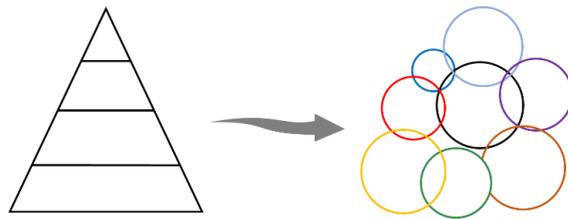


Transitioning from vertical to horizontal leadership:  
The psychodynamics of middle managers' shift of posture



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## “The voice of the sands” or metamorphosis

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"There was once an old river lost in the desert sands. It descended from a mountain which now blended with the blue sky. It remembered passing through forests, plains, cities, alive, leaping and wide, proud and noble.

What misfortune had led it to become bogged down in these trackless, low-lying dunes? Where should it go now, and how could it cross these endless, scorched expanses?

It didn't know and despaired. Now, as it lost the courage to strive without hope, a voice came from the sand:

-The wind crosses the desert. The river can do the same.

The river replied that it couldn't fly as did the wind.

-Just trust the breezes, immense, drifting breaths, said the voice. Allow yourself to be absorbed and carried away.

Trust the dangerous and intangible air? The river could not accept that. It replied that it was of the earth; it had always grown its waterfalls, waves, its currents in the solid world that was its life, and that it was unimaginable for it not to travel towards the ever-changing horizon.

Then the voice said (it was only a whisper):

-Life is made of metamorphoses. The wind will carry you beyond the desert, it will let you fall in rain, and you will return as river.

The river was suddenly afraid. It shouted:

-But I want to stay the river that I am!

-You cannot, said the voice of the sands. And if you speak this way, it is because you ignore your true nature. The river that you are now is merely a temporary body. Know that your imperishable being has already been repeatedly blown away, has lived in the clouds and eventually found its way back to Earth, to run again, stream and play.

The river was silent. And as it was silent a memory returned, like a barely perceptible scent. "It may be nothing but a dream," it thought. Its heart whispered: "If this dream was your only way of life now? "



The river became mist at nightfall. Fearful, it received the wind, which carried it away. And suddenly familiar with the sky where birds glided, it was led to the summit of a mountain.

Far below him, the sands whispered:

-It will rain down there, where the soft grass grows. A new stream will be born. We know that. We know all the thousand faces of life, we who are similar everywhere. The voice speaks constantly. Like the world's memory, the tale of the sand is infinite. "

Persian tale (*La voix des Sables*, n.d.)

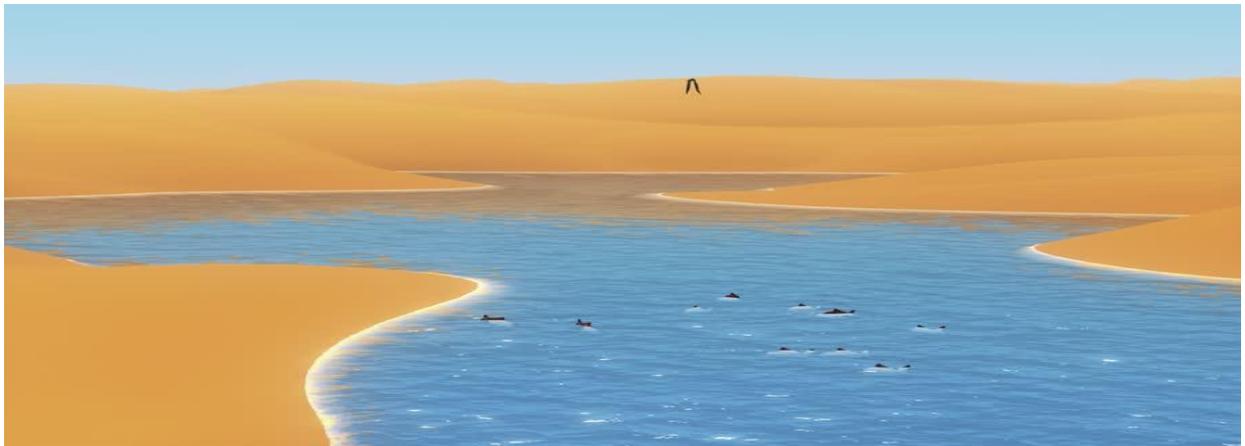


Figure 1: shoal of fish swimming in shine river that flowing in the desert,meandering sand dunes & blue sky. Retrieved from <http://www.shutterstock.com>

*To my father, who in life and death accompanies my journey of exploration  
towards being a freer person.*



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## I. Abstract

Organizations are facing an increased pace of change, hyper-competition and employees' growing disengagement. Their performance is limited by the legacy of the *vertical leadership model* with the *command and control* practices, commonly called. As a response, a wave of organizational innovation has been gathering towards more empowerment and engagement of employees' -often called *self-management*- characterized by the duo *freedom and responsibility*. This trend towards the *liberation of human potential* relies on a *horizontal leadership model*, where hierarchy is fundamentally revisited. A growing body of literature analyses and conceptualizes successful cases around the world. This study examines the *psychodynamics* in play for *middle management* when shifting from verticality to horizontality. Because it gives rise to much anxiety and requires courage to end the familiar vertical leadership posture and enter an unknown zone, this thesis focuses on the *leap of faith* moment, which is in fact, more of a period of transition when managers stop resisting and jump towards the unfamiliar. Through interviews of middle managers in three companies and using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, this study aims at providing a meta-model to explore and support the readiness of leaders to enter the horizontal posture.

## II. Keywords

Management innovation, middle manager, governance, transformation, transition, hierarchy, top-down, horizontal leadership model, self-management, empowerment, engagement, liberation of human potential, leadership posture and attitudes, psychodynamics, clinical paradigm, leadership mechanisms, leadership loci and event cycles, learning and surviving anxieties, purpose, desire, wholeness, W.L. Gore & Associates, Cosucra, Belgian Federal Ministry of Mobility.



### III. Introduction

Three megatrends are significantly challenging business organizations: the significantly increased pace of change, hyper-competition and growing systemic complexity. Amongst other consequences, the lifespan of publicly quoted companies is decreasing and their CEOs have shorter mandates.

In this context, companies face the imperative of innovation and agility. Their business model and competitive advantages rely increasingly on knowledge rather than scale; success depends more on ideas and innovation than ever. Since we can all access treasures of information on the internet, knowledge itself has become a commodity. Companies must generate new ideas, for which they depend ever more on people and employees' engagement.

The human factor is therefore a key to success, as Gary Hamel points out **“You cannot build a company that is fit for the future without building one that is fit for human beings”** (Hamel, 2010).

Taylorism appeared more than 100 years ago with an organization of work to maximize output. Labelled *scientific management*, this has been one of the most influential managerial innovations, heavily applied by the clear majority of businesses. It has led to significant value creation<sup>1</sup> since the book “The Principles of Scientific Management” was published (Taylor, 1911). **The organizational model behind Taylorism relies mostly on a chain of *command and control***, where the boss instructs the worker on what and how he/she must do. Even taking some recent adjustments of the mainstream organizational model into account, we see in most companies that power of decision and responsibility are mostly held at the top.

**Despite all its benefits, it seems that this quest for efficiency and this model have reached a limit as far as people go.** One of the most visible and painful signs is the growing number of burn-outs<sup>2</sup>. A less visible phenomenon is the rate of engagement -or rather disengagement- of employees. According to the last global Gallup report, only 13% of employees were engaged (down by 3% over the previous

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<sup>1</sup> Some benefits attributed to scientific management: higher production efficiency, i.e. lower cost of production & higher output, better & more standardized quality of products, simpler tasks for workers, better utilization of workers, higher profit (Derksen, 2014)

<sup>2</sup> In Belgium, the number of workers who experience psychological disabilities (depression and burnout) for more than a year has nearly tripled over 2008 to 2014 with respectively 29 112 and 83 155 cases per year. These people get indemnities by the Belgian public diseases and disability insurance (INAMI) – (Le nombre de dépressions et de burn-out ne cesse d'augmenter en Belgique, 2015)



report), 63% were not engaged and 13% were actively disengaged (Gallup, 2013). It is even more worrying in that only engaged people will vigorously drive innovation in companies, by sharing and investing their passion and creativity with their employer.

It therefore comes as no surprise to see that an **emerging wave of management innovation involving self-management has been taking place** around the world for several decades. It started at team level and progressively expanded to entire organizations. Today, some successful companies are recognized to be at the forefront of this organizational innovation wave. For most if not all of them, the shift has been initiated by their top management, mostly their CEO. Companies such as W. L. Gore & Associates, FAVI, Zappos, AES, Semco, HCL Technologies, Buurtzorg, Patagonia, Morning Star, Sun Hydraulics, Poult, etc. come to mind. There is a growing body of literature analysing these emerging models and experiments, identifying commonalities among them and developing theories, with a resulting echo in business circles. These companies are often tagged as “teal” (Laloux, 2014), “liberated” (Getz, 2012), “democratic” (Semler, 1993), “bossless”, “happy” or “organic”. The duo **autonomy and responsibility seems to be one of the most significant characteristics** of these companies and their self-management / horizontal model. Another one is the **employee’s connection with the company’s deep & noble purpose**, i.e. somewhat making the world a better place.

**But getting there is a significant challenge, which is the whole point of this thesis.**

To help you grasp the depth of this challenge, I would like to take the fake example of Alain, a blue-collar worker who operates a machine at Factory Inc, a traditional company used to *command and control*. He is paid for his time of activity on the floor, so he clocks in and out to identify his working day, with regulated pauses to relax and eat. Typically, he is instructed by his boss Serge (who is an engineer) as to what he should do on that day, with the sequence of tasks. The boss also controls the quality of the work, for which he is accountable towards higher management. Serge has designed the layout of Alain’s direct working environment, including which tools should be used and how. Serge is also in charge of the planning of the entire team, when each operator works and when they can take a pause, which shift they are part of and when they can take holidays. In brief, Alain is there to execute what Serge has defined as the optimal utilization of his time at Factory Inc.



Let's now imagine that Factory Inc. applies a horizontal leadership model, including self-management and a boss-less structure. Alain will take over many of Serge's responsibilities, together with his colleagues. Based on the assumption that Alain knows his job and his machine very well, he will be autonomous in defining the most productive layout for his work, to reach productivity and quality standards, for which he is now responsible. He has a lot of autonomy and might decide to change some tools and procedures because they would work better. Alain is also aware of the noble purpose of his company (somewhat making the world a better place) and has the sense of feeding it through his work and decisions. Of course, he consults his colleagues who work with him on the neighbouring workstations to check if these changes are OK. Planning is collectively organised by Alain and another colleague, in the spirit of self-management. They have attended training to be able to use the planning software. Other colleagues undertake other aspects formerly carried out by Serge.

Serge has now a **coaching role**. His experience and technical knowledge is put at the service of operators' teams who want to elaborate radical changes in production. Serge offers his services to feed the team's decision to go in one direction or another. Serge has **no formal authority over these teams anymore; his job relies on his natural leadership** (recognised talents, knowledge, skills and personality traits that make that people are willing to accept his lead) **rather than title-driven authority**. No one reports to him anymore.

Although this is a fake example, it resembles what happened at FAVI (France), a company that has been through one of the most radical transformations of this kind, to the stage of a boss-less model.

For both Alain and Serge, one can see **the required changes in terms of skills, but also -and mostly, in this thesis- of posture**. Imagine their attitude towards their own and others' work; the way they behave and lead others; the level of freedom and responsibility. Imagine the anxiety for Serge and Alain when they have to make this shift and extrapolate that to an entire organization. The challenge of such a transformation could shake anyone.

**This wave from vertical to more horizontal leadership is spreading to many companies transitioning with some degree of success. Since this model is very people-centric, the success of such a shift depends primarily on the change of posture / attitude.** Being an employee, a middle manager or a top manager in the



vertical model is significantly different than in the horizontal one. A middle manager for example would have **more ownership and autonomy** from his (or her<sup>1</sup>) executive board member in the horizontal model than in a vertical one, where the executive would give him clear and strict directions. At the same time, to fulfil his role, **the middle manager relies on the credibility of his supporting posture of coach to enable his teammates to make their own decisions and build the team's success**; he would not have power over his direct reports through status and formal authority. In the case of a company shifting from the vertical / traditional model to the horizontal one, the challenges for all employees involved in changing their own posture are not to be underestimated. It should come as **no surprise to see that some of these transformations are failing on that front**. Zappos for example is at the forefront of management innovation. Within ten years (1999 to 2009), they became the world number one online shoe shop, reaching revenues of one billion dollars and a marriage with Amazon. Their organizational model is very horizontal and their management is based on values. They have recently implemented holacracy - one of the emerging self-management schemes- but they are experiencing a flop (Bernstein & al., 2016). **Considering the high promises of this model towards employees who legitimately hope for more freedom and empowerment, a failure leads to a lot of frustration and further suffering. Therefore, managerial innovation in companies is not to be undertaken lightly: leaders, managers, consultants and coaches have a responsibility to ensure success.**

**These transformations to self-management are also highly complex with so many factors that will influence success.** Each of these factors is individually challenging and in combination is even more so. For example, a transformation to self-management implies some strategic and organizational design, it requires the financial strength of the company and favourable market dynamics, it relies on some operational maturity (including supporting processes and systems), its quality directly depends on the leaders' quality, the way they interact with the employees and their ability to adapt their attitude towards power. **Succeeding in such a challenge is "wow"!**

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, I will use fake personalized examples setting a person in a certain situation. I deliberate avoid "one" and favor "he" because it is more personal. Please note that the "he" is also a "she" in all examples. My thinking applies to both male and female managers / employees.



**In this thesis, I have decided to focus on the leaders' necessary change of posture and the dynamics at play around that change, with a focus on middle management.** The choice of this population is based on my personal experience as middle manager and on the belief that their very complex challenges are often underestimated as drivers for success (researchers' attention usually focuses at top managers and workers).

**Timewise, such transitions take months if not years; this study focuses on that period where middle managers will let go their main resistance and welcome the uncertainty of the change. I call this the "leap of faith", which is a key emotional step towards change. Although the image of a leap is interesting, this research revealed that the reality is more a transition of faith, where the middle manager gradually passes from resistance to neutrality and perhaps acceptance. This transition is not even linear, it goes back and forth, fast and then slow. The psychological driving forces and barriers towards this transition of faith are the cornerstone of this thesis.** Drivers are to be found in the middle managers' past, present and future. For example, the love and trust received by caregivers during one's youth or the positive experience of freedom and responsibility held in a past project could foster the readiness to accept self-management. The present trusting behaviour of a boss or seeing other middle managers successfully holding their new coaching posture could also promote this readiness. The deeper meaning of granting autonomy to others or the fear of being put aside from one's team if one does not learn a new way of behaving are some other drivers. And if you imagine the opposite to these drivers, you have examples of barriers in embracing the horizontal leadership posture. What elements trigger a middle manager to let go of resistances and embrace the uncertainty of a new posture?

