

This is the **Accepted Version** of a paper published in the
journal *Human Ecology*:

Evans, Louisa S., Cohen, Philippa J., Case, Peter, Hicks,
Christina C., Prideaux, Murray, and Mills, David J. (2017)
The landscape of leadership in environmental governance.
Human Ecology, 45 (3). pp. 357-365.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10745-017-9901-x>

1 **The Landscape of Leadership in Environmental Governance**

2
3 Louisa S Evans^{1,2*}, Philippa J Cohen^{2,3*}, Peter Case^{4,5}, Christina C Hicks^{2, 6}, Murray
4 Prideaux⁵, David J Mills^{1, 2}

5
6 ¹ Geography, College of Life and Environmental Sciences, University of Exeter

7 ² Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, James
8 Cook University

9 ³ WorldFish

10 ⁴ Bristol Business School, University of West England

11 ⁵ College of Business, Law and Governance, James Cook University

12 ⁶ Lancaster Environment Centre, Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK, LA1 4YQ

13
14 * **Corresponding authors:** The first two authors contributed equally in leading
15 development of the manuscript

16
17 Louisa S Evans

18 Geography, College of Life and Environmental Sciences

19 University of Exeter

20 Email: Louisa.Evans@exeter.ac.uk

21
22 Philippa J Cohen

23 WorldFish

24 c/- Australian Research Council, Centre for Excellence for Coral Reef Studies

25 James Cook University

26 Email: p.cohen@cgiar.org

27
28
29
30
31 Keywords; coastal and marine governance; biodiversity; fisheries; food security;
32 conservation; climate change

33

34

35

36

37

INTRODUCTION

38

39 Recognition that current patterns of human behaviour will radically alter the Earth's
40 environment and impact negatively on human wellbeing (Myers 1996, Steffen *et al.*
41 2015, World Resources Institute 2005) has led to calls to substantially improve or even
42 transform approaches to environmental governance (Kates *et al.* 2012, O'Brien 2012,
43 Brown 2013). In this context, transformation often refers to significant advances towards
44 more integrated approaches at increasingly larger scales (Olsson *et al.* 2008; Westley *et*
45 *al.* 2011), which in practice requires the merging of objectives around conservation,
46 development and climate change (see also the Sustainable Development Goals 2015).

47

48 The literature on environmental governance transformation is converging around a core
49 set of factors that foster change processes, with leaders (or entrepreneurs) identified as
50 one of the main drivers of significant change (Scheffer *et al.* 2003; Olsson *et al.* 2008;
51 Biggs *et al.* 2010; Westley *et al.* 2011). Often key individuals or 'champions' are
52 identified, who by virtue of their positions (e.g., traditional village chief / City Mayor),
53 personalities (e.g., charismatic) or competencies (e.g., networking skills) garner the
54 authority to drive environmental policy change and action (e.g., Manolis *et al.* 2008;
55 Black *et al.* 2011; see review by Evans *et al.* 2015). For example, research on the
56 transformation of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, Australia, focused almost
57 exclusively on the leadership role of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and
58 its Chairperson (Olsson *et al.* 2008).

59

60 Emphasising the attributes of individual environmental leaders reflects notions of what
61 is referred to in the field of leadership studies as heroic leadership (Case 2013). Such

62 approaches focus on individual agency and can underplay the important institutional
63 contexts that support the emergence of leaders as well as the potential for more
64 distributed forms of leadership (Carroll *et al.* 2008; Westley *et al.* 2011; Denis *et al.*
65 2012). Moreover, environmental research on leadership tends to view leaders in a
66 positive or normative light, as those who are aligned to environmental governance and
67 sustainability initiatives (Evans *et al.* 2015; Case *et al.* 2015). Relatively few studies
68 emphasise the potential of leaders and leadership to intentionally (and legitimately)
69 block, disrupt, or co-opt change processes, or inhibit change in a particular direction (for
70 exceptions see Pahl-Wostl *et al.* 2007; Zulu 2008; Njaya *et al.* 2012). By this, we do not
71 only mean the leadership enacted by environmental activists blocking or stalling the
72 activities of big polluters, logging companies or developers (Houck 2010; Martinez-Alier
73 2014), we mean the leadership shown by community groups, user groups and industry
74 groups, for example, who are involved in negotiating environmental outcomes. Such
75 approaches to understanding the role of leadership in governance transformations
76 arguably misrepresent the complex and potentially contested concepts of environmental
77 governance and sustainable development (Lélé 1991; Redclift 2005).

