

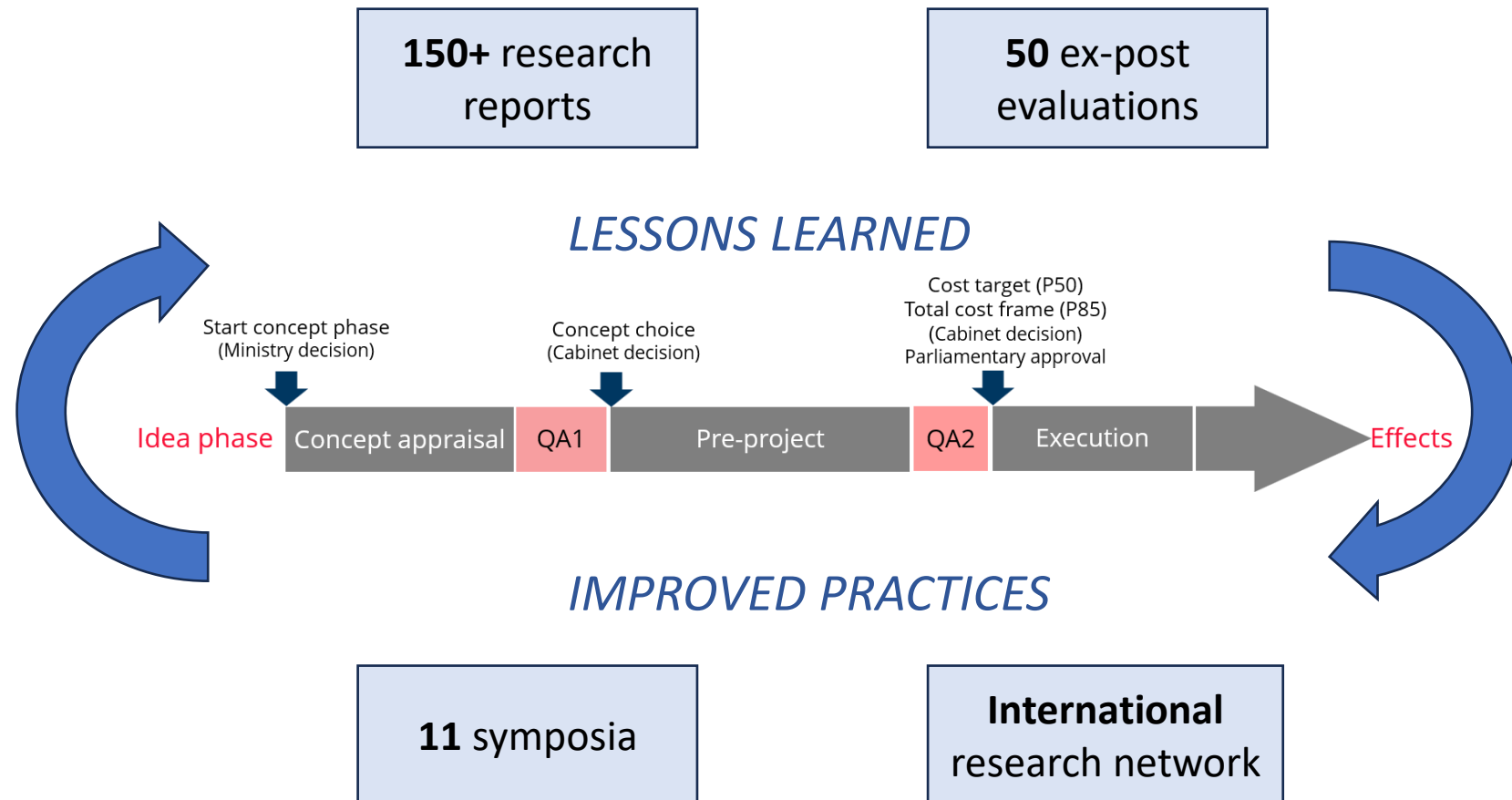
Update on Project Governance Research in Norway

Concept International Symposium 24 September 2026

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Concept Research Programme, NTNU

The Concept Research Programme

- 25 years of learning from major public projects
- Turning project experience into evidence-based policy and practice



A unique evidence base

- Trailbase: a project archive containing data from more than 300 major public projects
- Across sectors: Transport – Defence – Digitalisation - Buildings
- Interviews with project owners, managers and key stakeholders
- Strong willingness of practitioners to share their experiences



