

Practicing Relationality in the International Relations Academy: a Pacific Framing

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Abstract: As International Relations (IR) embarks on a relational turn, we held concerns about how IR engages with relationality beyond the scholarship advanced through Global IR. We pose that changing the way in which discussions about relationality are held shapes the outcomes. This paper depicts our conversations and practices in imagining, designing, planning and delivering a relational workshop to engender discussions about relationality in the context of peace, security and justice. Focusing on the Pacific Islands region, known for its practices of “deep relation”, we highlight the importance of contextually grounded relational approaches in IR. We outline three key methodological aspects for future relational research and adult education in IR: space, sharing, and flexibility. While acknowledging that no workshop or learning situation can exactly replicate this methodology, as it was designed specifically for participants with particular lived experiences and interests in a particular location, we aim to provide insights for other scholars seeking to incorporate different practices of relationality into their IR scholarship without co-option or misuse, and hope that our experience offers valuable insights for fostering IR in a different relational form.

Resumen: A medida que el campo de las Relaciones Internacionales (RRII) emprende un giro relacional, existe una cierta preocupación con respecto a cómo las RRII se involucran con la relacionalidad más allá de la investigación promovida a través de las RRII Globales. Postulamos que el hecho de cambiar la manera en que se llevan a cabo los debates en materia de relacionalidad moldea los resultados. Este artículo describe nuestras conversaciones y prácticas en lo referente a imaginar, diseñar, planificar y llevar a cabo un taller relacional con el fin de generar discusiones sobre la relacionalidad en el contexto de la paz, la seguridad y la justicia. Destacamos, centrándonos para ello en la región de las Islas del Pacífico, conocida por sus prácticas en materia de «relación profunda», la importancia que tienen los enfoques relacionales contextualizados en el campo de las

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Relaciones Internacionales. Perfilamos tres aspectos metodológicos fundamentales para la futura investigación relacional y para la educación de adultos en el campo de las RRII: el espacio, el intercambio y la flexibilidad. Aunque somos conscientes de que ningún taller o situación de aprendizaje puede replicar exactamente esta metodología, ya que fue diseñada específicamente para participantes con experiencias vividas e intereses particulares en un lugar determinado, buscamos proporcionar perspectivas para otros académicos que deseen incorporar diferentes prácticas en materia de relacionalidad en su investigación en el campo de las RRII sin que exista apropiación indebida o mal uso, y esperamos que nuestra experiencia ofrezca ideas valiosas para fomentar las RRII de una forma relacional diferente.

Résumé: Alors que les relations internationales (RI) prennent un virage relationnel, nous nous inquiétons du traitement de la relationnalité par les RI au-delà de la recherche qui a progressé grâce aux RI mondiales. Nous postulons qu'en modifiant la façon dont nous discutons de la relationnalité, nous façonnons les issues. Cet article décrit nos conversations et pratiques quand il s'agit d'imaginer, de concevoir, de planifier et d'assurer un atelier relationnel pour donner lieu à des discussions quant à la relationnalité dans le contexte de la paix, de la sécurité et de la justice. Nous concentrant sur la région des îles du Pacifique, connue pour ses pratiques de « relations profondes », nous soulignons l'importance des approches relationnelles ancrées dans le contexte en RI. Nous décrivons trois aspects méthodologiques essentiels pour les futurs travaux de recherche relationnelle et la formation des adultes en RI : l'espace, le partage et la flexibilité. Bien que nous admettions qu'aucun atelier ni aucune situation de formation ne peut répliquer exactement cette méthodologie, car elle est conçue spécifiquement pour des participants aux expériences vécues particulières et aux intérêts pour un emplacement particulier, nous cherchons à renseigner d'autres chercheurs souhaitant intégrer différentes pratiques de la relationnalité dans leur recherche en RI, sans récupération ou détournement, et espérons que notre expérience fournira des informations précieuses pour promouvoir des RI sous une forme relationnelle différente.

Key words: practice, Pacific Islands, relational methodologies, relationality, pedagogy, workshop design

Palabras clave: práctica, islas del Pacífico, metodologías relacionales, relacionalidad, pedagogía, diseño de talleres

Mots clés: pratique, îles du Pacifique, méthodologies relationnelles, relationnalité, pédagogie, conception d'ateliers

In April 2024, we stepped into the Hilton San Francisco Union Square with 6,500+ other members of the International Studies Association (ISA), ostensibly to discuss the theme of "Putting Relationality at the Centre of International Studies." Many of us travelled long distances and arrived excited that relationality had finally made it onto the mainstream International Relations (IR) agenda. We hoped that the relational thinking and sharing within the Hilton walls would be refreshing and inspirational.

Our hopes were not met. The austere commercialised urban setting, lack of shared meals, and the "ruthless multitude of young men in a hurry" (Cornford 1908, 3) did not exactly create an environment that nurtured new and existing relations between the attendant scholars. There was a high level of professional networking seeking strategic connections: interactions of one type (and therefore not inherently *unrelational*); however, such transactions did not reflect how we understand

and experience a “whole of life” relationality (Va'ai and Casimira 2024) in the Pacific Islands region, similar to Shilliam's (2015, 13) concept of “deep relation.” While broad conceptions of relationality refer to connectedness and interconnectedness, as we explain in this article, Pacific relationality embraces spirituality at its core.

At the 2024 ISA annual convention, we felt that little attention was paid to the fundamental notion of relationality itself, or what such attention could and should mean for the discipline. In the individual panel sessions we attended, relationality was barely discussed, reduced to the notion of transactional exchanges, or only superficial attention was paid to specific relationships—this was true even of panels with relationality in the title or that were explicitly in the “relationality” thematic stream. Perhaps the relationality “tag” had been included in the title just to ensure the panel's inclusion into the thematic program? People sat in straight rows, separated by empty chairs to avoid and isolate. The space between speakers and audience was a gaping void, clinical, with authoritative speakers up the front and a silent audience passively watching: presenting an asymmetrical power dynamic. Some audience members listened, while others texted or responded to emails, some arrived late or left early. If a question was posed about relationality, it was mostly rebuffed or ignored. Indeed, the use of words such as “complex” and “nuanced” appeared to create hostile reactions. As scholars with a deep commitment to the concept of relationality, we were disheartened. We wondered, was relationality just being co-opted by IR at ISA as a buzzword, without meaning or embodiment as Escobar et al. (2024, 8) have cogently argued has occurred in other contexts? Could relationality really be placed at the center of IR? Or, was it *how* relationality was being discussed that was the problem?

