Becoming a Megaproject Leader:
Reoccurring themes in personal life stories

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Purpose

- Advance the discourse on leadership in megaprojects by looking at project leader personalities

- Discuss past personality research to

  - Synthesize different perspectives for discussing future megaproject leaders

  - Develop a research agenda for the future

Agenda

- Positioning leadership

- Project-specific leadership

- Research on leader personalities

- Patterns in megaproject leaders' life-stories

- Ask the philosophers: Characteristics of leaders

- Towards a research agenda for leadership in megaprojects

Positioning and meaning of terms

	Structure	**Human Agency**
Steering	**Governance:** **Framework** for managers to do their tasks and are held accountable for their work – the structures, policies, processes etc.	**Governmentality:** **Mentalities, rationalities**, ways of interaction, chosen by those in governance roles to implement, maintain, and change the governance structure
Doing	**Management:** **Task** oriented activity to accomplish project objectives	**Leadership:** **People** oriented activity to accomplish project objectives

Leadership approaches and leadership styles

- **Leadership approach:** the locus from which leadership takes place, e.g. vertical, horizontal, team (shared/distributed), or balanced

- **Leadership style:** the leader's particular interaction with followers with other, such as
    - Transactional and transformational styles
    - Autocratic and authoritarian styles
    - Servant leadership styles
    - Democratic and laissez-faire styles

- Within each leadership approach, all leadership styles are possible
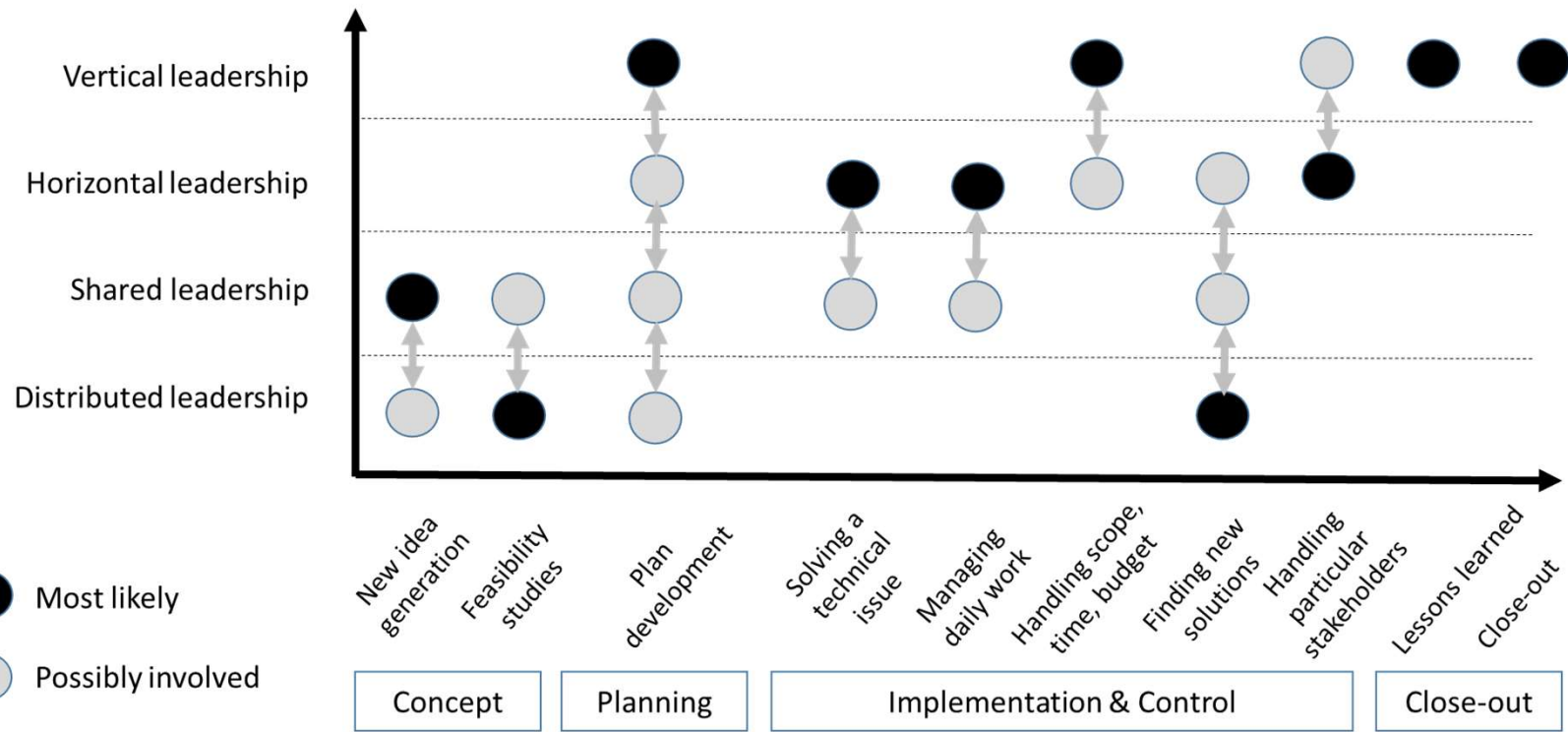
Müller, Drouin & Sankaran, 2022