Concept: Balancing relevance and independence



Action research

- Embedded in the project
- High relevance
- Active involvement



Concept

- ✓ Practical relevance
- ✓ Scientific independence
- ✓ Learning and improvement



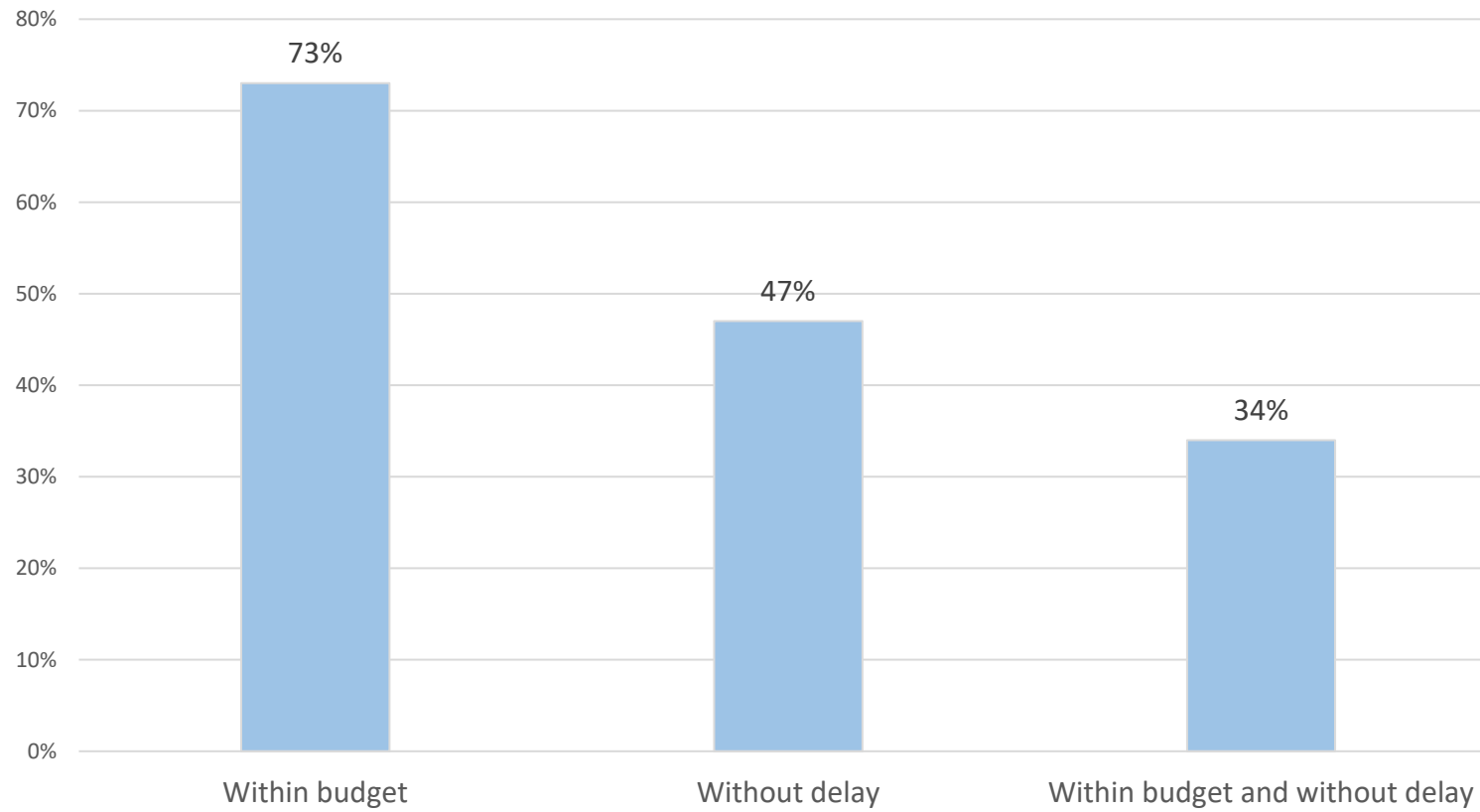
Traditional research

- Outside the project
- Independence
- Critical distance

Selected recent findings



“The Iron Law of Project Management”?



