumental aspects of performance go unnoticed, however. Especially in contexts of scarcity and diversity, leaders must also deliver the goods to be credible. Trust can only be sustained through actions, rather than words.

The *Citizen-state engagement in the Solomon Islands* project shines a light on this intersection between trust and the performance, or outputs, that leaders deliver. An overriding theme of the tok stori with communities where public goods were co-produced was that trustworthiness is a vital criterion against which people evaluate leadership, but it must be earned. Communities expressed a desire for 'honest leaders to manage the funds properly', noting that trust is 'very important when dealing with money'. As one leader of a local women's group noted,

> *'leaders lose respect because they talk but do less for the community. Talking does not make you a leader but you have to show your capability to do what you say.'*
>
> (Mcloughlin et al. 2023)

While performance may generate trust, hanging leadership on the promise of delivering the goods can also be perilous, particularly in low-capacity environments. In the district of South Fly, Papua New Guinea, the unpredictable timing and flow of money makes promising the goods precarious. In the words of one prominent longstanding leader,

> *"You must make sure that whatever you promised, you must take it back to the people. So in my leadership, I don't promise. I will only say I will work for you. ... Promises are not a good tool, a good system, because you're killing the relationship between you and the voter. [It puts you under] a lot of pressure. You become a bad leader. [In the end] you don't return anything back to your voters, those who you promised.*
>
> (Moran and Warapa, 2023a: 20)

'Performance' itself has many meanings. Particularly in clientelist settings, rewards for supporters, whether cash, materials, or favouritism in accessing public goods are the currency of leadership. Gift-giving practices are not just instrumental, but about "the feelings they engender and the relationships they forge" (Harahap et al., 2022: 6). But this moral economy is highly gendered. In South Fly District, women's networks tended to be less engaged in patronage systems than men, even taking a stand against such practices in some cases (Moran and Warapa, 2023b). In Northern Sumatera, gendered expectations around gifts had negative impacts for women seeking political positions (Harahap et al., 2022: 8) as this female council member explains:

> *"Men only have to give cigarettes and that is enough. We have to bring belau (betel leaf). One complete box of belau is 100,000 rupiah... And when we visit someone sick, we will not hesitate to hug her and tell her, "I'll buy you some food." It is different with men. "Say hello, goodbye," coffee shop, then it is done."*

Where a person's ability to deliver defines their leadership career, these individuals may be drawn to external finance and influence, whether via aid projects, mining benefits, or mobility and trade. Regardless of the intent or character of this funding, it affects the political economy of leadership in that context. In Papua New Guinea, when funds, materials or a project reach a village, local politics quickly reorientates around the money, displacing endogenous governance systems and driving tension between government and informal community leaders. At best, external funds can strengthen capacity and collaboration, at worst, they can destabilise leadership (Moran and Warapa, 2023a).

THE POWER OF IDENTITY

Leaders may be expected to 'deliver the goods' – either in terms of prior experience and performance or rewards for supporters. However, the identity of a leader – including their age, gender, ethnicity, and religion – strongly influences how people perceive their instrumental effectiveness. The *Identity Matters* project in Indonesia found that identity can trump performance, buffering against ineffectiveness and poor performance. Confirming theories of 'prototypicality', it found that leaders tend to be considered more effective and trusted when they reflect and represent the identity of the group, regardless of their performance. Women, though, are less easily persuaded by prototypicality, and more likely to punish failure (Hudson et al., 2020).

Gendered differences in how leadership qualities are understood surface elsewhere. Most starkly, in gaps between what citizens believe is good leadership and what women aspirants and politicians see as positive characteristics of leaders (Vijeyarasa, Vanniasinkam & Gunasekera, 2021). Women's skills, experiences and potential are undervalued or unrecognized, including by political parties and development partners (Jakimow et al., 2023b; Yumasdaleni et al., 2023; Moran and Warapa, 2023b).

Identity clearly operates at the level of ideas, but it also has a relational dimension. We know who we are by who we are not. For example, Pacific regionalists understand their leadership as a counterweight to national leaders' inability to secure citizen livelihoods and wellbeing. To many of them, being a regionalist is an explicitly political critique of the post-colonial state. Identity, as 'citizens' of the Blue Pacific, is an important binding narrative, as explained by this regional leader,

> *"we're all part of this greater continent. And it's the connectedness to each other culturally [that makes the] difference ... It's not about the control of the ocean, it's about the caring, and nurturing, because so many of those of you who come from the sea itself is that it's the spiritual essence of identity."*
>
> (Ng Shiu et al., 2023: 9)

For participants in the *Disability leadership in Indonesia* project, too, social identity is both personal and political. It shapes how they see the world, what they understand to be the possibilities for change, and how they view their own role in generating it (Jackson et al., 2023). It is both the world 'out there' and the construction of self that contextualises leadership: a topic explored further in the following section, where we ask where leaders come from.

The *Social protection and state legitimacy* project finds that identity is extremely powerful in shaping leadership opportunities in Timor-Leste. A combination of Conservative Catholic values, a culture of militarized masculinity from the independence struggle and customary laws, place elders - and particularly men – in positions of power and respect. On the other hand, women and youth are largely excluded from decision-making processes although demographic and political shifts may provide scope for these voices to gain greater salience in the near future (Pruce et al., 2023).

leaders tend to be considered more effective and trusted when they reflect and represent the identity of the group, regardless of their performance.

WHERE DO LEADERS COME FROM?