78

79 We bring new insights to environmental governance research from leadership studies
80 where there is a growing recognition that leadership is a process that is enacted through
81 a “web of interactions incorporating both people and objects” (Hawkins *et al.* 2015: 953).
82 Leadership is broadly defined as a process of influence resulting in shared direction and
83 commitment (following Bolden *et al.* 2012 and Haslam *et al.* 2011). To illustrate what a
84 more nuanced understanding of leadership can look like we employ a deliberately
85 provocative analytical perspective inspired by Actor Network Theory which recognises

86 that societal outcomes are shaped by relations among humans and non-human, including
87 discursive, actants (Latour 2005; Dwiartama and Rosin 2014 and see discussion for
88 detailed examples). We report on an empirical study of Solomon Islands' engagement
89 with the multi-national, multi-objective Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs,
90 Fisheries and Food Security (CTI), an initiative that is labelled as potentially
91 transformative. We aimed to understand how different actors perceive leadership for
92 improved environmental governance in Solomon Islands in practice. First, we determine
93 whether there are sources of leadership *in addition* to key individuals and organisations.
94 We investigate the potential of organisations, policy and legislative instruments, and
95 ideologies or discourses to enact leadership by influencing governance outcomes.
96 Second, we establish how leadership varies across three different, potentially contested
97 CTI goals – food security, biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation – that
98 in combination are expected to contribute to improved environmental governance. Third,
99 we determine whether leadership can also disrupt or stall progress towards improved
100 environmental governance outcomes. This paper aims to open up a broader debate about
101 leadership research in environmental sciences – the empirical approach and evidence are
102 illustrative rather than definitive.

103

104

105

METHODS

106

107 **Case-study**

108 We selected the Solomon Islands' engagement with the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral
109 Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security as our illustrative case-study. The CTI is a regional

110 partnership between Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea
111 and Solomon Islands launched in 2009. It is funded by USAID in collaboration with
112 WWF, The Nature Conservancy and Conservation International, the Global Environment
113 Facility through the Asian Development Bank, and Australian Aid. The CTI member
114 states have committed to five goals with the explicit ambition of transforming coastal
115 and marine governance in the region (see Fidelman et al. 2012; Fidelman et al. 2014 for
116 more detailed information). The CTI is now established and supports many new
117 investments and activities aimed at integrating multiple objectives around conservation,
118 development and climate change. It, therefore, provides a rich context to examine
119 processes of influence and integration, in order to highlight the multiple facets of
120 leadership, broadly defined.

121

122 We conducted our research in Solomon Islands, one of the six CTI member states in
123 which we have established research connections. In Solomon Islands a multi-agency
124 National Coordinating Committee (NCC) has responsibilities for monitoring,
125 implementing and coordinating the CTI activities in-country. It is co-chaired by the
126 Environment, Conservation, Disaster Management and Meteorology and the Ministry of
127 Fisheries of Marine Resources. The NCC can be considered as a governance network
128 (*sensu* Newig *et al.* 2010), or a field-policy or organizational leadership network (*sensu*
129 Hoppe and Reinelt 2010), in that it was deliberately formed (rather than emergent) to
130 align resources and co-ordinate activities to address the common goals of the CTI.

131

132 **Data collection**

133 We conducted face-to-face expert interviews with the named representatives of
134 organisations that are members of the Solomon Islands National Co-ordinating
135 Committee (NCC). We aimed to survey all NCC member organisations. The Chair of the
136 Solomon Islands NCC provided the names of the 17 experts who were the regular
137 attendees of NCC meetings who act as representatives of the NCC member organisations.
138 In 2013 we interviewed 12 of these experts; five were unavailable for interview. We
139 asked each respondent to represent the experiences of their organisation. Our sampling
140 approach is consistent with other research employing expert elicitation, network and
141 participatory approaches (e.g., Cohen *et al.* 2012; Game *et al.* 2013) and it aligns with
142 methodological approaches in leadership studies (e.g., Mailhot *et al.* 2016)

143

144 The face-to-face expert interview involved a participatory network mapping activity to
145 map leadership influences on the respondents' organizations. First we asked respondents
146 to identify “*Who* and *what* provides leadership in the work that your organisation does
147 (e.g., activities on the ground, policies your organisation develops, research your
148 organisation undertakes, etc.) related to the three core goals of the Coral Triangle
149 Initiative in Solomon Islands?”. The three core goals were food security, biodiversity
150 conservation and climate change adaptation. Following accepted definitions in
151 leadership studies, respondents were asked to consider leadership broadly as influence.
152 To encourage respondents to openly consider the influence of conventional (human) and
153 non-conventional (material and discursive) actants on the activities of their organisations,
154 we asked them to consider four overarching categories of ‘actants’ that could constitute
155 potential sources of leadership, and we described each in lay terms; a) organisations and
156 networks (i.e., described to respondents as any group of social entities working together),

157 b) donors and funding (i.e., sources of finance), c) policies and strategies (i.e., a
158 document that articulates how actions should or must be taken), and d) beliefs and
159 discourses (i.e., the over-arching views that people or organisations hold). In each of these
160 four categories we provided a few broad and specific, but standardised, examples to
161 clarify our meaning (Table 1). The specific examples we provided were those
162 organisations, donors, policies and discourses that were frequently mentioned in key CTI
163 documents. *Importantly*, respondents could include or *exclude* the example provided in
164 their network map, and then were encouraged to list any further actants in any of the four
165 categories (Figure 1A). Note, respondents could not nominate themselves/their own
166 organisation. Thus, the leadership influence of any organisation was determined by
167 others. In the network diagrams, responses were recorded as binary figures: a one (i.e.,
168 presence of influence) or a zero (i.e., absence of influence) against the list of actants.