- The Norwegian evidence suggests a more nuanced picture
- Cost performance is generally strong, while schedule performance remains more challenging.

Managing for benefits, not just delivery

- Key insights from Concept studies:
 - Projects do not create benefits on their own. People and organisations do.
 - Benefits often receive less attention than cost, time and scope
 - Organisational change is often more important than technical delivery.
 - Many benefits materialise long after project completion

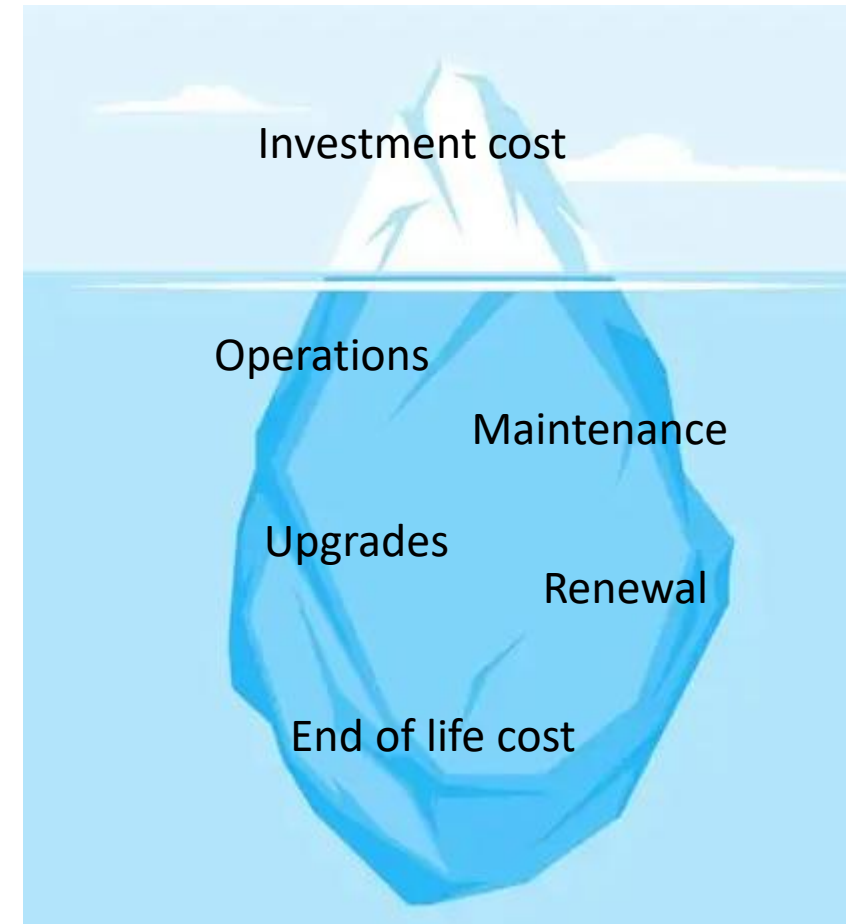


Benefits management recommendations:

- ✓ Clear theory of change
- ✓ Clear benefit owners
- ✓ Accountability for outcomes
 - ✓ Benefit plans with measurable targets
- ✓ Follow-up after completion

The full life-cycle perspective

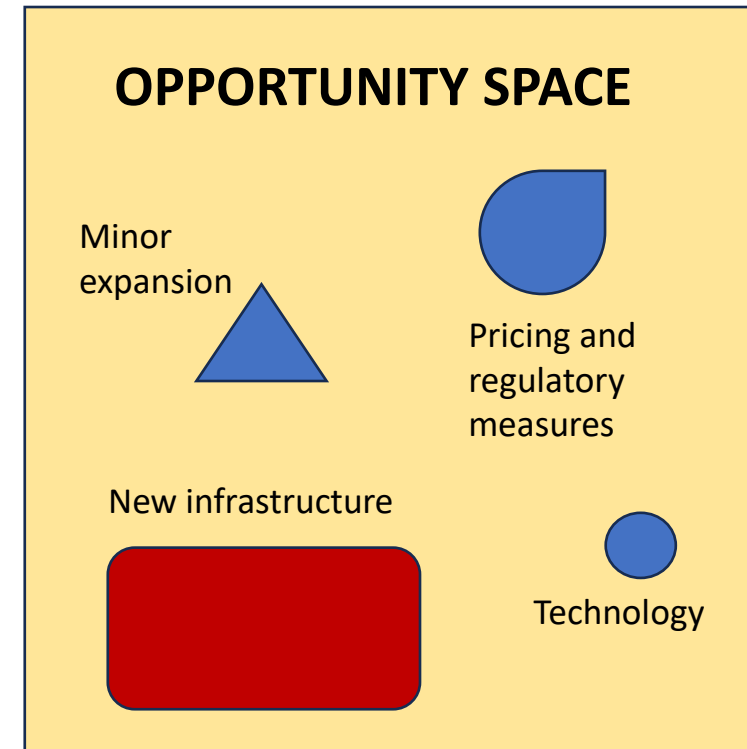
- Key insights from Concept studies on lifetime and life cycle perspectives:
 - Investment costs receive most of the attention, while operating, maintenance and renewal costs are often treated more superficially.
 - Asset lifetime fundamentally influences both costs and benefits, yet lifetime assumptions are often weakly documented and rarely evidence-based.
- Implications:
 - Take a life-cycle perspective from the earliest planning stages
 - Base assumptions on experiences from previous projects
 - Explicitly address uncertainty and adaptability