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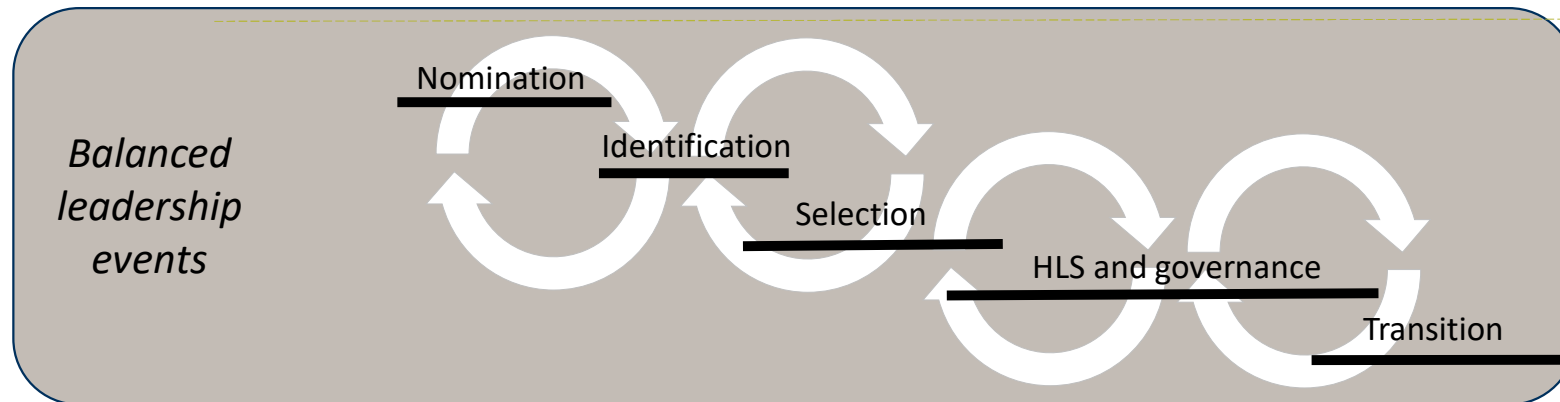- Towards a research agenda for leadership in megaprojects

Leadership approaches in projects

Leadership approach	Definition
Vertical	By an appointed or formal leader of a team
Shared	A collaborative, emergent process of group interaction in which members engage in peer leadership while working together
Distributed	Leadership emerging from the social interaction in and around the project team
Horizontal	**Executed by a team member upon nomination by the project manager (vertical leader), and governed by the vertical leader for the time of the nomination.**
Balanced	**The dynamic, temporary and alternating transitions between vertical, shared/distributed and horizontal leadership for the accomplishment of desired states in, for example, a task outcome, or the entire project**

