



# JUST LEADERSHIP? IS IT POSSIBLE?

Webinar will begin shortly





The University of Manchester



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
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# JUST LEADERSHIP? IS IT POSSIBLE?



# TODAY'S PANNELISTS



**DR VIOLETA SCHUBERT**

**Senior Lecturer at The University of Melbourne**

Violeta is an anthropologist with research expertise in kinship, gender and identity.

Co-director of the Master of Leadership for Development at The University of Melbourne and The University of Manchester.



**LETIZIA DE MARTINO**

**Master of Leadership for Development Student**

Letizia is currently completing her studies on the online Master of Leadership for Development.

Executive Director of Reality Gives, a non-profit based in Dharavi, one of Asia's largest slums, that provides children and youth living in urban and rural low-income communities in India with access to quality education

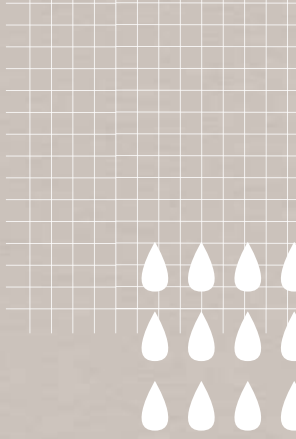


**THOMAS O'BRIEN**

**Global Development Expert and Economist**

Thomas has worked at the World Bank since 1994 in leading roles. he shaped the World Bank's strategy for the continent and guided a portfolio of over \$75 billion in more than 600 projects across all sectors.

Honorary Professorial Fellow of the Global Development Institute at the University of Manchester.



# Today's Webinar

- What do we mean by *Just Leadership*? – Violeta Schubert
- Issues of effective leadership in a large development-focused organisation, including delivering positive and just impact in a multinational setting – Thomas O'Brien
- Lived experience as a leader in an NGO, lessons/ Insights learnt from ML4D experience – Letizia De Martino
- Q/A Session
- Opportunities to study an Online Master in Leadership for Development, with The University of Manchester and University of Melbourne.



# Starting the conversation...

**Development Leadership and Leadership for Development is a growing area of interest, concern**

- Leadership deficit
- Complexities of development leadership
- Exceptionalism of development leadership and leadership for development
- Shifting leadership discourses in development-local leadership, Indigenous leadership, global leadership
- Though there are also shifting discourses about what is wrong and what we need to do – leaving no one behind, inclusion and equality; localisation, decolonising development – the core moral grounding from which we pursue such work relates to the pursuit of a more just, equitable world; shared humanity, shared environment, shared fate and responsibility

Photo: Asmorowati, S (Airlangga University) & V. Schubert(University of Melbourne), October 2023, Samin community elder, East Java



# *Just* Leadership? Leadership *for* Justice?

Leadership = mode of collective action, embedded in relationships where we assume that organising for collective action to achieve some kind of collective goal

Leading, following: leader-follower - What might it look like to cut across dichotomous thinking?

Leader-centrism - Dichotomy of leaders and followers shows a lot of prejudice in conceptualisations, our understandings of how things get done

Leader as representative of the collective

Leader as creator of collective organisation and action

Leaders of leaders

Leadership as collective collaboration, network, alliances

Organising – Organisations – Organisationalism

leader-follower distinction reproduced irrespective of ethical, responsible, servant, authentic, value-based leadership styles

Where emphasis on the initiation of collective action is presumed to come from individuals – leaders- the nature of the relationships in the field of the collective action is inherently presumed to be unidirectional- through force of personality, character, superior knowledge, skill and so forth able to compel, cajole, influence, motivate others into action where the ‘others’ – followers- are often presumed to be passive, less skilled, lacking vision, superior intelligence..... Being a follower is somehow inferior to being a leader

Compensatory followership discourses – having agency to follow [presumably because they cannot be leaders]; Followership is ‘proactive’ (Velez & Neves 2022)

ideas about how we organise ourselves to achieve something when we start from premise of leader-centrism means that we look for leader figures rather than the way that leading and following is done, things we all do, equally vital for individuals deemed leaders or followers, depends on understandings, approaches, culture, positionality and the nature of the linkages between people institutionally, socially, privately and professionally

Where we assume that action takes place because of the command, influence of the initiators of ideas or action plans

Narrow view on relationships, the inherently collective mode of achieving social action and the context fluidity, interplay between leading and following

Justice-racial discrimination, poverty and marginalisation connected to environmental justice; essential intertwining between leading and following, courage to lead and follow





# Connecting institutional, relational & social frames of thinking about justice and equity



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**UNDERSTANDINGS** - *What do we mean by justice, just leadership & leadership for justice?*

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**APPROACHES**- *What paths are we taking to achieve justice? What are our priorities? What can we communicate, share about our successes, challenges and failures?*  
*Individual*