The pursuit of Do-minimum alternatives. Do we invest too much in new infrastructure?

- Key insights from Concept study:
 - Despite the mandatory QA1, early project appraisals tend to favour large investments.
 - Better exploration of do-minimum alternatives can contribute to both cost-effectiveness and sustainability.
- Recommendations:
 - Broaden search beyond infrastructure and agency boundaries
 - Use systematic screening methods
 - Better tools for appraisal of small measures
 - Establish multi-disciplinary teams in the front-end phase
 - Rewards efficient solutions rather than ambitious projects
 - Better use of existing assets

PROBLEM

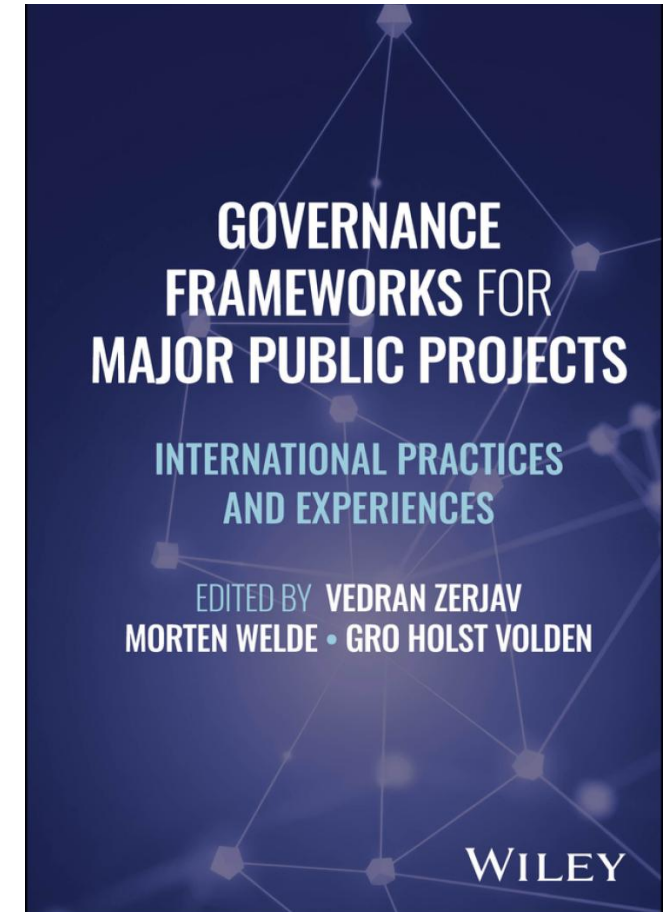
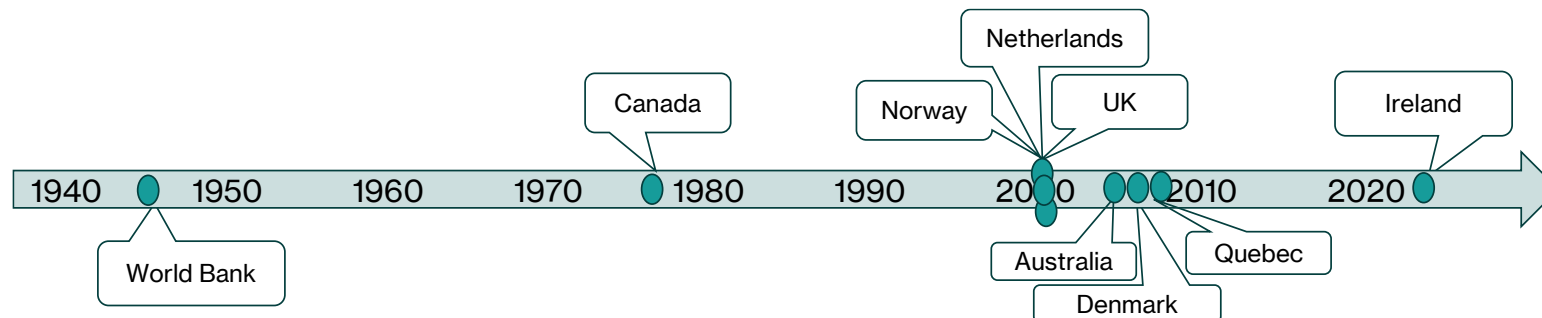