169

170

TABLE 1

171

172 To address our second objective of establishing whether leadership varied across the
173 three CTI goals, respondents ranked the relative influence of different actants in their
174 network for each goal. First, we asked respondents to allocate 100 counters across the
175 three goals according to where the most progress had been made by the CTI in Solomon
176 Islands since it started in 2009. We then asked respondents to consider one CTI goal at a
177 time and to distribute the allocated number of counters across the actants they felt were
178 influential for that particular goal, i.e., placing more counters on the more influential
179 actant (Figure 1B). For example, if the respondent had indicated relative progress by
180 assigning 60 percentage points to food security, 30 to biodiversity conservation, and 10

181 to climate change adaptation, they then had 60 counters to distribute across the specific
182 actants influential on food security, 30 across actants influential on biodiversity
183 conservation and 10 on influential climate change adaptation actants. We then asked
184 respondents to discuss why they had identified particular actants as the most influential
185 in each of the three rounds of scoring.

186

187

FIGURE 1

188

189 To address our third objective on whether leadership might also inhibit progress towards
190 environmental governance outcomes, we asked the respondent to identify “Who and
191 what hinders, stalls or halts the work that your organisation does?” across all three CTI
192 goals combined. We recorded responses against the established list of actants again using
193 a binary code: one to indicate the presence of influence or zero to indicate the absence of
194 influence. We then asked respondents to discuss why they had identified particular
195 actants as the most influential in hindering, stalling or halting CTI progress.

196

197

198 **Data Analysis**

199 Using Ucinet version 6.288, we created two network visualisations representing: a) all
200 identified sources of positive influence on progress of NCC organisations towards the
201 CTI goals combined; and b) all identified sources of negative influence on progress
202 towards the CTI goals combined. In each network, the actant (i.e., source of influence)
203 is the node. In total, respondents identified 122 actants as influential on CTI progress.
204 Therefore, to create networks in Ucinet we produced 7 x 122 cell matrices (one matrix

205 for positive, and a separate matrix for negative influences), where cells contained either
206 a one or a zero indicating the presence or absence of influence. If we had interviewed
207 more than one respondent from a particular NCC member organisation, their responses
208 were aggregated, therefore, the responses of the 12 respondents were incorporated into
209 seven rows; one for each organisation. The size of the nodes represents the frequency
210 with which respondents identified a particular actant as influential, i.e., in-degree
211 (Degenne and Forsé 1999). To examine the different levels of influence for each CTI
212 goal, we summed and sorted (from highest to lowest) total scores from each of the three
213 rounds of scoring with counters. In Microsoft Excel we organised and analysed
214 supporting qualitative data on why respondents ranked particular actants as the most
215 influential. Qualitative responses were analysed to determine patterns in explanations
216 of the participatory network data (i.e., why particularly actants were highly influential).
217 Given the small size of the NCC network, we do not apply statistics to our network
218 data. Instead, we present this empirical study as illustrative of the potential for a
219 broader approach to environmental leadership research.

220

221

222 **RESULTS**

223

224 **Multiple sources of influence on CTI progress**

225 In the participatory network mapping activity respondents identified a total of 54
226 organisations, 18 donors, 32 policies and 18 discourses (represented as the nodes in the
227 network diagram) as being influential (indicated by the lines in the network diagram,
228 Figure 2A) in progressing the three main goals of the CTI in Solomon Islands. The five

229 most frequently cited actants, in descending order of frequency, were: the National Plan
230 of Action (NPOA), Equality, the Ministry of Environment, Conservation, Disaster
231 Management and Meteorology (MECDM), the Ministry of Fisheries of Marine
232 Resources (MFMR) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC).

233

234 The actants ranked as the most influential by respondents (as indicated by the highest
235 number of counters summed) across all three CTI goals combined were: MECDM,
236 NPOA, Poverty, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and WorldFish (Table 2). The
237 MECDM emerged as the most influential actant with a score almost twice that of other
238 potential sources of influence. Poverty was the most influential discourse overall. It was
239 identified as important in less than 25% of responses but where it was identified it was
240 felt to be highly influential over CTI progress. Similarly, equality was felt to be a very
241 influential discourse by those that identified it.