Relationality is a complex concept for many scholars to wrap their head around. We seem to intuitively understand what it means and consider that in some ways everything is relational, but the mental shifts required to use it as a framing concept (taking *relationships* rather than *agents* as the unit of focus and analysis) can be difficult to make or sustain, as it requires such a radically different positionality to that commonly adopted in dominant Western scholarship. Indeed, Shilliam (2015, 13) argues that deep relation is “found in a relationality that exists underneath the wounds of coloniality,” recognising that forms of relationality such as the Pacific's “whole of life” relationality did not begin with colonialism. 2024 ISA President Laura Shepherd (2025, 3) agreed that “Developing relational ontologies is best informed, in my view, by Indigenous and decolonial ways of apprehending the world of world politics, because these are intrinsically relational ways of knowing.” Although relationality is not unique to Indigenous cultures, nor do we intend to suggest that some cultures are inherently “more” or “less” relational than others, Indigenous ontologies and practices nonetheless remain largely overlooked within the field of IR, yet offer vital insights that can enrich and advance scholarly inquiry beyond dominant understandings.

In this article, drawing from Pacific ontologies and practices of relational space, the multidimensionality of power, the communal self, and use of metaphors, we explore what kinds of mental and practical shifts are required to adopt a relational approach through a case study on a familiar aspect of academia: the scholarly workshop. Given that we were dissatisfied with how the 2024 ISA annual convention on relationality did not facilitate a “whole of life” understanding, we asked ourselves: what would a different relational approach look and feel like? By adopting Pacific ontologies and practices into our workshop design and delivery (as opposed to adopting a dominant networking style), we demonstrate that these ways of thinking and doing produce a different way of relating within an academic context.

We did this in a limited way at the ISA annual convention itself. We were intentional about cultivating the quality of the relationships between panel members and audience. While some of us knew one or two other members of the panel in advance, the whole panel did not know one another, and there was one panellist whom no-

one knew in advance. To engage in relation with one another prior to the panel we made two very simple changes to the conference “norm”: we established a group WhatsApp chat before departing from our various parts of the world for San Francisco, and we organised a shared meal the evening before our panel. In doing so, we made time to get to know one another in an authentic, empathetic way—not just our research interests for individual networking benefit, but sharing our lives, values, and stories outside of the academy. During our panel the following day, we sought to maintain that genuine connection which included addressing the power dynamics within our group, to both enhance the collective experience for those participating and improve the value of knowledge exchange for those attending. We chose to not sit in rows, instead shifting the chairs into a circular formation, a typical format of relationality in the Pacific: explicitly demonstrating that presenters and audience were on the same level, sharing connected space with shared power and agency. Space in the Pacific context is not empty, it is always connected and interconnected with shared relationships, values and protocols, which are central to “whole of life” relationality. Prior to the research presentations, the Chair asked everyone—both presenters and audience members—to introduce themselves, and welcomed them into the group. The panel was spatially and psychologically different to other panels at ISA, and genuinely felt (and discussed) relationality. There was no specific Q&A time, instead questions were invited during the panellists’ remarks as part of a conversation (rather than expressly called upon after demonstrating a raised hand to the Chair, thereby ceding power). This facilitated important and meaningful discussion within a setting of mutual respect and neutral power dynamics, another key aspect of Pacific relationality. While there were varying understandings of relationality, we were able to discuss them openly. At dinner that evening we reflected together on our shared experience, and asked ourselves: Why had our panel felt so different? What can we learn from relational theory to change *how* scholars engage in sharing, generating and mobilising knowledge with each other?

This paper discusses an experiment in relational workshop convening that we conducted following ISA; but first, we should explain why we consider convening a workshop relevant, and where the Pacific comes in. The momentum promulgated with the Global IR turn (Archarya 2014) could, and should, reflect diverse spatial and physical environments. Indeed, a “relational approach must be contextually grounded and able to reveal interconnections” (Downie and Llewellyn 2012, 2–3). Ideally, relationality is a way of going “beyond the *re-production of patterns* to forging *new pathways* for doing IR and engaging difference and sameness differently” (Trowsell et al. 2021, 27, emphasis in original). Our hypothesis was that changing *the way in which* discussions about relationality are held, in spaces such as academic workshops, *shapes the outcomes*.

As a way to test this, we applied for and won an internal grant to host a workshop on “Translating relationality: bringing Pacific understandings of relationality in security, peace and justice into International Relations”. Pacific relational approaches contribute important lessons about peacemaking, and are vital to understanding issues of security, peace, and justice within IR (D’Costa and Lee-Koo 2013; Naupa 2025). This paper is explicitly not the outcomes of that workshop—it is not our place to speak for the diverse range of private thoughts shared relationally throughout the day (see the important work of Berents et al. 2024 on caring for knowledge producers). Instead, this paper depicts our conversations and practices in planning and delivering a workshop designed with principles from Pacific relational methods. We offer this contribution in the hopes of changing how relationality discussions are held in IR, whether in adult education or research. We are committed to the importance of attending and centring relationality in our lives; however, this should not be mistaken for the view that we identify all relationships as inherently “good” as relationships can be oppressive and harmful too (particularly through colonial and epistemic violence). In Tonga, there exists “vālelei (good [relational] space) or

vākovi (bad [relational] space)” between actors (Ka’ili 2017, 28), and we emphasise this to distinguish from inaccurate and unhelpful notions that relationality means glorifying all relations.

Engagement with the Pacific Islands in our case study was both a consequence of our existing backgrounds and relationships, but also a very deliberate way to learn from and apply Pacific relational theory. It is ‘a basic reality that most if not all understandings of personhood in the Pacific are deeply relational’ (Vaai and Nobobo-Baba 2017).¹ However, the Pacific Islands region has historically been seen as “geopolitically marginal” to mainstream IR (Teaiwa and Slatter 2013, 447; Wallis and Koro 2025), and what limited IR analysis there is “tends to view the region through the lens of the interests of major and metropolitan powers” rather than through the lens of Pacific Island states and communities, and their relationships (Waqavakatoga and Wallis 2023, 1). Teaiwa and Slatter (2013, 449) argue that there is “much in the [Pacific] region to engage and teach feminist security scholars who are prepared to shift their gaze from the center to the periphery or margins.” Both relationality and the Pacific Islands region have historically been marginalised from IR; therefore, as Global IR brings relationality into mainstream IR (Acharya 2016), it is appropriate to also consider contributions from the Pacific. We seek to increase “diversity in knowledge production” by bringing Pacific voices and ways of doing into Global IR (Barnett and Zarakol 2025, 5).

