

Becoming *phu nam*: The sociomaterial and spatial dimensions of accomplishing leadership in Laos

Preliminary title and abstract for ISLC keynote

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This keynote lecture offers a co-constructed and auto-ethnographic account of a researcher's journey toward 'passing' as a leader (*phu nam*) within a state-run service in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The researcher in question was a foreigner in Laos employed to lead a series of international development initiatives designed to improve agricultural productivity and assist the Government of Lao meet Millennium Development Goals with respect to food security and poverty reduction. Particular attention is paid to processes of learning about the politics, sociomateriality and the embodied enactment of leadership in particular places and spaces. Three phases of 'becoming *phu nam*' are identified and illustrated using auto-ethnographic data. The keynote seeks to communicate three core messages: firstly, to offer anthropological insight into leadership practices in a non-Western and non-Anglophone context; secondly, to demonstrate how attending to sociomaterial and spatial aspects of the phenomenon can improve our understanding of leadership learning; and, thirdly, to exemplify the inseparability of aesthetics and politics in understanding leadership practices.

Biographical Note for Peter Case

Peter Case is Professor of Organization Studies at the University of the West of England. He also holds a part-time position as Professor of Management and Organization Studies at James Cook University, Australia. His research interests encompass leadership studies, organization theory and philosophy, international development and global healthcare. He has eight years of experience running rural development projects in Lao People's Democratic Republic and acts as a consultant to the Malaria Elimination Initiative based at the University of California, San Francisco, advising on malaria programme management issues in the Greater Mekong Sub-region and southern Africa. Peter has published widely in academic journals and his books include: *Worldly Leadership, Belief and Organizations* and *Origins of Organizing*. He holds editorial board positions on several journals, including: *Leadership*, *Leadership & the Humanities* and the *Leadership & Organizational Development Journal*.

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