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**POSITIONALITIES** - *who are we, what is our place in the systems of thought and action? What are our relationships and who do we include and exclude in the pursuit of justice?*

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**CULTURE** - We need to create shared understandings and expectations of our moral obligations for justice, equity, organisational, institutional cultural frames; acknowledge contested culture ideologues, interculturality, fluidity and multiplicity of cultural frames

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**LINKAGES** - linking organisational and social justice; understandings-approaches-culture and positionalities, collaborations, distributive justice, decolonisation, localisation, local-local, local-global linkages





# Socio-religious paradigms of social justice

## *Social justice in Islam*

'social justice is a fundamental tenet in Islam ... It is often understood as fairness (*qist*), or the mutual obligation to uphold 'equality and justice in distribution' through 'a shared social project [that] ensures all members of society receive their fair share' (Khan, 2020, p. 5).'

'For Muslims, the actualization of social justice is through the practices of consensus (*ijma*), independent reasoning (*ijtihad*), and consultation (*shura*).'

'As a collective, these Islamic tenets call on believers to stand up for justice and bear witness to the truth 'even if it is against yourselves, your parents, or your close relatives' (Qur'an, 4:135). Believers are expected never to allow 'hatred of others to lead [one] away from justice' (Qur'an, 5:8) and requires Muslims to secure the welfare of society, specifically those who are underprivileged, orphaned, or oppressed (Qur'an, 2:203; 2:275–281).'

'social justice is a sacred duty for Muslims to implement in their daily lives'

Ref: D. Ezzani, M. C. Brooks, L. Yang & A. Bloom (2023) 'Islamic school leadership and social justice: an international review of the literature', *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 26(5): 745-777, p. 746, DOI: 10.1080/13603124.2021.2009037





# Is it *Just* Leadership or *just about* leaders?

What do we mean by 'Just leadership'?

Leaders fighting for justice

Leaders that are just

*Deficit-thinking: do we focus too much on what is lacking rather than what is present?*

*We are more likely to have ideas about what constitutes injustices (what we want to stop, change) than what we want to change into, or what justice look like*

*To achieve justice takes time, resources and collaboration – in the broad field of development we have problem with time, resources and our collaborations are often patchy*

**In light of rising concerns with decolonisation, inclusion and equity and of course environmental precarity – do we need to spend more time to critically reflect on our understandings, approaches, assumptions and practices or are we overthinking things?**

**What we already do, individually and collectively, in the pursuit of a just world**

**Some things are highly visible, top-down** - networks, collaborations, champions ([International Gender Champions](#)); – leadership group dialogues for achieving gender equity, decolonialisation, environmental justice and so forth

Many more things go under the radar – everyday negotiations, bargains, small achievements, embedding equity and fairness in representation, knowledge sharing, moral support, voluntary contributions, doing the 'unsexy' work

**What do we need to acknowledge, recognise, change to achieve justice?**

# Linking organisational justice and organisational commitment (leadership & performance paradigms)

## Organisational justice

Organisational justice (Tatum 2003) 'just and ethical treatment of individuals within an organization'

Justice theory of leadership- Justice-based leadership drives a dynamic process that seeks constantly to create structures, systems and institutions that decentralize power, and that teach, empower and inspire every person to become a justice-based leader.

**Distributive and procedural justice**- fairness of outcomes distributions or allocations, fairness of the procedures used to determine outcome distribution or allocations; debates around equity and equality, group harmony-productivity-individual difference

**Interactional justice** – quality of interpersonal treatment people receive when procedures are implemented; interpersonal justice- people treated with politeness, dignity, respect; informational justice-explanations provided about procedures (Colquitt et al. 2001.)

Ref:

Colquitt et al. 2001. 'Justice at the millennium: A meta-analytic review of 25 years of organizational justice research', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(3): 425-445

<https://www.cesj.org/justice-based-leadership/>





# Your thoughts?

## **What are the challenges for achieving Just Leadership and Leadership for Justice?**

we change our culture according to trend rather than change the cultural frames or mindsets of others, how can we achieve justice by drawing on culture (in its broadest meaning of our shared frames for understanding the world and our place in it)

Organisational, institutional political and structural imperatives often stand in the way of achieving both organisational and social justice; compels negotiation, compromise, exercise of the powerful

What about 'Just followership'? There is no focus on followership for development, no research that seeks to understand the leader-follower relationships, dynamics, impacts and challenges as central to notions of justice- how does just leadership and just followership reconfigure pursuit of organisational and social justice?

What are our strengths? What have we to offer, share about our understandings, approaches, culture, linkages to the broader society, locally and globally?

## Q/A Session

Please feel free to post any questions in the Q/A function



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