We first provide an overview of the “relational turn” in IR (Kavalski 2017: 3; Kurki 2022), before turning to what Indigenous, and in particular Pacific, cultures, can teach us about being in relation beyond the state: with/in communities, and spiritual and/or more-than-human aspects of the world. We then turn to our own practice, describing our decisions, challenges, and actions during the planning and delivery of the workshop. We conclude by highlighting three key features that IR scholars may consider when planning workshops seeking to engender sharing of knowledge and relationship building: space; sharing; and flexibility.

Relationality, IR’s “Relational Turn,” and Pacific Relational Practice

We acknowledge that “relationality” means different things to different people based on their social, cultural, disciplinary, and linguistic conditioning. Some focus on the relations between humans, such as Dowie and Llewellyn (2012, 4) who argue that “the relational conception of the self. . . recognizes not only that we live in relationships with others but also that relationship and connection with others is essential to the existence of the self. The human self in this view is constituted *in and through* relationship with others.” Looking to relationality more broadly to recognise the non-human elements, Va’ai and Nobobo-Baba (2017, 11) suggest that relationality “embraces the uniqueness of both individuality and communality, unity and diversity, visibility and invisibility, male and female, top and bottom, secular and sacred, heaven and earth, God and the world, rich and poor, tangible and intangible,” through a “whole of life” consciousness. While this can lead to claims that “everything is relational” and should be contextualised or grounded for research purposes, we follow Escobar et al.’s (2024, 8) conception of relationality and relatedness—“an intimacy with our relations that is as immediate as our limbs”—intrinsically bound regardless of the human/non-human divide.

One of the most significant questions raised by the concept of relationality is concerns about the relative focus on individuality vis-a-vis communality. Some disciplines deal explicitly with the relational self, one which is defined “*in* relationship to others and *through* relationship with others” (Dowie and Llewellyn 2012, 4;

¹Importantly, we do not essentialise nor reduce the vast ocean and many countries and territories of ‘the Pacific’ to one culture, history or political structure. It is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse regions in the world, and we recognise that each village and community brings a different (if sometimes similar) ontological perspective.

Koggel et al. 2022). The relational conception of self is grounded in the claim that individuals cannot be conceived of as abstracted from relations: agency and selfhood are reframed in relational terms. Expanding upon this point, Escobar et al. (2024, 5) argue that “*there is no such thing as an intrinsically existing individual*. Individuals are always embedded in webs of relationships, systems, places, landscapes, communities and so on. There is no such thing as an individual; rather it makes sense to speak of persons in relations.” Similarly, in Pacific spaces, “Pacific peoples are not individuals; there is a shared divinity with ancestors—including the waters, land and skies, all integral parts of the cosmos” (Matapo 2017, 7; Va'ai 2017). Communal societies are predominant within the Pacific Islands region, and people often make decisions based upon their community, village or family rather than themselves—making privileging these structures in relational analyses important (Tamasese et al. 2010; Henderson 2016). Explaining the “Samoan relational identity,” former Samoan Prime Minister and Head of State Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi Efi made the oft-quoted statement:

‘I am not an individual; I am an integral part of the cosmos. I share divinity with my ancestors, the land, the seas and the skies. I am not an individual, because I share a “tofi” (an inheritance) with my family, my village and my nation. I belong to my family and my family belongs to me. I belong to my village and my village belongs to me. I belong to my nation and my nation belongs to me. This is the essence of my sense of belonging’ (quoted in Henderson 2016, 316).

Including these Indigenous perspectives in the debates around relationality contributes nuanced and important perspectives that are often overlooked by mainstream IR.

International Relations’ “Relational Turn”

Relationality is not a new concept, and can be traced back in academic debates to the Socratic period, through Marx and Hengel, and Dewey and Bentley (for a detailed history, see Emirbayer 1997). More recently, it has been considered within a “patchwork nature of scholarship” comprising the disciplines of philosophy, gender studies, sociology, bioethics, law, policy, and restorative justice (Downie and Llewellyn 2012, 1). Importantly, Emirbayer’s (1997) manifesto for a relational sociology called for scholars to fundamentally reconsider social relations—moving from understanding the world as *things* with relations secondary, towards *interaction or the processes of relations* as the primary unit of analysis. This allows for identities to shift, and decisions to be made not in isolation, but based upon the web of relations that the actor is situated in. However, IR was slow to appreciate relationality. Acharya (2016, 6) questioned if “Western IR theories because of their obsession with rationality have overlooked or rendered invisible the relationality aspect.” Kavalski (2017, 2) argues that the failure of IR to acknowledge relationality was that it was seen as an “other” concept (aka not European in origin), and was therefore relegated to other fields, because mainstream IR “tends to prioritize ontologies of separation rather than connectedness.”

IR did dabble with interrelation, notably Patrick Thaddeus Jackson and Daniel Nexon (1999, 292) who brought ideas into IR from sociology by suggesting that ‘a focus upon processes and relations rather than substances will enable scholars to formulate better theories of world politics, explaining some phenomena... that fit uneasily into substantialist frameworks’. This was important, as it understood interrelation as a way of forming states and the decisions that states make, refocussing IR scholarship from centring the actor towards the relationships *between* actors (Kavalski 2017). However, the referent object remained the state and its relationships, including how they are conceived within transnational exchanges for power or influence (Smith and Holster 2023), which creates difficulties in acknowl-

edging the role of time and spirituality in IR (Koro et al. 2023). There has been some criticism of this state-centric approach (including in a Pacific context) by those who recognise a “relational state” constructed by networks, particularly where the state itself is not physically present or is uncertain, as in Bougainville (Peake and Forsyth 2022; also Koggel et al. 2022). Ultimately, the dominant focus of IR on the state itself omits the important connections between communities, peoples, cultures, cosmology and individuals required to understand relationality. Donati (2010) asked, what is society from a relational point of view as an epistemology, paradigm and social practice? We further ask how are people, societies and states can be then understood through the relational reality, particularly through the social connections and lens of the Pacific.

