

# Interrogating Community Leadership and Governance augmenting Natural Resource Development: A Prologue for Papua New Guinea

Francis B. Essacu

Papua New Guinea University of Technology

**Abstract:** An unequivocal understanding and differentiation must exist between various leadership models and governance concepts at the local community levels to facilitate community development outcomes. Using anthropological approach as well as ethno-methodological tools, this paper attempts to highlight the impacts of community leadership concepts, practices and challenges of community leadership in Papua New Guinean communities. Amongst others *Bigshot* and *Grand Chief* leadership models across the studied regions are some of the emerging *community leadership concepts and practices*. These variations in leadership concepts and practices reflected the different forms and nature of natural resource development projects, the pace and scale of development, cultures and traditions in the region.

**Key words:** Papua New Guinea, community leadership, development, natural resource development, development outcomes, development challenges

## 1. Introduction

This paper explores a problem community leadership and governance in the context of natural resource development in Papua New Guinea (PNG). Also, it narrates how PNG communities are currently shaping and constructing their relationships to access benefits and outcomes from natural resource development projects. 'Community leadership' (CL) in this study refers to village-based interactions amongst local communities, developers and various stakeholders who are at play in this contemporary environment. Community leadership is important because of two central roles it plays in the contemporary PNG context. First, is the role CL plays in linking the traditional and modern communities and economies (Ambang, 2007). Amongst other functions, effective community leadership helps in improving service delivery to communities (Ambang, 2007), in improving community livelihood support systems (Ambang, 2007). At the same time, CL helps to facilitate decentralization of the centralized decision-making processes at the national and provincial levels to village communities (Randle & Dhillon 2004; Kulwaum, 1985). The

second role of CL is, from a traditional perspective, it assumes the role of the court system, and manages disputes and conflicts within the community, and restores and reconstructs communities in times of inter-state or inter-tribal crises (White, 2006). In these senses, CL works to narrow the gap between the traditional and modern leadership contexts. In PNG as elsewhere (Agrawal, 2008; Ostrom, 2007), also share the importance of community leadership that, at local community levels it enhances community engagement and participation in decision-making processes. It is argued that better community development outcomes may be achieved if there is good community level leadership and governance processes (Yadav, 2009).

Advocates of community development (Yadav, 2009; Ostrom, 2007) have always assumed that, with an encouraging conducive CL environments, benefits arising from natural resource projects will be sufficiently managed and distributed amongst the communities (K. K. Yadav, 2009). However, many studies in PNG (i.e. Kulwaum, 1995; Tivinarlik & Wanat, 2006; Ambang, 2007), and more generally (Ambang, 2007) and elsewhere (Franches, 1999) show that this is not straightforward. There are many community development projects that do not succeed even when community leadership is emphasized (K. K. Yadav, 2009). This situation highlights the need to examine the factors underlying the organization of the community leadership and their potential to affect approaches to effective and democratic leadership and decision-making processes. While many studies have examined community leadership relating to natural resource management and conservation in many spheres, both in PNG and elsewhere (Warner, 2000; (K. K. Yadav, 2009; Koim, 2013), knowledge of the attributes and effects of community leadership processes in community development context in PNG remains limited. This study aims to fill this gap. The discussion provides an insight to understanding the factors at play in resource-based development (i.e. agriculture and mining) projects. Primary concern of this discussion revolves around governance systems, models, modes and challenges of leadership in community development context.

## **2. Community leadership (CL)**

The concept of leadership has been widely studied in anthropological literature in the context of political organizations (White, 2006; McLeod, 2007; Mosko, 1991). Both McLeod (2007) and Mosko (1991) maintain that 'anthropologists have long examined the ways in which social groups achieve cohesion in the absence of a centralized state' (White, 2006; McLeod, 2007). Reay (1959) and Bernt (1962) investigated 'how group (clans and tribes) leaders attained and exercised power, typically within the boundaries of a specific locale'.