SENSE OF SELF

Everyday leadership hinges on individuals and collectives being motivated to act towards shared goals. We might imagine that material rewards, whether in the form of resources or power, spur people towards such action. But findings from across DLP III indicate that the prospect of material rewards is often less significant than intrinsic rewards, such as creating shared value, and fulfilling obligations to create positive change. These intrinsic motivations are intimately tied to a sense of self (Fletcher et al., 2016).

People construct their sense of self through their connections to community, time and space. In the *Citizen-state engagement in the Solomon Islands* project, many of the key people who led the production of public goods, such as in the road construction example that opens this report, were not compensated financially for their efforts. Even where the potential material rewards were significant, they rarely described them as a motivating factor.

> *"The reason for my involvement in this road project although I'm old is the future of my families who reside in the highlands. I felt that my children and grandchildren shouldn't experience the same struggles and hardships we had been through. So I prefer to see change. This is the ultimate reason for my engagement in praying, advocating and discussing with leaders and young people in the highland communities. Therefore, when I was asked to join the road committee, I felt obliged."*
>
> (Mcloughlin et al., 2023)

Sometimes, however, a strong sense of self may deter people from choosing a particular leadership pathway. Women in Indonesia and Sri Lanka do not always see politics as an effective route to realising their social identity, for example. Many non-elite women view social work a 'calling' but consider the arena of formal politics as riddled with self-interest, and thus incompatible with their ambition to serve their communities (Jakimow et al., 2023b).

People construct their sense of self through their connections to community, time and space.

FORMATIVE EXPERIENCES

Formative experiences, such as family and schooling, lay the groundwork for the construction of self, and the realisation of agency. When we think about the formative experiences of leaders, we might imagine privileged access to opportunities, whether through education, wealth, or familial connections. These do, of course, matter. We found patterns of leaders being relatively better educated than their peers in Cambodia, where the level of formal education helped explain higher leadership capacity among commune councillors (Nhim and Pruce, 2022a), and education is highly valued as a formative experience in Papua New Guinea (Moran and Warapa, 2023a).

Likewise, Pacific leaders of regional organizations typically come from elite families, were raised in urban settings, are highly educated, and often have overseas education and work experience (see also Spark et al., 2018). While this sets them apart from the 'sub-cultures' they represent, it also means they have a unique shared experience that forms a tacit regional identity. Many of these regional leaders then begin their careers by returning home to "live the lives the Pacific Islanders live [and] face the challenges" and retain connection to their community (Ng Shiu et al., forthcoming). This identity formation highlights a core tension in the regional project: between local interests and community aspirations, and the need to leverage influence overseas to achieve them (Ng Shiu et al., 2023).

In the Solomon Islands, education is a significant element in, and means to, positional leadership. Particularly for women in school, church or community leadership, it is increasingly necessary to demonstrate not only cultural but written literacy. Not all chiefs possess both cultural and written literacy, and consequently education (or access to educated people) is becoming increasingly significant as a component of leadership (Johansson-Fua et al., 2021).

The *Disability in Indonesia* project particularly highlighted the importance of a 'life course' view of leadership, where opportunities build on each other. Schools were often the first places where participants experienced discrimination or became aware of themselves as having a disability, as one interviewee explained,

> *"When I was at primary school, the principal would often call me to his office and say to me, 'You shouldn't be at this school, you should be at a special school.' Imagine saying that to a 7-year-old! I felt so hurt! But thank God I did well at school, so he let me stay."*
>
> (Jackson et al., 2023: 7)

In some cases, negative formative experiences had positive outcomes, making disability activists more determined to prove their capabilities, and forcing them to develop self-advocacy skills. Others noted how they developed self-belief thanks to teachers providing them with opportunities to lead, as team captains or student representatives, as another interviewee recollected: *"At school I was always a group leader. The teacher had faith in me, and that made me confident"* (Jackson et al., 2023: 15).

While education is important, many leaders more squarely located their intrinsic motivations in their home and family environment. The importance of family for the opportunity to lead is in one sense obvious – for example elite women from political families in Indonesia tend to have greater success in politics because of the power, money and connections this gives them (Siahaan et al., 2021a). But the research also revealed the power of family in much more subtle ways as a strategic site for nurturing (or limiting) women's political engagement. In Sri Lanka, familial approval to enter the realm of politics is vital (Jakimow et al., 2023b).

For women who wish to enter politics, negotiations with family are therefore essential, and the perspectives of fathers, husbands and children has a huge impact on political engagement (Siahaan et al., 2021b). In Papua New Guinea, women in rural areas face more resistance from their husbands to fill leadership roles than in urban areas (Moran and Warapa, 2023b).

For disability leaders, parents, spouses, siblings, children, and extended family members were a critical source of support, offering advice, encouragement, and comfort during difficult times, and supporting them to continue their education or seek out new experiences (Jackson et al., 2023). These examples suggest that family approval and support may be most important for typically marginalised leaders, such as women or people with disabilities.

SOCIALISATION AND EVOLUTION OF IDENTITIES

Formative experiences begin a process of socialisation that continues into adulthood as people gain the motivation and opportunity to engage in spaces where they can develop the skills and networks to lead.

These spaces are diverse. In the Pacific, church practices influence and shape leadership in direct and indirect ways, by creating opportunities and networks, and instilling values. Many female leaders may gain experience and affiliations to their communities through the church.