Within the IR context today, there are several schools of relational thought: some drawing from and presenting cultural bases (i.e., Qin 2018; Pan 2018; Kavalski 2017); some considering culture widely and broadly to theorise relationality generally (i.e., Jackson and Heo 2022; Kurki 2022); and others which consider relational thought throughout scholarly history and do not draw from other cultures (i.e., Jackson and Nixon 1999). Regardless of differing origins and important differences in the *practice* of relationality, Jackson and Heo (2022, 157) argue that there is a “family resemblance” between these schools, in holding that the relations between—whether states, regions, cosmologies, more-than-human entities, individuals, or communities—are the primary unit of analysis.

Acharya (2016, 6) argues that “if IR is to overcome Western dominance, then it must offer concepts and theories that are derived from other societies and cultures,” including relationality. Relationality has come to the fore in Global IR via Sinophone scholarship (Kavalski 2017; Qin 2018; Pan 2018; Uemura 2015). These perspectives were included to answer questions about the rise of China that mainstream IR seemingly could not answer (Pan 2018), and to develop theoretical concepts “from a non-Western culture that has been neglected in the development of IR theory” (Acharya 2016, 6; Acharya 2014). However, Kavalski (2017, 3, 4) while drawing from these roots, argues that ‘a genuinely *relational* IR theorizing is neither Sinocentric nor Eurocentric, but cultivated from the convivial, yet dissonant, cross-pollination of values, narratives, and practices in the study of world affairs’ and are not closed systems but “interrelated and constantly intermingling.” Indeed, Acharya (2016, 6) questioned if the “concept of relationality applicable beyond the Chinese domestic or East Asia regional context?” Qin (2018, xx) answered this question (although did not go beyond the human):

To relate and be related is human. Relations are significant in every society and the concept of relationality goes far beyond Confucian communities. Despite the fact that there are various understandings of relations, relationality as a social practice is everywhere and generically human. It is, however, a very much underdeveloped and underexplored concept in the global academic world.

Jackson and Heo (2022) importantly highlight the problems of creating dualities in terms of separate forms of relationalism, or essentialising relationality as distinctive to a culture—minimising the worlding possibilities for understanding. We engage in what they describe as re-representation by bringing one example, Pacific relational concepts, into the broader (complex) discussion about relationality so as to extend and expand current relationality scholarship from a narrower geographical lens.

Global IR welcomes a more geographically and culturally diverse scholarship for IR audiences, where relational scholarship is occurring in and between many parts of the world (Trownsell et al. 2021). Scholarship on Indigenous diplomacy, for instance, challenges dominant approaches to IR, demonstrating that “while conventional diplomacy has tended to be focused upon territorially bound land masses thereby casting seas into the shadows, the philosophical relationalism underpinning

Indigenous diplomacy suggests a different relation” (Brigg and Graham 2023, 588). We follow Escobar et al. (2024, 14) in noting that this is not an essentialist argument, and that “while many important sources of relationality come from Indigenous and place-based cultures that were violently overtaken by patriarchal capitalism, our is by no means a romantic call toward the halcyon days of the past, culture is not stagnant, and we do not believe relationality is something that only existed or exists among “pre-“ or “non-modern” cultures.”

Pacific-Centric Relationality

We suggest that contributions from Pacific Island relationality scholarship and practice could significantly benefit IR. Writing within IR, Shilliam (2015, 13) found that “the knowledge traditions of Māori and Pasifika utilize sophisticated practices of relating—and valuing relations—that are firmly embedded in particular locales and peoples.” Therefore, we sought to bring concepts of relationality that are central to Pacific studies—and indeed, Pacific communities—into conversation with IR’s “relational turn.” The Pacific Islands is a region ripe “for developing new perspectives,” particularly for the “reimagination of relations and ways of being and becoming” (Jerrems et al. 2024, 1, 2).

Indigenous scholars have raised concerns about scholars within IR (or other Western-centric disciplines) potentially misusing the term and tools of relationality, highlighting the risk of relationality (and other Indigenous knowledge and ways of being and doing) becoming extractive, appropriated or co-opted, thereby causing epistemic violence and harm (Tynan 2021; Brigg and Graham 2023; Tuhiwai Smith 2004; Ahenakew and Naepi 2015). In the Pacific context, some scholarship has “authorised certain knowledge systems that misidentify Pacific beliefs and behaviours, alienate Pacific peoples from practices of social research, and often result in the flouting of cultural protocols and the failure of research initiatives to deliver back to communities the benefits first promised” (White and Shaver 2022, 119). For example, sometimes non-Pacific things were mis-labelled as Pacific, even though as Sanga and Reynolds (2017) remind us, “offering a Pacific name does not necessarily ensure alignment with Pacific thought or practice.” Even the practice of talanoa, a form of dialogue which is often adopted in Oceanic diplomacy, can be appropriated. Tarai (2025, 317, 321) argues that Fiji co-opted the term and practice of talanoa at COP23/24 “without adequate due respect for informed inclusion, participation and engagement of its Pacific neighbours,” and was “careless and negligent in respecting the shared meaning and value of talanoa.” We are ourselves concerned by examples of individuals from outside the region who have appropriated Pacific relational dialogue mechanisms, like talanoa, without following the protocols that come with the respective practices or co-design with Pacific Islanders in research planning. Due to these concerns, scholars “invite caution, and care, and qualification in applying “relationality” as an approach” (Carter and Fry 2023, 657; Brigg and Graham 2023). Therefore, it is with an abundance of caution and care that we write this contribution, as a conversation between scholars from the region, and from elsewhere.² We respect the limitations of our respective positionalities.

Context-specific models of research are vital to working in the Pacific Islands region and Pacific diasporic contexts (Tuhiwai Smith 2004; Thaman 2003; Anae et al. 2001; Koya-Vaka’utu 2017). A diverse range of Pacific research methods have emerged which “offer a way for Pacific researchers to shift away from research practices whose foundations were built upon the ideological assumption that Pacific knowledge either did not exist or was inferior and instead move toward ensuring that the world understand the Pacific from a Pacific lens” (Naepi 2020, 3). These

²We herald from Aotearoa New Zealand, Samoa and Tokelau, Australia, and Canada respectively, and have all spent time living and/or working in the Pacific Island region at different points.