Balanced leadership situations

Vertical leadership
Horizontal leadership
Shared leadership
Distributed leadership

New idea generation
Feasibility studies
Plan development
Solving a technical issue
Managing daily work
Handling scope, time, budget
Finding new solutions
Handling particular stakeholders
Lessons learned
Close-out

● Most likely
○ Possibly involved

| Concept | Planning | Implementation & Control | Close-out |

Müller, Drouin & Sankaran, 2022

Balanced leadership

Müller, Drouin & Sankaran, 2022

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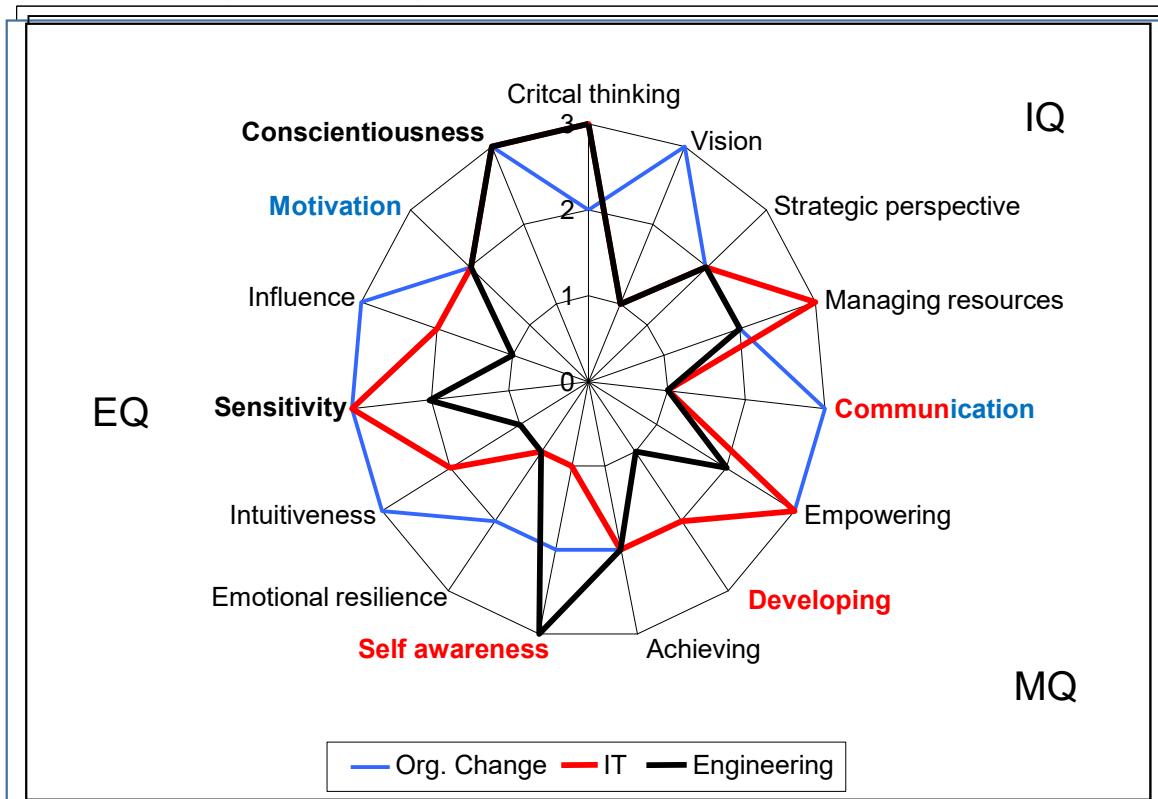- Towards a research agenda for leadership in megaprojects