**The chosen research method is based on the exploration of middle managers' experience in three organizations.** Two of these are in the middle of the transformation from a vertical leadership model to a horizontal one; the third one serves as reference as the company is very mature in the horizontal model. I am grateful that these nine fine middle managers have openly shared their experience during semi-structured 2-3 hour interviews, which have enabled me to highlight the key aspects of what they went through. I was also able to interact with the leaders of these organizations to prepare these interviews and to get their feedback on the

findings of the research and the developed model. This qualitative research method used here is called Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

In brief, **the study shows that the readiness to adopt a horizontal leadership posture happens at very personal level, though the various mechanisms of leadership, i.e. emotions, intellectual understanding, personality traits and visible behaviour** (Eberly et al., 2013). For example, this leap of faith will require increasing one's confidence in others and in the process, rather than in one's own technical mastery and control of others, or increasing awareness about human systems and one's impact on them.

**Several factors influence this personal transformation and readiness towards a horizontal leadership posture, in the past, present and future.**

**One important finding is that the most powerful elements are related to the person's past, their deeper psychological traits and earlier social experiences.**

Because leadership refers to social interactions and influencing others, I have also looked at the middle manager's present relationship to his boss, colleagues and associates, and how these influence the transition of faith towards a new posture. The purpose of the change of model and the one of the company are also potential strong drivers to a shift of posture.

Another fundamental factor fostering or hindering this personal shift is the projection of the future, where there is an unconscious balancing between the fear that not changing will be negative and the fear of making mistakes while learning new behaviours. Next to this balancing of fears, the projection of pleasure and envy when functioning in this new model could be a significant driver.

**This study concludes with a meta-model connecting these factors, which has helped to better understand the dynamics of a shift of leadership attitude.** I have taken the opportunity of this research to test the relevance of this meta-model and its possible applicability in life with some business leaders. It seems to hold some potential.

This thesis also has a strong echo in my professional life: as an independent organizational transformation advisor, I currently facilitate the transition towards a more horizontal model of two organizations in Belgium. On the one hand a

government agency in charge of reducing unemployment and on the other hand the Belgian subsidiary of a large French group.

This thesis is therefore the opportunity to enrich my concrete professional interventions, which also enrich my research perspective.

Finally, the topic also echoes my personal development because I am also transforming from a quite controlling attitude towards more trust, in myself and in others. The journey that I have discovered with these managers and leaders inspires me in my own transformation.

Dear reader, I hope that you will share my passion and find some key learning for you when reading this thesis.

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*In the Persian tale (see page 2), we sense the river's willingness to remain river, the deep personal challenge to transform into mist, another form of the very same nature of water. In this thesis, we observe middle managers used to top-down command and control models transitioning to horizontal leadership, perhaps nourished by the deep aspiration to autonomy and responsibility.*



## IV. Research aims and objectives

In this transition from a *vertical* to a *horizontal* leadership model, middle managers face numerous challenges. The features of vertical leadership are quite remote from the horizontal<sup>1</sup> and they require a very different posture of the leaders and the followers.

Putting it in a stereotyped way, in the vertical model a middle manager's boss takes the big decisions, gives him clear directions and responsibility on the how, with the risk to be badly evaluated and perhaps lose his job in the case of failure. From there result some well-known attitudes -such as "cover my a\*\*" and "umbrella"- of avoiding responsibility and thus the risk; these add absolutely no value to an organization. If the level of empowerment is even lower, the middle manager will also get guidance or even detailed instructions on his tasks and how to perform them. The infantilizing postures leads to some comfort, for example of the reduced stress of not being held responsible in case of failure. But it also has some collateral damage, such as the lack of self-esteem for the middle manager and the loneliness of the boss who carries the accountability.

Looking at the relationship with his staff, the middle manager has authority over them and a socially valued status (mostly translated in a title of *head of*, *VP*, *director* and *manager*). To the extent of his own autonomy (and sometimes beyond), he can exert his power over others. This might feed his narcissism and his ego.

In the self-management model, the fundamental assumption is that people are capable of doing their job in an autonomous way, that they are well-intentioned and that they are willing to fulfil the company's noble purpose. Some people will not meet these assumptions, but the system should not focus on them<sup>2</sup>. So, to continue with the stereotype, the manager inherits more autonomy, responsibility and less formal authority (different to informal influencing power). In fact, the middle manager relies on his *natural leadership* as regards his team, his boss and the organization. His main responsibility is to create the favourable environment for his team to succeed in its objectives, and thereby his objectives too. To do so, the manager coaches his people

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, the horizontal model will also be referred as self-management, horizontal leadership, teal and liberated organization.

<sup>2</sup> For example, if 3% of the people hijacks a system based on trust by stealing time or material, the company should not build a control system around these 3%, because it would also damage the trust to the other 97% and cost more in controlling time than what is stolen (Getz, 2014).



where appropriate, trusting that people know how to do their job better than he does. He facilitates their decision process whether he still ultimately takes it after consultation or he authorises his team members to decide for themselves. He gains more freedom to shape his own role in line with the organization's purpose (the *why*). He has and gives autonomy as to the necessary means / investments to succeed. In brief, the middle manager has a broader and less defined role, mostly emerging from what he can contribute to make his stakeholders successful.

For a middle manager, transitioning to horizontality means accepting the end of the well-known and comfortable posture held in the vertical model. This can involve emotions such as denial, shock, anger, fear and anxiety, mostly driving resistance to change. Per William Bridges' approach to emotional transition (Bridges, 1991), this phase is called "the ending zone" (see figure below), where most of the effort and emotional energy is taken by accepting the end of something. The next phase of the transition is the "neutral zone", where there is less emotional turmoil and there is room for curiosity, acceptance of uncertainty, some instability with highs and lows. Enthusiasm, clarity and hope are typical of the third phase, that Bridges call the "new beginning zone". This is when a person or a group can genuinely engage actions towards the new posture, model, project or strategy.

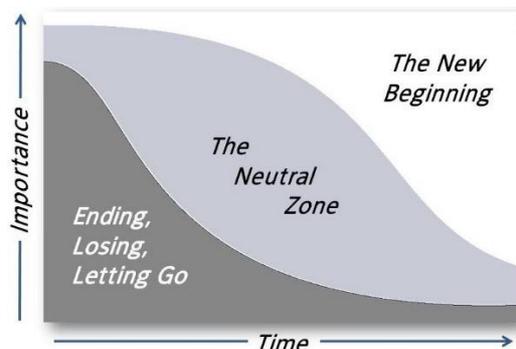


Figure 2: William Bridges' transition model (Bridges, 1991)

What I call the *leap of faith* is the passage from the ending zone to the neutral zone. Already here I can mention two limits to this point of view: The *leap* is rather a *transition* of faith because it takes time and happens in a non-linear way. Then, the neutral zone is hardly felt, even less so in that positive emotions and enthusiasm can be experienced very soon; therefore, the transition of faith could also include the new beginning zone.

**This thesis aims to identify what key psychodynamic patterns are experienced by middle managers around this transition of faith towards the horizontal leadership model.**

The psychodynamics at play are complex and happen on different levels. In this research, I explore two basic questions:

1. What motivates the manager to hold on to the well-known top-down posture?  
This refers to the barriers of the transition of faith.
2. What facilitates his passage to the coaching posture? This refers to the drivers of this transition.

The thesis also explores a possible meta-model to understand these forces and perhaps be of some use to leaders, consultants and coaches to facilitate this transition of faith for themselves and for others.

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*Like in the Persian tale (see page 2), we will explore what happens to the middle managers' transition of faith, from willing to remain in the verticality towards accepting the idea that horizontality is imaginable and possible.*



## V. Literature review

Researchers have generated much in terms of description of self-managed organizations and concrete cases, their governance, the required posture of workers and managers (top and middle), general success features of these organizations. To a lesser extent, there is literature on the transition process from a hierarchical organization to a flatter model involving self-management. What I have found very little of is a focus on middle managers in these transitions, in particular on the psychodynamics at stake.

The most comprehensive analyses of self-management as a system are offered by three authors: Isaac Getz with Brian Carney and Frédéric Laloux.

Isaac Getz and Brian Carney, in their book *Freedom Inc.* (2009), explain the key principles of “liberated” organizations based on real success and failure stories. It goes back to the roots of the movement, for example with this powerful quote “If you put fences around people, you get sheep. Give them the room they need.” by William L. McKnight, CEO of 3M (1924). Their premise is that if you give your workers maximum autonomy, in the right conditions and culture, they will “lead your business to higher productivity, profits and growth.” The book also looks at liberating existing companies and what is required, with some focus on managers.

Frédéric Laloux offers a more recent analysis and different angle in his very successful book *Reinventing Organizations* (2014), which is often cited by other authors<sup>1</sup>. During a sabbatical of three years after some time as management consultant at Mc Kinsey & Company, Laloux selected and analysed twelve companies around the world. All these companies have applied self-management in a determined and emerging (sometimes chaotic) way without consulting each other. Laloux has identified common traits and principles, which he has described. His research is also intended as a cookbook for those who want to implement these principles since he offers an overview of the key structures and practices in terms of human resources, daily life and major organizational processes. There is even a movement around this book; the most visible one is this online tool called *wiki* to inspire next-generation organizations, based on the same collaborative principles than Wikipedia: people can contribute to

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<sup>1</sup> Laloux sold more than 100.000 copies; this is a high volume in the field of management books.



the collective knowledge about liberated organizations by sharing their insights (see [www.reinventingorganizationswiki.com](http://www.reinventingorganizationswiki.com)).

For me, these two books are the richest single sources of inspiration, understanding and information.

Several other CEOs of self-managed companies gave me further and complementary understanding on the topic in their books, articles and videos.

- In his book *Maverick* (1993), Ricardo Semler shared his inspiring success in turning around the Brazilian company Semco. He explains the key principles of *industrial democracy*, based on democracy (of course), profit sharing and information. The involvement of employees in the decision-making requires reasonably small business units of maximum 150 people, a flat hierarchy and an inverted pyramid, where employees have a say in the key decisions (as CEO, Semler had been outvoted several times).
- In “*The Future of Management*” (2010), Gary Hamel, an American management expert, consultant and guest professor in renowned universities, starts from the imperative of companies to innovate and how the current management model acts as a barrier to success. His key management principles include transparency, openness, experimentation, disaggregation, meritocracy and community. Although I find Hamel’s message very powerful, I find it sometimes too academic and not pragmatic enough. His perspective of psychodynamics is also somewhat limited.
- Vineet Nayar was the CEO of HCL Technologies, one of the biggest Indian technology companies with more than 100.000 employees in 2016. It was selected among the twelve cases of the book *Reinventing Organizations* (Laloux, 2014). In his book “*Employees First, Customers Second: Turning Conventional Management Upside Down*” (Nayar, 2010), he claims that managers’ main responsibility is to do everything they can to maximize the efforts of employees who work in the value zone (where they add value to the customers’ satisfaction). Nayar is more explicit about the loss of power of middle managers and their challenge in changing posture and continuing to add value. Among others, he claims that *satisfaction* is not powerful enough to lead change, whereas *passion* does (Nayar, 2010). He also drew the parallel between managers’ shift of posture and the evolution in parenting of children at the age where parents turn away from feeding towards mentoring their kids to succeed (Nayar, 2011).



- Jean-François Zobrist is a fascinating and strong character who led the company FAVI in the North of France. He is one of the most radical “liberating” leaders because he shifted overnight this traditional industrial medium-sized company into a boss-less organization. His success is indisputable: the company was close to bankruptcy and is now the number one player in its industry (OEM in the automotive sector), with more than 60% market share, 600 employees and no boss. FAVI is also part of Laloux’s selection. In his book “La Belle Histoire de FAVI” (Zobrist, 2008), he compiles stories about employees and himself, what they have achieved and the key principles. This is a very touching approach, based on the belief that humans are good and fundamentally well-intentioned.

Considering that self-management is an emerging practice, based rather on experimentation than on well-articulated theories, I found also quite useful to dig into documentation of companies which are quite mature in this model. These companies invest in such documentation to mostly describe the self-managed system and the culture to their employees and stakeholders. As such, they tackle neither the shift from the vertical model to the horizontal one, nor the specific challenges of middle managers, but they give very relevant input for my work. In this context, I had access to presentations of Netflix, FAVI and W. L. Gore & Associates.

Holacracy is a social system of organizational governance developed by HolacracyOne which takes a lot of self-management principles into account. These principles are active in some of the renowned examples of self-managed organization. One of the most efficient explanations of holacracy has been developed by the consultancy IGI Partners in France under the form of a comic book (Chiquet & Appert, 2013). Holacracy is influencing many companies willing to shift to self-management with some readymade structures. Although I doubt that you can apply a ready-made recipe for such a complex and adaptive challenge (Heifetz, 2009), I find relevant to understand how this system works.

When reading about self-management or boss-less organizations, there are some questions about how leadership is exerted and the role of middle managers. Several articles point to this matter, with an overall consensus that even if formal hierarchy is kept to the minimum or even abolished, natural leadership and earned followership are necessary and even promoted. It is a role-based and not a title-based authority any



more. Leadership is based on taking initiatives, consulting the impacted colleagues about it, and making explicit agreements. Natural leadership is granted by colleagues based on the contribution to the group, rather than personal achievements. This type of leadership can be developed and deployed in a culture rich of social capital (Lieberman, 2013).

The relevance of the culture to enable a horizontal model is often discussed in literature. This matters systematically in seven related organizational designs: self-management, intrapreneurship, virtual ephemeral structures, neuroscenced organization, accultured organization, transparent organization and agora organization (Demailly, 2014). Even when self-management was emerging at the level of teams in the 90's -as precursor of reaching the entire organizations nowadays-, culture was already seen as a highly relevant factor to success, with differences around the world (Kirkman & Shapiro, 1997). This led to the observation that some countries and regions (mostly in western cultures) might be generally more supportive to horizontal leadership. However, a case such as HCL Technologies in India demonstrates that this viewpoint is relative: hierarchy and determinist, two factors hindering self-management, are typical Indian cultural traits.

Next to the required posture of managers in horizontal models, literature confirms that intentions behind self-management could also include cutting personnel costs. Downsizing and delayering are terms which come up quite often, with a tougher connotation of cutting costs versus the positivity that is commonly displayed about self-management. Statistics show that middle management positions have been eliminated in all sectors of the Canadian economy, from 10,4% in 1991 to 7,8% in 2015 (Hutchins, 1995). This fact and vocabulary such as boss-less might also explain middle-managers' anxiety when facing a transition to a horizontal model.