242

243 **Different sources of influence on three overarching CTI goals**

244 We disaggregated perceptions of influence by the three overarching goals of the CTI in
245 Solomon Islands. Proportionate ranking by respondents indicated that they perceived that
246 relatively equal progress had been made across the three goals in Solomon Islands as a
247 whole, with slightly higher emphasis on climate change adaptation (37% of total points),
248 than biodiversity conservation (34%), or food security (29%). Importantly, respondents
249 perceived that different actants had been influential for different goals (Table 2). Overall,
250 *organisations* feature as the most important category of actants accounting for 45% of
251 the total points. The MECDM emerged as the most influential actant on all three CTI
252 goals. The NPOA and RPOA were among the top five sources of influence for all three

253 goals. Discourses around poverty, equality and food security were among the most highly
254 ranked influences on progress under the food security and climate change adaptation
255 goals of the CTI.

256

257

TABLE 2

258

259 The MECDM and MFMR hold formal leadership roles as co-chairs of the National Co-
260 ordinating Committee for the CTI, and both are among the four most important
261 organisations influencing CTI objectives overall. MECDM is the most influential
262 organisation for each of the three goals when they are considered separately, whereas
263 MFMR was among the four most influential actants under the biodiversity conservation
264 objective, but was substantially less influential under the climate change adaptation
265 objective (ranked 12th). For both food security and climate change adaptation objectives
266 WorldFish is considered by respondents to be more influential on their on-ground
267 activities than MFMR. For both biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation
268 TNC is also perceived to be more influential on organisations' implementation practices
269 than MFMR.

270

271 Two other trends to note in these data are, first, the identification of customary rights as
272 a source of influence on food security and biodiversity conservation objectives. Second,
273 the presence of donors in the top sources of influence under climate change adaptation;
274 the objective for which data suggested most progress (37%) had been made over the last
275 five years. Several respondents' comments noted the intense donor focus on climate

276 change, with one respondent suggesting that: “*there are enough [externally funded]*
277 *projects on climate change for everyone*”.

278

279 **Blocking or stalling influences on CTI progress**

280 Actants viewed to be influential in the progress of CTI goals were, in some cases, also
281 considered to be influential in stalling or hindering progress (Figure 2B). Tradition was
282 the most influential factor stalling progress. Respondents related tradition to customary
283 rights and identified land disputes, in particular, as a challenge to progress. One
284 respondent explained that “*When customary rights issues, such as disputes, arise we*
285 *leave people to sort it out and we walk away. We don't have the capacity to address or*
286 *solve these issues. That is the responsibility of the community or a mediator. It's*
287 *frustrating but you have to respect and understand this*”. Respondents explained that
288 while these cultural factors were important for guiding the implementation of CTI
289 objectives (i.e., particularly through community-based approaches) they could also
290 significantly stall action.

291

292 Despite their formal position as the co-chairs of the NCC, both MECDM and MFMR
293 also feature highly as actants that hindered progress. One respondent suggested that the
294 NCC co-chairs can't fulfil their leadership roles, “[they] *can't implement what they talk*
295 *about and so stall progress on the ground*”. Finally, donors and the government financing
296 department were identified as influences that stalled or blocked progress under CTI
297 objectives. In particular, respondents perceived that donor agencies impose conditions
298 around the provision of finances that stalled progress resulting in, what respondents
299 viewed as, an administrative burden on management resources. For example, donor

300 funding was viewed as a hindrance to progress because it is often difficult to access,
301 distribution is delayed and it comes with (excessively) high expectations. They used
302 words such as *rigid*, *time-consuming* and *unrealistic* to describe the funding and
303 reporting requirements of certain donors. Some respondents also argued that donors
304 pursued their own priorities not the country's priority needs.

305

306

FIGURE 2A AND B

307

308

309

DISCUSSION

310

311 Our participatory analysis of a governance network uncovered a landscape comprising
312 multiple human and non-human sources of leadership that are objective specific and
313 operate in ways that can both facilitate and hinder progress. Our data show that over
314 122 actants have influenced the direction and progress of the CTI in Solomon Islands.
315 Organisations were the most often identified sources of leadership influence, and the
316 NCC co-chairs – MECDM and MFMR – were, as expected, ranked among the most
317 influential actants alongside key supporting NGOs and donors. Nevertheless, more than
318 a third of the sources of leadership identified were not agents or actors in the
319 conventional sense, but non-human material and discursive entities. Four of the most
320 influential sources of leadership overall were discourses, including 'Centre of
321 Biodiversity' – which is an emerging motif of the CTI (CTI Secretariat 2009; Veron *et*
322 *al.* 2009) – 'poverty', 'equality' and 'customary tenure rights'. In Solomon Islands
323 customary tenure is the main form of property right, it is enshrined in the Constitution
324 and, as our data indicate, it both facilitates and hinders progress towards CTI goals.

