



# Crafting and maintaining organizational identity narrative in a temporary organization: The case of Tideway megaproject

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to explore organizational identity crafting and maintaining processes in a temporary organization where multiple organizations are involved. We collected data using interviews, archival documents, and visual data to study the case of Tideway (Bazalgette Tunnel Limited) in the United Kingdom. A thematic analysis with visual representation was used. Findings provide evidence that both organizational identity crafting and maintaining processes are integrated in temporary organization. We identified five dimensions of organizational identity crafting: encouraging socialization; showing leadership behavior; communicating with internal and external stakeholders; doing citizenship behavior; and developing and implementing legacy strategy. The study also provided evidence of four elements of organizational identity maintaining: hybrid working as the new normal; providing support system; additional resource utilizing; and adapting to the next normal. Our developed model of organizational identity mapping has a number of implications for ongoing research on organizational identity narrative in temporary organizations.

## 1. Introduction

The need for crafting and maintaining organizational identity narratives is recognized as important effort in any organizations (Alvesson et al., 2008; Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Schultz & Hernes, 2013) but especially in temporary organizations (Koene & van Riemsdijk, 2006; Sergeeva & Ninan, 2023a). Temporary organizations such as projects and megaprojects are unique endeavors that attract a lot of attention from the public. Each project, especially a megaproject, aims to create a unique special identity that is different from other previous or current projects. This unique special identity refers to what a project/megaproject is known for answering questions: Who are we as a temporary organization? What are we doing? What do we want to achieve in the future? Given that team members work together only for a limited timeframe, there is a need for putting effort in crafting a differentiated unique identity within the team and maintaining it throughout organizational life (Sergeeva & Ninan, 2023b).

Organizational identity is crafted and maintained through narratives that can be used in combinations in spoken (i.e., formal, and informal meetings, conversations, talks), written (i.e., reports, briefs, documents), and visual (i.e., videos, pictures) forms (Bojovic et al., 2020; Ernst & Schleiter, 2021). Organizational identity narratives are used in

creating and maintaining a shared identity with shared values within the team that is crucial in ever dynamic temporary settings. Without a shared identity a temporary organization may suffer from dispersed interests, contradicting and conflicting views, and a lack of sense of working towards the same purpose and vision (Sergeeva & Ninan, 2023a, b).

Temporary organizations, i.e., projects, are characterized by narratives in order for value to be derived from them. The difficulties, of course, are multiplied in those cases where there are several different organizations whose objectives need to be accomplished, as is often the case with megaprojects (Gil et al., 2017). During the lifetime of the project, temporary organizations coordinate activities which may range from 5 days to 20 years (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1998), during which management and teams are constantly changing. This creates the need for the creation of an organizational identity narrative before a project starts. To achieve shared understanding and shared identity among team members, it is often necessary to maintain these organizational identity narratives throughout the project life cycle. In a megaproject (Gillett & Tennent, 2017; Locatelli & Mancini, 2010), several different organizations, such as designer, consultant, client, contractors etc., are coordinating, which creates a need for an organizational identity narrative that is created, maintained over the time, and to align effort, it needs to be

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communicated to members of the internal team (Sergeeva & Roehrich, 2018). In the context of megaproject, the formulation and maintenance of an identity narrative is critical.

Narratives as temporal discourses provide sustainability, stability and promote or resist change in and around organizations (Vaara et al., 2016). There is an increasing interest in and research into organizational identity narratives exploring their different aspects, interactions, changes, and strategies for creating them in temporary project context (Sergeeva & Winch, 2021; Winch & Sergeeva, 2022). Narratives play an important role in the development of organizational identity and image (Brown et al., 2005; Humphreys & Brown, 2002). This paper focuses on temporary organization's identity narrative crafting and maintaining. We define identity narrative crafting as a process of creating an organizational identity narrative; identity narrative maintaining as a process of sustaining an organizational identity narrative over an organizational life (Sergeeva & Ninan, 2023a, b). Past project management research has started to shed some light into project identity and image narratives (Sergeeva & Winch, 2021), but calls for further empirical research to explore how these are crafted and maintained. The construction of an individual's social landscape is used to connect individuals to wider social performances; it draws upon both the individual's identity and self-narrative, as well as the discursive context in which they are operating (Brown, 2015; Rostron, 2022). Thus, the narrative structure involves the creation of a coherent story, a *narrative identity* (Ricoeur, 1991, 1994), which embodies the multiple and often conflicting identities that individuals articulate over time (McAdams, 1996).

Within identity studies, the so-called *narrative turn* (Brown et al., 2009) has started to address the challenge of examining the processes of identity construction rather than factors affecting identity outcomes (Ashforth et al., 2008; Brown & Toyoki, 2013) by exploring how individuals make ongoing sense of themselves and others over time (Bolander et al., 2019; Mallett & Wapshott, 2012; Watson, 2009), the role of life histories and experiences prior to becoming a manager (Bolander et al., 2019; Watson, 2009) and how they accommodate the demands of varying contexts in which they work (Bresnen et al., 2019; Van Grinsven et al., 2020). For example, in a story, a landscape provides meaning to the narrative arc (actors, settings, plotlines to build a story), as well as the behaviors and choices of the actors. There are different meanings to the phrase *he picked up the knife* depending on whether it takes place in a restaurant, a domestic kitchen, an operating theatre, or a dark alleyway and constructs the actor picking up the knife and the narrative arc in different ways (Rostron, 2022). Individuals account for themselves through identity narratives (Brown, 2019).

Within organization studies, research has focused on the construct of identity work by paying considerable attention to discourse (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004), and, in particular, the role of narratives (Clarke et al., 2009; Maclean et al., 2012; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). A number of these studies indicate that actors can invoke multiple identities through narratives as a process of maneuvering discursive regimes and social relations (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Another stream of research focuses on managerial identity, in particular the relationship between self-identity and social expectations of a managerial role (Bolander et al., 2019; Hay, 2014; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Sirris, 2019), as well as the interplay between identity work and identity regulation (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). However, there is little about how temporary organization's identity narrative is crafted and maintained, given its temporary nature. Hence, we pose the following research questions:

How do project participants craft the megaproject identity narrative?

How do project participants maintain the megaproject identity narrative?

Our case study on a megaproject (*Tideway megaproject*) is currently in the execution stage, and provides access to multiple stakeholders and organizations, which makes it an interesting context in which to study megaproject's identity narrative. Our study makes two contributions: the first is to develop better understanding and insights about organizational identity narrative; the second is to provide insights into

processes of organizational identity narrative crafting and maintaining. Following the introduction, the article discusses relevant theory, followed by a description of the case and a discussion of the methodology; providing evidence in findings, a discussion of the findings is presented, and conclusions are drawn.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Narratives

Narratives are defined as temporal discourses that provide "essential means for maintaining or reproducing stability and/or promoting or resisting change in and around organizations" (Vaara et al., 2016, p. 496). Narrative is a vehicle for negotiating, sharing, and disputing meaning and can be presented in a variety of forms, including orally, in writing, or on film (Veenswijk & Berendse, 2008). In other words, narratives serve to define who we are as individuals, and they empower social actors by giving their lives a sense of meaning, purpose, and coherence (Wright et al., 2012). In general, narratives are recognized as attempts to impose order and, therefore, as integral elements of organizing (Currie & Brown, 2003; Weick, 1979). Various purposes are served by them, including persuasion, creating, and reinforcing messages, achieving shared understanding, and creating organizational and individual identity and image.

As narratives are temporal, they can change over time, becoming new narratives, as well as being repeated in organizations (Cunliffe et al., 2004). Narratives can be viewed as instruments through which individuals interpret and understand their lives and the social world by temporally organizing multiple life experiences and events into a narrative. It is about the "meanings that people attach reflexively to themselves" as they seek to answer existential questions about who they were, who they are and who they wish to become (Brown, 2015, p. 23). Moreover, narratives can also be interpreted as identity work in which managers as well as the organizations can play a significant role in constructing their own identities (Brown, 2015). Brown (2006) argues that organizations' identities are formed through a continuous process of narration in which a narrator and an audience formulate, edit, applaud, and refute various aspects of a narrative.

### 2.2. Identity narratives

Identity is inescapably temporal (Ricoeur, 1994); it is constantly in flux, pulling back yet pushing forward, negotiating, and adapting in the process (Dunne, 1996). Identity work is a continuous process that is affected by both internal and external motives, pressures, expectations, and prescriptions (Ybema et al., 2009). Therefore, it is considered to be a part of an ongoing process of revision, negotiation, retreat, and (re)invention. A narrative approach, on the other hand, establishes continuity between the past, present, and future (Rasmussen, 1996). Identity work is the dialectic between a self-reflective, internal sense and an outwardly directed social identity (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 2008). As a result of the social dialectic, identity work aims to manage the tensions, contradictions, and changes that arise from personal (Beech, 2008; Kreiner et al., 2006). It is the interpretive process of constructing a coherent sense of self amidst multiple social interactions and conflicting demands (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

Several studies have suggested that an actor can, through narrative, invoke a range of multiple and conflicting identities as a process of social relations (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003) that individuals articulate over time (McAdams, 1996). Identity narrative is a mode of self-experience (Eakin, 2006) through which individuals account for themselves (Brown, 2019) and is seen as central to the career and life changes of an individual by providing a sense of continuity "between who they have been and who they are becoming" (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010, p. 136). It provides a sense of unity, coherence, and purpose by bringing together "the events of lived experience in the plot of the story

a person tells about his or her life” (Ezzy, 1998, p. 239).