Finally, the recent flop of Zappos' implementation of Holacracy has made the researcher community boil a little. Several articles are now questioning the sustainability of boss-less organizations and holacracy as a system. A little like communism, the idea of such a system is attractive, but very hard to put in practice (Aarts, 2016). Titles such as "The No-Managers Organizational Approach Doesn't Work" (Rigoni & Nelson, 2016) or "Beyond the Holacracy Hype" (Bernstein & al., 2016) appear. There is agreement that self-management generates complexity, which is relevant and worthy in some situations requiring more adaptability than others where



reliability is a paramount (Bernstein & al., 2016). The authors depict that success highly depends on the right culture and posture of people, what is also supported in this thesis.

Based on this existing literature, there's justification to examine issues not yet addressed. There is a need for future research to examine the combination of two aspects of this wave of managerial innovation. On the one hand, the shift from a vertical system to a horizontal one because most companies are currently operating in the former and traditional one. Many have the intention to become more participatory and flatter, and will face the challenges of the transformation. On the other hand, I find that middle management is a doubly challenged population: they must face a change of posture both as leaders and as followers, plus their numbers are decreasing. Since they are very instrumental to the success of companies (and this is not questioned by majority of authors), I find relevant to have a closer look at the psychodynamics of their change of posture in the horizontal model.

The theoretical frameworks that support my research focus are multiple: (1) managing organizational transition by William Bridges, (2) the clinical paradigm by Manfred Kets de Vries, (3) the integrative process model of leadership (including the mechanisms and loci of leadership and the event cycles) by Eberly, Hernandez, Johnson and Avolio and (4) the anxiety of learning by Edgar Schein,

All of them add a rich perspective to the issue because they help me understand the dynamics at play for middle managers when transitioning from the known vertical model to the new challenging posture of the horizontal one.

- 1) More specifically, the organizational transition theory has helped me identify the features of this leap of faith when a middle manager will let go the resistance and “negative emotions” of denial, anger, frustration and/or depression (O’Shea, 2014) to give room to some emotional openness to change. I found most relevant to understanding the emotional scope of this transition from the “*ending zone*” to the “*neutral zone*” (Bridges 1996) and (Bridges & Mitchell, 2000). This framework has already been discussed in chapter IV *Research aims and objectives* (pages 14-15).
- 2) The intrapersonal perspective (the inner world) of a middle manager -as of anyone- is a vast world. Its understanding and interpretation are very instrumental for this



research to explain drivers and barriers to the adoption of a different leadership posture. I found that Manfred Kets de Vries' perspective on the clinical paradigm very relevant here. In his book "*Coach and couch: The psychology of making better leaders*" with Konstantin Korotov and Elizabeth Florent-Treacy, they explore in depth the leaders' drivers and barriers to change. In their first chapter "*the clinical paradigm: A primer for personal change*" (Kets de Vries, Korotov & Florent-Treacy, 2007), they argue that there are four premises in the clinical paradigm:

1. All human behaviour, even in its most odd or deviant forms, has a rational explanation;
2. Our unconscious plays a tremendous role in determining our actions, thoughts, fantasies, hopes, and fears;
3. Our emotions contribute to our identity and behaviour;
4. Human development is an interpersonal and intrapersonal process.

Their perspective was highly relevant in the construction of my research and the interpretation of the results.

- 3) The integrative process model of leadership by Eberly, Hernandez, Johnson and Avolio has helped me to identify how the combination of mechanisms of leadership and loci of leadership interact to facilitate the transition of middle managers towards their new posture. This framework identifies how their personal experience impacts the four mechanisms of leadership -affect, cognition, behaviour and traits- within themselves. Precisely because they are *in between* top managers and working teams, middle managers are directly and personally involved in two loci: locus of leader and locus of follower. Others loci of leadership will also influence their posture, i.e the context and the collectives / groups (Eberly, Hernandez, Johnson and Avolio, 2013). In the figure below, a generic event cycle is presented among 2 loci of leadership, each characterized by their leadership mechanisms (traits, cognition, affect and behaviours).

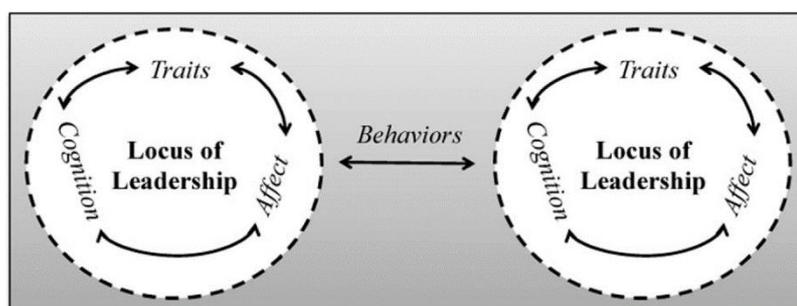


Figure 3: The basic leadership Event Cycle involving two loci of leadership (Eberly et al., 2013)

4) The anxiety of learning and the balancing anxiety of survival have helped to understand some driving forces behind this leap of faith, where managers need to unlearn routine postures and behaviour valid in a command and control system. Survival anxiety is the realization that to survive one must change (Coutu, 2002). Unfreezing the current state to let some change happen through the realization that the current system cannot be sustained, creating some anxiety about the failure of current ways of doing; this will require some psychological safety to accept this anxiety (Coutu, 2002). The learning anxiety is the anticipation of the usual process of making mistakes to adjust one's behaviour and get better. Failing, falling or being faced with one's vulnerabilities can be frightening. One needs a good reason to enter this area, which can be considered as dangerous.

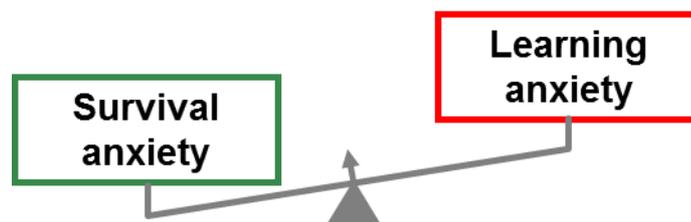


Figure 4: The balancing between survival anxiety and learning anxiety will define the readiness to enter or not the dangerous zone of learning

To summarize, I hope that this thesis contributes to the available literature about the management innovation towards self-management through the combination of three specific angles:

- The focus on the transformation from a vertical model to a horizontal one;
- The attention to the middle managers, who are facing numerous challenges and are very instrumental to the success of such a transformation;
- The observation of the psychodynamics in such a transition.

The conclusions of this thesis and its meta-model might be useful to the many leaders who are intending to move towards self-management. It might offer them an insightful perspective to deal with the psychodynamics at play and better manage the emotional transition.

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*Like in the Persian tale (see page 2), the sand hold a lot of knowledge and wisdom to help the river / middle manager accept its metamorphosis, but there are still some unknown aspects, some of which this thesis explores.*



## VI. Methodology

To explore the research question of the psychodynamics of a transition, a qualitative approach was perceived to fit better, in order to observe the phenomenon related to the leap of faith of middle managers and to understand the essence of their experience, individually and perhaps collectively. This method also fits me well because I am quite talented at interviewing people, creating a positive climate of trust, favorizing in-depth discussions.

The qualitative method that I found most productive to explore this question is the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). It helps to connect the dots between insights from the semi-structured interviews of seven middle managers who are going through such a transition in two Belgian companies - the Federal Ministry of Mobility (1100 employees) and Cosucra (food industry with 250 employees). To gain some contrast, I also interviewed two middle managers at W. L. Gore & Associates, one of the globally most mature and successful companies functioning with the horizontal model.

To access these nine participants, I relied on my network to enter contact with top leaders of these companies, who then proposed to a series of managers that they be interviewed. All the people who had accepted to meet me did it on a voluntary basis, knowing that they would speak about their experience of this transition from a personal point of view.

At the Ministry of Mobility, the person who facilitated my research is Quentin Druart, the head of Personnel & Organization (like a VP of human resources). He offered to approach some managers who have accepted this change and others who have shown more resistance. My approach was obviously and understandably more attractive to managers supporting (or neutral to) the new model than real opponents. I could not meet any manager who was in obvious resistance to the shift. This phenomenon was also observed at Cosucra.

At Cosucra, my sponsor was the CEO Jacques Crahay, who also initiated the transition to a horizontal model. The interviewees' hiring process started when he sent an email to all middle managers calling for volunteers, with a brief description of my research and my coordinates. He did not perform a selection himself and I relied purely on spontaneous volunteering.



For W. L. Gore & Associates, the sponsor was Nobert Ebster, the recently retired general manager for Germany. He identified two of his former colleagues who accepted the interview.

I am fully aware that this sample of people might be over-supportive of the new model versus the average reality. As much as possible, I have taken this bias into account in my approach and conclusions.

Part of the process was also to interview these three sponsors about the general background, their management practices and the ongoing transformation to a horizontal model (the latter is not applicable to W.L. Gore & Associates).

Middle managers' interviews in Belgium were conducted face to face in their offices. For the two participants at W. L. Gore & Associates in Munich, the conversation was via videoconference. The first interview took a little more than two hours. Some follow-up conversations took place with some participants, mostly on videoconference.

The interpretation of the data collected was structured around the few theoretical frameworks, i.e. learning and survival anxiety (Edgar Schein), the loci and mechanism of leadership (Eberly et al., 2013) and the clinical paradigm (Kets de Vries, 2014). Then, connecting the dots and the convergence to my conclusion of this research happened in an emerging way, mostly based on my experience and intuition, helped by some discussions with friends and colleagues.

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*Like the dialogue between the sand and the river in the Persian tale (see page 2), observing the phenomenon related to the leap of faith of middle managers and understanding the essence of their experience, this thesis has required conversations / interviews with them.*



## VII. Description of the research setting

Considering the echo between this study related to the leap of faith of middle managers and my personal journey, let's explore the latter a little more in this section. In the next one, we will look at the three companies where the research was conducted.

As advisor and coach in organizational transformation, I set up my consultancy company named LIFRAN. My professional purpose as stated on my website [www.lifran.com](http://www.lifran.com) is "to facilitate organizational transformation towards more shared-value creation". LIFRAN's baseline is "boosting people and business performance". On a deeper level though, my mission is to increase *harmony and balance* in organizations. Of course, this quest derives from my personal one, where I also evolve towards a more harmonious state.

One of the most powerful success factors that I offer to my clients is my double lenses: a sharp one on the business rationales and an intuitive one on human dynamics. I believe that I have ambidextrous skills with what is commonly called left and right brains (see illustration below).

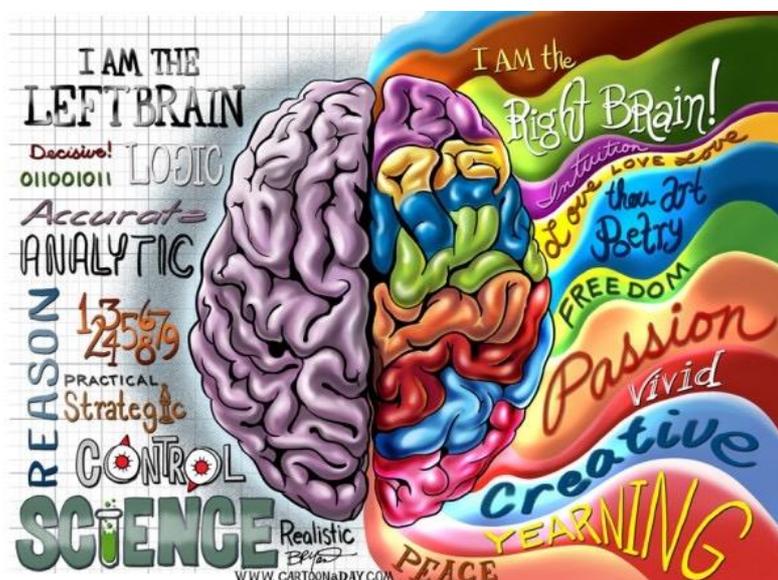


Figure 5: illustration of the commonly used pseudo-scientific theory of the left and right brain personality types (Bryant, 2012)

My rationality, fact-orientation and analytical mindset come from my education and early professional experiences. For many reasons, I perceived that my parents denied emotions a lot. Rationality was put on a pedestal, as a safer space. In a quite judgmental way, my father valued more studies like engineering, law, or business, but

certainly not social sciences or psychology, which I was tempted to follow. Instead, I studied business, which I luckily do not regret. My initial steps in business were following the same line, building a corporate career, including some strategy consulting, one of the highly regarded experiences of business rationality. However, I was also restless and not very talented in this position. So often I received the feedback that I was soft, too gentle and should focus on a more people-oriented career. This echoed with much of what I had always perceived from my parents about my softness and the place of emotions. Luckily, I evolved towards a different type of consulting, focused on organization and human dynamics, which are essential components to business performance (from the strategy definition to its execution). I call that organizational transformation.

This positioning was latent but had taken several years to emerge in 2010. This required a lot of personal exploration and trials, including personal development, meeting inspiring people and experiments with clients. I was exploring my own leadership and purpose and these topics became more present in my professional practice. For the first time in my life, I was experiencing a visible and strong convergence between who I am and what I do.

An additional perspective on this brief story is that during the early part of my life (until age of 35, i.e. 10 years ago), I was mostly driven by fears and the willingness to comply with my acquired view of what is good, including rationality and control. For the last 10 years, I have gradually taken some distance from these conditionings and gained confidence in myself. As a result, I have relied more on my intuition, identified my purpose and gained in personal congruence and power. I have experienced that these new -to me- features are great guides, creating countless possibilities. This personal growth has also influenced my choice in art: in 2009, I fell in love with a painting by Steve Powers who depicted this hope and the journey of life.



Figure 6: *Countless Possibilities* by Steve Powers (2009), enamel on aluminum, 4 x 48cm x 48 cm

This path towards more trust (in myself and in the journey) and let go resonates big time with the transformation discussed in this thesis: the change of posture for a middle manager “educated” in a *command and control* mode, towards a *sense and inspire* one.

It is therefore natural that this personal journey towards releasing my potential and as organizational consultant, new organization models caught my attention, including the liberation of human potential in organizations. This thesis is a great opportunity to deepen my understanding in this field.

As to the choice of these companies, it is directly related to being based in Brussels, with a large business network granting access to local business leaders.

The Ministry of Mobility is a well-known case of an early stage transformation towards self-management, in the complex context of a government administration of 1.100 people. I obtained access to this organization through Laurent Ledoux who was its president between 2013 and 2016. Ledoux has undertaken a personal mission to lead companies and free their human potential through self-management. He did it before when he led a department of a major bank, then at the Ministry and now he’s doing it again as CEO of a European news agency.

Before Ledoux’s arrival as president, the Ministry had initiated a major project to move to smaller offices to cut costs; It drove the introduction of *new ways of working*<sup>1</sup>, including flexible offices & teleworking (working from home with a laptop computer). The project called *Moby for You* relied on working groups, which started to develop what this change could look like. When he came to office as President, Ledoux added a philosophical layer to this shift -mostly aiming at changing the culture towards self-management, with more responsibility and freedom to the workers-, and took unprecedented and strong measures to boost the movement. One of the most visible was the abolition of clocking-in on arrival and departure. The move to the new configuration of open offices happened step by step (floor by floor) and is now completed. In the meantime, teleworking has become a reality for most employees, about two days a week. Most of them are not counting their time any more, but those who still want to do so may continue. This fact creates complexity and raises some questions on their acceptance to be responsible for their results rather than their working time.