> *"[Leaders] rely on what they have been groomed in - what they have learned in terms of important qualities and values... including being honest and fair, delegation of duties, trust and collaboration... These cultural practices and values are what they brought with them to the vocation. Many rely on Christian principles as well... in terms of leading and managing schools."*
>
> (Sanga et al., 2023: 11)

This resonates with findings from elsewhere in the region. In Papua New Guinea, too, church related activities are more significant as a training ground for women than for men (Moran and Warapa., 2023b). In Indonesia, involvement in religious organizations creates opportunities for women who aspire to politics in two ways: i) practically to build experience and networks and ii) ideologically, to help resolve the tension between the perceived immorality of politics and its ability to make a positive difference (Yumasdaleni et al., 2022).

Spending a significant portion of time living and studying overseas is another significant space of socialisation. For many Pacific regional leaders, familial links provided access to overseas living and education, either through part-European ancestry (amongst the independence generation) or through dual nationality (Ng Shiu et al., forthcoming). These leaders also highlighted their educated parents who often worked in high-profile

regional and international roles themselves and in turn, either explicitly or implicitly, passed on the value of education and career mobility to their children:

> *"I was very fortunate to have a very highly educated mum. My dad on the other side was the same, he was the first Bachelor of Science graduate from Tonga. And so again, he was amongst the leading pioneers of that time for Tongan scholarship students. He came over to New Zealand, was educated here at the University of Auckland, then spent some more time at Teachers College. That's where he met my mum and that's how they, you know, got together."*
>
> (Ng Shiu et al., forthcoming)

Organisational networks also matter. In Indonesia, direct involvement in DPOs and coalitions builds tim sukses (success teams) for political campaigning. Such spaces are vital because people can learn from more experienced leaders to build their own knowledge, skills and networks (Yumasdaleni, 2022; Jackson et al., 2023). Individual leaders can only build and hone their skills and resources through and in these networks.

> *"After I finished my undergraduate degree, I tried to get a job – as is my right - but it wasn't easy. I realised that I couldn't do it on my own. Then I found out about disability organisations like [national disability organisation]. I learned so much, and that's when I started to get involved in the movement. I realised that if we work together so everyone can enjoy their rights, then my rights will also be fulfilled. That's made me strong in so many ways, both directly and indirectly."*
>
> (Jackson et al., 2023: 16)

Solidarity networks particularly matter when tackling political exclusion. In Sri Lanka and Indonesia, where women tend to be excluded from both formal and informal governance, non-elite women's organisations foster the solidarity and networking that enable political candidacy (Jakimow et al., 2023b: 20). In Daru, Papua New Guinea, organisations led by and for women were vital to help them gain access to spaces from which they are otherwise excluded and speak for their own rights. As explained by a local non-governmental organisation (NGO) worker,

> *"we can no more salute men, because the more we salute and the more we bow down to men, you will not build this solidarity"*
>
> (Moran and Warapa, 2023b: 20)

One of the key benefits of engaging in networks of solidarity is the opportunity to access mentoring. Such is the perceived value of mentoring that one leader interviewed as part of the *Transnational leadership in the Pacific* project even expressed interest in mentoring the research team, who are mostly from the Pacific. In Indonesia, disability activists highlighted how being involved in disability organisations gave them access to (other) disability leaders who they viewed as role models:

> *"In the past, I didn't have much confidence, and I used to feel stupid. [Disability activist] said I shouldn't be indecisive. At first, I didn't understand why she said that. Then when I looked at her, I saw that she was firm, to the point. Some people even saw her as fierce. It's better to be like that. From that time, I started to change, thanks to her. [Disability activist] helped me a lot in becoming a good leader."*
>
> (Jackson et al., 2023: 17)

These informal spaces develop out of, and in turn generate, relationships. Understanding the emergence of leadership implies understanding how such relationships work in situ. Formal leadership development programs are not always the way to create them. Generic capacity building efforts tend to focus less on making and reinforcing connections and networks than addressing perceived deficits in people's skills, knowledge and experience. Such approaches therefore can mis-diagnose pathways to leadership and overlook what women already know and do (Jakimow et al., 2023b: 13).

[Generic capacity building efforts] can mis-diagnose pathways to leadership and overlook what women already know and do.

Limited engagement with the context that participants in formal training work within, and must return to, can also limit their impact (Sanga et al., 2022a, Lovai et al., 2022). As an exception, the leadership development program analysed in the *Leadership journeys and outcomes of the Civic Champions program in rural Cambodia* project was successful because the training activities linked directly to sanitation promotion in communes. In this case, participants self-selected into the programme, were encouraged to reflect on their own starting points, and then directly apply this to their work, which resulted in tangible improvements in local wellbeing (Nhim and Mcloughlin, 2022; Ann et al., 2014). This brings us to the issue of how leaders work together, to collectively influence development, through the leadership process: the subject of the next section.

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HOW DO LEADERS COLLECTIVELY INFLUENCE DEVELOPMENT?

RELATIONSHIPS

In the same way that leadership is formed and socialised through relationships, the collective process of leadership relies on negotiating and building trust-based relationships. School leadership, for example, both operates through, but also *cares for*, such relationships.