Furthermore, an identity has the capacity to “link the past with the future by giving a sense of continuity to an ever-changing story of the self” (Rasmussen, 1996, p. 164) since identity narrative is always “in-process and unfinished, continuously made and remade” (Ezzy, 1998, p. 246–247). Identity narratives are ways in which individuals use storytelling to make sense of themselves and others (Rhodes & Brown, 2005) by selecting and organizing events into a coherent and meaningful whole (Boje, 1991). Identity narrative focuses on linear dimension of narrative, that is, how the individual builds and maintains their identity over time, and how they make sense of themselves across a variety of social contexts, including the past, the present, and the future (Bolander et al., 2019; Watson, 2009). It plays an integral role in identity narrative crafting, since how can one act effectively without understanding the nature of the world? Meanwhile, identity narrative work connects individuals to wider social performances by constructing a personal social landscape informed by the individual’s personal history and self-narrative, as well as the discursive context in which they must act (Rostron, 2022).

### 2.3. Temporary organization’s identity narrative crafting and maintaining

There is a growing research work into narratives and identity work in temporary organizational settings. There is a recognition in the project management literature that narratives play an important role in project organizing by connecting current practice to future projections and how to derive value from projects (Green & Sergeeva, 2019; Sergeeva & Winch, 2021). They also have important implications for shaping the internal identity of temporary organizations. According to Sergeeva and Winch (2021), narratives are deliberately employed in project organization for various purposes, including establishing specific futures, motivating investors, legitimizing actions, promoting projects, both internally and externally. By project narratives we mean narrative about the project’s mission and vision, identity, image, and value creation throughout its life cycle. Project identity narrative is an important narrative about what project is about and aims to achieve. An organizational identity narrative is conveyed internally (Ninan et al., 2019; Sergeeva & Winch, 2020). There is a need to craft this narrative by internal team members in project organization (Sergeeva & Winch, 2021). Some past project management research has emphasized the importance of project identity and the need to craft and maintain project identity. Veenswijk and Berendse (2008) are among the first who defined project narratives as narratives about project’s mission and vision, identity, image, and value creation throughout a project lifecycle. Lehtonen and Martinsuo (2009) emphasize that megaprojects have their unique task and develop their own unique identity. Willems et al. (2020) in their study on shaping project autonomy highlight *strong project identity* among team members which contributes to a greater perceived isolation among parent organizational actors, and the process of reinforcing project identity. Carlsen and Pitsis (2020) introduce the concept of “narrative capital” and highlight the role and importance of project identity narrative. Sergeeva and Ninan (2023a) have shown how identity narrative was created in real project case studies including Tideway (UK), Eden project (UK), Dakota Access Pipeline (USA), and Chennai Metro Rail (India). Further research has shown that labels and stories help in creating an identity for the project (Ninan & Sergeeva, 2021, 2022), and comparisons help in enhancing the perceptions of identity for the community (Sergeeva & Ninan, 2023c). Some latest research by Arda et al. (2024) has focused on narrative strategies by policymakers that influence citizen’s information seeking, belief formation and actions. They emphasize that “narrative strategies of policymakers are important effective communicative action, to discursively construct the megaproject identity – e.g. sustainable megaproject, efficient megaproject, technological megaproject – and to package it into a narrative that allow citizens to make sense of key megaproject aspects” (Arda

et al., 2024, p. 8).

Project is a temporary organization and has a time limit because it has a specific start and end date (Cummings & Pletcher, 2011). Hence, it is imperative to develop identity narrative that team members can refer to when making sense and talking about the project. There is also a need to maintain organizational identity narrative to achieve a shared understanding among team members, to create a consistent and coherent understanding of an organization, especially those which are temporary in nature and subject to being disbanded at the end (Sergeeva & Ninan, 2023a). The process of maintaining project identity narrative continues throughout a project lifecycle and requires effort from internal team members. To date, much less is known about the process of maintaining project identity narrative than about crafting it. Multiple organizations with multiple organizational identities are involved in megaprojects, it is thus necessary to develop and communicate a narrative, or a story, about an organization’s identity to internal team members to align their efforts (Sergeeva & Roehrich, 2018). To date, there is a knowledge gap in understanding how temporary organization’s identity narrative has been crafted and maintained given its temporary nature, which this paper aims to contribute.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Research design

We conducted a single case study to understand organizational identity in a megaproject. Since case studies can yield a rich set of data, they are particularly suitable for answering research questions requiring a detailed understanding (Hartley, 2004). Our study focuses on Tideway (Bazalgette Tunnel Limited) in London, United Kingdom, which is an excellent example of temporary organization that put effort in crafting and maintaining unique shared identity. This is evident from formal and informal events, brainstorming exercises where the team members shared their views on the organizational purpose and vision for the future. At the project’s initial phase, the second author visited the project and events, and had interactions with the people working on the project, which later helped us to access the project. We selected this case to explore how organizational identity is crafted and maintained – evolves over a period – in a typical megaproject project. An inductive and detailed approach is used to address our research questions.

### 3.2. Case description: tideway megaproject

Megaprojects can be defined as “large-scale, complex ventures that typically cost [USD one] billion or more, take many years to develop and build, involve multiple public and private stakeholders, are transformational, and impact millions of people” (Flyvbjerg, 2017, p. 2). Public institutions typically hold an important role in the project-financing of these undertakings because of their strategic nature and high cost (Locatelli & Mancini, 2010). Megaprojects are temporary endeavors (i.e., projects) that entail a significant investment, are extremely complex, and have a long-lasting impact on the economy, the environment, technological development, and society (Bruzelius et al., 2002; Brookes & Locatelli, 2015; Zhai et al., 2009). In general, they imply the construction of physical infrastructures, such as roads, railways, airports, bridges, energy transport, and electronic communication systems (Priemus, 2010). Megaproject has a distinct governance structure, as well as a temporary production system (Miller & Hobbs, 2005).

Megaprojects are characterized by complexity, uncertainty, and political sensitivity. They are normally accomplished through a temporary interorganizational network involving private and public organizations (Gil & Fu, 2022). These projects involve a wide range of business partners, including representatives from the industry, politicians, and others (Clegg et al., 2002), and have a significant economic and environmental impact (Bruzelius et al., 2002). It has been observed that organizations that undertake megaprojects encounter a performance paradox, in that

there is a considerable gap between what is expected from investment and what is ultimately achieved (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003a, 2004). According to Flyvbjerg et al. (2003b), megaprojects are notorious for failing to adhere to budgets, timelines, and benefits.

The majority of London is serviced by a combined sewerage system that collects sewage, rainwater runoff from roads, gutters, and pavements, along with sewage from loos, sinks, showers, and washing machines - hence combined. After the Great Stink of 1858, Sir Joseph Bazalgette designed the magnificent system that we rely on today. Bazalgette had the foresight to design his system to serve four million people by the mid-nineteenth century. With a population approaching nine million, the 1100 miles of underground sewers are simply overwhelmed by the current population. Therefore, Thames Water is upgrading London's sewer system to accommodate the growing population. With the construction of this 25 km tunnel, sewage waste will be intercepted, stored, and ultimately transferred away from the river Thames, making it possible to tackle the current pollution problem as well as provide a system that will meet future needs.

Moreover, the Tideway megaproject (<https://www.tideway.london/>) is aiming to improve the condition of the water in the tidal Thames and ensuring it complies with relevant wastewater legislation by reducing the overflow of untreated sewage discharge. As well as the key benefit of increased water quality, the project also provides protection for users of the tidal Thames and infrastructure which will improve London's sewer network resilience to climate change and population growth. Without this project there would be an increased risk of more frequent sewage overflows, more frequent fish kills, continued increased health risks to

recreational users, worse litter blight, and adverse impacts on the attractiveness of the water frontage.

The project is in the construction phase with nearly 90% of the construction work complete. Across 24 construction sites in London, the expansion of London's sewer network is scheduled to be completed by 2025. Tideway is designed to be in operation for at least 120 years. The project planning was approved in 2014 and construction work started in 2016, followed by tunnelling in 2018. Tunnelling is expected to be complete in 2023, with all work including testing and commission to be completed by 2025. The cost of the project is expected to be £4.1 billion and 10 different organizations are involved, working with a program manager, system integrator and three main work contractors, along with a client and a consultant (archival documents).

### 3.3. Data collection

We collected data using semi-structured interviews, archival documents, and visual data. Semi-structured interviews were selected as a primary data-gathering method as they are a rich source of insights and provide real-time data. Archival documents and visual data were used and analyzed to compare different sources of information, to consider alternative explanations (Yin, 2018) and gain an insightful understanding of the project context and its background. Table 1 provides further details for multi-sourced dataset.