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<sup>1</sup> New ways of working are resulting from an organizational mix of practices fostering flexibility of time, of workspace, of work organization and of management (Taskin, 2007)



Alongside some tangible results, traditional hierarchy is still seen as the main reference and their organogram shows as many layers as before. One interesting change towards self-management has taken place in the HR department where they have reviewed the organizational design towards three circles fulfilling three newly distributed roles (development of talents, careers and organization). This was designed by the employees themselves and they could join their preferred circle. New leaders-coaches were appointed next to “old style” ones, with the intention to change the leadership posture. This is under experimentation with some successes as shown in my interviews there.

In brief, I consider the Federal Belgian Ministry of Mobility in an early stage of change towards self-management, where the system is still showing considerable resistance and individual supporters are still trying to convince others. At this stage, it might succeed or not, but I found it an interesting ground for my interviews because the “leap of faith” is not far, whether ahead or away. Independently of this transition, Ledoux and the minister experienced public disagreements on a policy issue, which ultimately resulted in the resignation of both in Spring 2016 (the tensions did not relate to the change of leadership model). The Ministry is now led ad interim and the drive to pursue the transformation is somewhat damaged. However, some people are still motivated, with at the forefront the HR Director Quentin Druart, whom I met through Ledoux and who accepted to give me access to interviewees. During a preparatory interview with Druart, we agreed on the interviewees’ recruiting process, ideally balancing supporters and detractors. Ultimately, I only met the supporting middle managers, because the others did not respond to the invitation for an interview. I had the great opportunity to interview Anja Neyt who is HR manager, Peter Claeysens who manages the President’s office and Veronique Lagrange who oversees the mobility research service.

The genesis of Cosucra’s transformation to self-management is as different to the Ministry as the nature of the organization. It is a family-owned industrial company producing food additives based on vegetal sugar, located around the city of Tournai (West Belgium close to the French border) and employs 250 people. The company is mainly owned by its CEO Jacques Crahay. He personally initiated the shift to self-management. Crahay was puzzled by the increasing complexity of his business and the organization. The market conditions were demanding faster answers than the system could deliver. He also witnessed siloed interactions among departments and



an executive committee involved in very operational decisions, so that top management had become a bottleneck to initiatives.

So, in the summer of 2014, Crahay was “enlightened” by discussions with some peers, and by the book “Reinventing Organizations” (Laloux, 2014). In Feb 2015, he gathered all employees in a movie theatre to announce that he was no longer going to *manage* the people but that people would *self-manage* themselves. He supported his message with some videos of Jean-François Zobrist and Isaac Getz and hired a consultant to facilitate the discussion. It was a surprise to all, including his executive committee members. In short, Crahay opted for the *big bang* approach.

In the following months, 80 people got involved in working groups, which emerged on different topics such as company purpose and working environment. People were taking an active role in these discussion, such as 1<sup>st</sup> links, ambassadors, reporters and testers. These groups involved 50/50 blue and white collars and with representatives from both factories.

Through a friend, I got introduced to Jacques Crahay. When I met him, I was struck by some typical features of these inspired leaders who genuinely engage in such a shift: generosity, humility and drive. Crahay is very far from the *I-know-it-all* CEO who is lecturing others. He sees his journey as an experiment, where he accepts failures and delays, while having a very strong drive to make his business better and the organisation more supportive to the workers. He is also very keen to share his experience, as a contribution to his country. Therefore, he evidently welcomed my research and facilitated setting up the interviews. True to his approach of self-management, he called volunteers: he broadcasted a nice message to all middle managers and accepted that I would follow up with a personal email to promote responses. I experienced this process as very generous. Eventually, I could interview Karine Dupont who is responsible for the internal sales team, Jean-Claude Guelluy who is process engineer, Laurent Peckel who is HR Manager and Nathanael Leclercq who oversees energy, environment and automation.

W. L. Gore & Associates was set up in 1958 by Wilbert L. (Bill) Gore and his wife Vieve, based on its current entrepreneurial and organizational philosophy. The company is very well known for the Gore-Tex product, which is made of Polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE or Teflon), initially developed by DuPont de Nemours and Company. When Bill Gore left DuPont after 16 years of service, he thought that

PTFE could be used to encapsulate wires. This was the initial application for his company, and Gore-Tex came in to being in 1969.

The current corporate culture was initiated by its founders from day one, because Bill Gore wanted to escape his frustration while working at DuPont. The organization is flat with a lattice-like structure where people have no other title than “Associate” and “Leader”. There is neither formal hierarchy, nor predetermined channels of communication. A leader must earn his followers, i.e. Associates choose to follow leaders rather than have bosses assigned to them. Every Associate’s contribution is reviewed based on an annual peer-level rating system. The culture is based on few principles, also still applicable today: freedom, fairness, commitment and waterline. If the three first are self-explanatory, the last one needs explication: before undertaking an action that could impact the reputation or profitability of the company, an Associate is expected to consult his colleagues who might be affected by it. By doing so, employees safeguard the company, as they would do with their boat: make sure that the hull of a boat remains waterproof below the waterline.

Today, the company is generating more than USD 3,2bn in revenue, employs more than 10.000 people worldwide and is globally one of the most mature companies with a horizontal leadership model.

To gain in contrast for my analysis, I found relevant to explore how middle managers are experiencing in such a mature self-managed organization.

For Gore, I was introduced by an Insead classmate to Norbert Ebster, the just retired general manager for Germany. He became interested by my topic and identified two colleagues who accepted to be interviewed. Uwe Bauer is Key Account Manager Footwear and Matthias Zaggl is Business Leader Outdoor Footwear; they are both based in the Munich office of W.L. Gore & Associates.

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*Like for the river in the Persian tale (see page 2), knowing one’s true nature helps the transition of faith, but this self-awareness is not easily accessible. It requires multiple and deep explorations.*



## VIII. Data gathering and reporting

Interviewing people is the core source of data when following Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis; it is also for me the most enjoyable part of the thesis because I adore interacting with people on a deeper level. All nine conversations were enjoyable, inspiring and rich with the fine nine middle managers: Uwe Bauer and Matthias Zaggl at W. L. Gore & Associates, Karine Dupont, Jean-Claude Guelluy and Laurent Peckel at Cosucra, and Anja Neyt, Peter Claeysens and Veronique Lagrange at the Belgian Federal Ministry of Mobility.

Although each interview is unique, I had prepared a questionnaire structured around several themes, to cover what happened before, during and after the “leap of faith” moment. I used the few lenses I had identified in terms of theoretical frameworks, i.e. the learning and survival anxieties by Edgar Schein, the clinical paradigm by Manfred Kets de Vries, and the loci and mechanism of leadership (Eberly et al., 2013). The next section covers the chapters of this questionnaire and their logic, before reporting on how these interviews went.

The first chapter is the general introduction where I present myself, the context of this thesis and the purpose of my research study. I also review how the answers will be used, their level of confidentiality versus the public nature of the thesis, before asking permission to record the interview. Then, I introduce the structure of our discussion, as you will see in this section. Typically, I speak during approximately ten minutes. After presenting the purpose of the interview, the core starts with the first general question “Could you tell me about yourself?”. This question aims at discovering what comes spontaneously about one’s personal background. It has often proven rich in information.

The next chapters follow the timeline of the interviewee’s “leap of faith” toward her/his company’s transformation to self-management:

1. Chapter one refers to building the momentum to shift to a horizontal leadership model;
2. Chapter two relates to when the interviewee’s leap of faith happened, when she/he genuinely let go the resistance to the new model;
3. Chapter three reviews the new situation.

Note that this questionnaire was set up prior to the observation that the leap is rather a transition, of which you will see the implications in the next chapter IX on findings and discussion.



Here is a review of the main angles of questioning and their intention.

#### Chapter 1: Building the momentum to shift to the horizontal model

- A description of the system before the change, including the leadership model, the organogram, the decision-making process, the communication style, meeting style and politics.
- A view of the interviewees' role as middle manager, his/her power of decision, level of autonomy and responsibility, his/her posture as leader (including the style) and as follower versus his/her boss.
- About the interviewee personally, we looked at the feeling then, the resonance with his/her in general (to check how it relates to personal history and experience).
- We discussed the idea of the shift of model, how it was brought to the interviewee and his/her perception of the need to shift (this touches the possible survival anxiety for the system).
- We explored how the interviewee related to this idea (still before the leap of faith), the inner projections in a new environment, a new role, a new level of autonomy and responsibility and how it made him/her feel, as well as the resonance with his/her life and the key personal challenges on entering into this new model (this touches on the possible learning anxiety to adopt new behaviour).
- Then we looked at the possible influences of the interviewee's environment on his/her perception of the need to change, like his/her boss, colleagues, team members and context (in order to explore the leadership loci).

#### Chapter 2: When the interviewee's leap of faith happened, when she/he let go the resistance towards to the new model

- He/she described the moment of the personal shift, its circumstances and interpretation of the reasons of the openness, including the type of resistance that was abandoned (or not).
- Looking at leadership loci, we explored how the boss, colleagues, teammates and context have influenced the inner change.



- We also explored the interviewee's survival anxiety, by looking at the perception of a choice (if I do not move, I will not survive in this system).

### Chapter 3: The new situation

- A description of the system after the change, including the leadership model, the organogram, some artefacts of the culture such as the decision-making process, the communication style, meeting style and politics.
- We also discuss the transformation process.
- Here again, we looked at the leadership loci and their impact on reinforcement of a new leadership posture or further resistance to adopt one.
- We reviewed the new role and posture as middle manager after the shift, including the decision power, level of autonomy and responsibility, and to what extent these matched expectations and how this new role made the interviewee feel. We also checked the resonance with the interviewee's personal history, his/her views on what was easy and challenging in adopting a new posture.

As conclusion, I checked whether the person had something to add, how he/she had experienced the conversation and if a follow-up conversation were possible, if necessary.

The interviews at W.L. Gore & Associates have obviously taken a slightly different path considering that the company has always functioned with a horizontal leadership model. The interviewees Uwe Bauer and Matthias Zaggel have not experienced this type of organizational transformation in the company since they joined respectively 16 and 24 years ago. I have therefore explored their transformation of personal leadership posture when joining Gore. My underlying assumption is that they came from the mainstream leadership model, whether in studies (Matthias) or previous companies (Uwe). Joining Gore would have required adapting to a new paradigm, with the same kind of resistance and necessary leap of faith as the other interviewees. As you will see in the next chapter, this assumption turned out to be valid.



Overall, these 2-hour plus conversations were all very rich and touched me deeply. I found it fascinating to listen to these life stories, to hear reflections about personal and systemic changes, how everyone is different with his/her specific drivers and talents. The script was not always respected, but the intention to touch on these points served well to cover most of them.

A very nice reward at this stage already was the interviewees' consistent feedback that this angle made them reflect with a new and insightful perspective. An interesting sign of satisfaction is that they all agreed to a follow-up discussion and sometimes we expressed the intention to meet up again for open conversation.

Reporting on these conversations also turned to be a rich process. I opted for a simple framework where I noted the top three drivers and barriers to adopt a new posture and embrace self-management as middle manager. I am also totally aware that my selection of these top three drivers and barriers is subjective, based on my interpretation of the information I collected and could process. However, I was also taught and have experienced the value of using my third eye and ear, trusting my intuition.

The interpretation of these conversations was quite delicate because it intended to find some link between the drivers and barriers towards self-management and the overall readiness to make the leap of faith. In other words, it aimed at understanding what were the drivers or the barriers for each interviewee and how much impact they had. But it appeared that this leap of faith is complex and can happen over a long lapse of time, with variable commitment. The depth of the leap also varies, even for people in the same environment: some are ready to go far in self-management, some are more prudent, showing or not their scepticism; their commitment to the shift is difficult to evaluate. However, all interviewees claim to be engaged in this new model and in the change within their company. Considering the social movement of their company (as social animals, we prefer to be *in* rather than *out*) and the intellectual attractiveness of self-management (most people are nowadays in favour of more autonomy and responsibility) it would have been naïve to expect total openness about scepticism and personal resistance to the shift.

Therefore, I had to base my assessment on other factors than just what was said. Based on expressions used and body language during the interview, as well as further probing outside the script, I have built my perception -also subjective of course- about their adoption level of self-management, like a cursor.

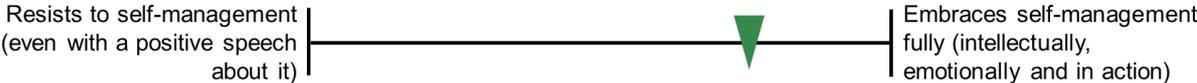


Figure 7: Illustration of a subjective assessment of readiness to self-management

This combined view on drivers, barriers and readiness to self-management has helped me to better answer my research question: what key psychodynamic patterns are experienced by middle managers around this leap of faith towards the horizontal leadership model? The answer is discussed in the next chapter.

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*Like in the Persian tale (see page 2), where uncovering the true nature of the river requires a conversation with the sand, growing the understanding about the middle managers' transition of faith required interviews.*



## IX. Findings and discussion

To offer more perspective on the research question, W. L. Gore & Associates was chosen as a reference case for its successful self-management model leading to great business performance. It is obviously the most mature case among the three of this thesis, where Cosucra and the Belgian Federal Ministry of Mobility are in the middle of their transformation toward a horizontal model. The two interviewed middle managers at Gore have successfully adopted the horizontal leadership posture for decades. Their case can therefore be considered as a reference success case for the transition of faith, where drivers have prevailed on the potential barriers. Therefore, I would like to start in this section with what I found out at W.L. Gore & Associates.

In the next sections of this chapter, we will explore the interpretation & associations about the current transition in the two other companies, then look at the meta-model, which enabled better sense making about the transition of faith, then again identify the most important drivers and barriers to this transition. The two final sections will explore the applicability and limits of this meta-model, with some proposed additional improvement to the model and actions to facilitate the transition of faith.

### Setting the reference of a mature horizontal model

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Uwe Bauer and Matthias Zaggl experienced their shift of posture when they joined W. L. Gore & Associates some 16 and 24 years ago. They both had to adapt to their new environment, they experienced some resistance and performed their *leap of faith* to espouse Gore's culture.

The key principles of this culture (also called "Ameba Model") are that people are the most important resource, opportunities are the number one vehicle to success, and process rules over structure.

When Uwe and Matthias joined the company as Associates, they were expected to make their own commitment to the company based on few rules:

1. Shape your own vision;
2. Understand how to lead yourself (also follow your "sweet spot" and commit where you have interest, motivation and capabilities);
3. Lead others, support others;
4. Get it done (execution) and
5. Culture fit.