325

326 Our analysis can be interpreted in different ways. The data could be understood in terms
327 of organisations and donors exhibiting leadership influence within a context of other
328 influential, non-human discursive (e.g., equality) and institutional (e.g., Regional Plan of
329 Action) contextual factors. This would reflect a body of work in leadership studies that
330 argues for more attention to the dialectic relationship between leadership and context i.e.,
331 to understand what type of leadership is effective in particular situations and how
332 leadership itself shapes context (Pettigrew 1992; Denis *et al.* 2010; Endrissat and von
333 Anx 2013). Some authors further posit that leaders can lead *through* context as well as
334 through other more direct leadership actions (Endrissat and von Anx 2013). In our case,
335 this would mean that discourses and policies are created deliberately by lead agencies to
336 enact more indirect influence over actors within a broad governance context in which
337 direct influence or leadership is not possible (i.e. actors work for different organisations
338 and are not accountable to particular lead agencies).

339

340 Alternatively, our data can be seen to reflect a distributed form of leadership. In this
341 paper, we took a provocative stance to argue that both human and non-human actants
342 can enact leadership influence within a distributed leadership network. This is a
343 reaction to the over-emphasis on individual and charismatic people or single
344 organisations as leaders in much of the environmental sciences literature. We defined
345 leadership broadly as a process of influence resulting in shared direction and
346 commitment (Haslam *et al.* 2011; Bolden *et al.* 2012) and suggest that influential
347 discourses and policies can engender as much of a shared vision as organisations or
348 charismatic individuals can. We show that actants, in addition to conventional agents,

349 can direct and motivate the activities of the key CTI implementing organisations (i.e.,
350 the NCC) and influence processes and outcomes in different ways, thereby enacting
351 leadership broadly defined.

352

353 Our approach follows an emerging stream of research in leadership studies on the role
354 of people *and* objects/artefacts in distributed leadership (Spillane *et al.* 2004; Bryson *et*
355 *al.* 2009; Oborn *et al.* 2013; Mailhot *et al.* 2016). Some scholars analyse how human
356 agents employ objects (i.e., concepts, committees or technologies) to achieve outcomes
357 through their leadership practice (Mailhot *et al.* 2016). Other scholars take a slightly
358 more ‘radical’ approach which views the objects themselves as *performative*, meaning
359 the objects have their own agency and can frame interactions and recruit other actors to
360 their ‘cause’, even in the absence of particular human agents who created, mobilised or
361 utilise the object (Mailhot *et al.* 2016). Spillane *et al.* (2004: 27) state that “the practice
362 of leadership is stretched over leaders, followers, and the material and symbolic
363 artefacts in the situation”. Similarly, Bryson *et al.* (2009: 200) identify artefacts or
364 objects including strategy maps “that changed the minds of their producers and guided
365 subsequent action across time and space” as influential actants in inter-organisational
366 collaboration. In the context of public policy making, Oborn *et al.* (2013) highlight that
367 socio-material configurations of human agents and objects (such as data and
368 communication technologies) can resolve conflicts and legitimise re-thinking of
369 leadership outcomes. They too emphasise that “these materials are not passive
370 mediators or neutral channels for leadership but are consequential”. Yet, the agency of
371 these objects emerges in relation to different actors and specific practices or activities,
372 rather than being inherent in a material’s properties (Oborn *et al.* 2013). In our case,

373 agency emerges through the interactions between the NCC organisations and the
374 human and non-human actants they identify as influential on their policy and
375 implementation practices.

376

377 This approach to leadership research falls within the pluralist tradition of the leadership
378 studies literature which focuses on the “combined influence of multiple leaders in
379 specific organisational situations” or, in our case, inter-organisational situations (Denis
380 *et al.* 2012: 211). The pluralist approach is at the forefront of leadership studies and
381 informs numerous strands of enquiry into how leadership emerges and plays out in group
382 settings and through group processes (Hoppe and Reinelt 2010; Haslam *et al.* 2011;
383 Denis *et al.* 2012). As Oborn and colleagues (2013) argue, taking an inclusive view of
384 distributed leadership is appropriate for understanding how leadership emerges in
385 complex policy contexts involving diverse stakeholder groups with multiple conflicting
386 interests, as is characteristic of environmental governance transitions.

387

388 Recognising leadership as distributed and contested is rare in environmental leadership
389 research and our study took this broad approach to distributed leadership to respond
390 directly to these critiques. In doing so we consider leadership broadly, we unpack
391 environmental governance into component and potentially contested objectives, and we
392 explicitly examine forms of leadership that may block or stall particular trajectories. In
393 addition to showcasing how leadership influence can be widely distributed among the
394 human and non-human, we also show that actants that may block and stall progress are
395 not necessarily “devious” but can be limited by the mandates that guide them,
396 competing priorities, limited capacity to act or indeed active disagreement with the

397 direction a particular initiative is taking. We hope that our study has highlighted why
398 these different aspects of leadership must be considered in future efforts that seek to
399 explain the function and performance of leadership in environmental change processes.