#### 3.3.1. Interviews

We conducted 16 semi-structured interviews with 14 participants,

**Table 1**  
Methods for data collection.

Interviews					
Role of organization	Designations	Education	Project joining (year)	Experience (years)	Interview duration (minutes)
Client	Chief Technical Officer	MBA	2012	39	102
	Head of Corporate Responsibility	-	2015	32	60
	Director of Strategy and Regulation	MSc.	2015	26	45
	Director of Business Services and HSW	MSc.	2016	21	58
	Program Manager	MSc.	2015	26	54
	Digital Communication Manager	M.A.	2017	16	53
	Internal Communication Manager	-	2017	9	51
Water supply and wastewater treatment organization	Head of Transformation	MBA	2014	45	67
Civil engineering- Contractor	Head of Health and Safety	-	2014	26	57
	Deputy Head of Health and Safety	-	2016	23	53
Civil engineering- Program manager	Program Director	MSc.	2015	28	45
	Project Manager 1	Meng	2017	14	53
	Project Manager 2	Meng	2015	8	55
	Schedule Integration Lead	BE	2019	12	55
Archival data					
Type of archival data	Detail of archival data				Quantity
Corporate news	Financial reports				29
	Directorate changes				
	Half yearly reports				
	Others				
Financial publications	Annual reports and financial statements				113
	Interim reports and financial statements				
	Debt summaries				
	Investor reports				
	Holding company principles				
	Supplementary prospectus				
Revenue statements	Revenue statements				9
Supply chain	Main contractor awards				13
Government support package	License award documents				11
Impact reports	Social impact				3
	Legacy assessment				
PowerPoint presentations	Investor presentations				5
Visual data					
Videos	Execution of the project and community awareness				80



ranging from 45 to 102 min. We used a theoretical sampling approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) when selecting study participants to generate better insights and develop or expand theory (Creswell, 2007). Participants included senior leadership and middle management such as Chief Technical Officer, Program Director, Program Manager, Director of Strategy and Regulation, Director of Business Services and HSW (Health, Safety and Wellbeing), Head of Health and Safety, Head of Corporate Responsibility, Head of Transformation, and other team members (Internal Communication Manager, Digital Communication Manager, Schedule Integration Lead, Deputy Head of Health and Safety, Project Managers). They were members of client and utility suppliers, as well as contractor and program manager organizations involved in delivery of the megaproject (see Table 1 for details). Our strategy was to interview senior and middle managers who are actively involved in creating and maintaining project identity.

In semi-structured interviews, informants were asked a core set of structured questions with open-ended probes to elicit further information (see Appendix A for the interview guide). We encouraged interviewees to use their own terminology and discuss issues and concepts they felt best represented their own experiences. Initially, we utilized a snowballing technique, asking each informant for additional contacts who they believed could help us understand the identity crafting and maintaining process. The initial interview protocol was wide-ranging, as we sought to understand a large complex project with multiple stakeholders. The subsequent interviews led to the development of more focused questions as themes emerged from the data. The interviews were recorded and transcribed.

### 3.3.2. Archival documents

To develop sufficient background understanding of the case, we utilized archival sources of data, acquired either through searches on the internet or provided by Tideway official website. The archival data consists of 183 internal and publicly available files, including PowerPoint presentations, annual reports, investor reports, revenue statements, corporate news, government support packages, impact reports etc. We used archival data to develop a better background understanding of the case context.

### 3.3.3. Visual data

Video data offers a unique perspective on phenomena of interest through access to the surrounding context. The field has shown that a wide range of research (Lave 1988; Scribner, 1984) indicates that it is imperative to examine interactions and relationships between individuals, artifacts, and social groups as a means of understanding how people learn. Video offers a comprehensive and rich source of data in a format that can be viewed repeatedly, making it an ideal means of capturing and analyzing context (Asan & Montague, 2014). We used 80 publicly available videos available on YouTube (tunnel vision) and Tideway website ranging from 2 to 14 min.

### 3.4. Data analysis

We have analyzed visual data in the form of videos. We transcribed them, identified and coded major activities/events explained in the videos with the time in which those activities/events have been performed. Fig. 1 represents visual representation of video data. Visual representation allows us to present large amounts of information in a relatively small space, and it can be used to develop and verify theoretical concepts (Langley, 1999). The time scale along the left-hand side of Fig. 1 is decomposed into six successive years. These years represent when the activities and events occurred; hence, they are simply a means of organizing the description of activities and events (Langley & Truax, 1994). Within each year, there is a certain continuity in the activities and events as represented in Fig. 1, which provides information on the temporary organization and traces of the organizational identity. The activities and events represented in Fig. 1 are a depiction of identify

crafting and maintaining such as boat trips were organized to create awareness around the community about the project and to discuss the community's concern regarding the project.

Moreover, thematic analysis was used for data analysis. It provides insights into meaningful themes by identifying, organizing, and categorizing them (Braun & Clarke, 2012). In this study, thematic analysis was abductive going back and forth (Dunne & Dougherty, 2016) to read the transcripts (interviews and visual data), develop initial codes which leads to identifying sub-themes and themes. We followed Braun and Clarke's (2012) practical guide for applying thematic analysis: first, the transcriptions were read several times over, initial coding have been conducted. The sub-themes of encouraging socialization, showing leadership behavior, communicating with internal and external stakeholders, doing citizenship behavior, developing and implementing legacy strategy, hybrid working as the new normal, providing support system, additional resource utilizing and adapting to the next normal were identified; third, the main themes were defined by reviewing the sub-themes. As shown in Table 2 and Table 3 below, the sub-themes and themes are derived from the coding process.

## 4. Findings

Two major themes emerge from our findings, which exhibit the organizational identity crafting and maintaining: how organizational identity has been crafted in a megaproject and how organizational identity has been maintained. The term *project DNA* was used by participants when referring to organizational identity. DNA as deoxyribonucleic acid is used as metaphor by participants to explain identity.

### 4.1. Organizational identity crafting

Our findings indicate that there are five sub-themes to explore in organizational identity crafting: encouraging socialization, showing leadership behavior; communicating with internal and external stakeholders; doing citizenship behavior; and developing and implementing legacy strategy.

#### 4.1.1. Encouraging socialization

Encouraging socialization refers to the process through which people are encouraged to learn about a culture and develop a sense of belonging to the project. Multiple organizations are involved in a megaproject, each having different values, norms, and cultures. These different values, norms and cultures were merged to create an organizational identity. Thus, it was suggested by the Head of Health and Safety from the contractor side that "rather than imposing a culture of one organization to another, it is better to merge it with right way philosophy. Like a Chameleon and bespoke to each of the schemes... we've looked at what cultures are already there and extracted all the good points, merge them in right way, put them all in a mixing bowl and we've got a unique collaborative culture". As illustrated below:

*There was a Tideway operating model, which was to get the right cultural behaviors in Tideway. If stakeholders don't have clarity as to the different roles of the different teams in the different organizations, they don't work well together.... We adopt RACI program, it's called responsible, accountable, consulted, informed and it's a way of dealing with innovative organizational culture behaviors to make sure everyone is clear on what's expected of them and how they work with other people, that's part of the DNA for me clarity, alignment, engaging people, involving people on their roles. (Head of Transformation, Water supply and wastewater treatment organization)*

Moreover, from the very outset, it was evident that the project was going to be different—and better. Particularly from a health and safety perspective, the concern was with doing things the right way: doing them safely or not at all, which is a strong organizational identity narrative. To develop, transfer, and promote this cultural identity, the

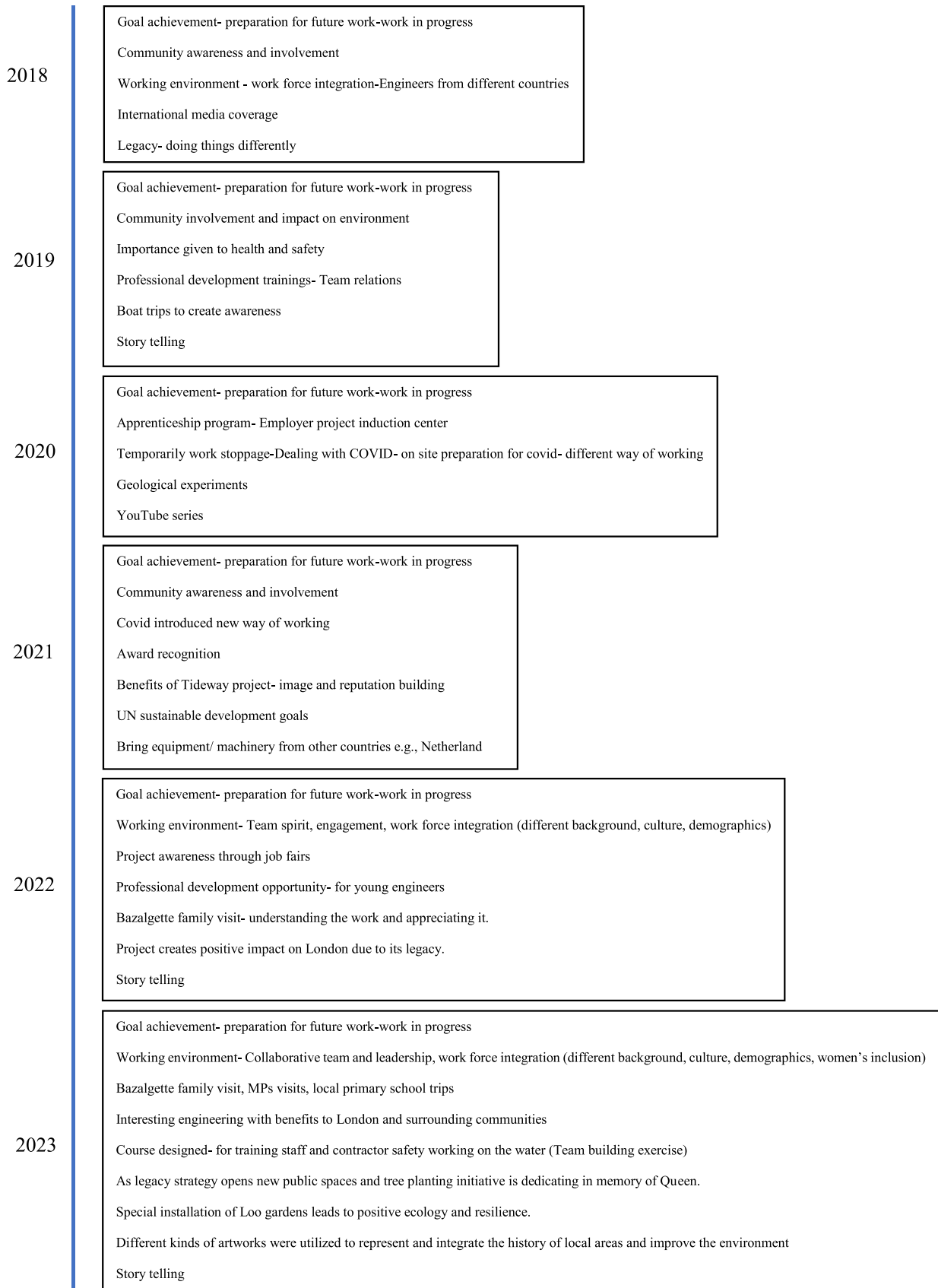


Fig. 1. Extraction from visual data.