The key features of the company philosophy are visible in the next illustration (figure 8, below).

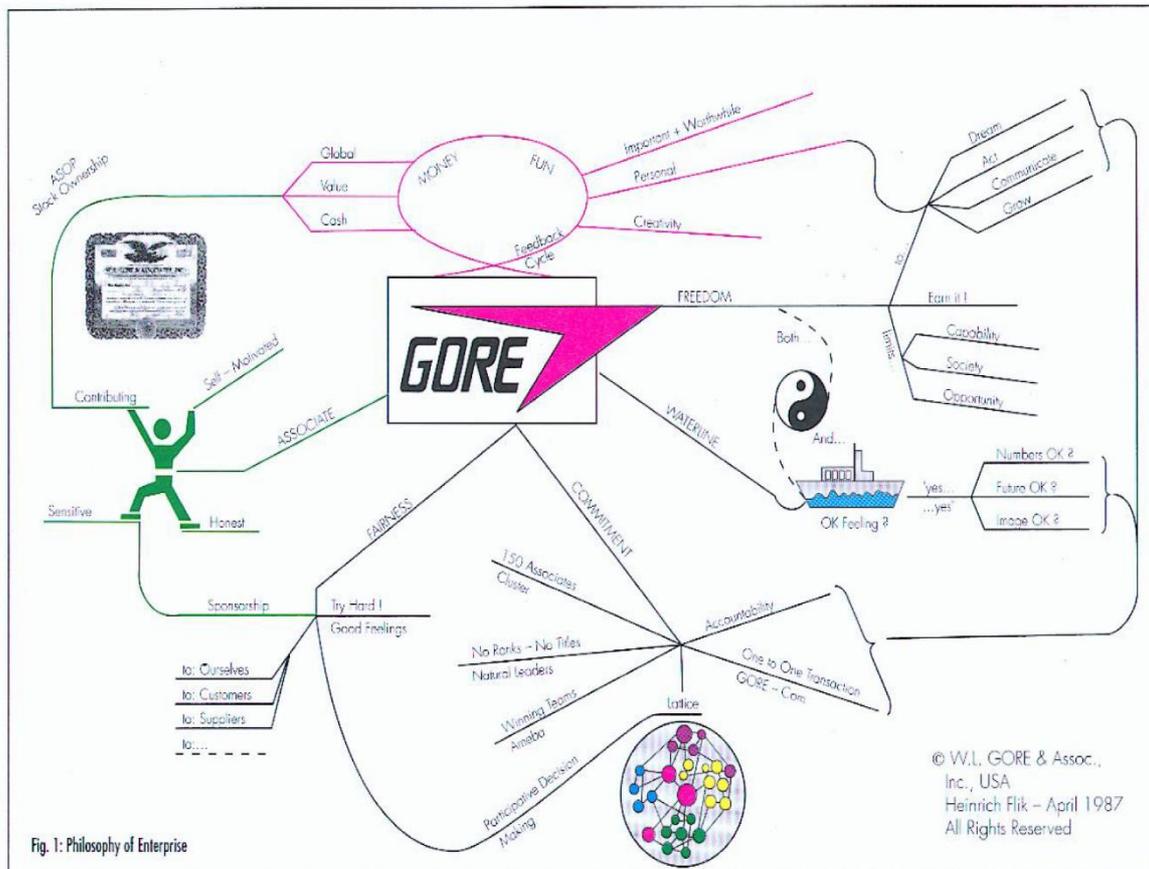


Figure 8: Philosophy of W.L. Gore & Associates (Flik, 1986)

Uwe Bauer joined the company 16 years ago. Uwe has always followed his passion for sports, which is central in his life: he graduated in sports marketing, was a professional mountain guide and worked in the ski industry and for footwear manufacturer in sales & marketing jobs. He joined Gore as Key Account Manager for the Footwear business; he still successfully holds this role. Uwe continues to be an active sportsman, particularly in the mountains where he acts as a guide. His last job before Gore was in sales for a German footwear family-owned manufacturer. This environment was quite different from Gore and very typical of a family-owned enterprise: classical hierarchy, strong leadership in the vertical style of command and control on the big decisions. “Luckily” (dixit Uwe), he experienced quite some autonomy in the way he ran his operations. When he joined Gore, he faced a new type of environment with unprecedented autonomy and freedom. This change obviously required him to adapt and created some anxiety.



This is what I observed about the psychodynamics of this change of professional posture as manager. Firstly, I perceive that Uwe hardly had to adapt. The main drivers of his successful introduction to the Gore system are to be found in his past experiences. His training as mountain guide seems the most striking to us (I checked this assumption with him). This is the type of activity where he experienced both *freedom* and *responsibility* to the highest level. The freedom of a mountain guide has multiple facets, such as observing nature, both free and beautiful, choosing the path, deciding when to pause, etc. For the guided group, a tour is a leisure activity, which by nature allows more freedom and informality than daily life.

Responsibility is also significant: mountains are a dangerous and powerful environment where lives are at risk and the guide is required to cope with real danger. This seems far more impressive and tangible than reaching sales figures or succeeding at a business meeting. The responsibility also concerns the group working well together, and people must rely on each other, for example when they are secured by a single rope. As mountain guide, Uwe was used to taking responsibility for real and essential risks, with the required humility when facing powerful Mother Nature. This experience echoes the culture at Gore where a leader invests in his team, sharing successes and pride to achieve the collective goals.

Informality is another driver of Uwe's successful integration in Gore. Low formality is a key characteristic of the sports world, about which he is passionate. When ski competitors or mountain guides meet, the atmosphere is systematically informal. Performance matters and formal authority not much. This echoes to the culture at Gore, where people hold no title (they are all Associates). They are very focused on business performance and natural leadership rather than status and rank. So, when Uwe entered his new context at Gore, he rediscovered these aspects and was faster at ease with them.

Uwe's passion for sports is the third important driver that I observed. This creates positive emotions about Gore's products and what is required from him in his role. Since affect, or feeling is one the four pillars of the mechanism of leadership with personality traits, cognition and behaviour (Eberly et al., 2013), I sense that this positive energy had (and still has) an influence on Uwe's performance as a leader in his new environment.

When analysing Uwe's interview, I could not find any barrier to his leap of faith into a posture of self-management. Although his motivation to join W.L. Gore & Associates was mainly driven by the closer proximity with home, it seems that this company fitted him much better than his previous one. This leads me to get back to Laloux's concept of *wholeness* (Laloux, 2014), which Uwe is most probably expressing to a great extent. Wholeness means that employees show themselves beyond what is commonly expected in companies, beyond their *professional self*, i.e. the rational, masculine, positive, conqueror part of their ego. But we are more than that, our wholeness includes the our emotional, intuitive, spiritual self, our feminine side and our deeper parts. Obviously, Uwe can express his wholeness in his environment at W.L. Gore & Associates, and this might be an important lever to find a meaning and express his talents to the fullest.

Matthias Zaggi has been with Gore for the past 24 years. He was summer trainee in sales during his studies. After graduation, Matthias had two job offers: one at Gore and another at BMW, a famous mainstream company for which to work. Based on his positive traineeship, he opted for Gore in a sales role. He is now the successful worldwide business leader for Outdoor Footwear.

However, his first months were hard. Matthias experienced the vertigo of freedom, where he had to create his own opportunities by himself, where it was not clear what was expected as success and how it was measured. This resulted in Matthias experiencing some regrets about his choice for Gore and wanting to escape; when he contacted BMW to reactivate the opportunity there, the job was gone and he eventually decided to stay at Gore. It seems that this high level of freedom and the blurred responsibility made him uncomfortable, anxious and resistant. A leap of faith was necessary and these are my observations of the main drivers to his adopting the appropriate posture to succeed (and what a success!) at Gore.

As number one, I see the survival anxiety (Coutu, 2002) of not getting a second chance at BMW. This forced Matthias to learn to deal with the impressive autonomy at Gore, the absence of clearer guidelines and frameworks. It might have forced him to deal with his learning anxiety, such as the fear of failing and making mistakes and of not being recognised.

The second driver is related to the loci of leadership (Eberly et al., 2013) between Matthias and his *context* at Gore. Putting on the lenses of the *mechanism of leadership* (Eberly et al., 2013) to analyse this context, there are some noticeable observations: the company is characterised by a distributed leadership, with high level of self-management (these are the *traits* of the context of Gore), with a clear concept of empowerment as driver to performance (*cognition*) and the underlying positivity and trust in people (*affect* of the context at Gore). Matthias' willingness to belong to this context has probably been a significant driver to adjust and learn to deal with autonomy & responsibility.

The third driver could also be related to Matthias' survival anxiety. This duo of autonomy and responsibility at Gore can also be tough and generates some pressure on people. The company has a performance system where once a year, Associates are ranked for their contribution to their team. The evaluation is done by their teammates and the leadership. This ranking drives pay raise and potential to grow in the company. For people in the bottom third, their mentor (all Associates have a mentor with more experience in the company, with the mission to help them succeed) is informed to support improvement. This system creates transparency on the business performance and some anxiety to be a good performer. My reading of Matthias' testimonial is that this phenomenon has positively influenced him to tackle his challenge of adapting (learning anxiety) to his new environment.

#### Interpretation & association about the transition towards the horizontal model

The contexts at Cosucra and the Belgian Federal Ministry of Mobility are of course quite different to W.L. Gore & Associates, simply because they are in the middle of a transition towards a horizontal model, which is emerging and not mature yet. Some initiatives to sustain this shift are successful and some are not. The people who I have interviewed are mostly "going with the flow" of the transformation, but at different paces, with variable readiness towards self-management and with more or less success. Because the conversations were face-to-face, we had the opportunity to explore this transition of faith deeper than with Gore (by videoconference).

Even if my research could offer a view on the readiness and success of the transformation, I feel that it would be wrong to disclose my subjective assessment in detail, both at company level and at individual level. Why? Firstly, because being

judgmental would be unfair towards the leaders who gave me access to their organization and towards the interviewees. Secondly towards the interviewees to whom I announced that these conversations would feed the observation of the psychodynamics at play when they go through the transformation, and not the assessment of how well they transition and the reasons behind.

Respecting the interviewees' intimacy is also important, even more because I was surprised that the past of a person seems to have a fundamental influence, still more than the systemic and social dimensions. My initial assumption was that the current dynamics with other actors of the system (the phenomenon of loci of leadership) would have the largest influence on their readiness to shift, together with Schein's survival anxiety (Coutu, 2002), what John Kotter also calls the "sense of urgency" (Kotter, 1996). It was therefore surprising to perceive that personal history of interviewees, his/her personality traits and character, his/her family background, education, past experiences with management and personal interest play a leading role in the shift towards a horizontal leadership posture. By itself, this personal dimension is a whole world and difficult to grasp. During the interviewing process, I strongly sensed its critical influence on the adoption of a horizontal leadership posture, to an extent that I had not anticipated.

Another surprise is that the transition happens on two distinct levels at different paces. The cognitive transition and the emotional one, the former being easier and faster than the latter. As already discussed, being a middle manager in a vertical "command & control" environment requires a different posture than the horizontal model and its coaching mode. The latter requires, among other things, to let go of control, to abandon micro-management and to trust people. This move is easier said than done. For all people who I have interviewed, they cognitively support the model, even if they would not put the cursor of trust and letting go at the same level. I take no risk in stating that they all have done the cognitive transition. The more challenging one is to walk the talk, to adopt new actions and behaviour. At the personal level, there is a sequence starting with the cognition about a topic, influencing the personal emotion driving the choice of action. This individual action could lead to a collective action through emotional contagion, driving the collective performance. This sequence is remarkably described by Professor Quy Huy in his article "How Collective Emotions



and Social Identities Influence Strategy Execution” (Huy, 2011). I could detect this sequence with the interviewees at Cosucra and Belgian Federal Ministry of Mobility.

This leads to my last surprise in this process: the leap of faith is broader than I had thought; it is rather a “transition of faith”. I imagined a “aha!” moment or a kind of sudden insight as when Dr House (from a famous American TV series) finds the solution to a complex case. When approaching my research question, I had this photograph of Yves Klein (see figure 9) in mind, where the middle manager would experience resistance towards a new posture required by self-management and at some point, he/she would let go and jump into the still unknown, even if it looks scary.



Figure 9: "Leap into the Void", artistic action by Yves Klein, photographed by Harry Shunk, 1960 (gelatin silver print 25.9 x 20 cm)

But the reality is that people progressively abandon their command & control attitude, and gradually enter a posture favourable to self-management; This emotional transition happens at individual and collective levels and it takes time.

To a certain extent, William Bridges' Transition Model (Bridges, 1991) enlightens this phenomenon, where people navigate through the three emotional stages from the endings of the past towards the new beginnings (see figure 2: *William Bridges' transition model*, page 15). But I also discovered that the *neutral zone* is somewhat bypassed or remains brief. The transition of faith is between the *zone of ending* to the *new beginning*. My interpretation of this is that hope and meaning are strong drivers,

perhaps overlooked in Bridges' model. This will even be confirmed in the last section of this chapter.

### Making sense of the findings through a meta-model of observation

These surprises have driven me to revisit the theoretical frameworks used when designing the interview questionnaire and to elaborate a meta-model to better connect the dots of the “transition to faith” and the several theoretical frameworks used here. In the figure 10, you will see this meta-model, which is explained in detail in this section.