> *"leadership involves recognising, understanding and respecting the relationships that either restrict or distribute knowledge. Knowing who to ask for what, recognising the currencies of exchange and the structure of obligations that provide context, and being embedded in exchange networks are relational matters."*
>
> (Sanga et al., 2022a: 10)

Relationships can be decisive when tackling crises, or challenging exclusions. Determined and collaborative leadership aided by social capital through the wantok system, Fa'a Samoa, Faka Tonga, and other networks across Oceania mitigated potential livelihood disasters during the COVID-19 pandemic. Pacific leaders treasure, strengthen and use informal social capital and safety nets that protect and sustain Pacific Island families in times of distress. However, in times of crisis there can be increased pressure on these support structures – for example in Solomon Islands when people returned to their villages in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic (Nanau and Labu-Nanau, 2021). But it also must be recognised that such support systems do not necessarily include everyone on an equal basis. For disability leaders, working with civil society organisations outside the disability movement was especially important for mainstreaming disability issues into other areas such as women's empowerment or legal rights.

Relationships can substitute for material resources. In Indonesia, Rani, a nurse in the community, was selected for political candidacy. In the absence of a campaign fund, she continued her community work in supporting people to access vital medical treatment to win votes. She defeated several "newcomers" with large volumes of cash, who did not build these vital relationships.

> *"Payments of any size do not necessarily win elections. "By my principle, if you want to be elected do not campaign with your lips but with your heart. Build a strong relationship with the people instead of relying on money."*
>
> (Harahap et al., 2022: 9-10)

The power of such relationships is not always immediately visible, as the research in South Fly uncovered about informal women's networks. While typically small, and generally not taken seriously, these groups are highly dynamic, and strategic for helping women leaders to establish their support base. This nascent 'coalition for change' potentially could provide mentoring and support to reach women in rural areas who are otherwise excluded from decision-making processes (Moran and Warapa, 2023b).

Securing material assets, whether funding, resources and/or labour, depends on the capacity of leaders to build relationships. In Solomon Islands, tribal and church leaders played the crucial role in mobilising voluntary labour, or materials such as roofing iron, timber etc, to produce local public goods, such as schools, clinics and roads. In this rural environment, where scarcity and precarity mean the opportunity costs of shared projects are high, collective endeavours rely on the social capital that can only be built through relationships.

NAVIGATING DIFFERENT DOMAINS

One of the central tasks for leaders in effectively executing their relational work is bridging across and brokering between different domains or multiple 'worlds' (Corbett, 2012; 2015). By domains, we do not mean public or formal versus private or informal spaces. This distinction does not hold up. Instead, we mean the spaces where authority operates with a different logic. For example, we can point to the different domains of culture, traditional leadership, the household, church and government. These domains are fuzzy, but they are real.

Our findings identify the particular significance of leaders who perform multiple roles across these domains. In Solomon Islands, where authority is dispersed between state, customary and church institutions, straddling them can facilitate decision-making or dispute resolution:

> *'Sometimes individuals demand compensation for certain things and I had to look at these and verify claims. I am also part of the chiefs' council in Malaita, so I have powers to deal with issues and try to settle disputes in my area. We have guidelines given to us by the provincial government and we often use it to guide our decisions and settle disputes.'*
>
> (Mcloughlin et al., 2023)

The benefits of successfully navigating and collaborating across domains were also revealed in educational settings. In the *Appreciating Pacific understandings of school leadership* project, the combined efforts of the community chief, the tribal chief and the church leaders were needed to resolve conflicts, for example when landowners expected their children to receive free education, and assure the continuity of schooling (Sanga et al., 2023).

Connections across localities – or trans-local ties – may also be a vital lifeline for community leaders, particularly in remote, rural areas. In the province of Malaita, where a community successfully co-produced a culturally and socially important space for holding gatherings, major events, and feasts - Rame'ai Kings Table - the strength of the connections forged among a wider spiritual 'movement' offered a network via which to secure youth participation in voluntary work. The relative remoteness and poor transport links to this rural community amplified the value of connections beyond the village for sourcing necessary materials.

MAKING MEANING

Forging relationships, particularly across domains, operates through and generates shared meaning. In the studied cases of co-production in Solomon Islands, for example, negotiation and dispute resolution between tribal and customary leaders was facilitated through customary processes of dialogue and negotiation, grounded in spirituality and ritual. Disagreements over access to tribal land were resolved partly through prayer. In this way, progress was anchored in shared ideas, held in collective imagination, and realised through collective effort.

When ideas are not shared, negotiation and compromise may be required to navigate competing interests. In the DLP/WFD project on *Legislative leadership on environmental issues*, which examined single use plastic (SUP) bans in 32 countries including Thailand, Barbados and Kenya, a stand-off between the government in Barbados and industry led to changes to the proposed legislation. The Cabinet Minister leading the process of drafting the bill responded to industry demands by focusing on phasing out SUPs rather than banning them outright, highlighting the importance of participation in designing legislation (Alderman, 2022).

Leadership is vital to making meaning – or, to 'how groups come to have common beliefs about consequences and common valuations of them' (Mayer, 2014. p. 27). Through narrative strategies, storytelling and articulating desired goals, leaders make connections between what people perceive to be in their individual or collective interest. Much of what leaders do to overcome collective action challenges is to narrate and reinforce the ideas that underlie change.

> *'one of the things I noticed... was the need to explain ideas and concepts clearly to our people. Some of these ideas are foreign and sometimes we had to properly explain clearly in order for them to understand. If they understand what we are trying to do, they are always willing to assist or even allow land and resources for development.'*
>
> (Mcloughlin et al., 2023)

Leaders carry ideas. School leaders in the Pacific, for example, contain and curate a deep well of traditional knowledge. Legends, skills, and histories are brought into the classroom, to contribute to learning, creating "a place-based curriculum with relational resources" (Sanga et al., 2022b: 12).