Scholars such as (Regan, 1999; B.D.Yadav, 2013) suggest that CL has evolved the dynamics of states in crises. To illustrate this perspective, Regan (1999) and White (2006) maintain that during crises in state governance in many parts of the world, traditional or community leadership re-emerges as an evident alternative to modern leadership approaches, and international interventions seek to recognize and capitalize on traditional modes of authority in rebuilding states structures. Other studies, for example (Barker, 1985; Mosko, 1991), suggest that communities are composed of social groups and units, including clans, tribes and families, with diverse religious, social and cultural identities, values, norms and beliefs that determine power relationships. They argue that community decisions, participation and access to resources and benefits depend on social structures, norms, values and a leader's behavior, all of which are inherited from, and evolve across, generation to generation. Over the last three decades, it has also become clear that a rural community's social structure, and its composition and clan configurations, are associated with decision-making and livelihood outcomes achieved from natural resource projects (Mansuri & Ravo, 2004). The relationships between decision-making processes and livelihood outcomes have been explored and described by Mansuri and Ravo (2004). In their study (Adhikari & Di-Falco, 2009) have observed that local institutions, such as community-based organizations typified by community forestry management groups. They carry out their functions through regulations and working practices largely formulated by a small group of decision makers. These small groups influence social organizations in regard to the use, management and development of natural resources.

### **3. Examining Community leadership through development lens**

The relationship between community leadership and community development is critical, particularly, understanding the influences of community leaders (leadership) in facilitating development outcomes in the communities. There is relatively little literature that directly addresses community leadership and community development. Scholars such as (Charnley & Poe, 2007; Larson & Soto, 2008) argue that whilst CL is often mentioned in literature about 'community participation' and 'community development' in the context of natural resource management, such mention is often relatively superficial. There are various comparative studies relating to the CL and community development the focus of this study in PNG, including those of (Prideaux, 2006; Haley & May, 2007; Martin, 2013).

In Community Development context, (Burkey, 1998; K.K.Yadav, 2009; B.D.Yadav, 2013) argue that community leadership is critical, and that it facilitates the participation of poor and disadvantaged communities in community development process. In the same vein,

(Dorfman & Howell, 2002) maintain that community leadership works with government and other development agencies to deliver community development outcomes. Recent studies (e.g., Trosper *et al.*, 2008; K.K.Yadav, 2009) assert that community leadership is an area that requires greater attention in contexts of community access and development. Building on this, others such as Altman (2009) and May (2010) support that good relationships between community leaders and stakeholders are critical in order to facilitate investment in community development projects. Furthermore, Cumbe (2010) argues that the involvement of community leaders with legitimacy and credibility, in both the traditional and modern social and administrative networks, are key factors for success in community development. Trosper *et al.* (2008) also maintains that government officials and community leaders have become increasingly concerned about the lower socio-economic status, community well-being, and generally poorer levels of health of aboriginal communities in Canada because of the poor governance systems and relationships in place at the community level.

#### **4. Role of community leadership in community development context**

Studies of community-based natural resource management and development (e.g. Warner 2000; Liu 2010) have shown that community leaders (leadership) play important roles to facilitate community development outcomes. Community leaders' (leadership) close engagement with the development project ensures streamlined centralized decision-making processes to village communities (Randle & Dhillon, 2004). In many ways, the local community leaders have assumed the role of traditional court systems, managing disputes and conflicts within the community, and restoring and reconstructing communities in times of inter-state or inter-tribal crises (Regan, 1999; Banks, 2008).

In PNG, community leaders play important role as mediators in rural communities in the context of community development projects. They facilitate communication, negotiations and decision making between resource owners and development agencies (Ambang, 2007). Many of these community leaders assumed roles as chairmen, presidents and directors of community groups, institutions, firms and associations in project regions. In this sense, a leaders' measure of performance, viewed by their followers is determined by how effectively they provide these goods and services to their communities and determine overall community prosperity and stability. For example, in a traditional leadership context, a clan leader takes responsibility for ensuring that every member has access to land and other resources belonging to a clan equally among its members for food production and other sustainable livelihood outcomes. In this case decisions made by clan leaders are

based on livelihood outcomes of their clan members. In terms of situation involving projects such as mining and logging developments the approaches remain the same at the local community level where clan leaders are the decision makers and are responsible for delivering small community-oriented projects.

Thus, in the event of a mining or logging project, it is usually the clan elder who is appointed as leader of the project. When this occurs, the scope of responsibilities of the clan leader increases dramatically. His judgment and decisions have to be based on a wide range of factors including economics, marketing, business benefit sharing. He is caught in the dilemma of making decisions for the developer as well as for his/her people. Appointment of leaders in communities is made by villagers with high expectations of their role.