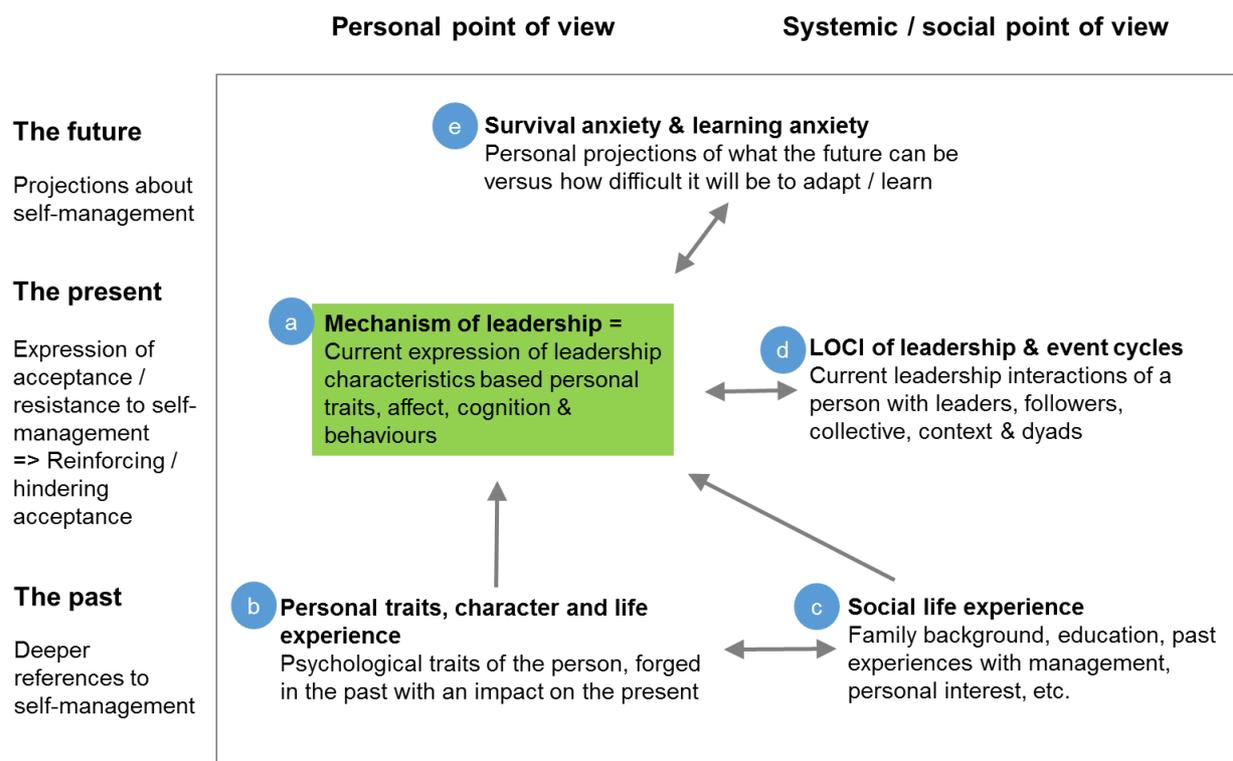


Figure 10: Meta-model to understand the psychodynamics of the leap of faith towards self-management

- a. The mechanism of leadership: The expression of the *transition of faith* towards the posture of self-management as middle manager happens at the personal level in the present. Someone's present leadership posture is based on the person's personality traits, cognition about a situation (the mental understanding) and affect / emotions. The visible expression or transmission of this person's leadership is his/her acts as leader (Eberly et al., 2013).

Considering the “transition of faith” from a vertical leadership posture to a horizontal one, a middle manager could let go his/her resistance based on these four different lenses (traits, cognition, affect & behaviour) with different intensity. We have already seen that the shift could happen cognitively. For example,



coming from a vertical mode, one mentally understands the benefits of adopting a coaching attitude rather than a command and control one to boost the engagement of a teammate.

The transition can also happen emotionally (affect), for example when one feels a more positive connection with the team member when one lets this person free to decide about his direct working environment and how he/she will handle the responsibility, rather than giving detailed instruction. This is also happening to a father or a mother, who is touched by the growing autonomy of a child and who deals with the ambivalent feeling of protecting and letting go.

The adoption of self-management can also be influenced by personality traits as a pre-condition (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). Traits such as drive, leadership motivation, self-confidence, honesty and integrity will have an influence on one's ability to lead people based on influencing rather than formal authority.

Finally, the transition to a new leadership posture can be supported by the adoption of new sorts of behaviour, the observation of their effectiveness and the creation of new habits. For example, when a person commands an associate with very precise instructions, he can observe his own behaviour and its effects, which he can compare to what happens when he tries to define the result to the associate to whom he gives the autonomy on the how to reach it.

These four mechanisms of leadership (traits, affect, cognition and behaviour) are simultaneously at play with various intensity and deeply interact with one another at all time, including during the transition of faith towards a more horizontal posture of leadership. They are also happening in the present.

I have put these mechanisms at the centre of my meta-model because they are the expression of the transition of a leadership posture in the present. They are influenced by phenomena in the past and the present, as well as projections in the future (see the vertical axis of the model). The current mechanisms of leadership are also influenced both by my inner world (here called *personal point of view*) and by a *systemic and social* dimension when I interact with other people in the past, present or future (by projection).



As already mentioned, it seems that the past plays the most significant role in the transition of faith of a middle manager.

- b. Personal traits, character and life experience developed in the past are a vast world, with multiple components. One of them is the psychological profile of a person and the intrapersonal dynamics. This profile is shaped by intrinsic traits of character of a person (i.e. one was born with them), by relationship to self and by numerous interactions with others being objects or persons. I will not attempt to summarise this immense world, but let me give some examples of how it could influence the transition of faith to horizontal leadership.

The construction of the *self* is emergent and happens in early childhood (van de Loo & Lehman, 2015). This is a process where an infant develops his/her narcissism and autonomy. Obviously, if one failed to develop it in a healthy way, one could have difficulties in grasping one's own independence or in trusting other people and granting them autonomy.

What lives in a person's conscious, preconscious and unconscious layers is shaped in the past and has a critical influence on one's leadership mechanisms. These layers are home to one's *ego*, *superego* and *id* (van de Loo, 2015). The power relationship between these deep personal drivers will define some leadership mechanisms. For example, if one's unconscious is home to moral principles that don't encourage trust, one would have difficulties to take and give autonomy in a managerial environment.

Although I am convinced that this mechanism is very influential, it was very difficult to explore during the interviews. I could merely elaborate assumptions; a serious exploration and observation of this dimension would require another situation than an interview, such as a personality questionnaire, more focussed on early childhood and major life events.

- c. Social life experience is driven by far- or early-past relationships, for example with caregivers, parents and teachers, classmates, former bosses and colleagues. It is also made up of past life social experiences and events, including more recent ones related to managing or being managed in a business context.

Some of them, mostly in the early part of life, have a deeper influence on the personality traits and character, which also influence the nature of social experiences; therefore, you see the double arrow between (b) *personal traits, character and life experience* and (c) *social life experience*.

In my understanding, social life experience has a significant impact on the ability of a middle-manager to adopt a horizontal leadership posture. For example, if the family system favoured trusting me as a child and giving me autonomy, it would have another effect than a system where I was generally under tight control. Note that control differs from discipline, which can also support taking responsibility.

Another example is the past managerial experience, where if one has mostly known highly hierarchical system based on command and control, one could aspire to more freedom and responsibility, but also encounter barriers to implement it. Barriers could be cognitive, such as “if I set people free, they will take advantage of it” or “it will be a mess and go in all directions”. The barriers could also be emotional with the fear to let go of control, even if cognition counselled otherwise.

These influences from the past form an extremely complex system, which has a critical impact on the readiness of a manager to adopt an horizontal leadership posture. I will discuss later my assumption that this has the most influence as to this readiness.

The present situations also contain significant influences on the mechanism of leadership and the readiness to adopt a new leadership posture.

d. Leadership loci and event cycles: The locus of leadership, if the source from which leadership arises (Eberly et al., 2013). The definition comprises the leaders, the followers, the leader-follower dyad, the larger collective -such as a team of the entire organization- and the context.

Event cycles are the points of contact between these different actors of a system, where they influence one another (Eberly et al., 2013). In other words, being a leader or a follower happens in interaction and not in isolation and these loci of leadership influence one another. In the illustration 11 (next page), you will find an example of a possible dynamic decrypted through the lenses of the mechanisms of leadership, loci and event cycles. This case shows an ascendant / positive spiral

towards more horizontality. Here, it is initiated by the leader of the event, who is not *per se* the leader of an organization; he could be the initiator of a project or the person in charge of a client relationship. Likewise, followers are not *per se* persons reporting to the leader, but person following him in this specific initiative. The context could be the organization at large.

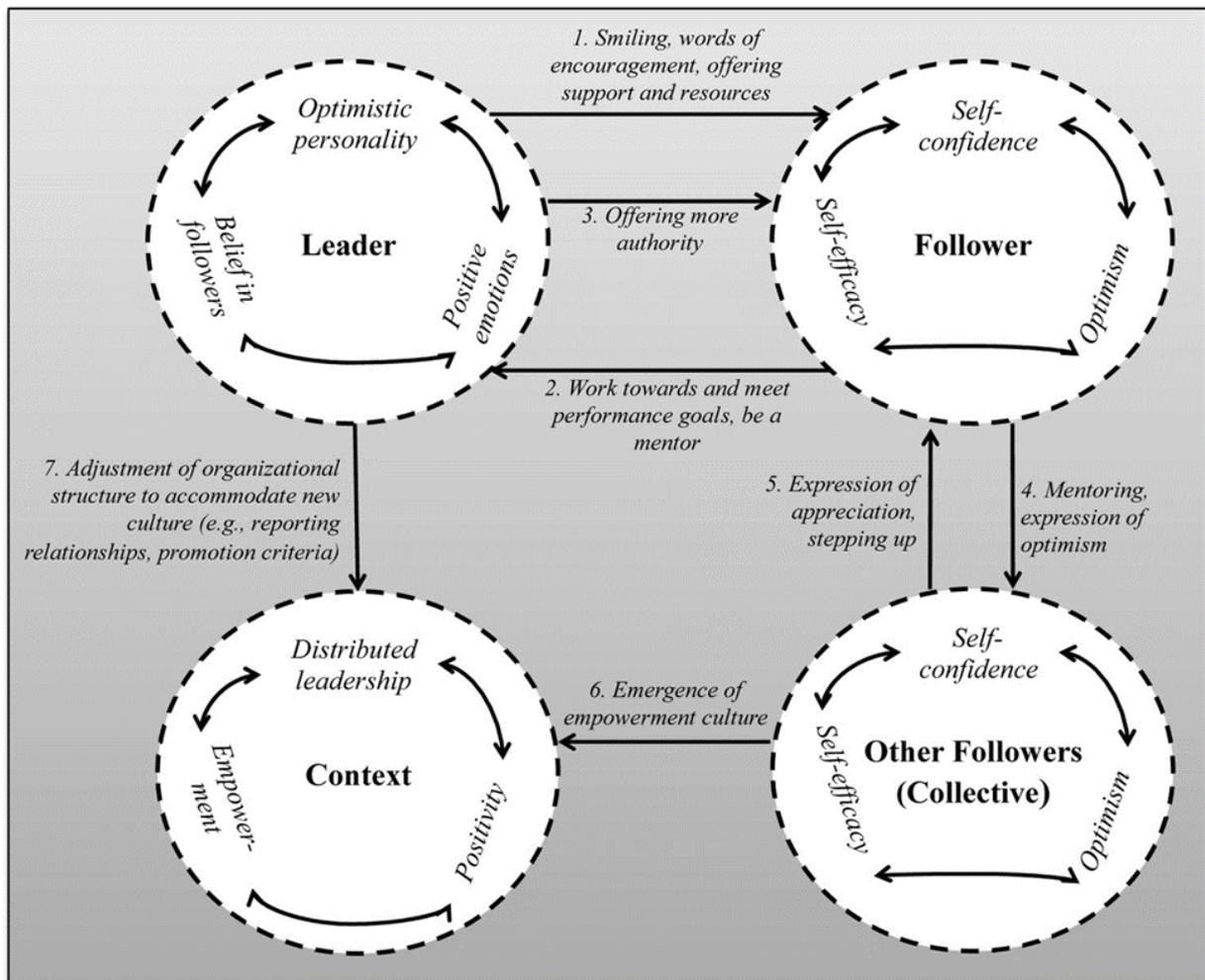


Figure 11: Example of leadership event cycle involving a leader, some followers and the context (Eberly et al., 2013)

To understand this illustration, you can first look at each cycle representing a leadership locus with three mechanisms of leadership: traits, affect and cognition. The arrows represent behaviours among loci; You can follow their proposed order to see the dynamics at play.

This dynamic could also deploy as a barrier to this transition; for example, if the top manager does not trust and empower someone as middle manager, the latter will have more difficulties to taking on responsibilities and perhaps also empowering their team members. Another influence could be colleagues (also middle managers) who might successfully adopt self-management behaviour; this would

stimulate one's personal transition towards a horizontal leadership posture. Or if the organization is already mature in a self-management approach, this would most probably influence one's own leadership mechanisms (such as affect, cognition and behaviour) in the same direction. The application of this phenomenon in the transition towards a horizontal leadership posture for the middle manager is complex and can contain multiple event cycles, in several contradicting directions (drivers and barriers) at the same time.

Although the future does not exist yet, its anticipation also influences the present mechanism of leadership.

- e. There is a natural balance between the anxiety facing the difficult act of learning and the anxiety of not surviving (Coutu, 2002). This is a very simple and powerful concept that I like to explain with this example: when a child learns to ride a bicycle, they will fall many times and perhaps get hurt or be ashamed of failing. Because this training process can take weeks, they will be able to anticipate the pain, whether physical or psychological, and this creates *anxiety of learning*. This fear of learning is balanced by another fear: not surviving. It could be, for example, the fear of not belonging to his group of friends who ride bicycles or the fear of not getting recognition and love from his parents. If this *survival anxiety* is more powerful than the learning anxiety, the child will face the latter. It is therefore very important to note that the learning anxiety can also be lowered by making the learning environment safer, for example by means of sidewheels or reassurance from the parents about their love.

Applied to the transition towards a horizontal leadership posture, the same balance plays a role. One's anxiety to let go of control over one's team could be balanced by the fear of not being recognized by one's boss or by colleagues. If a person's organization is driven by perfectionism or if the culture is to blame people when results are not good, this could increase one's anxiety in learning to let go of control.

This view on the future has a clear limitation, which will be confirmed and extensively discussed in the last section of this chapter. It is very much anxiety-driven, i.e. it touches on a negative / pessimistic anticipation of the future. Shifting to the horizontal model can also be supported by a powerful purpose of the change

and create an optimistic feeling of hope / envy. Both purpose and hope are potential very strong drivers to change, and at this stage, they are not in the model.

This meta-model has been quite useful to connect the dots of the rich information collected during the interviews. Except for the part on purpose and hope (because it was not clear enough yet), the meta-model responds and integrates my three surprises that I had along the research process.

1. The transition of towards a horizontal leadership posture is heavily influenced by the past of this person.
2. The meta model can be applied to the cognitive transition and the emotional one.
3. The *leap of faith* is rather a transition of faith, influenced by multiple factors, with possible back and forth between the zone of ending, neutral zone and the zone of new beginnings.

#### Observation and interpretation of the most important drivers and barriers to a transition of faith

Based on this meta-model, I was better able to connect the dots and draw conclusions from the rich interviews in the two organizations transitioning to self-management, i.e. Cosucra and the Belgian Federal Ministry of Mobility.

I could identify **the main drivers towards a posture of self-management as middle manager and rank them by -my subjective- order of importance**. This order is mostly relevant for the number one driver alone.

1. **Based on my observation during these interviews, the family background is the most influential driver (and barrier, as explained in the next section) towards adopting a posture of horizontal leadership. In the meta-model, this would be related to the social life experience (point c), related to the influence of the family during childhood.** I would like to review some examples collected during the interviews and my interpretation of how they ease the change of a leadership posture.

