

# Leadership as paradox

Miguel Pina e Cunha

Fundação Amélia de Mello Professor of  
Leadership

Universidade Nova de Lisboa

# Leadership

Leadership as process of social influence

- In the leader (eg charismatic)
- Situational (eg contingency)
- Relational (eg LMX)

# Paradox

Old idea with Chinese antecedents (Yin-Yang)

The three elements of paradox

- Interdependence
- Opposition
- Persistence

# Paradoxes of leadership

- The need to move beyond traditional dualisms (either-and)
- The promise of duality forms (both-or)

# A paradox research agenda for leadership

- Leadership in agile
- Leading digital organizations
- Leading dispersed organizations

# Implications for practice

- Learning to lead with different styles
- The role of consistent inconsistency
- Becoming paradox-savvy

# Final note

- Paradoxical leadership as a necessary approach
- Need to learn with Eastern philosophy
- Leadership as balance
- Synergy and tradeoff