Pacific methods are designed to undertake Pacific-led research centring Pacific relational values, and are appropriate to particular cultures. Talanoa (Vaiote 2006; Tecun et al. 2018), is the most well-known Polynesian practice of safe, respectful and empathetic discussion involving sharing stories and views, including to resolve issues, and is applied differently across various contexts, such as Samoa, Niue, and Fiji (Tarai 2025). Whilst talanoa cannot be generalised across the Pacific, it recognises the relationality of relationships within a given space, it involves people becoming comfortable with one another, a willingness to share their emotions, and in many cases for everyone to speak (in order of protocol) until the issue is resolved or consensus is agreed. Other examples of methods used in particular areas of the Pacific (which we will not elaborate upon due to space constraints, but direct scholars to the appropriate sources) include: fa'afaletui (Tuia and Cobb 2021; Goodyear-Smith and 'Ofanoa 2022), e-talanoa (Fa'avae et al. 2022), tivaivai (Futter-Puati and Maua-Hodges 2019), vanua (Nabobo-Baba 2008), ula (Sauni 2011), te waa (Rimon 2025), kakala (Thaman 1993), tok stori (Sanga and Reynolds 2021), masi (Patterson 2018), talaloto (Naufahu 2018), Te Wāhi Whangai (SC Jackson et al. 2024), and talatalaga (Tago 2022) methods, as well as the niu approach to inclusive research (Young et al. 2023). Koya-Vaka'utu (2017) provides practical ethical guidance for how these should be used within a broader research paradigm.

In a focused review of scholarship from varying disciplines by Pacific scholars and experts, Teariki and Leau (2024, 135, 132) found five common principles underpinning the majority of Pacific scholarship as 'shared interpretations within Pacific cultural diversity': holistic systems, the collective family, spirituality, connection with the natural world, and the connections between space, time and relational relationships. Each principle is relational. Often these principles and values are orally disseminated to the next generation by elders in the community (Meyer 2003). This substantive commitment to relationality as a worldview is necessary to bring into ways of doing research, because of the nature of the world and knowledge structures. As Naepi (2020, 5) notes, 'relationships are integral to Pacific research' which 'should be developed and maintained in a respectful manner', according to community and cultural protocols, and through practices of reciprocity.

A central contribution to this discussion is the Polynesian concept of *vā*: the relational space between (whether between individuals, communities, place, non-human aspects, and/or ancestors) (Ka'ili 2017). The *vā*, is an 'ethical or relational space, a space that must be nurtured and respected if ethical practice is to be enacted' (Anae 2019, 14). The maintaining, nurturing and looking after of the *vā* is over long periods of time, and can be done through cultural processes and protocols and 'upholding values, beliefs, code of conduct, rules and laws, policies, or agreements' (Koro et al. 2023, 4). There are concerns that in some cases of research about Pacific peoples and communities, there is some 'continuing adherence to traditional Western theories and research methods that undermine and overshadow the *va*—the sacred, spiritual, and social spaces of human relationships between researcher and researched that Pacific peoples place at the center of all human/environment/cosmos/ancestors and animate/inanimate interactions' (Anae 2019, 1).

Both Koya-Vaka'utu (2017) and Anae (2019) demonstrate how Pacific research methods are steeped within relational ethics. For example, 'the shared understanding of talanoa can be connected to talanoa as a relational exercise' which 'provides guidance on Pacific ontological understandings of the world, that we are relational' (Naepi 2020, 10, 11). To demonstrate this, talanoa is 'a process which affords value to, for example, kinship, land, tradition/custom, relationships, ancestors, ceremony, cosmology, space, language, ethics, the chiefly system, systems of faith, and protocols. Talanoa encompasses behaviors/manners such as openness, patience, tolerance, flexibility, silence, humility, generosity, gifting, reciprocity, humour, empow-

erment, listening, sharing, forgiveness, and subjectivity' (Stewart-Withers et al. 2017, 59).

This is not to say that the aforementioned methods are the *only* relational principles or even the only *Pacific* relational methods, just that they are distinct from the dominant methods that IR offers.³ The difference is that Pacific relational approaches are conceived within 'whole of life' philosophies (Va'ai and Casimira 2017; 2024; Va'ai and Nabobo-Baba 2017). This includes 'deep spiritual connections with the natural world going back to ancient times, relational relationships, connections with ancestors and more, that go to the heart of cultural identity' (Teariki and Leau 2024). Koro et al. (2023) highlight the ways in which Pacific peoples' relationships with the land, ocean and ancestors can affect IR. These connections, in addition to religious and cosmological beliefs, are 'not reducible to supernatural belief, but is intricately embedded in the moral, material, ritual and kinship connections that tie the community together' (White and Shaver 2022, 129).

Cosmologies are an important part of Pacific story-telling, which are central to many of these methods. Telling stories important in many cultures (for example, yarning in Indigenous Australian cultures, mo'olelo in Hawai'i, tok stori in Melanesian cultures), as 'content is enriched when myth and storytelling is added' (Meyer 2003, 39; Bessarrah and Ng'andu 2010; Sanga and Reynolds 2021; SC Jackson et al. 2024; Escobar et al. 2024; Shepherd 2025). Through stories, many Pacific research methods draw from metaphors about traditional modes of relation and/or relationship with the natural world. For example, Powell (2023, 42, 46) highlights that the reef has 'grown into a theoretical post for thinking about both relationality and Indigenous ontology' and similarly of 'the presence and power of the ocean as a life-giving, connecting and relational body in the Pacific region'.

While it is important that these methods are not be appropriated or misused, there are discussions about how Western and Pacific scholars can co-design and jointly conduct research (Wallis and Koro 2025). For example, Koro et al. (2023) discuss how a group of Pacific and non-Pacific scholars were guided by the Samoan principle of soālaupule in their discussion about differences in Western and Pacific international relations. White and Shaver (2022) are non-Pacific researchers who have spent long periods living in Fiji, and demonstrate how non-Pacific researchers can use Pacific research methods rooted in relationality ethically with due care and concern for protocols and practices. Enari (2021) highlights how relational Pacific research methods can be used alongside Western research methods. Additionally, Ponton (2018, 3) illustrates how the 'Teu Le Va paradigm works also as a pan Pacific approach when applied cross-culturally with other communities and across disciplines'. While relational methods should strive to be culturally-appropriate and specific, these examples suggest that Pacific relational research methods could potentially (with due care) be used in IR.