In contemporary PNG, community leaders are expected to make leadership decisions for modern institutions, viz. the community associations and companies established to receive development payments and, from them, meet the needs of their communities. Thus, it is clear that decisions that the leaders and communities make directly impact on their livelihoods in terms of prosperity and stability. Prosperity refers to improve services such as education, health infrastructure and access markets. Stability is about peace and improve law and order in the project communities during the live of the project. However, the styles and decision-making processes and various leadership concepts and practices of community leadership (leaders) are not understood in community development context, and are therefore a central focus of this research.

## **5. Research objectives and questions**

The overall objective of the study was to understand different concepts and practices of community leadership in PNG, how they function in different natural resource development contexts, to influence ‘community development outcomes’. To achieve this objective, following two primary research questions were developed:

1. What were the governance systems, leadership systems, leadership modes and their evident in the communities in the two case studies?
2. What were their challenges in delivering community development outcomes in the study communities?

## **6. Research methodology**

The study investigated the research question through a case study approach in two provinces of PNG, subject to different levels of natural resource-based development. The case studies were based around the new Kairak Oil Palm Development Project (KOPDP) in East New

Britain Province (ENBP), and the long-established Ok Tedi Mining Limited (OTML) development in Western Province (WP). Three local communities in each case study region were the focus of field research. The two case studies represent the two dominant forms of resource-based development in PNG, agriculture in EBNP and mining in WP.

Field research between July 2011 and October 2012 investigated governance systems, leadership models and leadership modes and a range of development outcomes in these case study communities. Primary data were derived from 90 household interviews in six communities (study units) across the two case study regions. A sample size of 20 participants was used in each of the selected case study units of analysis. A contingency plan was also considered to recruit additional participants beyond 20 in the event that theoretical data saturation stage was not achieved. In the actual survey, the contingency plan was not implemented because the theoretical data saturation point was achieved. The researcher was unable to find new data emerging after conducting 17 to 18 interviews in the case study communities.

In every community, before conducting household interviews, the researcher consulted with the local leaders to explain the purpose of the research and to seek approval to contact the members of the study communities. The local leaders agreed with the request and arrangements were made to meet with the members of the communities. During these community meetings the local leaders and senior community members assisted the researcher in selecting 20 households from their villages to be interviewed. Participants in the household survey were randomly selected by drawing their names from a box containing the name of all households in the community. This process was appropriate as the updated village or ward common rolls were available at the time of this study. This further helped to minimize any issues relating to bias that may have occurred if the researcher was just to hand picking the household participants.

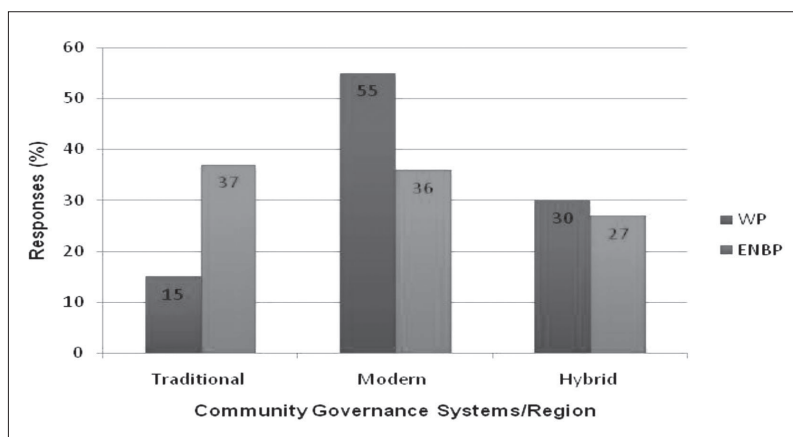
Data analysis employed a categorizing strategy to identify data similarities and differences, to distinguish categories and themes emerging from the data, and explain the phenomenon under investigation (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). A modified long table approach was employed to facilitate the data analysis. A descriptive, but an analytical summary was written of each response, and then compared and contrasted to each interview transcript. Specificity, emotion, extensiveness, and frequency of comments, guided the analysis within an overarching construct of constant comparing and contrasting (Krueger & Casey, 2000) and translated in the form of visual graphs to be presented as research findings.

## 7. Research findings and discussions

This section presents the results responding to research questions posed in the study (see section 5) that address four fundamental themes; governance systems, leadership models, modes and challenges of community leadership. The results are reflections of the responses from the interview respondents. Number of respondents who indicated their preferences (from less to most dominance) of leadership types are presented in the form of percentage in Figures 1, 2 and 3.