**Table 2**  
Illustration of the coding process from interviews.

Themes	Sub-themes	Initial coding	Supportive quotations
Organizational identity crafting	Encouraging socialization	Promoting health and safety among people Promoting social values Encouraging the team to get involved	There's a very comprehensive induction program—the EPIC induction—which is very innovative for the industry. It's very immersive. It's like actors basically playing out scenarios rather than a PowerPoint presentation to promote health and safety on site, and that's done within first couple of days when you join the project so straightaway, health and safety is promoted to you as the top priority. Apart from that, there are kind of extracurricular if you like networks, there are diversity and inclusion networks that people are actively encouraged to get involved in that is supported at executive level. (Digital Communication Manager, Client)
	Showing leadership behavior	Leaders are encouraging and coaching people Demonstrating leadership competencies	Leadership plays a key role; they are enabler, they allow things to happen, and encourage and coach people to bring the best... We're starting to see a lot of work on insights profile in project leadership... What type of person you are and we're trying to acknowledge the diversity of thought, and we're starting to embrace what's there, and I just think that their coaching style is the best leadership... As I said at the start, encouraging people is the key thing. (Program Manager, Client)
	Communicating with internal and external stakeholders	Communicating with local people and communities about project	We've invested quite heavily in communicating within the project, and the local

**Table 2 (continued)**

Themes	Sub-themes	Initial coding	Supportive quotations
			communities, because no one wanted a giant tunnel boring machine next to their houses or flats. Tideway instead of being defensive, they set up offices and porter cabins with the local communities. To communicate with people, the project is happening, therefore it's happening, this is how we're going to reduce noise, reduce dust, we're moving logistics not by lorries but we're going to do it through a series of barges... Where you don't create emissions and damage people and things. (Head of Transformation, Water supply and wastewater treatment organization)
	Doing citizenship behavior	Helping residents with gardening project Engaging with wider community	There's a local gardening project at my site, where some residents ask for help with and some of the guys from site just went there for say like half a day just to help clear things and shift loads of stuff and I think it does impact on how you feel coming to work... It makes you sort of proud to be part of the project, knowing that they're doing other things outside in the community.... The community gets the most value out of the project probably are the ones where they've come to us and said, could you help with XYZ. (Project Manager 1, Program manager)
	Developing and implementing legacy strategy	Project is delivering wider benefits in terms of environment, health and safety, people, place and economy	We came up with a legacy structure with five different areas... So, there was environment, health, safety and wellbeing, people,

(continued on next page)

Table 2 (continued)

Themes	Sub-themes	Initial coding	Supportive quotations
Organizational identity maintaining	Hybrid working as new normal	Strategizing process Visioning narratives	place, and economy.... And you know the core environmental benefits were clearly delivering the tunnel and making sure that it worked effectively.... But there were broader environmental benefits too. Health, safety, and wellbeing is fundamental to us, and it has been all the way through the project and will continue to be. Can we support a shift in the health, safety, and wellbeing of those involved in the project? That would really move the sector on the major project, in terms of what it's able to achieve and then people, place, and economy. There's a range of different commitments— 54 commitments in total.... They're all out there and we report on our progress against them now. (Director of Strategy and Regulation, Client)
	Providing support system	Adopting hybrid way of working Working from home and office	We are following a hybrid way of working and we will not allow anyone to work from home full-time because we value interaction. So, I expect to see people in the office at least a day, two days a week. Which days it is up to them in between them and their line manager. (Program Manager, Client)
		Focusing more on welfare facilities Having strict measures in place Supporting workers	We had quite strict measures in place. We reduce the site team, so you're only allowed on site if you absolutely had to be on site. Otherwise, you weren't allowed on site, and people were working in shifts and

Table 2 (continued)

Themes	Sub-themes	Initial coding	Supportive quotations
	Additional resource utilizing	Doing extra things which need more resources Changing spaces Allocating additional resources	bubbles... Some of the sites had things like watches that detected how close they were with one another... People had to wear masks all the time. We have always had welfare facilities on site as well. So, on-site nurses and their support for people who need that support. So, there have been strict measures in place to make sure that everybody has been kept as safe as possible... we encourage everybody to test themselves when they come to work. (Internal Communication Manager, Client)
	Adapting to the next normal	Keeping the safety measures on site Adapting to changes and new normal Focusing on people, their safety and wellbeing	From a budget point of view, we've had to do extra things to the welfare... We've had to get more units, we've got bigger, more changing room space to count for everybody on site, which we wouldn't have otherwise done, which obviously means more money and there are certain tasks which take longer while you're doing them... if someone goes off how do you then shuffle everybody else around? So, activities are done in sequential manner, rather than concurrent manner.... It might need more resources or some thinking towards how to handle that. (Project Manager 1, Program manager)
			There were lots of conversations and discussions, when we thought it was safe for staff to come back to site, that's when they were allowed to go back to site. But there were a lot of COVID safety

(continued on next page)



Table 2 (continued)

Themes	Sub-themes	Initial coding	Supportive quotations
			measures in place to make sure that everybody was kept safe. And even now with restrictions lifting, we are still going to be keeping some of our COVID safety measures in place because even though legally those restrictions have gone, we don't feel that its right to completely get rid of them because our priority is always keeping staff safe. Whether they were on site or in the office, things like mask wearing, hand sanitation, keeping distance will remain in place because that is the priority. (Internal Communication Manager, Client)

Employer's Project Induction Centre (EPIC) was established to provide experiential learning, as illustrated below:

*We wanted to have transformational health, safety, and wellbeing standards. We set our objectives to have greater parity between health and safety... so people understand the health risks and the damage that they can cause to physical health... But by adding the wellbeing as well, we also talked about the importance of individuals' wellbeing: their mental health, their own personal journeys around physical health, diet, exercise, etc., making sure that they were their very best whilst at work... At the outset, we made that statement upfront, and then said, "It's all going to start at the induction". We have a thing called EPIC, which is the Employer's Project Induction Centre, that everybody has to go through... It's an immersive, drama-based, involved experience. (Director of Business Services and Health, Safety and Wellbeing, Client)*

In this way, Tideway megaproject has crafted a unique organizational identity narrative, with priority given to people, their health and safety, their wellbeing, thus providing the best possible environment for them.

4.1.2. Showing leadership behavior

Leadership behavior that is collaborative, visible, open, approachable, and adaptive, crafts the project identity, and much time is spent working out who we are, what our values are and then making sure that those are fully shown and supported. As such, good leadership teams share their stories and are always there to listen to problems within their teams, problems that might otherwise be quite difficult to handle, rather than just tech dictating. This, in turn, empowers others for the purpose of allowing them to develop, either for the benefit of the project, or for their own future. Hence, we can say leadership plays a very key role in crafting organizational identity. This is illustrated below:

*Leadership team is the key, and they really believe in our values and really pushes them in everything that they say, do and act themselves. So, leadership leads by example. There is nothing that they would ask any of*

Table 3

Illustration of the coding procedures from visual data.