400

401 We recognise that our inclusive approach may be too broad for some analysts. While
402 Grint (2005, *pace* Gallie, 1955/56) notes that leadership is an ‘essentially contested
403 concept’ which will frustrate any attempt by researchers to nail-it-down in definitional
404 terms, he also attempts to articulate what is ‘sacred’ about the leadership concept. Grint
405 (2010: 89) observes that “in attempting to escape from the clutches of heroic leadership
406 we now seem enthralled by its apparent opposite—distributed leadership: in this post-
407 heroic era we will all be leaders so that none are”. Grint refers to a spectrum of distributed
408 leadership from leadership as moderately shared to more radical interpretations where
409 leadership is unnecessary or so widely shared it dissipates altogether. Even with its broad
410 focus on human and non-human agents we suggest that our study falls into the former
411 category: it does not preclude the role of individuals and organisations, but aims to
412 highlight a much broader platform on which to situate further environmental leadership
413 research.

414

415 Moreover, we acknowledge several key limitations to our empirical study. First, the NCC
416 network we analysed gave a small sample size that precludes statistical analysis of the
417 data. Nevertheless, we suggest that the relative ranking of actants (i.e., to the extent that
418 several non-human actants feature in the top ten sources of leadership overall and that
419 some new actants are recognised in the top ten sources of leadership for particular
420 objectives) is important and sufficient to illustrate the potential of broader approaches.

421 Second, by defining leadership as influence we facilitate a more open view of leadership
422 processes than may result from using more specific terms such as leader. Third, we did
423 not comprehensively assess *how* the different human and non-human actants *actively*
424 influence, stall or alter trajectories of progress in the CTI over time. Our network data
425 provide the foundations for an interesting extension of this research. For example, further
426 research could use longitudinal and ethnographic methods to investigate in more depth
427 how different actants influence the concepts, mandates, approaches and actions of the
428 NCC organisations; in particular, how non-human entities like policies and discourses
429 act as sources of influence independently of the human actors and organisations that
430 formulate or construct them.

431

432

433

CONCLUSION

434

435 Environmental governance needs to be transformed to address resource over-
436 exploitation, poverty and inequality, and climate change. Our study shows that there are
437 subtly different sources of influence underpinning multiple objectives communicated
438 under the rubric of regional conservation and development initiatives. This is a challenge
439 for governance but also indicates multiple potential entry points for bolstering Coral
440 Triangle Initiative outcomes and similar global initiatives that seek to be transformative.
441 As such, strengthening leadership may not be limited to a focus on key individuals, which
442 can make system change and progress vulnerable to loss of these individuals, but may
443 consider investment in a web of reinforcing actants that, in combination, constitute
444 ‘leadership’ and both facilitate and direct collective action.

445

446

447

448

449 **Acknowledgements**

450

451 This work was funded by a “Collaboration Across Borders” grant from James Cook
452 University. We are grateful to the Solomon Islands NCC for their participation in this
453 study. We would also like to thank Rebecca Weeks and Vera Horigue for feedback on
454 our original methodology. PJC and DJM are grateful for support from an Australian
455 Centre for International Agricultural Research grant (FIS/2012/074) and the CGIAR
456 Research Program on Aquatic Agricultural Systems.

457

458

459

460

461

462

463

464 **Compliance with Ethical Standards:**

465 Funding: This study was funded by a “Collaboration Across Borders” grant from James
466 Cook University and PJC and DJM are grateful for support from an Australian Centre
467 for International Agricultural Research grant (FIS/2012/074).

468 Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

469

470 **REFERENCES**

471 Biggs R., Westley F. R. and Carpenter. S. R. (2010). Navigating the back loop: fostering
472 social innovation and transformation in ecosystem management. *Ecology and*
473 *Society* 15(2): 9.

474 Black S. A., Groombridge J. J. and Jones C.G. (2011). Leadership and conservation
475 effectiveness: finding a better way to lead. *Conservation Letters* 4(5):329–339.

476 Bolden R., Gosling J. O’Brien A. Peters K. Ryan M. and Haslam A. (2012) Academic
477 leadership: Changing conceptions, experiences and identities in higher education
478 in UK universities. Final Report, Research & Development Series. Leadership
479 Foundation for Higher Education, London.

480 Brown K. (2013). Global environmental change I: A social turn for resilience? *Progress*
481 *in Human Geography* 38(1): 107-117.

482 Bryson J. M., Crosby B. C. and Bryson J. K. (2009). Understanding strategic planning
483 and the formulation and implementation of strategic plans as a way of knowing:
484 The Contributions of Actor-Network Theory. *International Public Management*
485 *Journal* 12(2): 172-207.

486 Carroll B., Levy L., and Richmond D. (2008). Leadership as practice: Challenging the
487 competency paradigm. *Leadership* 4(4): 363–379.

488 Case P. (2013). Review essay: Grint, K. *The Arts of Leadership and Leadership.*
489 *Leadership and the Humanities* 1(1): 59-62.