BENEFITS



New edited volume: Governance Frameworks for Major Public Projects

- A comparative study of 12 governance frameworks
- Contributions from 22 experts, a mix of academics and civil servants
- Each chapter:
 - Background and history
 - The framework with stage-gate model, QA mechanisms, roles and responsibilities etc.
 - Experiences with the framework



Edited volume (cont.)

- Key findings across countries:
 - Formal stage-gate models are widespread
 - Institutional designs vary
 - Front-end governance is critical
 - Independent quality assurance adds value
 - Tensions between politics and rational decision-making remains a challenge
 - Evidence matters, but remains scarce
- Recommendations:
 - Invest early before committing
 - Challenge assumptions on causality
 - Clarify accountability
 - Promote transparency
 - Ensure independent scrutiny
 - Capability building and knowledge sharing as part of the frameworks
 - Manage exceptions strictly
 - Adapt continuously

We welcome more policy-oriented research contributions

Policy Contributions: Engaging with Policy

Project Leadership and Society

Edited by

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Concept research programme

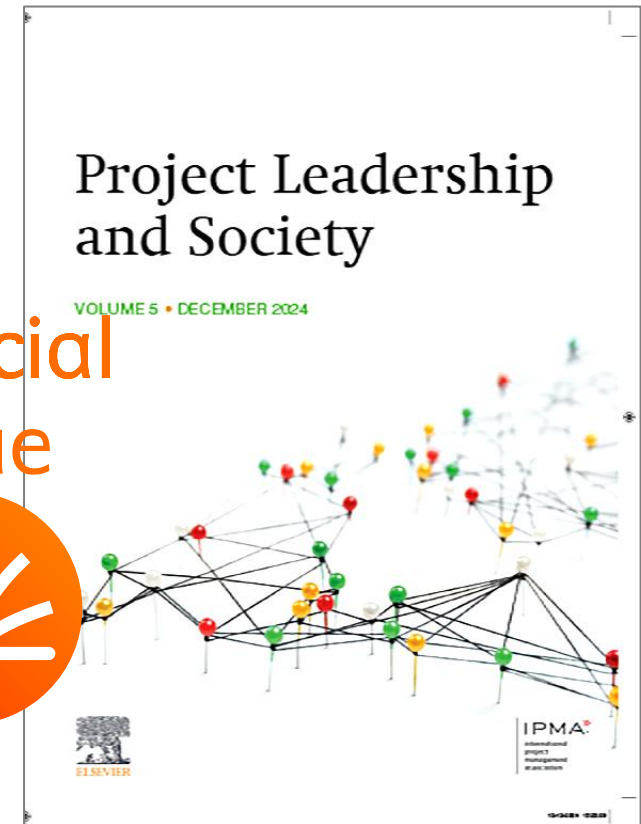
Daniella Jenkins, University of Bristol

Dominic Doe Ahiaga-Dagbui, Deakin University

Per Svejvig, Aarhus University

Martina Huemann, University College London, BSSC and The
Project Hub, Vienna University of Economics and Business

Special
Issue



<https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/project-leadership-and-society>

Enjoy the symposium

Learn. Share. Connect.

- The Concept team will be here throughout the symposium. Come and talk to us!



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Thank You!

See our website and follow us
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<https://www.ntnu.edu/concept>

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