Themes	Sub-themes	Initial coding	Quotes
Organizational identity crafting	Encouraging socialization	Creating sense of safety and responsibility among people Enabling people and making them feel responsible	EPIC is an employer project induction center at tideway. We want something transformational and to challenge the way that people think and act around health and safety.... It's about enabling people to recognize that they are responsible for how they behave and changing their behavior sometimes very slightly can lead to completely different outcomes... If something is not safe, we don't do it... This shows the tideway really cares about people says a lot about the fact that they want people to be safe (2020). Top management are coming out with volunteers and board members for litter picking on the foreshore such as towels and wet wipes etc. and to make sure that everybody understands what the problem is and what is the solution. It shows that as the top management of the project, we care about what we are doing, in a very real and if not glamours way, but this is important (2019). Skill London (UK job and career event) promoting Tideway to the young generation about what opportunities there are in Tideway. Helping them to navigate the connection between what they are studying today for their future career tomorrow. Got social media campaign #EngineerWithMe-trying to engage people and make them understand and connect it with what it is to be an engineer (2019).
	Showing leadership behavior	Top management visibility and involvement Leading teams	
	Communicating with internal and external stakeholders	Using social media platforms to engage people Giving opportunities to young generations	
	Doing citizenship behavior	Engaging communities with rowing activities Taking opportunities for community engagement	Partnership with London youth rowing is key for delivery vision of reconnecting Londoners with river Thames... Active row program is a combination of on

(continued on next page)

Table 3 (continued)

Themes	Sub-themes	Initial coding	Quotes
			water rowing and indoor rowing. It gives access to a sport that children usually don't have, so they are getting into water, working with their teammates, socializing and that one opportunity can make a real difference. It can change the course of a young person's life (2021).
	Developing and implementing legacy strategy	Doing things differently Delivering wider benefits Visioning and narrating	We have developed legacy strategy to deliver wider benefits- we looked at environmental, social, and economic benefits included employment of local people, hard to reach group and previously workless people... We also wanted to see how we could improve local air quality and safety in London. So, we made a commitment to use the river to transport material and export waste (2021).
Organizational identity maintaining	Hybrid working as the new normal	Adopting new ways of working Working remotely and face-to-face	We have reduced site activity and new ways of working have been adopted due to COVID... After detailed planning and with extensive safety measures in place, smaller teams are back at work on all sites, while many of us continue to work remotely (2020).
	Providing support system	Focusing on mental health to support each other Supporting each other	We find ourselves in a very strange and uncertain situation due to COVID- huge focus on mental health now. Supporting each other and making sure everyone knows that we are all doing our best and that is all we can do at this time (2020).
	Additional resource utilizing	Putting additional systems/ resources to work during COVID	We have developed a one-way system in the office and on site, reducing the need for hand scanners, installing additional hand wash stations, increasing PPE and mask cleaning stations. Protecting canteen and store staff with separation barriers (2020).
	Adapting to the next normal	Adopting hybrid mode of working Prioritizing	Safety is our priority as work continues... Due to COVID new way of working which is hybrid mode of

Table 3 (continued)

Themes	Sub-themes	Initial coding	Quotes
		with the focus on people safety	working has been adopted (2021).

*us to do. They wouldn't do themselves or that they don't believe in... They are very visible, they are very open, they get involved. You know who they are? You see them, you are able to talk to them about anything.* (Internal Communication Manager, Client)

Leadership behavior not only influences organizational identity internally, but also externally as well. Leadership engagement with suppliers, shareholders, and stakeholders via workshops and consultations, helps define organizational identity as illustrated below, once that has been established there is a concerted effort to ensure that it is implemented:

*Senior leaders played great very important role here on identity crafting... It is the quality of our leadership, and we are lucky that we have a very experienced chief executive, and a very experienced and highly respected Chairman, so they are the two most important people, and their relationship is good it's a balance. I think they have been able to take the shareholders' board of directors along, so the shareholders have continued to be comfortable with the way that the executive team is operating. So that's very important and I think that leadership is also being able to convince and provide confidence to the other external stakeholders... So, they have always been very supportive and experienced.* (Chief Technical Officer, Client)

Given the context of the megaproject, with multiple internal and external stakeholders involved in the delivery, it is of note that the crafting of internal organizational identity involves engagement with external stakeholders.

#### 4.1.3. Communicating with internal and external stakeholders

It is evident from the findings that communicating with internal stakeholders plays an important role in shaping organizational identity and it is suggested that open and honest communication could help to build better understanding of the project, as evident below:

*Being open and honest with the communication with your team members... The team will be fully informed of what is happening and like how certain things are dealt with... and understand what senior management team is going through and what they are considering... It's a very different identity... The communication that we had with my project team is very open and very honest and they keep you in the loop of things which helps you to plan and get your mindset right.* (Schedule Integration Lead, Program manager)

Moreover, the evidence from visual data is not only consistent with the fact that communication plays vital role to create identity within team but also extend that it also shapes identity externally with regular engagement with community. As illustrated below:

*There is a community liaison working group: a group of residents, and counsellors, and they want to know what we are doing, and we keep them informed on a regular basis. They want us to minimize the impact on the local community which we are doing... There is a monthly engagement with the community to run through their concerns and questions they might have and let them know about the activities scheduled for a couple of weeks.* (Visual data, 2018)

The above quote illustrates the necessary role of communicating with both internal and external stakeholders within a project. It also emphasizes authentic leadership. The findings provide interesting evidence of organizational identity crafting and influence the organizational identity by being present in digital platform such as social media sites. Digital platforms help to represent project insights to an external

audience, which in turn aids in understanding the requirements of external audiences, evidenced below:

*We have started new platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. They are massive platforms with massive audiences that need individual care and attention. It was about taking the identity and showcasing it on those platforms.... If we didn't have a presence on digital platforms, that doesn't mean people are not already talking about the project. They are already talking about us, but by being in that space, you are able to be involved in the conversation... You can allay peoples' fears. You can respond to requests, respond to their questions... In addition to the kind of digital output we have community liaison groups for each site... We have quarterly newsletters that go out to residents... There are visitor centers and a 24-hour helpline, so people are informed that way. But through the digital channels you can show them in a dynamic kind of realistic way and expose to an external audience what this project is about. (Digital Communication Manager, Client)*

Digital space provides an opportunity to communicate organizational identity and image. It is a contemporary way of talking about a project, people's experiences, as well as gaining attention from the wider public.

#### 4.1.4. Doing citizenship behavior

The concept of citizenship behavior covers voluntary behavior, which is neither expected nor explicitly incorporated into formal agreements (contracts), but nevertheless it contributes to the functioning of an organization or interorganizational unit (Autry et al., 2008; Organ, 1988) and assists with performing tasks and problem solving (Braun et al., 2012, 2013). Organizations involved in the megaproject tried to understand problems and find solutions by engaging communities, charities, mental-health awareness programs etc., which made them feel good about the project and helped to further shape organizational identity. As illustrated below:

*We talk about reconnecting London and Londoners with the River Thames... We need to talk about the things that we do outside of our sites. So how can we help local communities? What does our community investment program look like? How do we volunteer with local charities, local establishments that are there to enhance the local community, per se, and what can we give back?... It gives them a greater sense of purpose. (Director of Business Services and Health, Safety and Wellbeing, Client)*

*Two plastic boats have been made of recycled plastic, some of which have been collected from the sites along the project. The boat will be used for school trips and community groups to learn about the impact of single use plastic on the environment, collecting litter and then go in to process to hopefully make more boats... It will raise awareness and not only make people involved in taking plastic out but remembering why it is important to dispose of the plastic or other litter. (Visual data, 2018)*

Moreover, there are volunteer activities such as Dragons Den sessions and the science, technology, engineering, math (STEM) programs, which help people, stakeholders, and local authorities to understand details about the project and to build good relationships. As illustrated below:

*There are Dragons Den type sessions which encouraged innovation. We all pitched ideas for further investment and one of the things that we developed on was the virtual reality tunnel boring machine called Barbara that we could use for training, engineering, and design purposes. We took that into schools and colleges and get amazing feedback... we used it to train our own people up.... We also presented it to our clients [Names of client], and that technology now is being used on other projects which is something again I am proud of so again there's been a lot of work done to build an identity. (Head of Health and Safety, Contractor)*

Doing citizenship behavior, volunteering activities, and organized

events all contribute to crafting the organizational identity narrative.

#### 4.1.5. Developing and implementing legacy strategy

The Tideway legacy strategy was multifaceted and included five themes: Environment; Health, Safety and Wellbeing; Economy; People; and Place. There are 54 commitments across these five key themes to maintain a high standard. Legacy commitments have been mapped against the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and it is expected they will make a significant contribution during and/or after the project. The legacy strategy has shaped the organizational identity narrative, allowing the project to be different from other construction projects and to leave behind a lasting impression that others can build on with the aim of transforming the way in which many things are done in the industry. This is illustrated in the following:

*We organize legacy strategy under 5 themes, i.e., environment, health, safety and wellbeing, economy, people, and place... Additional environmental benefits to the obvious environmental benefit. The core purpose of the project, which is to vastly reduce the amount of sewage that spills into the Thames.... We can seek to raise the bar for aspects of health, safety, and wellbeing not just in terms of the stats but in terms of things like the way we do inductions. Economy is all about, the wider benefits of the project to the economy of London and the UK, which hopefully is self-evident and is not just about jobs but about training and in particular the river economy and what we are doing to boost the river economy. People are about supporting the vulnerable such as people with convictions, and workless. In addition, the place is about the public realm, we are leaving behind seven new areas of public realm for London, and that's a key part of our place. (Head of Corporate Responsibility, Client)*

In addition, the project legacy strategy provides a benchmark for either the same or other industries, within or outside the UK. In this way, Tideway could be considered as an exemplar project, as it raises the standards by trying to change behaviors. Other such big projects can apply these standards, thus shifting the bar, as stated below:

*The people who have been working on this project will go to other projects or go back to their parent companies and work on other projects. That will make a difference... People are going to other projects from Tideway and taking their experience with them and apply it on other projects.... We share all our best practices with our colleagues on High-Speed 2. (Program Director, Program manager)*

It is thus in the project identity that people who work in Tideway think about continuity, a vision for the future, developing and implementing legacy strategy.

## 4.2. Organizational identity maintaining

Once organizational identity has been crafted, the next important step is to maintain that identity over the period of the project life and even thereafter, in the form of a legacy. Tideway faced changes during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has an impact on the organizational identity. However, we found evidence that during COVID not only was the organizational identity maintained, but it also got stronger. Accordingly, we find the sub-themes of hybrid working as new normal, providing support system, additional resource utilizing, and adapting to the next normal for organizational identity maintaining.