490 Case P., Evans, L. S., Fabinyi, M., Cohen, P. J., Hicks, C.C., Prideaux M., and D. Mills.
491 (2015). Rethinking environmental leadership: The social construction of leaders
492 and leadership in discourses of ecological crisis, development, and conservation.
493 *Leadership* 11(4): 396-423.

494 Chapin F. S., Carpenter S. R., Kofinas G. P. Folke C., Abel N., Clark W. C., Olsson P.,
495 Smith D. M. S., Walker B., Young, O. R., Berkes, F., Biggs R., Grove J. M.
496 Naylor R. L., Pinkerton E., Steffen W., and Swanson F. J. (2010). Ecosystem
497 stewardship: sustainability strategies for a rapidly changing planet. *Trends in*
498 *Ecology & Evolution* 25: 241-249.

499 Cohen P. J., Evans, L. S. and Mills M (2012). Social networks supporting governance of
500 coastal ecosystems in Solomon Islands. *Conservation Letters*. 5: 376-386.

501 CTI Secretariat. (2009). *Regional Plan of Action; Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral*
502 *Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI-CFF)*. Interim Regional CTI Secretariat,
503 Manado.

504 Degenne A., and Forsé M. (1999). *Introducing social networks*. Sage Publications,
505 London.

506 Denis J-L., Langley A., and Sergi V. (2012). Leadership in the Plural. *The Academy of*
507 *Management Annals* 6(1): 211-283.

508 Denis J-L., Langley A., and Rouleau L. (2010). The Practice of Leadership in the Messy
509 World of Organizations. *Leadership* 6(1): 67–88

510 Dwiartama A., and Rosin C. (2014). Exploring agency beyond humans: the compatibility
511 of Actor-Network Theory and resilience thinking. *Ecology and Society* 19(3): 28

512 Evans L. S., Hicks C.C., Cohen P. J., Case P., Prideaux M., and Mills, D. J. (2015).
513 Understanding leadership in the environmental sciences. *Ecology and Society*
514 20(1): 50.

515 Endrissat N., and von Arx W. (2013). Leadership practices and context: Two sides of the
516 same coin. *Leadership* 9(2): 278–304.

517 Fidelman P., and Evans LS. and Foale S. Weible C. von Heland F. and Elgin D. (2014).
518 Coalition cohesion for regional marine governance: A stakeholder analysis of the
519 Coral Triangle Initiative. *Ocean & Coastal Management* 95: 117-128

520 Fidelman P. Evans LS. Fabinyi M. Foale S. Cinner J. Rosen F. (2012). Governing large-
521 scale marine commons: contextual challenges in the Coral Triangle. *Marine*
522 *Policy*. 36: 42–53

523 Game E. T., Fitzsimons J. A., Lipsett-Moore G., and McDonald-Madden E. (2013).
524 Subjective risk assessment for planning conservation projects. *Environmental*
525 *Research Letters* 8: 045027.

526 Grint K. (2010). The Sacred in Leadership: Separation, Sacrifice and Silence.
527 *Organisation Studies* 31(1): 89-107.

528 Haslam S. A., Reicher S. D. and Platow M. J. (2011). The new psychology of leadership:
529 Identity, influence and power. Hove. Psychology Press.

530 Hawkins, B. (2015). Ship-shape: Materializing leadership in the British Royal Navy.
531 *Human Relations* 68(6): 951-971.

532 Hoppe B., and Reinelt C. (2010). Social network analysis and the evaluation of
533 leadership networks. *The Leadership Quarterly* 21: 600-619.

534 Houck O. A. (2010). Taking back Eden eight environmental cases that changed the
535 world. Washington, DC, Island Press.

536 Kates R. W., Travis W. R., and Wilbanks T. J. (2012). Transformational adaptation when
537 incremental adaptations to climate change are insufficient. Proceedings of the
538 National Academy of Science United States of America 109(19): 170-182.

539 Latour B. (1996). On actor-network theory. A few clarifications plus more than a few
540 complications. *Soziale Welt* 47: 369-381.

541 Lele S.M. (1991). Sustainable Development: A critical review. *World Development*
542 19(6): 607-621.

543 Mailhot C., Gagnon S., Langley A., and Binette L-F. (2016). Distributing leadership
544 across people and objects in a collaborative research project. *Leadership* 12(1):
545 53–85.

546 Manolis J. C., Chan K. M., Finkelstein M. E., Stephens S., Nelson, C.R., Grant, J. B. and
547 Dombeck M. P. (2009). Leadership: a New Frontier in Conservation Science.
548 *Conservation Biology* 23(4): 879-886.