Demonstrating the 'analytical relevance to the conceptual and analytical development of IR as a discipline' (Acharya 2014, 655) that Pacific relational understandings bring, Koro's (2023, 18) work on relational security and geopolitics shows that in the Pacific Islands, 'relational values are necessary for harmonious relationships and existence' and that 'it is from this holistic and cyclic understanding that Pacific people view power and political economy, not as state centric constructs'. She affirms 'relational values and the Pacific Way as a means to understand, protect, and engage with Pacific people in the pursuit of security in the region. It is what has sustained our communities and our people', citing COVID-19 and nuclear threats as examples of when the Pacific has collectively used relational security practices internationally (Koro 2023, 22).

We drew from all these sources of relational theory and practice to imagine, design, and plan a workshop, as we now turn to discuss as our case study.

³There are also non-Pacific relational methods, which we have not listed here due to space constraints.

A Pacific-Inspired Relational Workshop Method

Planning

When planning this one-day workshop, we were guided by our lived experiences in various places within the Pacific Islands region; Pacific-centered relational teaching practices we have experienced at the Centre for Pacific Island Studies at the University of Hawai'i—Mānoa and the Pasifika Communities University (PCU) in Suva; the Pacific Studies teachings of Teresia Teaiwa (2021); the scholarship and philosophies of Manulani Aluli Meyer (2003) and Upolu Lumā Va'ai (Va'ai and Nabobo-Baba 2017; Va'ai and Casimera 2017; 2024; Va'ai 2017); and our (unbeknownst at the time) pilot panel in San Francisco. As we did not host the workshop *in* the Pacific region and had a broad range of participants (Pacific Islanders heralding from eight different states and territories, alongside non-Pacific participants), it was difficult to situate our workshop within one cultural practice. Therefore, we sought to design a pan-Pacific workshop that was shared with good intention, in keeping with many of the Pacific research methods designed for researching diasporic Pacific communities in settler-colonial nations. While we did not adhere to one particular Pacific research method, we were inspired by many and sought to maintain the relational values which ground them. We observed Meyer's (2003, 63) view that 'as a people developed relationship with a place and people for countless generations, they will be in full dialogue with what that place and people have to teach'. It was not our place to 'teach' people about relationality, but instead to approach the day with an openness and willingness to learn together. Some of these values may be shared beyond the Pacific Islands region; however, we used them within a Pacific context, and offer them within this space as an alternative to the traditional IR panel/workshop model.

Given that we as organisers were spread across hemispheres and multiple time zones, much of the organisation was done via email and video-conferencing. However, we took opportunities to plan face-to-face when at least three of the four organisers were in the same city, which happened often but irregularly across several months of planning. While there were very few issues of contention, we found one issue particularly difficult to progress, and therefore sought to connect in-person the following week. After 20-minutes of face-to-face discussion, the issue was resolved with a compromise that suited everyone. Within IR, face-to-face diplomacy is known to enable all parties to 'communicate and read from each other', deepening engagement, trust and understanding which facilitates relational outcomes (Holmes 2018, 3). Nurturing the *vā* between organisers was an important factor to acknowledge in the planning process to ensure that the day workshop itself was a positive experience for the participants.

We also wanted to ensure that participants were involved in the design of the workshop following the Pacific practice of working *with* and not seeking to dominate *over* participants. A month prior to the workshop, we sent an email to potentially interested parties, soliciting their interest and asking them to answer three key questions:

1. What are the big questions you want to ask of relationality at this workshop?
2. How will this workshop benefit the work you are currently doing on security, peace and justice in the Pacific Islands?
3. Please advise of any access needs or dietary requirements that we need to be aware of when planning.⁴

We used the answers to these questions to direct the schedule for the day, which groups we placed individuals into, and how we facilitated discussion throughout the day. This schedule went "out the window" within the first hour (as Pacific research

⁴We were told by participants later that this final question felt like a non-sequitur; however, accessibility is important.

scholarship reminds us, there is a need to be flexible when working in relational contexts and some things may take more time than expected); however, because we knew the participants' interests we knew where to re-focus the day, rather than sticking rigidly to schedule.

As we had done successfully with the San Francisco ISA panel, we invited all workshop participants to a dinner the evening prior to the workshop to get to know one another, be in relation, and at ease in one another's company. Sharing food is fundamental to humans relating with each other, and Pacific cultures are no exception. The dinner was provided to create a generative environment for connection, and as such there were no formal speeches or talk of the workshop at the dinner, and it came with no expectations.

The other part of the planning process which required some thought was logistics. Teaiwa (2021, 3) called upon Pacific Studies scholars to 'indigenize the classroom' where possible, including by taking students 'outside of their classrooms to talk, think, and learn on the grass, under the sky, in the sun, under the stars' (including metaphorically, if outdoors is not possible). More broadly, adult education best practice suggests 'leaving the classroom', as walks, sitting under trees, fresh air, and sunshine 'or perhaps simply the absence of walls around us—somehow greatly increased the students' capacity for empathetic listening' (Löwenheim 2024, 28). Therefore, we elected to leave the traditional classroom for our workshop and 'free' the conversation, by selecting a location on the outskirts of the city, atop a hill: with flora, fauna, and views of the surrounding river and hills. This provided an opportunity for a view during the workshop, sessions outside, and for walks during which participants could connect with nature, including by picking wildflowers. Indeed, Meyer (2003, 41) suggests that relational and 'cultural programming in wilderness adventures can add depth, meaning and significance', and that rituals and nurturing of the land are important to relationality. Research shows that changing spaces to the outdoors 'frees us from the regimented thinking or practices induced by the classroom's dull and depressing design and architecture'—design choices which force configurations of power, like the traditional ISA panel (Löwenheim 2024, 28). While being in nature is not inherently relational, altering the environment certainly shapes the types of conversations that can occur, and being in an open natural space enables increased potential for relationality through connection with more-than-human flora, fauna and cosmologies. Our selected location was an observatory site owned and operated by a university that two of the organisers are affiliated with, approximately 30-minutes' drive from the main campus.⁵ Our decision to hold the workshop there required a chartered bus for transport, alternative catering options, and everything to be ready to take up to the site in advance. This additional logistical effort was extremely valuable, as participants benefitted hugely from being away from a city-based campus noting the ability to think differently with the view and the increased relation with nature.