### 7.1 Community leadership governance systems

The leadership governance systems found across the three study regions are illustrated in Figure 1 as an overview of the combinations results (most dominant and least dominant) forms of governance systems.



**Figure 1: Average (%) proportion (number) of participants who believe the most dominant community governance systems across the studied regions**

As can be seen from the data in Figure 1 that traditional governance system with 37 percent was the most common system found in ENBP, followed by modern leadership model with 36 percent and least common model was hybrid leadership with 27 percent.

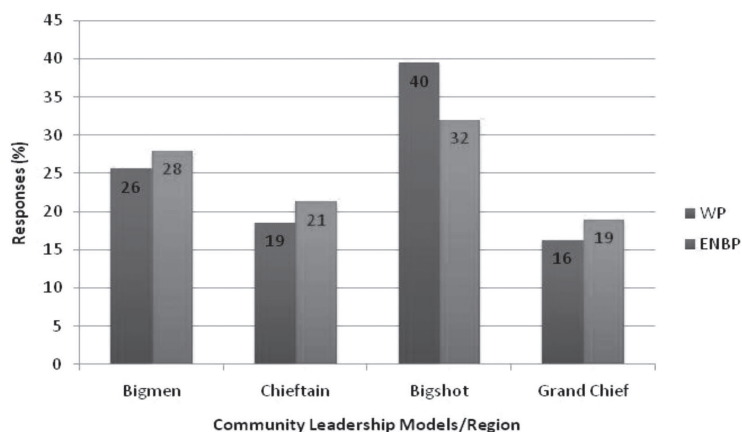
Like ENBP, WP was most dominated by modern but with significant variations with 19 percent higher. In terms of hybrid governance system WP was also dominant with 30 percent and least dominant with 15 percent traditional/customary system. This suggests that in WP modern governance system is more dominantly practiced than ENBP. In sum, traditional/customary governance system is most dominant in ENBP than WP, while WP was most dominated by modern leadership with 55 percent. Interestingly in ENBP both

modern and customary models were almost equally dominant with 37 and 36 percent respectively. The hybrid governance system slightly varied across the two regions, but with more dominance in WP with 30 percent, then ENBP with 27 as least dominant.

This implies that, the prevalence of modern governance system in WP was due to the increased number of various community institutions and associations formed during the operation of the mine. The formation of modern institutions and associations were mandatory requirements that local communities had to adhere to, in order to participate in the development process of the mine. In the processes communities had to abundant their traditional values and principles and acclimatized themselves to adapt to modern and hybrid practices brought in by the Ok Tedi mining project. As result there were great variations between the three governance systems in WP. Unlike in WP, the consistent and slight variations between the three governance systems in ENBP were supported by the slow and modest agricultural developments projects in the region.

## 7.2 Community leadership models across the two study regions

The four main models of leadership identified across the two regions were *Bigmen*, *Chieftain*, *Bigshot* and *Grand Chief*. Figure 2 provides an overview of the research results obtained in the two case study regions.



**Figure 2: Average (%) proportion (number) of participants who believe the most dominant community leadership systems across the studied regions**

It can be seen from data in Figure 2, that 40 percent of respondents in WP identified *bigshot* leadership as the dominant model. Another 26 percent of respondents identified *bigmen* as



their next dominant leadership model, 19 percent responded *chieftain* as the third dominant leadership model, whilst 16 percent said *grand chief* model as their least leadership system. As with WP and ENBP communities, in general WP communities were also dominated by four leadership models. Of the 43 participants interviewed, on average, 32 percent identified *bigshot* leadership as the dominant model. Another 28 percent identified *bigmen* leadership as the second dominant model; *chieftain* model with 21 percent was identified as third preferred model, and the fourth leadership model identified as the least dominant was *grand chief* with 19 percent.

The study revealed both *bigmen* and *chieftain* leadership as commonly practice models throughout the two regions. These results are consistence with those of Sahlin (1963; Chowning 1979) who described the common types of traditional leadership in PNG in two categories: ‘big-men’ and chieftain models. The ‘big-men’ model is practiced predominantly in the Highlands region, and in some other parts of mainland of PNG, and the chieftain model is found especially in the New Guinea Islands, Papua and some coastal islands of mainland New Guinea (Godelier & Strathern, 1991; McKeown, 2001; White, 2006). These models of leadership vary greatly between communities (Tivinarlik & Wanat, 2006) and the definitions of these leadership systems become ambiguous (Zimmer-Tamakoshi, 1997: 108-111; Martin, 2013: 176-186).