Some ideas become deeply embedded in society through narratives promoted by politicians, to the extent that they become difficult to change or remove. An example from the *Social protection and state legitimacy in Timor-Leste* project is the power of the veterans' payments policy. Its legitimacy is based on honour and respect for the veterans, as well as the belief that veterans have already earned this support through their role in the independence struggle. In this context, any policy changes will need to be framed in alignment with existing values and moral criteria, rather than challenging them completely (Pruce et al., 2023).

Disability leaders in Indonesia expressed how a key aspect of their role was sharing, explaining and using ideas to influence people. They also felt that communication and listening skills were important, as was being able to mediate differences of opinion, "connect people" and "have strategies to accommodate a variety of characters and interests". Navigating the interpersonal dimensions of collaborative leadership was often, they noted, the most difficult part of being a leader (Jackson et al., 2023: 20).

HOW CAN DEVELOPMENTAL LEADERSHIP BE SUPPORTED?

In this final section we reflect on what the findings mean for those who wish to understand or support developmental leadership and how it challenges the orthodoxy around leadership training and development. Our findings suggest a contextual set of initiatives for external actors, such as development partners, to support these human-centred, agency-based understandings of leadership as a set of everyday practices.

Yet the eventual returns on such patient investment… will arguably yield a much greater dividend in the longer term than shorter term fixes which are not grounded in the social context.

RECOGNIZE THE SYSTEM

Nearly all of the research projects in this phase of DLP explored existing processes of individual and collective leadership, and in most cases, this was done primarily through local researchers, or in partnership with them. This focus and approach helped to reveal the importance and complexity of local informal and formal institutions and the ways in which this 'eco-system' of actors is inter-related.

In the cases of *Non-elite pathways to women's political leadership in Sri Lanka and Indonesia* and *Disability leadership in Indonesia* projects this helped explain how activist leadership has emerged in formal politics and in social movements, respectively. The cases of *Citizen state engagement in Solomon Islands and Leadership beyond state limits in Papua New Guinea* show the importance of horizontal and vertical linkages between church, customary leadership and formal institutions. The implication is clear: development agencies should avoid rushing to establish new entities, structures, or networks, before they explore what exists already, and how those local systems function. This is the trampling risk, and avoiding it requires respect, humility, curiosity and patience.

For development agencies there is often 'an obsessive love of novelty' (Scott-Smith, 2016: 2230), whether that be in the form of new multi-million dollar programs, new organisational alignments and departments to signal relevance to the order of the day, or the lure of new technologies which are going to create 'transformational change' (Scott-Smith, 2016; Wells, 2022). At the same time, there is a remarkable conservatism in many business practices driven, some suggest, by organisational mimicry and coercive pressure, decoupling and rationalist institutional mythologies (Fushimi, 2018), as well as managerialism and corporate doctrines (Gulrajani, 2011), which in turn help explain why innovations in the sector do not last.

In addition to the political pressures which drive expediency noted in the *Transnational leadership in the Pacific* project, this short-termism may also be explained by the sector's tendency to focus on 'techno-utopian ideologies' (Wells, 2022:15) rather than more radical alternative institutional arrangements and ideologies when it comes to innovation, which have yet to really emerge. Either way, not rushing to set up new entities or structures, patiently understanding what already exists and listening to those who are close to the context, and playing the long game will require more than a shift in programming policies, although that is important. It will also need deeper shifts in the ideas and relationships which shape day to day practices, and which mitigate against the 'strategic patience' required to work in this way.

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ENABLE EMERGENCE

Many of the important factors in enabling leadership that have emerged from DLP research relate to informal institutional spaces and domains, and broader societal norms and values. For example, in the case of *Citizen state engagement in Solomon Islands* project, local and informal relational dynamics are seen to be critical in the production of local public goods. Findings from the *Appreciating Pacific understandings of school leadership* project, for example, point to important ways in which the legitimacy of school leaders is judged in relation to their navigation of kastom.

> *'...leadership ideas travel across domain boundaries, and kastom, a domain which has longstanding influence and involves everyone in a society, is likely to dominate any negotiation between leadership ideas. This is particularly true because when people leave the office, school or other post, they step back into the familiar world of kastom, as do their clients, be they children, parents or others'*
>
> (Sanga et al, 2023: 20)

Very few of these factors seemed to relate to the direct, formal attempts to build the skills or knowledge of assumed leaders through development programs or projects. As such, and in a similar vein to previous DLP research on gender and politics in practice (Derbyshire, 2018; Cox, 2018; Roche et al., 2018), these cases suggest that agencies might stop focusing so much on 'capacity building' and leadership development and instead also look to enhance the enabling context for the emergence of individual and collective leadership.

> *'Programs are required that both increase the possibilities of personhood for women (early socialization, including in schools for example), and which disrupt the reproduction of the political realm as a masculine dirty realm hostile to socially active women'*
>
> (Jakimow et al., 2023a: 350)

A commitment to "casting a wide net to produce a *cohort* of women able to enter politics" (Jakimow et al., 2023b: 21) is therefore as much an extension of the prospective candidates' networks of support and the capacities of their broader team as it is supporting a specific individual. This echoes earlier DLP research which suggested that, for example, the provision of long-term support to secondary or tertiary education might be beneficial, something which has been shown to be particularly important in contributing to developmental leadership in several countries (Brannelly et al, 2011; Jones et al, 2014; Schweisfurth et al, 2016).