Leader personalities

- EQ, IQ, MQ profiles of successful project leaders
  - Global mixed methods study (Qual - Quan) to identify the project manager personality profiles for different types of projects
  - Global mixed methods study (Qual - Quan) to identify the impact of program managers EQ IQ, MQ on program success

Leader profiles

Project managers (Turner & Müller, 2006)

Radar chart with axes: Critical thinking, Vision, Strategic perspective, Managing resources, Communication, Empowering, Developing, Achieving, Self awareness, Emotional resilience, Intuitiveness, Sensitivity, Influence, Motivation, Conscientiousness. Scale 0–3. Quadrants labeled IQ, MQ, EQ. Legend: Org. Change (blue), IT (red), Engineering (black).

Program managers (Shao, 2018)

Independent variable	Dependent variable	Main effect
IQ	Program success	+
	Delivery capability	+
	Organizational capability	0
	Marketing capability	+
	Innovative capability	0
MQ	Program success	+
	Delivery capability	+
	Organizational capability	0
	Marketing capability	+
	Innovative capability	0
EQ	Program success	+
	Delivery capability	+
	Organizational capability	0
	Marketing capability	0
	Innovative capability	0

+. Positive relationship; 0. No relationship.

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Leader personalities

- Patterns in life-stories of successful megaproject leaders
  - Sociological/biographical methods study to identify the common themes in personality backgrounds of megaproject managers

Patterns in life-stories of successful megaproject leaders

- Increasing attention for human capital and socio-environmental dimensions of megaprojects by their leaders

- Increasing ability of megaproject leaders to reflect upon their personal management styles

- Role of project leaders' experiences and turning points

- Growing awareness of leaders on project culture and cultural differences

	Time	Social Relations	Place
	Biographical roots	Social relations in the project	Environment of the project
Past	Family values	Personal situational setting	Cultural context
	Turning points	Constructing self-identity	Political context
	Significant others	Social intelligence	Environmental complexity
	Learning process	Beliefs	
Present	Learning by doing	Teamwork engagement	Stakeholder management
		Project culture	Risk management
		Trust	Innovative processes
Future	Learning by reflecting	Public private collaboration	

Socio-cognitive theory perspective

SCT dimension	Megaproject leader theme	Examples from interviews
Personal determinants	Personal characteristics	Situational fit of megaproject requirements and leader's characteristics of hardworking, ambitious, intelligent, self-efficient, problem and paradox solving
	Social value orientation	Adopting family/societal values, e.g., for education, hardworking, and camaraderie
Behavior	Relationship with team	Include teams in decision-making, empower team members to decide themselves. Build long-lasting relationships. Take on tasks, others do not dare to do
	Professionalization	'Reflection-in-action' with most learning in difficult, problematic, political, and sensitive projects
Environment	Turning points	Conditional: Situational changes, like entering university, death of a close person etc.
		Personal: Interaction with mentors, family members etc.

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Who should lead? Who is legitimate?

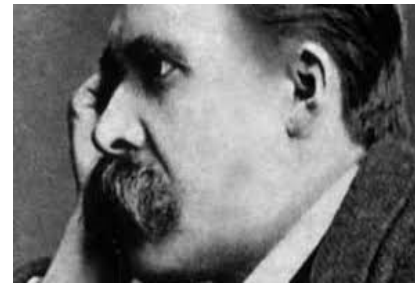## Take a step back and look what the philosophers say

Stand upright and become through the Other
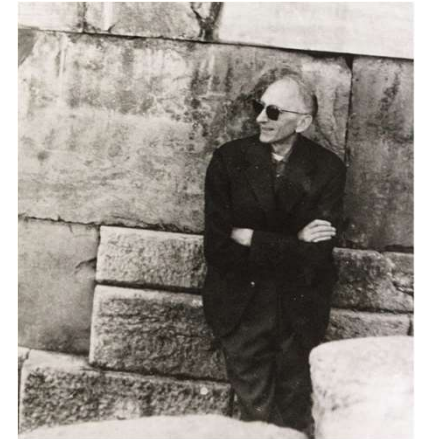Emmanuel Levinas (1906 – 1995)