The interviewee was raised in a small village in the countryside and often worked with her<sup>1</sup> father at repairing bicycles and other tools. The father allowed his

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<sup>1</sup> For confidentiality reasons, I will not disclose the name of the interviewee and use the female gender as generic in all this section.



daughter to work independently, and she had the opportunity to experiment, make mistakes and still get his support to learn. The village was a collaborative environment where the interviewee and her father were doing repairs for the other villagers, who in their turn helped with other matters where they were skilled. This experience deeply anchored several key aspects required in self-management, such as taking responsibility for what she undertakes, her greater consciousness of community bonds and the interdependence amongst people, and the benefits of a coaching attitude (from her father's example).

Another interviewee experienced an absent father during the week and a mother who took care of her basic needs such as food. But the interviewee had to take care herself of all other aspects of her life. I do not know where her drive was coming from (this is my blind spot about her psychological traits), but she was soon autonomous in organizing her homework, visits to her friends and free-time activities (games, sports). Obviously, this gave her a deep-rooted and significant advantage when experiencing the challenges of self-management, its necessary autonomy and taking responsibility. In her case, she was actually very reluctant to have a controlling boss and could not easily function in a hierarchical command and control model.

Family history can also drive a cognitive understanding of an organizational model: for this third example, her father was a blue-collar worker in a traditional hierarchical organization, where there was a strong solidarity among the shop floor employees. She would hear every day about the pride of these workers, how they would overcome difficulties of life together and how bosses could have a "wrong" judgement. Obviously, this shaped her conception of hierarchy, its limitations and her deep respect of people's work, mostly lower down the ladder. Her approach to status is clearly negatively biased, since she gives a critical connotation to the boss. As middle manager, her management style is rather communicative and collaborative, based on mutual help, which she organizes in her department.

- 2. Education is also part of the *social life experience* dimension in the meta-model. For some interviewees, it is an obvious driver to their transition of faith, rooted in the choice of a university subject matter or experience in primary school (to mention only two illustrations).**



As an example, I refer to the interviewee who had a strong interest in biology, which she picked for her master in sciences. She was fascinated with the evolutionary theories and its systemic characteristics. When we discussed the transition of the organization and her role, I asked whether this echoed with her personal experience. She very spontaneously cited her knowledge of biology, the dependence and connection among different cells, all having their role. If a role was not properly fulfilled, the system would experience lower resistance or even fail. This gave her a stronger consciousness of her responsibility in her professional role and the necessity to care for others, because they are part of the same system.

Another interviewee comes from a modest background. She remembered her experience at school, where most of her classmates were from wealthier families, went more often on holiday and had bigger houses. Although she was sensitive to the different social status, she experienced no difference in worth between people. She mentioned this phenomenon as critical to her perception that all people are equal, whatever their social background and that hierarchical status is not the most relevant and certainly does not allow a condescending posture.

**3. The current human dynamics in a job can significantly support a middle manager's exploration of a trusting and empowering posture; this falls under the leadership loci and event cycles (point "d" above). The most significant driver here would be the interactions with the interviewee's leader.**

Powerful and simple illustrations can be found in these quotes: "My boss trusts me. This stimulates me to perform better and this realization pushed me to trust others" and "My boss' trust in me is showing me the way". This confirms the critical role played by leaders and my belief that they have the responsibility to initiate the journey by incarnating the change of posture.

The influence of the general context was also revealed as very important. Like Matthias at W.L. Gore & Associates, some interviewees were significantly influenced by the structural intention of the change. Their general context then allows them to take more initiatives (be more autonomous) and bear more



ownership / responsibility on what they undertake. To put it differently, some interviewees feel better supported if the shift to horizontality is intended for the entire organization than if it is just about their department. As middle managers they feel one among others; this lowers the anxiety of making mistakes and diminishes the required courage to experiment.

One interviewee mentioned that the new paradigm resulted in the voice of internal customers (peers in other departments) was now louder. The demand for quality came from internal clients and not from the top manager any more. This was a more tangible and motivating reason for her to take initiatives to fix quality issues. When another interviewee heard about her CEO's intention and although she was not reporting to him (he is 2-3 levels above her), she felt authorised to take initiatives. She felt that his voice was the voice of the system.

**4. Learning from previous professional experience of self-management is a critical driver to gain confidence and improve one's posture. We are constantly creating reinforcing (or not) experience in what we do, through experimentation.**

The most striking example concerns this interviewee who was relatively recent in the organization. In her previous job, she went through a similar transformation to self-management, where hierarchy was revisited, managers were invited to adopt a coaching and enabling attitude. When she came here, she was more mature than the clear majority of the employees. Based on her experience, she could easily enter a 'coordinator and resource' role -rather than a classical manager. She could also resist to the temptation to respond positively to her teammates' requests for more instructions (typical behaviour of followers in a vertical system, expecting clear guidance from their 'boss').

Another interesting case is this person who worked in the army, where she was trained to take initiatives during operations. She would for example get the mission to secure a quarter and if something arose, she was trained to act immediately (there would be no time to ask for permission). But the responsibility was also to keep the chief informed of the action which relates to a horizontal leadership posture.



The other related example is this interviewee who lives in the village where the headquarters of Decathlon is based, a French company already implementing self-management. She would hear employees talking about their work and notice that it seemed an unusually positive experience. This was an important source of inspiration to engage in the transformation of her company and her own leadership posture.

5. **We hardly discussed survival anxiety as a driver with the interviewees. However, I sense that it plays a significant role: when the system changes and people do not get along, they fear being outcast by their leader, their peers or their team.** My assumption about this timidity is related to the setup of the interview: I was meeting people for the first time and couldn't expect them to be completely open about everything.

Still, some testimonials revealed this survival anxiety under the label of recognition: "if I did not change my posture, my boss would be disappointed with me" or "because of the announcements, my team was expecting to receive more freedom and I was clearly expected to give some". None at Cosucra and the Ministry discussed a possible impact on their evaluation, mostly -in my understanding- because the new posture of self-management has not been integrated in the performance review yet. But the contrast is here quite significant with W.L. Gore & Associates, where the contribution to the team is ranked every year by its members, with visibility on the top and the lower performers. Gore's system is certainly driving some survival anxiety, pushing the people to learn new behaviour, feeding the system of self-management.

**Lowering of learning anxiety was also not discussed in the interviews. This includes the creation of a safer space to allow mistakes and receiving feedback.** Learning organizations are quite good at using failures & frustrations to serve continuous improvement. My assumption about the reason why this has not been mentioned is different from the survival anxiety: the context of these companies towards mistakes and failures might not have evolved. One of their problems was the culture of blame, which is the exact opposite to a safer place and a potential powerful barrier to a change of posture of leadership.

This meta-model also helped me to better **understand the barriers to the interviewees' adoption of a horizontal leadership posture. Like for the drivers, the ranking is mostly relevant for the first one.**

- 1. Like for the drivers of the transition of faith, I perceive that the psychological profile and social life experience have the biggest impact on this readiness to adopt a horizontal leadership posture. Among the nebula of influences here, I could clearly observe the impact of the family background.**

For example, this interviewee comes from a bourgeois upper class family background, where social status is important, mostly based on individual success, mostly represented by money. Her father was quite absent and paid little attention to her achievements. Her mother was authoritarian and tough. This early deficit of recognition has driven seduction behaviour, still present today. During the interview, she realized that her family model has not been supporting her adaptation to the horizontal model. My assumption is that she was not enough trusted as kid and this deficit has driven a fundamental assumption that people cannot be trusted, perhaps including herself. Overcoming this barrier requires deeper self-awareness and the activation of other driving mechanisms to enter a trusting and empowering leadership posture. Looking at *leadership mechanisms*, I guess that the person could benefit from identifying the most malleable dimensions among emotions, cognition and behaviours and work on it.

Perfectionism and the drive to succeed at tasks were embedded in this other interviewee's mind. She felt that this was keeping her from letting go of control over her team and imposing stringent quality standards. As such, the latter is fine because a self-managed company is not exempt from delivering high quality. But the high control was also limiting her ability to give signs of trust and to empower people in her team. She also had the fear of losing the common focus if she were not to control people, thus inducing the anxiety of not attaining the results. This fear mechanically stimulates her *command and control* attitude, where she rather gives instructions on what tasks need to be fulfilled and how. I did not clearly see a concrete source for this behaviour, but I suspect that it relates to a very strong drive to perform, perhaps driven by her father's very high quality standard.

This drive could also be a natural bias when one is given a task: the brain picks the shortest path to success. If someone is used to command and control, and is given an objective, the brain will be driven to activate the easiest way, and the best known. An illustration of this phenomenon is the test of selective attention (Simons & Chabris, 2010). You might remember the test of the gorilla (*selective attention test*, n.d.), where you see two teams (with white & black t-shirts) playing with a basketball. The audience receives the task of counting the number of passes between the whites. In the middle of the sequence, a black gorilla passes through the scene. Because people are busy with their task involving white items, only half of them notice the gorilla.

My assumption is that the task is to get to the business result or even to be perfect, with an attention narrowed to the known route of *command and control* (assimilated to the white shirts), overlooking at other leadership posture, less known, such as a coaching attitude (assimilated to the black shirts).

## 2. **The other important barrier to the shift is related to learning anxiety.**

**Changing to a leadership posture is difficult, especially when it includes giving trust to people, and letting go of control and status.**

An obvious example arose with several interviewees and can be summarised with the assumption “if I adopt self-leadership, I will not have a role anymore and ultimately lose my job / status” and with the question “what will be my role?”. This is like learning how to ride a bicycle: I will fall. This creates a very understandable anxiety.

The other necessary lesson to learn and which generates fear is in collective decision-making, when a “horizontal manager” cannot simply decide on his own but must ask for advice or consent. This requires trusting an unknown process and also recognizing the illusion of control inherent in top-down decisions; many people disengage from the implementation of a decision with which they were not in agreement and/or were not treated in a fair way. There is a similar phenomenon with the fear that less control will lead to not being able to detect skivers and thereby to take disciplinary measures. There is also the need to learn to give continuous feedback to workers in a context promoting autonomy, where some interviewees experienced difficulties doing so without being perceived as control



freaks. These are all new skills to learn and require a middle manager to adopt a new posture.

**3. Leadership loci and event cycles can also be barriers to the adoption of a new posture. Interactions with the leader and with the context come up as the most important barriers.**

The most recurring case mentioned by interviewees relates to the direct boss who is still in a *command and control* posture, even if in transition. The interviewees are therefore driven to adopt a posture of follower, asking for permission to take initiatives and being controlled as to the results. Consequently, this leader-follower dynamic with the boss hinders the middle manager's new leadership style with his team, as a leader this time.

The locus of context can also hinder the shift of some interviewees. The context can be driven by people having a symbolic value (such as top executives), by an organizational model, company processes and systems. For example when the executives are not walking the talk of self-management, this damages the dynamic even of people not directly reporting to them. Or if the reward system is only promoting individual results, this might also affect the collective spirit and this one's transition to a new posture.

**Note that I have detected drivers and barriers with each interviewee. This coexistence was not a surprise**, even in a mature environment such as W.L. Gore & Associates, **because there is a swing between the vertical and the horizontal leadership posture** (Van Der Loo & Rogers, 2015). This swing can even imply some regressions when under stress, interviewees distance themselves from coaching behaviour and become more directive. It is also quite frequent that in crisis, leaders often tend to dictate more than consult, simply because there is no time.

### Further reflexions on the applicability and limits of the proposed meta model

As part of the research, I have checked the relevance of this meta-model and its potential applicability to stimulate and perhaps steer the change of leadership posture with individuals and with a collective.

Therefore, I interviewed in a second round the leaders who gave me access to the nine middle managers in the three organizations: Jacques Crahay, the CEO of Cosucra, Quentin Druart, the head of Personnel & Organization at the Belgian Federal Ministry of Mobility and Nobert Ebster, the former Country Leader of W.L. Gore & Associates Germany. I also presented the model to several other business leaders in a think tank on “more conscious leadership”. The discussions gave me rich insights on the model and its possible further evolution to improve its completeness and applicability in organizations.

About the relevance, the overall feedback was convergent on several aspects. The general feedback is that the model is understandable and makes sense in terms of dynamics for a *transition of faith*. There is a general agreement that leadership is expressed through the *mechanisms of leadership*, through traits, affect, cognition and behaviour. They also agree that the past might play a significant role in a manager’s readiness to transition from a “command and control” attitude towards a “coaching” attitude.

**The reactions showed also a similar frustration to the one I felt: the past plays such a significant role, it’s as if they have no impact on it. Leaders are mostly shaping the future, and therefore they need to better understand the levers able to influence it.** I could feel the resistance to accept determinism and the hope that we can still influence the future.

**One recurring limitation of the model came out in the discussions: they all missed the positive drive of the future.** Its anticipation is not just related to anxiety about surviving or learning. **The purpose of the transformation (and of the organization) is a significant driver for personal and collective actions.** For example, the *raison d’être* is explicitly used at the Ministry of Mobility, when making the link between a better public service to the population and a more horizontal organizational model. This also echoes the “*evolutionary purpose*” as one of the three pillars of “teal” organizations described in the book *Reinventing Organizations* (Laloux,



2014). This dimension is also confirmed in the study on the financial performance of companies cultivating purpose described in the book *Firms of Endearment: How World-Class Companies Profit from Passion and Purpose* (Sisoda & al., 2007)

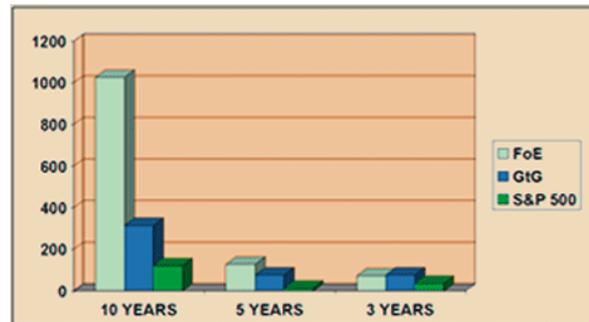


Figure 12: Financial performance of selected companies cultivating their corporate purpose versus companies analysed in the book *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... and Others Don't* (Jim Collins, 2001) and the companies listed in the Standard & Poor's 500 index (from Sisoda & al., 2007)

In his book *Drive, the surprising truth about what motivates us*, Daniel Pink confirmed that purpose is one of the three main drivers that motivate us, together with mastery and autonomy (Pink, 2009). We have already seen in earlier chapters that the two later drivers are totally convergent with self-management, based on autonomy and responsibility.

One could argue that nurturing purpose is part of lowering the learning anxiety, and thus already included in the model, but I would disagree with this. If I come back to this image of a kid learning to ride a bicycle, putting side-wheels to avoid a fall lowers the fear of learning. But explaining that riding a bicycle will help him/her to make friends gives a positive reason to overcome the fear. This is the positive opposite to the survival anxiety, i.e. the fear of not being part of group of friends because I cannot ride the bicycle like them. Survival anxiety helps to overcome learning anxiety, in a negative way.