Supporting developmental leadership should also recognise the significance of the private, informal, family and community spaces in shaping future propensity for leadership, often at an early age, in addition to church, educational establishments, and workplaces, as several cases suggest. Even if donors may not have a legitimate or useful role in these spaces, they may be involved in governance or policy making processes that impinge upon them and play a significant role – as for example education does – in shaping the norms, values and ideas which are reproduced in these less formal spaces.

Enabling emergence also recognises that there are many different pathways for leadership to emerge, promote change and be sustained, and these are long run processes that cannot be socially engineered and exceed a typical project lifecycle. Leadership "looks and feels and works differently in different spaces and places" around the world, with the term 'leader' being socially constructed rather than pre-ordained (Hudson and Mcloughlin, 2019: 7). In the case of support for disability leadership to emerge, this may look like the introduction of the social mobility of disability and interactions with disability activists and leaders – two significant factors for participants in the *Disability leadership in Indonesia* project – through primary and secondary education (Jackson et al., 2023).

Investing in longer run processes makes it harder to attribute direct results, which is challenging in a climate where the demand for short-term tangible results continues. Yet the eventual returns on such patient investment – i.e. an increased adaptive and leadership capacity to respond to, and promote change – will arguably yield a much greater dividend in the longer term than shorter term fixes which are not grounded in the social context: "Developing leadership that is sustainable because the structures that support change exist after outsiders leave, funding stops, or the project timeline is up is the key to effectiveness." (Sanga et al., 2022a: 10). This also can generate strategic benefits, as the *Transnational leadership in the Pacific* project suggests. Expedient approaches just will not work: '… if you want to achieve [with us] you have to have that long term view of what it means to be part of the life of the Pacific' (Ng Shiu et al., 2023: 17).

The trick is to make the case to development agencies and other funders for the longer-term investment, for capturing progress along the way and communicating this effectively and for increasing the visibility of the underlying processes being built to support this longer trajectory. For example, emphasising the functional value and viability of investments, such as how exposure to international secondary or tertiary education can enable the emergence of regional leaders who not only have a strong collective understanding of donor concepts, priorities and interests, but who also might gain the relationships which enable greater mutual understanding in the future.

UNDERSTAND POWER AS RELATIONAL

Leadership and how it is exercised is highly dependent on identity and is gendered. These dimensions of identity impact on other aspects of inclusion as well. The two research projects which focused more directly on this – *Non-elite pathways to women's political leadership in Sri Lanka and Indonesia* and *Disability leadership in Indonesia* – both reveal the importance of inclusion and why it means moving beyond questions of simply women's leadership, or disability leadership, to bring together more intersectional analysis which genuinely explores power relations between and within groups, and how these might be changed. For example, understanding how different spaces or domains are gendered in ways that shape leadership opportunities for men and women, and the role – if any – that ethnicity or religion play.

> *'The reproduction of politics as a masculine sphere creates further incompatibilities with social models of womanhood. Respondents in Sri Lanka considered the political domain as a masculine space where women's voices are suppressed and they are assigned limited roles. Derogatory language and a violent political culture prevent women from entering into politics. Forms of political engagement are masculine and incongruous with gender norms, such as addressing large gatherings on a public stage.'*
>
> (Jakimow et al., 2023a: 348)

This is also important when it comes to progressing and supporting leadership for inclusion, which often requires broader coalitions of diverse groups and interests. Building collaboration and relationships across interest groups takes a particular set of skills and qualities, as Gordon and Hasson (2021) found for parliamentarians active in such reform processes. At the same time it may mean being more aware of the potential that resides in existing, but maybe less visible networks that are already working across boundaries.

> *'The [women's] groups are typically small, disconnected, highly dynamic, not immediately visible, and sit in the background of everyday culture and male-dominated decision making. Women's groups do not appear to form along language or tribal lines, which underscores their importance for attempts at building trans-local alliances.'*
>
> (Moran and Warapa, 2023b: 22-23)

For development agencies and national decision makers, this still includes making progress on the long-standing demands to move beyond 'add women and stir' (Harding, 1995) to genuinely address underlying gender and power relations building on understandings of feminist leadership (Batliwala, 2011). This, in turn, requires broader understanding of politics and governance that adequately factor in questions of identity and intersectionality in a way that are politically savvy and draw on both traditions (Derbyshire et al., 2018). As a number of the research projects in this phase recognised, this can mean avoiding intersectionality and gender rights language which can be politically counter-productive, or simply be used to meet 'standardised GEDSI (Gender, Disability and Social Inclusion) technocratic

'tick box exercises' (Van Hemelrijck et al, 2023). It also means, as the *Appreciating Pacific understandings of school leadership* project suggests, starting from local conceptualisations and world views of gender and leadership, as well as the opportunities and barriers that these might bring:

> *'Outside stakeholders need to suspend their judgements as to what leadership role of women should be. There are different expectations on how men and women are expected to carry out their leadership roles, that these expectations are linked to traditional leadership stories while helping preserve the status of those involved in leadership interactions'*
>
> (Institute of Education, USP, unpublished)

Many development agencies have recognised for some time that confronting the issues and challenges in understanding power as relational require development agencies themselves to squarely and constructively address their own identity and internal power relations related to gender, race, disability and sexuality (see for example DFAT's 2015 Women in Leadership Strategy). However, these initiatives have tended to focus on single dimensions of identity, and have also been relatively silent on issues of race. As recent debates on racism in the sector suggest, building an equitable and inclusive aid sector will require a multi-faceted response including addressing the norms and values of the sector which are still 'underpinned by preferences for international experience over contextual and cultural knowledge and assumptions of best practice originating in White majority high-income countries' (IDC, 2022).