Appear in front of the Other
Hannah Arendt (1906 – 1975)

Embody and revere the meaning within
Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 – 1900)

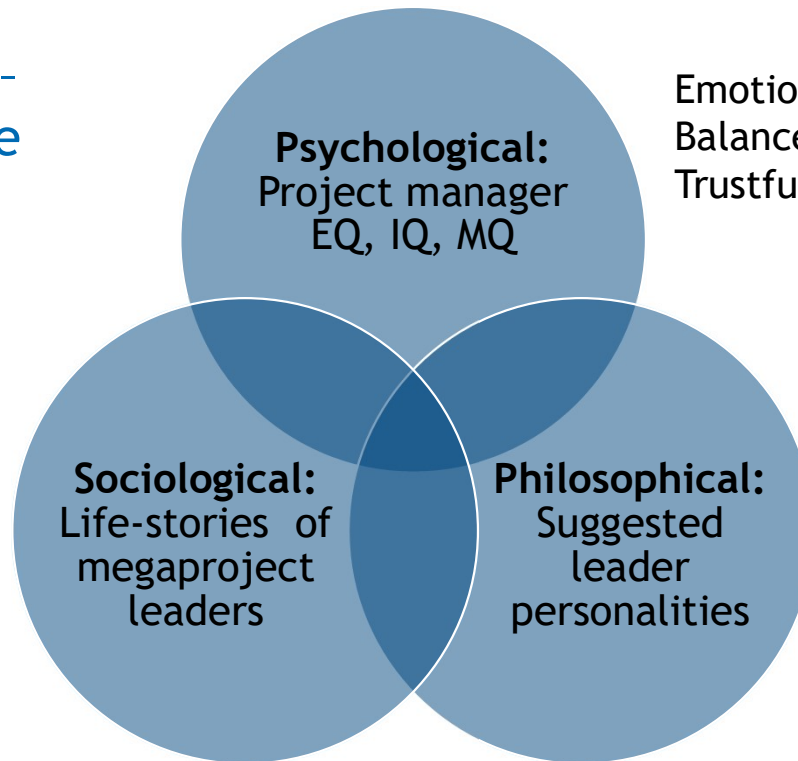*Echo ideals*
Maurice Blanchot (1907 – 2003)

Konstantinou & Müller, 2021

Who should lead? Who is legitimate?

Emmanuel Levinas (1906 – 1995)	Hannah Arendt (1906 – 1975)	Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 – 1900)	Maurice Blanchot (1907 – 2003)	Synthesis
The one whose actions are destined to lead to the Other and not to an eternal return to the self	Appears in front of the watchful eye of society and fully discloses past, present and future intentions	Distinguish between oneself and society and make decisions based on their humanity	Echo ideals and engages with ideals that extend thought, intelligence, decisions and actions from what is already known and into new spaces of action	Stands upright and engages with fellow-world-citizens in defining what is to be known, the reality of tomorrow

Konstantinou & Müller, 2021

Summarizing

Leaders personalities – suggestions from three perspectives

Emotional/social intelligence
Balanced/horizontal leadership
Trustful leadership

Psychological:
Project manager
EQ, IQ, MQ

Sociological:
Life-stories of megaproject leaders

Philosophical:
Suggested leader personalities

Personal characteristics ('fit')
Social value orientation
Relationship with team
Professionalization
Turning points

Stands upright and engages with fellow-world-citizens in defining what is to be known, the reality of tomorrow

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Towards research agenda

- Validate leader-related findings in megaprojects

- Investigate the relationship between the three leader perspectives

- Investigate the leader – structure relationship and the potential of particular personalities that fit certain structures

- Identify potential benefits of this fit and ways to pursue them

Thank you

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References

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