However, an interesting finding of the study was that related to *Bigshot* leadership model. Comparatively the predominance of *Bigshot* leadership model across the two study regions indicated the most influential leadership model. It is difficult to explain this result, but it might be related to the type of resource projects, pace, history of development and the kind of benefits accompanying the projects might have contributed to the rise of *Bigshot* leadership model. This could be possible because of the slight variations between the two models (WP 40, ENBP 32) percent that that resource development projects might have influenced the rise of *bigshot* leadership.

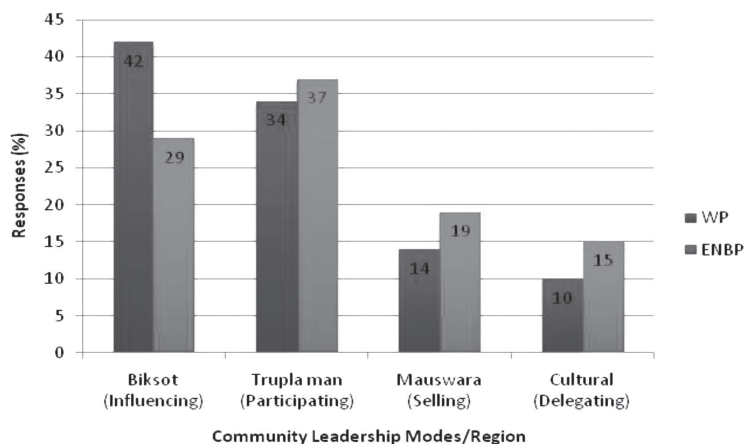
Another important finding was *grand chief* leadership model that was patently widespread throughout these communities. As demonstrated in the results in Figure 3 that the two study regions recorded the presence of grand chief models. In some parts of the country (PNG) a term synonym to grand chief are used. For example, Dom (2015) noted the use of *liptimapim* (in PNG *tokpisin* means ‘lift’) leadership and is equivalent to adulatory behavior, almost akin to idolatry and cult worship. In PNG context, the demonstrating of ‘grand chief’ leadership model is usually seen through the throne-carrying of elected Members of Parliament when they visit local communities (Dom, 2015). This has no precedent in PNG culture. However, it has become a norm in the recent years in

the PNG political context. Dom (2015) argues that the '*grand chief*' leadership approach is used by the traditional communities to initiate elected politicians and bestow them with various traditional titles such as Chiefs, Chief of Councils and Chief of various tribes. The emergence of Grand Chief Titles has become both common and contested in the last two decades in the PNG political spheres, in terms of who should attain such a title and on what basis. Although, grand chief leadership model maybe seen from political sphere, more recently in the developments of Liquefied Natural Gas and mining projects in the Southern Highlands, Gulf and Enga Provinces, the use of the term chief have been mainstay of formation of various community-based landowners associations.

Thus, those playing *Bigshot* and *Grand Chief* roles in contemporary PNG society are also leaders of whom people from their communities have knowledge, a lifetime of experience, and whom they trust. This means the *Bigshot* and *Grand Chief* have, reciprocally, the moral obligations to speak the right words, to solve disputes, to create peace and maintain harmony, and to take the right action so that all parties are content; and to take responsibility for the outcomes for communities as a result of their words and deeds (Martin, 2013; Dom, 2015). The emergence of *Bigshot* and *Grand Chief* Models of leadership are indicative of how leadership models in PNG are shifting from more traditional modes to various hybrid forms.

### **7.3 Community leadership modes across the two study regions**

The four main modes of leadership identified across the three regions employed by community leaders employed to facilitate development outcomes were the influencing (*biksot*), participating (*trupla man*), selling (*mauswara*) and the delegating (*cultural*) modes of leadership. Figure 3 shows what the research found in the two case study regions relation to each of these four leadership modes.



**Figure 3: Proportion and number of participants in the two study regions identifying dominance of particular leadership modes**

From the graph above (Figure 3) we can see that respondents in WP identified *bigshot* (influencing) with 42 percent as the dominant leadership mode. Another 34 percent of respondents identified ‘*trupla man*’ (participating) leadership as the next dominant mode, 14 percent identified ‘*mauswara*’ (selling) as the third leadership mode, while 10 percent said ‘*cultural*’ (delegating) as their least leadership mode. These responses were quite consistent across the three communities. Unlike WP, in ENBP ‘*trupla man*’ (participating) leadership was identified as a dominant mode by 37 percent of respondents; *biksot* (influencing) leadership mode as their second dominant by 29 percent and *mauswara* (selling) leadership mode as dominant by an average of 19 percent. An average of 15 percent of the respondents indicated *cultural* (delegating) leadership as the least dominant mode. The dominance of influencing and participating leadership modes are reflective of the resource development types, their history and the time and pace of development and the opportunities that came with development projects.