### 4.2.1. Hybrid working as the new normal

Once COVID hit, the project was stopped for six to eight weeks. In that timeframe, decisions were made about how to execute the project safely during COVID. Thereby, the new normal was adopted as a way to work from home, via remote working, to ensure people safety while maintaining the organizational identity. This is seen in the following:

*Project identity has been maintained. The interactions have remained, albeit they have been virtual interactions. I think there is lack of*

*engagement at a local level, on site, where we just haven't been able to get to site, and we haven't been able to have face-to-face conversations with those that are delivering the job on a day-to-day basis. So, that's changed but from a Tideway perspective, the pandemic has allowed us to change in a positive way. I think people have reflected on how productive they can be whilst working from home.* (Director of Business Services and Health, Safety and Wellbeing, Client)

At the outset of COVID, people were only allowed on site when it was an absolute necessity – for example, a job that could not be done remotely, such as fixing steel and pouring concrete—which meant that it was compulsory for others to work from home. However, this could have created us-and-them situation between employees, which would be compounded by reduced social interaction. As soon as the pandemic situation improved, a slightly altered new normal hybrid working mode was adopted, where people were allowed to adopt a flexible work approach— a mix of work from home and office. In this way, the organizational identity was maintained, and we even find evidence that the organizational identity was strengthened, as inherent values were concretized, seen below:

*We tried to maintain the culture and we did a huge amount of work at the start of the lock down. The first lockdown, which was about keeping people connected. In this kind of new virtual world, there was a massive amount of work to continue to have this kind of digital collaboration or social interaction. So, as best as we can, we try to maintain the culture and values. In that our offices are starting to reopen for people who want to come back and there is not pressure on anyone to come back on a full-time basis, and so the option is there, and I think that also reflects on the values the company has to protect, its workers and their wellbeing.* (Digital Communication Manager, Client)

Therefore, we can say that socialization was effectively managed by doing the right things and by keeping health, safety, and wellbeing a priority. However, volunteer activities, community involvement and charities programs were completely shut down as social gatherings were prohibited during COVID. This was solely driven by either the opportunities not being there, or people not feeling comfortable taking part in such activities—this being the way in which COVID significantly challenged citizenship behavior.

#### 4.2.2. Providing support system

A support system is intended to provide a network of individuals with practical and emotional support.

In addition to improving overall health, these support systems also reduce anxiety and stress. COVID was a difficult situation; it created uncertainty in terms of what was going to happen and how to restart work. The project took strict measures to maintain the value of health and safety, making sure that the sites were COVID secure. The general culture around health and safety was always consistent and thus the project identity remained as that of a caring project that revolved around doing the right things. As illustrated below:

*We look at ways of how we can remobilize the project during the lock down period... then we had to look at ways collaboratively with the client, with parent organizations on how we are going to get back to work in a COVID secure manner, and with the right way philosophy that we have is about doing the right thing. The right thing was to close the project down, to regroup, to come up with very dynamic risk assessments and plans to get the project back safely so that you know, protecting livelihoods, protecting jobs, and protecting people's health. It was doing things the right way.* (Head of Health and Safety, Contractor)

Moreover, there is a deep thought process involved behind the preparation of guidelines for resuming the site work, which represent the support and due diligence from project. As illustrated below:

*We always consider are people ready to come back to site? do they want to? or anyone is in a vulnerable group? Have they got any family members*

*they need to look after? We then looked at how people traveled to get to the site. Once on site, how they can move around safely. We have gone through welfare facilities in detail, then we look at the actual tasks that people are doing, we have cut down the number of people we need on task and in a lot of cases we also reduced the task we are doing... We have developed a series of measures to protect our workforce and local community during COVID.* (Visual data, 2020)

In addition to making the project COVID secure, it was difficult to adjust from working five days a week to none at all or working from home. There was uncertainty about how to interact (a change in mode of communication) and social interaction was minimized, which impacted wellbeing. As a result, the project strengthened the support system and utilized mental health first aiders. As illustrated below:

*When you are working from home and you are limited in social interaction, it has some impact on mental health. So, we have mental health, first aiders and so these are people that have been trained and it's quite an extensive kind of training program for them to learn how to recognize signs of distress in colleagues. Learn how to support them. Learn how to direct them to the right support that they need so we are always kind of putting that message out of that. There are mental health first aiders throughout the pandemic.* (Internal Communication Manager, Client)

As shown, maintaining organizational identity involves supporting people, making sure that people are aware of their wellbeing and that mental health support was available.

#### 4.2.3. Additional resource utilizing

Resource utilizing is about making required resources available. Each project plans how to utilize resources more effectively to ensure that project organization is as productive as possible. For many projects, Brexit affected the material supply and workforce from Europe. Moreover, COVID made the situation worse as people left for their home countries and were not willing to return. As such resource availability can become an issue. To handle such a situation, it is critical to have some additional resource utilization. As illustrated below:

*It sort of exemplifies in the way we have been dealing with COVID, how we responded to that was another example of our DNA... When the pandemic first happened tideway was very generous, very positive, very supportive to their main work contractors, subcontractors, and supply chain.... we said we would pay everybody regardless of what they were doing, we guaranteed to pay our contractors and their subcontractors, for several months... so that they didn't feel unduly stressed by actively not working... As a result, when they came back to work, our productivity was good because I think we have respected our people, been generous to them, we have recognized that it was difficult for them, and they repaid us with a lot of positivity and good morale.* (Chief Technical Officer, Client)

Additional resources were also required for people who had to work on site. For example, PPE suits were not purchased but rather designed, which also suggests that the identity was maintained by respecting the opinions and values of others, as well as the openness and adaptiveness of leadership. As illustrated below:

*We were trying to have a specific identity and wanted to have our PPE different from everyone else's. We didn't quite manage it as well as we could have, so we had some negative feedback on the quality of the PPE... We redesigned our PPE twofold. We designed PPE specifically for women, so that it was a different fit for women going on site.... But we also designed a hijab for Muslim women to be able to go on site and still respect their faith. This came from one of our employees, who said, I cannot go on site, because I can't wear the PPE. So, we said, you help us design it. We will pay for it. We will get it manufactured, and then you have got something. That's now, in normal production.* (Director of Business Services and Health, Safety and Wellbeing, Client)

#### 4.2.4. Adapting to the next normal

The next normal assumes that there is a period before, during, and after COVID. During COVID, the new normal emerged, and post COVID there followed the next normal. Before COVID, projects were situated in different working environments (offices/workplace). In the next normal, the workplace was no longer required, as people could work from home, which provided flexibility for work-life balance and wellbeing. As a result, the workforce probably now has more influence in terms of how they work. There is a drive to adopt the next normal, not just within project, but across industry and across the country. It is a need that will define how industries, organizations and projects will continue to survive in this new era, as illustrated here:

*It doesn't mean now that restrictions are lifted that you need to be back at your desk five days a week, we have changed and introduced flexible working policy so that people can have a balance between working from home and working in the office. All these things that we have tried to put in place to make sure that staff feel comfortable and kind of show them that we are in a new world and we accept that we are not going to go back to the way that we used to work, because that's not how people have been used to working now, and we always try to put people's wellbeing at the top. And that's one of our kind of biggest values, so that's what we have tried to do. (Internal Communication Manager, Client)*

Once COVID restrictions were relaxed, people could adopt a hybrid mode of working i.e., mix of working from home and in the office. For people working on project sites or in offices, COVID safety measures were retained on site, and since some people were joining the office 15 months after the start of the pandemic, it was essential that projects and organizations adopted a flexible approach by providing people enough time to get comfortable with their workplace environment. This is acknowledged by the following:

*We have still got some people that are potentially coming back into the office for the first time in 15 months, and to give those people that sort of confidence, we haven't changed any of our control measures. We haven't relaxed any of our COVID restrictions, so we are still maintaining all the safe measures that we have had in place during COVID. So that there be safe coming into work and to ensure that we don't have outbreaks on our sites, etc. We have kept our procedures and processes in place... As people are coming back to office, so we are going to get interaction and collaboration... The flip side to that is, as people come back after like 15 months of being working at home, having a get them back in the rhythm of coming into work, of traveling on public transport, of being available. So, these are some of the challenges to manage. (Deputy Head of Health and Safety, Contractor)*

Moreover, upon following up on the next normal we find that the hybrid working mode is still in place. As people like the flexible working model and it is hard that anyone to disagree with the options to work flexibly and if they did, they could still work the standard way of working (Monday – Friday, 9 to 5). However, generally people are more motivated and engaged at work if they feel that they have time to manage their personal life too but then there needs to be opportunities where they are encouraged to engage with each other in person regularly as well. Hence a balanced hybrid mode is recommended as illustrated stated below:

*Hybrid working is the way forward, but employees should have autonomy to manage their flexibility – whether that's working different hours, reduced days, mixing working from home with office working etc.... The model could impact negatively if employees decide that flexibility means working from home every day and they lose that face-to-face contact with colleagues, become isolated, demotivated, and therefore lose their networking skills.... Project culture takes a hit if most staff are visibly absent most of the time and opportunities to get together are limited or non-existent... The benefits of flexibility could mean that when colleagues do see each other they enjoy the engagement more. There is a need to have*

*a balanced hybrid working model which provides opportunities to socialize, learn and engage. (Internal Communication Manager, Client)*

In this way, Tideway is maintaining its organizational identity by assuring people about health and safety measures, adapting to the new norm by allowing a flexible mode of working, and stabilizing the environment so that people feel comfortable at work.