549 Martinez-Alier J. (2014). The environmentalism of the poor. *Geoforum* 54: 239–241.

550 Myers N. (1996). The biodiversity crisis and the future of evolution. *Environmentalist*
551 16(1): 37-47.

552 Njaya F., Donda S., and Béné C. (2012). Analysis of power in fisheries co-management:
553 experiences from Malawi. *Society and Natural Resources* 25(7): 652-666.

554 Oborn E., Barrett M. and Dawson S. (2013). Distributed leadership in policy formulation:
555 A sociomaterial perspective. *Organization Studies* 34(2): 253–276.

556 O'Brien, K. (2012). Global environmental change II: From adaptation to deliberate
557 transformation. *Progress in Human Geography* 36(5): 667-676.

558 Olsson P., Folke C., and Hughes T.P. (2008). Navigating the transition to ecosystem-
559 based management of the Great Barrier Reef, Australia. *Proceedings of the*
560 *National Academy of Science United States of America* 105(28): 9489-9494.

561 Pahl-Wostl C., Craps M., Dewulf A., Mostert E., Tabara D., and Taillieu T. (2007).
562 Social learning and water resources management. *Ecology and Society* 12(2): 5.

563 Pettigrew A.M. (1992). On Studying Managerial Elites. *Strategic Management Journal*
564 1(winter): 163–82.

565 Redclift M. (2005). Sustainable development (1987-2005): an oxymoron comes of age.
566 *Sustainable Development* 13(4): 212-227.

567 Rosen F. and Olsson P. (2013). Institutional entrepreneurs, global networks, and the
568 emergence of international institutions for ecosystem-based management: The
569 Coral Triangle Initiative. *Marine Policy* 38: 195-204.

570 Scheffer M., Westley F., and Brock W. (2003). Slow response of societies to new
571 problems: causes and costs. *Ecosystems* 6: 493-502.

572 Spillane J.P., Halverson R. and Diamond J.B. (2004). Towards a theory of leadership
573 practice: a distributed perspective, *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 36(1): 3-34.

574 Stafford-Smith M., Horrocks L., Harvey A., and Hamilton C. (2011). Rethinking
575 adaptation for a 4°C world. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*
576 369(1934): 196-216.

577 Steffen W., Richardson K., Rockstrom J., Cornell S. E., Fetzer I., Bennett E. M., Biggs
578 R., Carpenter S. R., de Vries W., de Wit C. A., Folke C., Gerten D., Heinke J.,
579 Mace G. M., Persson L. M., Ramanathan V., Reyers B., and Sorlin S. (2015).
580 Planetary boundaries: Guiding human development on a changing planet.
581 *Science* 347(6223).

582 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2010). The Millennium
583 Development Goals Report 2010, New York.

584 Veron J., Devantier L. M., Turak E., Green A. L., Kininmonth S., Stafford-Smith M.,
585 and Peterson N. (2009). Delineating the coral triangle. *Galaxea, Journal of Coral*
586 *Reef Studies* 11: 91-100.

587 Walker B., Holling, C. S., Carpenter S. R., and Kinzig A. (2004) Resilience, Adaptability
588 and Transformability in Social-ecological Systems. *Ecology and Society* 9(2): 5.

589 Westley F., Olsson P., Folke C., Homer-Dixon T., Vredenburg H., Loorbach D.,
590 Thompson J., Nilsson M., Lambin E., Sendzimir J., Banerjee B., Galaz V., van
591 der Leeuw S. (2011). Tipping toward sustainability: emerging pathways of
592 transformation. *Ambio* 40(7): 762-780.

593 World Resources Institute. (2005). *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment: Ecosystems and*
594 *Human Well-being: Synthesis*. Washington, DC.

595 Young O. R., Osherenko G., Ogden J., Crowder L. B., Ogden J., Wilson J. A., Day J. C.,
596 Douvère F., Ehler C. N., McLeod K. L., Halperin B. S., and Peach R. (2007).
597 Solving the crisis in ocean governance: Place-based management of marine
598 ecosystems. *Environment* 49(4): 20-32.

599 Zulu L.C. (2008) Community forest management in southern Malawi: solution or part of
600 the problem? *Society and Natural Resources* 21(8): 687-703.

601

602 **Figure 1.** A schematic of the participatory method use with respondents to identify
603 different sources of leadership and their relative influence on the three CTI goals; (A)
604 illustrates the initial map of actants considered to be influential (data used for the

605 quantitative network diagrams), and (B) depicts how respondents ranked the relative
606 influence of actants on the three different CTI goals (data in table 2).

607

608 **Figure 2.** Network diagrams illustrating the relative frequency (indicated by the size of
609 the point) that different actants (individual points) were identified by respondents as
610 being influential on (indicated by lines) CTI goals: (A) positive influences and (B)
611 negative influence. Respondents' organisations are indicated by triangles; the arrows
612 point towards the actants that respondents identified. Categories of leadership are
613 indicated by different colours; black = organisations and networks, blue = donors and
614 funding, red = policies and fora, and green = beliefs and discourses.

615

616