PUT IDEAS AND RELATIONSHIPS BEFORE MONEY

In several of the research projects, the importance of social connections and relationships was evident in both shaping leadership and its emergence, and in how collective leadership was exercised and maintained. There are important lessons about where, how and particularly when investments might be made in ways that build on and strengthen existing relationships, or at the very least do not undermine them depending on context.

> *'There is a further lesson in the sequencing of the ideational, relational and material dimensions of community projects. Our most successful cases were inspired ideationally, and negotiated relationally, to facilitate the sourcing of material goods. In other words, the ideational and relational have to come first, not the other way around.'*
>
> (Mcloughlin et al., 2023)

At the same time, the *Leadership beyond state limits* project also points to how the injection of material resources can often undermine these relationships and collective leadership.

> *'A 'do no harm' principle is essential, including sequencing of disbursements of any money to the end of the process. While there is considerable opportunity to strengthen informal organisations, there is also potential to instrumentalise and politicise them'*
>
> (Moran and Warapa, 2023a: 32)

There are important lessons about where, how and particularly when investments might be made in ways that build on and strengthen existing relationships, or at the very least do not undermine them.

For development agencies the implications emerging from most of the cases is the need for them to put human beings and the relationships between them and their context at the centre of their programmatic thinking. This suggests recognising that the successful disbursement of material resources is dependent on pre-conditions which are often hard to get a handle on, particularly for outsiders. Others propose that it also means interrogating the ideas and worldviews that predominate in development and humanitarian agencies and the narratives they tell about themselves (Saez and Bryant, 2023).

These frames and narratives are shaped by, and in turn shape, the relationships the organisation holds most dear, as well as defining what policies and practices might be considered as implementable, and as such are central to organisational identity. Developing new stories and narratives which seek to build more equitable relationships and partnerships, and which decentre the role of development agencies vis-à-vis local actors, might be a useful starting point. However, this is clearly insufficient if these narratives, for example 'partnership' and being part of a 'Pacific family' are seen to be mere rhetoric (Ng Shui et al., 2023). Exploring how internal organisational culture and ways of working align with the need to build long-term relationships that are likely to drive longer term success maybe a useful starting point.

This arguably might avoid what some have called the 'broke not broken' narrative for the sector (i.e., a focus on the need for more material resources) which can in turn delay the recognition of the need for more wholesale reform (Saez and Bryant, 2023: 30). As the *Transnational leadership in the Pacific* project notes '[w]hile increased resources can be of incredible benefit, the way that they are being distributed has the potential to generate more problems than it solves' (Ng Shiu et al., 2023: 17). As the authors go on to note 'If donors understood regionalists better, what they care about and the challenges they encounter, then donors might be better placed to work productively with them.'

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MAKE THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE

Understanding how local systems function, creating an enabling environment for developmental leadership to emerge, seeing power as relational and recognising the importance of the less tangible and less visible processes that drive social change all assume that development agencies are well equipped to do so. But are they?

Understanding or making visible the role of ideas and relationships in processes of social change requires deep knowledge of, and engagement with, context (almost always through local leaders, practitioners and researchers) as well as culturally appropriate means of 'seeing' these things. Current discussions about an Australian First Nation's foreign policy (Fejo, 2023), and on Pasifika, indigenous and Māori-led evaluation, provide a useful platform for progressing these debates in this region (SPC, 2020; Campbell et al, 2022; Wehipeihana, 2018).

Yet orthodox approaches to context analysis, political economy analysis, research, and monitoring, evaluation and learning, remain limited in that they are not locally led or contextualised. Being ill equipped to 'see' is exacerbated where locally grounded expertise is overlooked, research methods are ill-adapted to context, or research findings are filtered through a Western lens (Krishna & Roche, 2022; Krishna, 2023).

The cases explored in DLP III suggest opportunities for re-dressing these explicit biases and blind spots. They show how using culturally appropriate methods can reveal hidden dynamics, how engaging local leaders as researchers can provide deeper understanding of the challenges they face, including via autobiographical elements, or provide access routes into high-level leaders that otherwise may not have been possible.

These understandings suggest revising the mechanics of program design, monitoring and evaluation and who leads and shapes this, and asking more fundamental questions about how performance and its measurement is approached. And, how the less visible relational, which this phase of DLP has so clearly identified as important, is valued and rewarded. Whilst this debate is familiar in feminist circles where the notion of caring work as invisible labour is well understood, this has not been applied to the relational work that is required in and central to the development sector (Peters, 2020).

Ultimately, navigating everyday leadership will also require a more robust discussion in development agencies about what forms of knowledge are valued, how different world views are brokered and weaved together, and who is best placed to legitimately do this.

NAVIGATING EVERYDAY LEADERSHIP

In order to successfully navigate everyday leadership, we need a way of understanding and seeing it in action – this is where the real politics of development happens but often remains hidden. This synthesis paper shows the day-to-day practices of leadership in a variety of contexts, informed by and building on the valuable work of our research teams and partners.

We use the navigational waypoints explored in this paper (materials, relationships and ideas) to unpack the inner workings of everyday leadership. We have developed a series of straightforward but challenging guiding questions which can help reveal how the ideational, relational and material work, together.[2] And the ways in which these three points interact can shape how leadership is understood in different contexts, where leaders come from, how leaders collectively influence development, as well as how leadership can be supported.