## 5. Discussion

Organizational identities are crafted and maintained through multiple narratives (Brown, 2006; Vaara et al., 2016). For example, as our evidence shows, through narratives about the project identity, people who work there and who are affected by the project, events, and situations. In our paper we explore temporary organizational identity narrative crafting and maintaining processes. The combination of interview data and visual data provides insights into these processes. Our evidence shows that organizational identity narrative is specifically crafted through engagement with internal and external stakeholders; while organizational identity narrative is mainly crafted internally in an organization, the temporary organization, i.e., project, it is also evident that engagement with external stakeholders has an impact on internal identity crafting process (Brown, 2006). The crafting and maintaining organizational identity are based on multi-faceted, comprehensive processes that provide an opportunity for organizations to continually (re)create a unique identity. Some latest research has shown that labels and stories help in creating an identity for the project (Ninan & Sergeeva, 2021, 2022), and comparisons help in enhancing the perceptions of identity for the community (Sergeeva & Ninan, 2023c). Our research builds upon the previous research and unpacks other important dimensions for identity narrative crafting and maintaining. Our visual data (Fig. 1) and interview data (Fig. 2 below) provide a comprehensive understanding of identity narrative crafting and maintaining.

Megaprojects, by their very nature, attract a lot of attention from the public and each megaproject aims to create a unique identity that differentiates and allows them to stand apart from other megaprojects. The uniqueness of the Tideway identity is in their approach to leadership style, values they create and maintain. Fig. 2 below shows temporary organizational identity mapping, which represents the elements for organizational identity crafting and maintenance.

As evident from both Figs. 1 and 2 there are important processes and dimensions contributing to identity narrative crafting and maintaining. These show the importance of identity narratives as goal setting and maintaining over time. The emphasis is placed on people, community, communication and how normal is envisioned in the future. Our framework provides some insights into organizational narrative identity work in practice. From an identity-related research perspective, it sheds light into not only crafting but also maintaining identity. The majority of past research has focused on creating identity and rarely explore maintaining identity (Sergeeva & Ninan, 2023a). From narrative-related research perspective, we specifically focus on identity narratives in temporary organization based on interview and visual data (Brown et al., 2005). From a megaproject management research perspective, we provide insights into unique project identity narrative. Megaprojects are unique endeavors providing excellent opportunity to explore identity work in practice.

### 5.1. Organizational identity crafting

Encouraging socialization is a process through which individuals are encouraged to transform from outsiders into functioning members (insiders) of an organization (Beyer & Hannah, 2002; Korte & Lin, 2013; Van Maanen & Schein 1979). Individuals working on the project have a strong desire to be accepted and seek to internalize how things are done in the organization. Socialization, like induction and orientation, is a change process for Tideway, involving the transmission of important



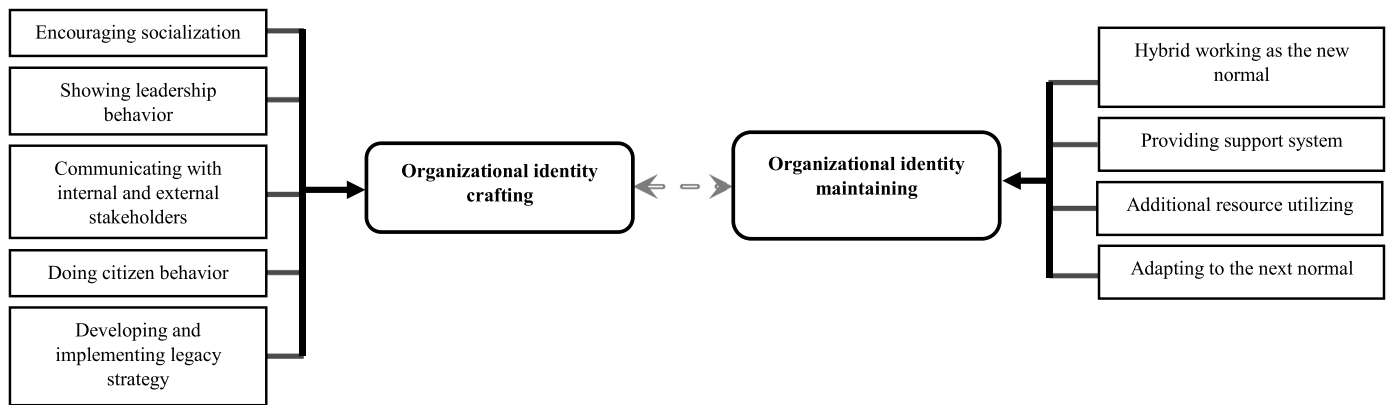


Fig. 2. Temporary organizational identity mapping.

norms and values to individuals with the outcome of performance, job satisfaction and organizational commitment, as suggested by Adkins (1995), and Haski-Leventhal and Bargal (2008). It is the process by which (i) individuals working on Tideway acquire the knowledge and skills needed to perform their jobs (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979); (ii) organizations involved in Tideway help individuals to learn about their work and adjust to the workplace (Korte & Lin, 2013; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Generally, the socialization process is aimed at maintaining control by ensuring that individuals adhere to the same culture, norms, values, and beliefs as the organization (Chow, 2002; Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008), which in turn shape's organizational identity.

From a project network perspective, leadership does not reside in an individual's attributes, but in the relationships connecting individuals within and across an organization (Balkundi & Kilduff, 2006; Tasselli & Sancino, 2023). Tsui et al. (2006) stated that leaders may exhibit distinctive sets of behaviors. In our case of Tideway, we identified three leadership behaviors influence internal and external stakeholders as suggested by Burke et al. (2006): first, leadership of Tideway, creates empowerment which includes approachability (Detert & Burris, 2007; Milliken et al., 2003), openness (Ashford et al., 1998; Detert & Burris, 2007), and accessibility (Edmondson, 1999)—particularly in relation to their subordinates' motivation to speak up; second, transformational behavior is useful because they create an environment in which "followers feel trust and respect towards the leader and are motivated to do more than what they are expected to do" (Yukl, 1989, p. 272); third, the concept of boundary spanning encompasses the management of external relationships by (i) representing the interests of the group to powerful stakeholders; (ii) coordinating work activities with external partners' needs; and (iii) accessing external resources, such as information and expertise from external partners (Marrone, 2010). In the case of Tideway, leadership plays an important role in ensuring all external stakeholders are on the same page and can proceed accordingly. In this way, our findings are in line with contemporary research which suggests that leaders' behavior shapes the work environment of the entire organization (Engelen et al., 2015; Gong et al., 2009) and is effective in aligning the interests of members and the organization (Bass, 1999; Engelen et al., 2015)—thus forming organizational identity.

According to Martínez et al. (2014) communication is the main dimension of organizational identity, and is important in any organization (Worley & Doolen, 2006), but particularly in megaprojects where multiple organizations are employed, and the need for open and effective communication is essential. Open communication is evident in Tideway, as leaders communicate, are willing to share their opinions, are open-minded and create a shared understanding which shapes organizational identity, as highlighted by Riantoputra (2010). Moreover, internal, and external communications, such as meetings, discussions, newsletters, and Twitter accounts, in temporary organizations such as Tideway, promote organizational identity (Basque & Langley,

2018; Cornelissen et al., 2021). Internal communication provides a medium for good ideas to those who are responsible for promoting and implementing them (Tourish & Hargie, 1998). Whereas external communication supplements and transposes insights with a deeper understanding of Tideway's internal discussions into their online communications with the larger community. Communication not only shapes organizational identity but also develops organizational images (Scott & Lane, 2000): how organization members believe others or outsiders view the organization (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). Community involvement in Tideway highlights that an organizational image is based on organizational identity. From this perspective, an organizational image is conceived by its identity and invoked through the communications between organizational members and internal stakeholders with external stakeholders (Martínez et al., 2014).

Doing citizenship behavior is engaging in a voluntary behavior, which is not explicitly rewarded but is useful for organizational functioning (Organ, 1988). It is usually categorized as "extra-role" — behavior which serves to advance the purposes of the organization (Gerke et al., 2017), by enhancing a social and psychological work environment (Wang et al., 2005). In temporary organizations, groups of people often operate under constraints of complexity, temporality, and uncertainty (Bakker, 2010; Huemann et al., 2007; Xia et al., 2018). So, individuals involved in such settings are predominately engaged in citizenship behavior. Tideway presents evidence of being involved in citizenship behavior through community involvement, charitable activities etc., with the intention of promoting the welfare of the individual, group, and organization (Turnipseed, 2002) and making them more sustainable (Lamm et al., 2013). Braun et al. (2013) and Xia et al. (2018) state individuals who are satisfied with their jobs or committed to their organizations are most likely to go beyond their formal job requirements, and when they have supportive or inspirational leaders. As stated earlier, citizenship behavior holds immense importance for organizational effectiveness (Xia et al., 2022), which helps in the craft of organizational identity, while positive organizational identity, such as values and norms of being caring and supportive, has the potential to generate organizational citizenship behavior (Ashforth et al., 2008; Lam et al., 2016).