Delivery

We acknowledge that this workshop took place on colonised land, in a settler-colonial nation that still has not truly grappled with its indigeneity. Being in a settler-colonial environment to discuss relationality has implications for how knowledge is understood, and therefore the workshop sought to undertake a 'critique of the colonial mind' (Meyer 2003, 88; Shilliam 2015). The first peoples of Australia, the land in which we hosted the workshop, traditionally retain a 'deeply relational way of living and organising political order', through which there are formalised diplomatic protocols which determine the relationships in this order (Graham and Briggs 2023, 592). Many workshop participants had joined from overseas, requiring a Welcome

⁵This also meant that participants could not 'drop in and out', ensuring intentional focus and participation.

to Country within diplomatic protocols. Country is an Aboriginal English term representing an important aspect of relationality that is crucial to acknowledge and engage with during our workshop: 'Country includes humans, more-than-humans and all that is tangible and non-tangible and which become together in an active, sentient, mutually caring and multidirectional manner in, with and as place/space' (Bawaka Country et al. 2016). Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong (2023) reminds us of the importance of these protocols in foreign affairs including with the Pacific Islands:

'Being welcomed to country is a powerful reminder that diplomacy has been practised here for millennia and that these practices still live on today. It also reminds us that the First Nations peoples of this country were this land's first diplomats... throughout Polynesia, Melanesia, Micronesia, I have been welcomed by traditional owners and the centrality of traditional custodianship, customs and leadership of the Pacific way is something Australia should respect in our regional engagement.'

These cultural ceremonies extend beyond making people feel welcome: it is also about seeking out, associating existing, and generating new connections. An Ngambri-Ngunnawal custodian, Paul Girrawah House, conducted a Welcome to Country ceremony, in which he spoke of relational connections between traditional custodians and ancestors, land, sky and waterways; as well as yindumara (respect); and issues of justice for First Nations people in Australia which remain pertinent to this day. This not only educated guests about and welcomed them to Country, but also set the tone of the workshop, bringing relationality to issues of security, peace and justice. He finished with a song on the glass yidaki (didgeridu) with workshop participants sharing the music by playing clapping sticks. Following Pacific protocols, Mauaiaivao Maima Koro responded to him as a Samoan matai (chief), explaining the vā between them and her gratitude to share in this space.

It must be highlighted here that the room had been arranged paying conscious attention to the kinds of relating we wanted to encourage. Instead of chairs in rows, we sourced woven mats from Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Fiji which we placed in the middle of the room (chairs and tables pushed to the side), in a circle formation. Participants instinctively followed Pacific protocols by removing their shoes and sitting on the mats. Circular formations for sharing are well-recognised in teaching Pacific Studies as they encourage engagement and connection and help to counter power asymmetries (Teaiwa 2021). By contrast, with all participants and organisers at the same level, there was no implicit bias of power: no people of colour relegated to the back of the room; no professors standing up the front with students sitting. Of the 18 participants and organisers, there were a range of participants and positionalities: in the academic sense there were PhD candidates, to-be PhD candidates, former diplomats, Early Career Researchers, Visiting Fellows, Senior Lecturers, and Professors; in the cultural sense there were matriarchs, matai, and persons with immense mana (respect generated from wisdom); there were Indigenous and non-Indigenous people; male and female. When in a circle on the same level, accommodating one another in the space without the boundaries of chairs, many power dynamics were minimised.

Following the Welcome to Country, the organisers spoke about this design, and asked the participants to engage with the concept of soālaupule, a Samoan practice which empowers all people to contribute through 'a meaningful collaborative process' which 'requires acknowledging people's rightful authority to engage in decision-making processes' (Koro et al. 2023, 2). Koro et al. (2023, 3) suggest that 'being guided by soālaupule meant that we treated each other as equals, engaged in dialogue, co-created shared understandings, and reflected on our respective positionalities and privileges'. We also drew from the Hawaiian reconciliatory practice of ho'oponopopo, where words are shared in the spirit of truth, the group shares values of aloha (love), everything is in confidence, and the leader is fair and impar-



Figure 1. Embodied relationality placed in the center of woven mats (Image supplied by authors).

tial. In [Meyer's \(2003, 44\)](#) words, these practices 'ensure an ethos of commitment, honesty, privacy and fairness' and 'provide a foundation and structure for the discussions that will follow' in a 'successful, relationship-centered resolution process'.

With these values and protocols in mind, in the Pacific (as in many other Indigenous contexts) meetings are often started by introducing yourself and where you are from: the land, family and/or tribe which situates you and your genealogy. Introductions in Pacific contexts are about identity and an entry point for connections to be established. We acknowledge that there are different understandings of relationality, and these are often connected to a person's lived experiences, background, and culture and can best be shared through story-telling. Oral story-telling is used across the Pacific to share knowledge and culture across generations, shaping identity and understanding of the world ([Taukave 2024](#)). To this end, we were inspired by a practice developed by PCU, asking participants and organisers bring an item (or photo of an item) that embodied what relationality meant to them. Going around in a circle we asked each person to tell the story of their item and how it represents relationality to them, and then place it in the middle: orienting the group's focus to the shared meanings and anchoring our discussions ([Figure 1](#)). A range of items were shared which elicited many emotions, spoke to diverse cultural backgrounds, allowed people to be in deep relation with one another through a sense of understanding, and reflected the different understandings of relationality present in the room.

After the embodied practice, there was a brief morning tea break. The organisers noticed that the participants were enjoying the sunshine and view, taking the time to breathe the fresh air and connect in a way that deepened their engagement of one another. Therefore, we decided to change the location for the next session to outdoors. This type of flexibility is possible with small groups, and it requires the organisers to firstly notice and secondly respond quickly but without fuss to changing circumstances. Instead of mats, there was a natural semi-circle of rocks which

we sat upon to speak about the reasons for bringing this workshop together, and the aforementioned risks of relationality being appropriated, co-opted or misused. The discussion was free and open, and provoked significant thought among the participants which they returned to throughout the day and long after.

We eventually relocated indoors, due to the sun and heat—recognising the needs of participants. The next session was facilitated through three groups which had been pre-determined based on the themes participants had proposed in their pre-workshop questionnaire. These groups were designed to deepen reflection and consideration for the pre-workshop questions, and would come together after their group discussion to share their wisdom with the other participants. An organiser had been allocated to each group to support the conversation, which still took place in the same (large) workshop room. It was with Meyer's (2003) reminder that educational tools of group work are relational in mind, that we designed the group task. Groups were each posed a question based around their pre-workshop questionnaire responses. These were framed as 'big questions' that there may potentially not be a single answer to, or that such an answer may take more than the allocated time to ponder. In this sense, we asked participants to think about *the ways in which* these questions could be approached through a relational lens, and/or how relationality might be framed or practiced in answering the question. While this was proposed for an hour in the initial schedule, we found that 40-minutes was enough for the reflective groups, and then we returned to a circle formation to discuss each groups' findings.