The guiding questions aim to uncover the often-hidden aspects of everyday leadership and can be used alongside other design, planning and Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) tools, such as context analysis and stakeholder mapping. The questions can be answered individually or in a group, encouraging us to:

- Be explicit about underlying assumptions and question these assumptions
- Think about who is included and excluded in the analysis, and why
- Pool knowledge, acting as a point of conversation and contestation
- Identify significant knowledge gaps
- Draw on culturally appropriate methods to reveal the above

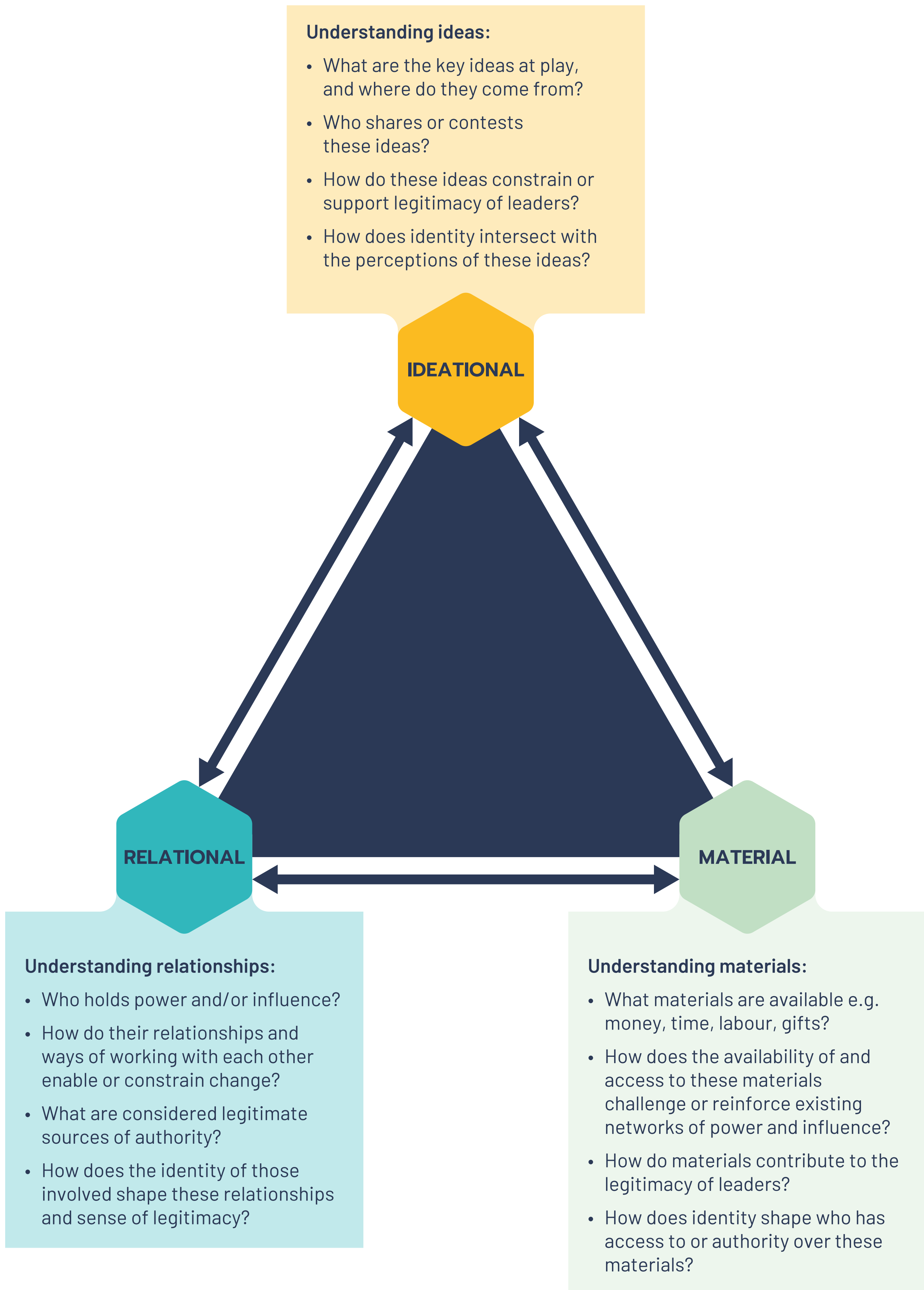
There are two stages involved in navigating everyday leadership. The analysis stage focuses on understanding ideas, relationships, materials based on the questions identified in Figure 1. Understanding the answers and the interactions between the waypoints can reveal potential for action and change, guided by the following questions:

1. What are the existing opportunities to build on shared ideas?
2. Which ideas are shaping how problems are perceived, and the feasibility of possible solutions?
3. How will different material investments interact with existing relationships and ways of working?

The purpose of the analysis is to deepen knowledge of the relevant context and uncover the dynamics of everyday leadership. The action questions then prompt reflection on the ways in which ideas, relationships and materials interact to enable or constrain change. There is likely to be overlap between the analysis and action, and both stages can be re-visited throughout a project or change process.

2 We would like to acknowledge Lough et al. (2023). Our emphasis on the material, the relational, and the ideational emerged directly from the DLP synthesis process and outputs. Though we were not influenced by the Wellbeing in Development framework, the similarities are striking and serve to validate the importance of these factors for understanding a range of outcomes.

FIGURE 1: NAVIGATING EVERYDAY LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK



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