According to Preuss (2007), legacy can be viewed as a three-dimensional construct: planned or unplanned, positive, or negative, and tangible or intangible. Legacy refers as a repository of the accumulated knowledge and experience of an organization, which represents key organizational routines (Cyert & March 1963; Feldman, 2014). Culture that is *strong* (that is, widely shared and deeply rooted) is likely to prevail, and a CEO's strategy backed by a strong culture is likely to become a legacy (Ogbonna & Harris, 2001). Thus, legacy (in the form of vision, objectives, or doctrines) may be considered as the product of a culture's values (Thompson & Wildavsky, 1986). Legacy, in particular, played an important role in the evolution of megaprojects such as the



Olympic Games, as they exploded in terms of size, scope, and cost (Agha et al., 2012). Correspondingly, legacy is an important part of Tideway as it shapes organizational identity. Reviewing annual reports of Tideway show that there are 5 legacy strategies: (i) Environment; (ii) Health, Safety and Wellbeing; (iii) Economy; (iv) People; and (v) Place. Legacy is not a local, but a global concept; today, megaprojects such as Tideway are creating value that is closely connected with many industries, including Engineering, Construction, Consultancy, IT etc., with a wide range of impacts on the city and country (Hyung-Min & Grix, 2021).

## 5.2. Organizational identity maintaining

Potentially disrupting events such as COVID are referred to as *identity threats* (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996), and captures the responses of those whose aim is to restore alignment between how an organizational members perceived of themselves, or how they would like to be perceived, by others (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Gioia et al., 2000; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). Our findings show that the crucial element for maintaining organizational identity is the adapting to the new normal and the next normal. The COVID-19 pandemic offered a significant opportunity for organizations to imbibe change (Ansell et al., 2021), by effectively disrupting previous operational models and embedding changes such as remote work and digital pivots that are pervasive (new normal) and may potentially last beyond the pandemic (next normal) (Raghavan et al., 2021). According to Grote and Raeder (2009), work flexibility is related to organizational identity, and our findings demonstrate that Tideway is of no exception in adopting new normal and next normal. In response to new health, social, and economic conditions, the new normal can be defined as a situation in which organizations' nature and behavior have changed. It is a transitional phase where organizations are faced with unexpected changes to their work environment, and have to adjust to, for instance, remote work structures (Raghavan et al., 2021); hybrid work structures (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010), and adopt digital solutions to ensure service continuity (Raghavan et al., 2021). The wider adoption of remote working enunciated positive changes, such as a greater awareness of employee well-being, an inclusive workplace, and values-based leadership in organizations (Bartsch et al., 2020). There was, therefore, a need for many organizations to develop policies and procedures that incorporate remote working into their working practices (Raghavan et al., 2021), referred as the next normal. However, remote working can also lead to feelings of isolation (Cooper & Kurland, 2002) and there is greater evidence of mental ill health in those working at home compared to those based at the workplace (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010) particularly during COVID in Tideway. For this reason, the need for "chameleonic" managers—who provide support and additional resources including training, implementation, and management—has never been more evident (Johnson, 2004), so as to make it easier for individuals to adapt (Raghavan et al., 2021).

Support system "is defined as the extent to which employees believe that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being and socioemotional needs" (Edwards, 2009, p. 92; He & Brown, 2013, p. 20). When an organization supports employees, it signals that it values and endorses their behavior in accordance with organizational norms and policies (Lam et al., 2016). Therefore, the organization's care and respect for its employees is an important cue for organizational identity (Marique et al., 2013; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). During COVID, Tideway support system improved organizational identity by strengthening the individual's sense of belonging or oneness with an organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Lamm et al., 2015). It helped individuals working in Tideway to believe that their organization was a caring, respectful entity (Eisenberger et al., 1990), paying attention to their wellbeing and providing support in performing their jobs more effectively; as a result, employees developed feelings that fit with the organizational identity (Lam et al., 2016). In particular, a support system helped individuals involved in Tideway to adjust to the

organizational change taking place with the implementation of the new normal (Dezdar & Ainin, 2011). Organizational identity is therefore conducive for change, as employees tend to be more ready for organizational change (He & Brown, 2013), and provide support in reflecting on the uncertainty (COVID) in the organization based on a supportive culture (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). A supportive organization contributes to the organization's overall image (Marique et al., 2013).

The success of any organization is dependent on their ability to utilize resources properly. As part of the resource-based view, resource utilizing is an important process, since it reflects a productive use of resources (Miller & Ross, 2003). Temporary organizations, according to Turner and Müller (2003), are coherent sets of changes that are sensitive to the assignment of resources for their maintenance. An ineffective or inefficient utilization of resources could result if one set of resources is responsible for several sets of change. Tideway as an agency for resource allocation also implies something about the structure of the temporary organization and the goals where multiple organizations are involved. COVID was a challenging situation which led to a significant change in the working environment: the new normal. Clearly, as a complex temporary organization, Tideway needed to negotiate afresh for resources with a focus for assigning resources from across the organization (Cleland & Kerzner, 1985) which seems to have been perceived as an effective way of assigning resources to change (the new normal). Therefore, Tideway provided appropriate resources which enabled individuals to adopt the new normal effectively and efficiently (Dezdar & Ainin, 2011) and maintained the temporal organizational identity. Whilst some previous research has started to explore organizational identity crafting process (Sergeeva & Ninan, 2023a), much less is known about organizational identity maintaining process. Our paper provides some insights into this process by showing that effort is required from organizational team members to work on maintaining a shared unique identity throughout an organizational life cycle.

## 6. Conclusion

Our paper makes a contribution in terms of helping to elucidate crafting and maintaining of organizational identity narratives, using the case of Tideway's megaproject. In temporary organizations these processes are especially important because of their limited lifecycle; temporary and complex settings require the construction of a temporal organizational identity. We shed light on the processes of crafting and maintaining a temporary organization's identity, which has theoretical implications for narrative identity work in practice. Temporary organizations work on ways of crafting and maintaining their unique identities; a megaproject aims to create its own unique identity for the purpose of creating a competitive advantage and positive image, while at the same time attracting positive attention from the public and promoting continuity in the project ecosystem and ongoing learning. A number of aspects are taken into consideration, all of which contribute to this process. Whilst this may vary from one temporary organization to another due to their individual characteristics, there are some commonalities. Specifically, we found that temporary project organizations develop a legacy strategy for sharing lessons learned from past to future projects.

There are some managerial implications. Managers may use insights from our paper when designing their own temporary organization. Throughout a project lifecycle, managers and employees work together on ways of crafting and maintaining the organizational identity narrative; at different phases of a project lifecycle some aspects maybe be more relevant and important than others. Moreover, multiple organizations are involved in settings like Tideway, so transformation of these multiple organizational identities into a specific organizational identity is important, but maintaining that identity in challenging times, such as during the pandemic, is crucial for practitioners—and a major contribution of the study.

This paper also provided a few methodological contributions. Our

data sources include semi-structured interviews, archival materials, and visual data (videos) that allow us to capture a comprehensive understanding of the craft and maintenance of the project identity. The paper makes a methodological contribution to a narrative perspective on creating an organizational identity (Ravasi & Canato, 2013). We aimed to capture the perspectives, narratives, and commitments of people in the project, and in this way our paper makes a methodological contribution by using multi-sources dataset that involves spoken, textual and visual (videos) forms of narrative data. Particularly in terms of visual data, which is commonly used in health care and medical journals. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) recommend using concepts from neighboring disciplines to examine a new phenomenon in a different field known as *bricolage*. As such, this paper demonstrates the applicability of visual data in a new context, which leads to variant forms of analysis.

## 7. Limitations and future research directions

It is important to acknowledge the limitations. From an internal validity point of view (Miles et al., 2014), we analyzed publicly available narrative and interview data, and we provided as much as possible details about data analysis. It has been challenging to combine different types of narrative data and display in finding common themes from coding process and differences. We were in continuous conversation with some interviewees seeking feedback on drafts of our paper. This tactic helped to validate the findings but there are personal biases involved in qualitative narrative research. From an external validity point of view (Miles et al., 2014; Yin, 2018), our study can be replicated in other contexts with some similarities and points of differences. Our paper has found evidence pertaining to a particular timeframe when the data was collected and analyzed. Our empirical data are limited to the analysis of the interview data based on participants' views at the period of data collection, and visual video data analysis done by researchers which can be interpreted in different ways by other researchers. Moreover, there are no clear guidelines for visual data analysis (i.e. video data), this could be a potential future research area to explore. Future research may be more longitudinal in nature and provide insights into the processes of crafting and maintaining organizational identity narratives, and how it evolves through time. In the context of a megaproject, it means exploring how these processes evolve throughout a project lifecycle. Since this research focuses on the perception of people, future research could focus on micro processes. Future research may find other themes and efforts that contribute to the process and may compare the organizational identities of different megaprojects in different contexts in order to shed light on the uniqueness of the organizational identity. Moreover, this study is focusing on identity at organizational level in temporary setting, future research should study identity at network level. Finally, we believe that Tideway is an excellent example of a temporary organization; however, this is a single case study, and the findings might be applicable merely in the context of the UK. Future research could investigate temporary organizations in other geographies.

## CRedit authorship contribution statement

**Rehab Iftikhar:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft.  
**Natalya Sergeeva:** Funding acquisition, Supervision, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

## Declaration of competing interest

None.

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## Appendix A

### Interview guide

#### Background

Could you please tell us about yourself?

Could you please describe your roles and responsibility in this project?

How long have you been working here?

#### Identity crafting: How and why

How has a project DNA/identity been crafted?

Do you think that the knowledge you gained while doing this project had an impact on project identity?

How does COVID impact the collective identity narrative? How does that make you feel?

How project identity has been changed and maintained over period?

How does identity narrative evolve over time?

Do you have something in your mind that you would like to add?

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