We did not dictate how this discussion should run, nor the order or time allocated that people should speak: it was a free-flowing and open conversation. In Pacific approaches, there are protocols that govern discussions and meetings depending on the issue. These differ across the Pacific and even within communities. The common principle however, is respect. People understand their roles and responsibilities and engage appropriately. It can mean silence, for some people which in Pacific settings can be a powerful tool. Time is differently understood, particularly when addressing significant issues where outcomes are not time-bound. Who can speak, and when, is important, and it is important that all members of the group have an opportunity to have their say: going around until the matter is resolved through consensus. Therefore, the time taken was much longer than we had initially scheduled. While there were only three groups, we found that by the time lunch arrived, we had only discussed one of the 'big questions'; however, we noticed that questions the organisers had developed and scheduled to discuss later in the day were being answered through the overall discussion.⁶ We made the impromptu decision to break for lunch, where people could spend time walking and engaging with the natural surroundings, and replaced the scheduled afternoon discussion with the next two groups' discussions. The lunch break itself created yet another dynamic relational space where people could interact in their own terms over food and allowed for personal and informal reflections that they could come back to in the group discussions (which deepened as the day progressed).

For the final session of the day, we wanted to galvanise interest in what could be next for this conversation. To inspire innovative thinking, we looked to Pacific practices once more: a participant mixed yaqona/kava in a tanoa, and shared it with bilo. Kava is a root-based⁷ beverage consumed widely across the Pacific, both ceremonially and casually: 'many Pacific people understand and utilise the unique properties of kava... in the maintenance of cultural identity and practices' (Faleolo and Ravulo 2019, 142). Kava also plays an important relational function in Oceanic diplomacy (Carter et al. 2025): King Charles III imbibed kava at the 2024 Commonwealth Heads

⁶Our questions were: "What does it mean to view relationality through a Pacific lens? What does it mean to view the Pacific through a relational lens? What does it mean to view IR (or other disciplines) through a Pacific relational or just a relational lens? How do we account for relationality in both micro and macro theorizing? Should we?"

⁷*Piper methysticum*

of Government Meeting in Samoa; and the Moto Lava Treaty establishing a maritime boundary between Vanuatu and Solomon Islands was sealed with the drinking of kava, about which [Naupa \(2022, 2\)](#) explained, ‘the sharing of traditional *kakae* (food)—kava and betel nut—signal[ed] the value placed on cultural relations’ during the negotiations and agreement. Sharing kava from the tanoa was a metaphor for the day we had enjoyed together in deep relation, a symbol of good life, connection to cultural practices albeit in a new place, and the relationships developed between participants and organisers. During our kava session, many ideas for next steps were posed. We as organisers were clear that our approach was not extractive and we were not reporting outcomes, instead sharing an exploration of how to do relationality differently *together*. Following the workshop though, a community of practice organically developed between the participants involving a sharing of relational scholarship and ideas on a regular basis. In keeping with Pacific relational ontologies and practices, the relationship with the community is held long after the research has been completed.

Conclusion

Our experience at the relationality-themed ISA convention had raised concerns for us about how IR was engaging with relationality as a concept. By introducing Pacific relational ontologies and practices to IR, we were able to shape *how* discussions about relationality were occurring by creating a workshop that juxtaposed dominant models of power, space, and inflexibility. In this piece, we have shared the conversations, decisions, challenges and practices that we experienced in the planning and delivery of a workshop, in which the design intentionally focused on facilitating deep and holistic understandings between participants and the knowledge they shared. While we acknowledge that no workshop could mirror our method exactly, nor should it, as working relationally requires that we are intentional and purposeful in attending to the people and relations in our design choices and focus; however, we hope that other scholars hoping to encapsulate relationality differently into their IR scholarship (without co-opting, appropriating, or misusing) could learn from our experience and use the lessons to develop their own workshop or learning space. The key features of our relational method were space, sharing, and flexibility: not unique to the Pacific, but are brought out and enhanced by Pacific ontologies and practices, and therefore we offer these insights as an alternative to traditional IR workshops and panels.

Firstly, space is important in Pacific contexts, and often misunderstood by Western schools of thought ([Koro et al. 2023](#)). By electing to take this workshop to an environment with hills, rivers, flora and fauna we were able to change the way in which people used the space, took time to think, and were in relation with their natural surroundings. We also changed the space inside the room through circular formations to shift the power dynamics of the workshop. While space might be used differently in different cultures and parts of the world, we suggest moving away from the dominant speaker-audience model to change the levels and power dynamics of interactions.

Secondly, a relational workshop must involve building the foundations for progressive sharing. Neutralising the power dynamics of the space was mutually inclusive to allow for meaningful sharing. Sharing meals and stories was a constant through our workshop, starting with the meal on the evening before the workshop which brought everyone together informally, and finishing with sharing kava from the tanoa. The sharing of personal items which embodied relationality enabled participants to share their understandings of relationality, culture and lived experiences, and for other participants to connect with them in different ways. This sharing develops, nourishes, nurtures and repairs the *vā*. Taking the time to acknowledge the emotions and connection in these stories is also important, if we had simply pushed

on and/or asked people to stop at a fixed point, it would not have been as effective or sensitive.

The third and final feature is that we as organisers had to be flexible and intuitive to the needs and wishes of our participants. Whether this meant changing the setting from indoors to outdoors, or extending a session throughout the afternoon, it required the organisers to put aside their own research agendas and put the participants' interests first. Being flexible enabled the co-design element to continue throughout the workshop, because the participants contributed to the implementation as well in terms of the shift in the program. This made for a much more interesting, and robust conversation. It also removed any opportunity (not that we would have taken it) to engage in extractive research: our perspective from the beginning was not to write up the workshop outcomes, but to facilitate and empower a community of practice where Pacific Island scholars lead work on relationality in Global IR as knowledge producers.

Our workshop was small which made it easier to facilitate relational connections and deep relation, even between the organisers, as opposed to the ISA convention's 6500+ participants; however, we hope that our experience provides food for sharing and thought towards designing future IR events (in terms of design, space, time, and intention) differently.

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