This finding supports the previous research into this brain area which links the Situational Leadership Model (SLM) or contingency theory postulated by (Hersey *et al.*, 1996). This theory states that: ‘leaders are more effective when their behaviors are dependent upon situational forces. Both internal and external environments have a significant impact on leaders’ effectiveness. This situation is similar to PNG community leaders’ decision-making choices in resource development contexts, in which they are confronted by many internal and external factors. These leadership modes are similar to the concepts of bigmen, bigshot and chieftain models presented in section 7.2, particularly in

relation to the roles and responsibility of leaders and community members.

## **8. Challenges of and risks and associated with community leadership in community development**

An important challenge for community leaders is to manage conflicts between traditional and modern leadership concepts and practices. In the interactions between traditional and modern value, two common challenges faced by community leaders are evident: ‘inter-tribal conflicts’, and clashes between modern and traditional values. Inter-tribal conflicts are the rivalries between PNG traditional tribes and clans. This finding confirms (Ambang, 2007; Koim, 2013) who noted that a tribe, clan, or an ethnic group usually believe that their norms, beliefs and values are better than others who may have similar cultures and traditions. The findings further support the idea of (Waiko, 1990; Barker, 1985) that communities comprise of more than 800 cultural and linguistic groups. For example, traditional leaders are aligned more closely to clans, co-opting them where convenient. In some cases, leaders put their traditional loyalties aside to favor self-interest (e.g. community leaders selling resource rights that actually belong to others).

Another challenge confronting community leadership is the clash of modern and customary value systems. This clash of cultures is widely discussed in the literature (see Epstein, 1968; Finney, 1973; Prideaux, 2006) which recognize that indigenous people often have to compromise their cultural values in favor of values associated with ‘development.

Besides challenges, there are risks associated with community leadership that are important to be considered in the context of community development. Two common risks are those associated with ‘*too many leaders*’ and ‘*few followers*’. When more people take up leadership roles in their local landowner firms and associations, less number of community members participate in decision making processes. In the process more people in leadership roles often compete for positions amongst themselves within their local firms and associations. As a result there is an inadequacy in full participation and discussions concerning the plights of the general communities. These risks are similar to those B.D. Yadav (2013) described as overrepresentation principle - that if approaches to community leadership are overemphasized to deliver community development outcomes, it may not deliver accordingly to communities’ expectations.

Conversely, another risk is ‘*fewer followers*’ to participate in community decision making process. This is described as under-representation’ of the interests of the community as a whole (B.D. Yadav, 2013). These are the risks that encourage formation of fragmented smaller groups in tribes and clans within communities. B.D. Yadav (2013) described this

tribal and clan-centred approach as '*pragmatism*', and acknowledged it as an "important feature of community leadership that encourages peoples' participation in community development processes. Yadav argued that if "communities become too fragmented, this may lead to a failure of the leadership in achieving communities' desired development outcomes".

## **9. Conclusion Remarks**

In conclusion, key findings of this study indicate that modern and hybrid governance systems, bigshot and grand-chief leadership models, and participating and influencing leadership modes are widespread in the two studied regions.

Participating leadership, which reflects both traditional and modern inclusive processes, was strongly evident in all communities. Participating leadership moderated the effects of self-serving 'influence leadership' case in ENBP, but in WP many community members felt that influencing leadership dominated over the participating, despite both being reported dominance.

The relative importance of leadership governance systems, models and modes expressed in this study appeared to be influenced by the history of development (length); the nature and type of resource projects in the region. In the process of development, community leaders (leadership) are compromising traditional loyalties to favor modern and self-interest gains.

Generally, the study suggests that leadership concepts and their practices in contemporary PNG is shifting profoundly to adapt to the changing social, economic, political environment and development. As reflected in the results of the study, the concepts of community leadership varied in the two regions studied in PNG reflecting different types and nature of resource-development projects, its pace and scale of development, cultures and traditions in the region.

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