In brief, this model should consider the positive emotions about the future, mostly driven by nurturing a purpose, the desire of one's future role and the pleasure that one would get from it.

Coming to the applicability of the model, I also obtained some rich and relevant insights. The most obvious benefit of this model for a leader dealing with any evolution of leadership, including the transition from the vertical to the horizontal model, is that it helps him/her to reflect. When dealing with leadership development, most models advise self-awareness as key to improving oneself. This model helps to reflect about what drives my own style and its desired evolution.

At the same line, the model also helps a leader to reflect about others and what could be put in place to stimulate the transition of faith of an associate. Some possible interventions came up in these second round interviews to illustrate this. One person mentioned that the model could be shared with someone to stimulate self-reflexion and guide a coaching discussion on how to inspire the personal transition and overcome inner barriers. Leadership training could also include the model to give a framework for reflexion about oneself, a team or the organization.

The model is also seen as a structured eye-opener to identify possible interventions within the collective and the organization. For example, someone mentioned that the drive to success and autonomy can be stimulated by structurally promoting trust, recognition, empathy, respect and transparency within interactions (referring to the leadership loci and event cycles). Shaping one's own decision making and autonomy is also the responsibility of one's boss, who needs to give the space and hold on to his own coaching posture; this can be structurally supported by some guidelines/rules & open feedback systems.

Hiring was also mentioned as a potential field of application. The model suggests delving deeper into the past experiences of the candidate. Of course, this would need to be handled ethically and with care because the past and the psychological profile of a person are very complex and delicate.

All discussions confirmed the relevance of this meta-model for acting leaders, but they also all agreed that the model should be more accessible to non-academic people. I agree with them.

### Towards an improved version of the meta-model and some facilitators of the transition of faith

Taking these reflexions into account, there were some obvious improvements to make to the meta-model.

The most significant one was to include the positive projection as to the future related to the purpose of the shift and the desire for the anticipated pleasure in a new model. The purpose is both in the present and the future, since we can act as of now to fulfil our purpose. Both have strong associated emotions, which potentially serve as powerful drivers, which could be complementary to the fears of learning and surviving.

Taking these improvements into account, you will see the next version of this meta-model in the illustration below. The other core elements are similar to the original version (see figure 10, page 44).

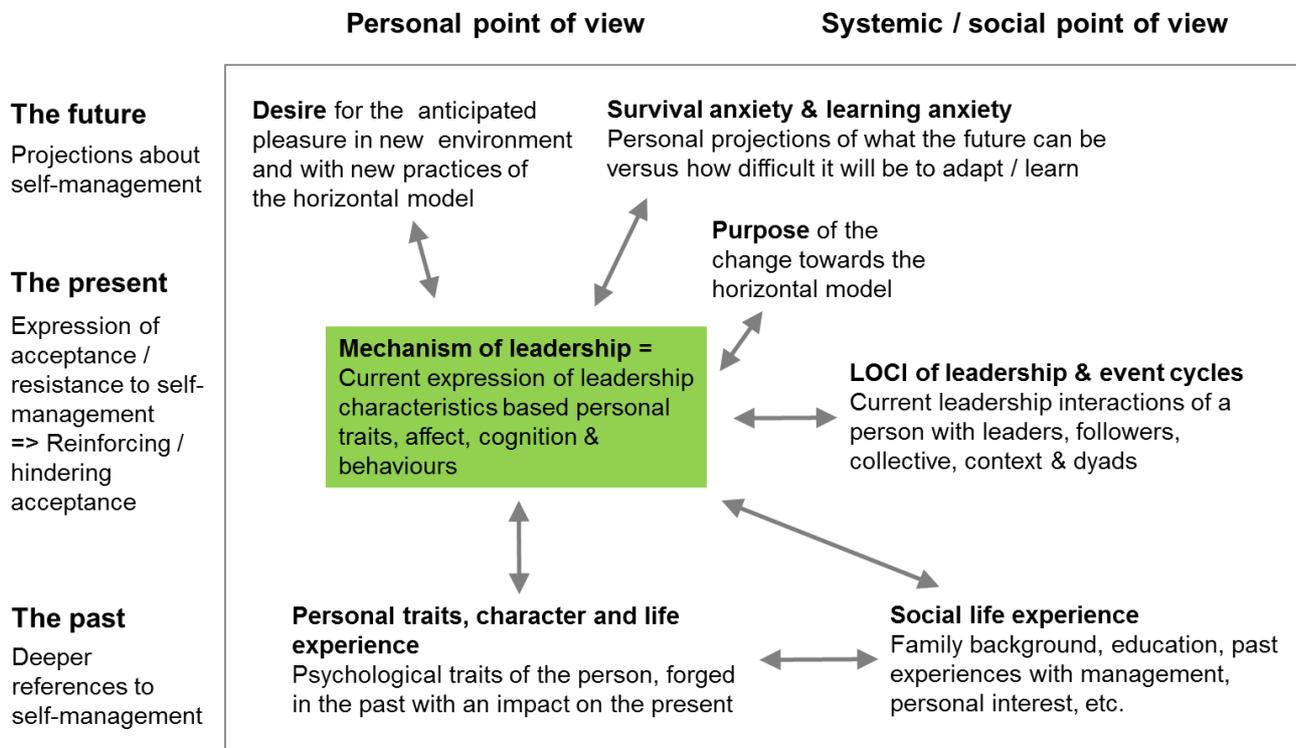


Figure 13: improved version of the meta-model

Together with this new version, I would like to come back on some possible facilitators of the transition of faith, i.e. few actions that could foster the drivers and neutralize the barriers to a change of posture towards a horizontal leadership posture.

Although the past remains the past and we have seen its significant importance in this transition, there is a possible processing of this past. Personal and / or leadership development are disciplines based on the assumption that we can all get better. The past is a representation and we can -if needed- change this representation, we can process the past to turn its burdening parts into a growth opportunities. If the past supports the shift, we can also leverage this help to also get better and further. And sometimes, we get back in the past conditioning and references through *regression*. This can become a barrier to a horizontal posture. If it happens from time to time and with self-awareness, this is OK and we can make overall progresses towards a desired posture. But if we experience this regression too often and with little awareness, we might be in trouble with adopting the new posture.

Overall, processing the past requires to grow self-awareness. Leaders, consultants and coaches can help this by having deep conversations with people in transition of faith, offering them feedback and reflection time.

In the present, we create experience cycles, i.e. having success at personal level growing credibility, then team level, also creating credibility there, and then growing to the organization. There can be a reinforcing experience cycle to the adoption of the new posture of leadership. The more success we experience in the new horizontal model, the more credibility it has. We can also have failed experience cycles with the opposite effects. This research has also shown the complexity of both cycles coexisting, with some steps forward and some backwards. The art is to reach and overall progression towards the adoption of a horizontal leadership posture, for individuals and the collective.

The anxiety of learning (a barrier to the transition of faith) can be lowered by securing the learning environment, allowing mistakes to be made so as to learn from them. Help from colleagues can significantly ease to overcome this anxiety. In the same way, if the anxiety of surviving is too high, it could inhibit further actions. Help and support from others can help to overcome the barriers or activate the drivers related to learning.

As to the purpose of a change of posture we can foster imagination about the ways to have a positive impact on the organization and on the world.

The desire of acting in the new model also requires imagination and some experimentation, which could activate these drivers of a change of posture.

Hopefully, this new version of the meta-model could better help leaders, consultants and coaches to facilitate this transition of faith towards a horizontal leadership posture, for themselves and for others.

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*Like for the river in the Persian tale (see page 2), the metamorphosis must respect one's true nature and can be facilitated by meaningful conversations.*



## X. Limitations

This thesis and my research are limited principally by the subjectivity of the methodology: the limited sample of nine interviewed middle managers is biased because they were chosen by the leader who were driving change (in the case of the Belgian Federal Ministry of Mobility) or they volunteered (at Cosucra). Observe that I have had limited access to other people sceptical about the ongoing transformations. I also understand that the opponents could be afraid to be interviewed by a stranger sent by their boss; it can take more courage to criticise than to praise. And this has probably also biased what my interviewees disclosed, although I tried to ensure the safety of the interviews as much as possible with explicit confidentiality rules. My analysis is based on self-declaratory testimonials, where people prefer to say that they are favouring self-management rather than be scared by it. Perceiving their resistance was therefore harder and required pushing the interviews at a deeper level, relying on my intuition and interpretation. Furthermore, I could not cross-check the information, particularly on how well the interviewees have adopted a leadership posture as middle-manager in a horizontal model.

My conclusion that the past has the most significant effect on the readiness of a person to take up self-management could also be better grounded. For example, I could have better explore the interviewees' personal history, personality traits, character and social experience. I would have been more precise by accessing more material about these, including some personality tests, drivers and talents.

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*Unlike the millenary desert sand in the Persian tale (see page 2), this thesis results of few months of research on too few people in only three organizations.*



## XI. Future research

The quote “The more I learn, the more I realise how much I don’t know.” is commonly attributed to Albert Einstein. I can totally relate to this after this research journey and would like to share some possibilities for further exploration on this topic of the psychodynamics of the transition of posture towards horizontal leadership.

About the readiness of this transition of faith, there might be an interest to further explore the influence of the past. This research hardly scratched the surface of a vast world of personality traits, personal drivers and motivation. Exploring further what shapes these aspects and their influence on the transition of faith could be enlightening.

Also, one could study more precisely what characterizes the performance of a leader in a horizontal model and connect this with drivers and barriers. This could create some more precision about the weight of these drivers and barriers in the adoption of a favourable leadership posture. This would also require a more comprehensive description of the components of performance as middle-manager in a horizontal model.

Another question came along the way, related to the optimistic and pessimistic anticipation of the future to drive a change of posture. On the one hand, there is the possible drive of a noble purpose and hope for a more pleasurable job, and on the other hand the fears of leaning and surviving. One could take a closer look at these two, how they coexist and influence the change.

Finally, one could also explore the application of this model in real organizational life and in coaching. How could an executive coach assess where and how the coachee needs support, which will enable better performance as a leader?

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*Like the desert sand in the Persian tale (see page 2), wisdom is immense and still to be explored.*



## XII. Conclusion

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Like the river in the Persian tale (see page 2), an important challenge of the metamorphosis is the leap of faith that the future will be better than what we have done and can remember so far. It is tough to let go of the past and become freer in our mind, heart and actions and able to accept the uncertainty of the future.

Like the river in the Persian tale, most of us have forgotten that we aspire to freedom and autonomy, to a purposeful life and to the mastery of our actions. We are attached to our culture and habits, which have conditioned so many of us to the mainstream of countless duties, a quest for money and status and the illusion that we can control our and others' faith. This applies to the functioning in business organizations, and perhaps beyond.

As for the river in the Persian tale, this thesis is an invitation to reflect on how we can foster a leap of faith towards deep aspirations to more freedom, while accepting the concomitant responsibility; these are characteristics of a horizontal leadership model. For a leader, changing from a *command and control* posture (typical of a vertical leadership model) to a *coaching* attitude means trusting others and the process more, granting autonomy to others and letting go status-based authority. Whether it is applied to middle managers in business organizations or anyone else in a leading role, this leap is not a technical challenge. Changing our posture and our attitude is a challenge requiring a high level of adaptability, and involves complex human dynamics.

Like the river in the Persian tale, our current leadership posture and our ability to embrace a new one are deeply rooted in our past; this is a key finding of this thesis. Our family background, education and psychological profile can be both strong drivers and barriers to accepting a change of leadership posture.

Unlike the river in the Persian tale, this change of attitude takes time, even the first step of overcoming the resistance to an ending -what is referred here as the *transition of faith*. This transition happens at different paces in our mind, heart and actions, and our mental acceptance is obviously faster than our emotional one.



Like the river in the Persian tale, we can rely on powerful elements to help us transition towards a horizontal leadership posture, knowing that these elements can also become barriers.

Firstly, we can gain awareness about the influence of our past and how it drives our emotions, personality, intellectual understanding and actions. A balcony view of the past and our conditioning can drive some change. Like the river in the tale, it can help us to reconnect with a deeper aspiration or to become more aware of a cause of resistance and work on it.

We can also benefit from dynamics when interacting with people around us and in the general context. A leader or colleagues can positively help us to transition towards more autonomy and responsibility through their actions, example, support or permission. The general context, habits and culture of our environment (such as an organization) will also influence our posture as leader.

Our anticipation of the future also shapes our hopes and fears, which can give us the courage to face the dangerous act of learning. The risk of changing one's leadership posture requires experimenting, making mistakes and adapting the next experiment to see if it works. This is far from easy for adults with power. So, the anticipation of possible negative effects if one does not change (the *survival anxiety*) and the hope to fulfil a greater purpose if I change are two huge forces towards fostering a transition of faith.

I hope this thesis, a little like the voice of the sands in the Persian tale, has whispered some clues to business leaders, consultants and coaches about the psychodynamics of transitioning from a vertical to a horizontal leadership posture. Hopefully, this thesis has helped you, dear reader, to gain some perspective for your own, a friend's, an associate's or a leader's transition towards more freedom and responsibility.

### XIII. Acknowledgements

Many people have been very helpful during the journey of this thesis and I would like to express my gratitude to them for their trust and contribution.

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THANK YOU!

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*Like the river in the Persian tale (see page 2), this thesis didn't grow alone. This research benefited from many streams of the energy, goodwill, time, courage, knowledge and wisdom of these people. Gratefulness!*



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## Annexe: Interview protocol

Ref	Questions	Answer + time code on the recorder for key points (minutes - seconds)	My observations	My insights
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Who I am</li> <li>* The purpose of my research study</li> <li>* How the person's answer will be used (anomalous, blended with the others per company and global)</li> <li>* How the thesis will be disseminated and used</li> </ul>			
2	Is it OK to record?			
3	Would you tell me a little bit about yourself?			
4	This interview will be structured around the period before your shift towards a more liberated style, the jump and the period after			
5	<p><u>Chapter 1: building the momentum to shift to horizontal model</u></p> <p>THE SYSTEM</p> <p>How would you describe the leadership model then?</p>			
6	Organogram, decision making (guidelines and reality), communication style, meeting style, politics,			
8	<p>YOUR ROLE</p> <p>How would you describe your role as middle manager then?</p>			
9	What were your decision power and level of autonomy and responsibility?			
10	<p>Describe your posture as leader?</p> <p>What was your leadership style?</p> <p>Describe your posture versus your boss (former boss)? (as follower)</p>			
11	<p>YOU</p> <p>How did you feel then in this environment?</p>			
12	How did your role resonate with your life in general (past and present)?			



13	THE IDEA OF THE SHIFT * How has the intent to change been introduced to you? Who was involved?			
14	Did you perceive that the company had the choice to keep status quo? Can you explain more?			
15	YOU AND THE IDEA OF THE SHIFT How did you picture imagine your role in this new model? Your level of autonomy, your own leadership style, your responsibilities and those of your team?			
16	How did you feel about the idea? What emotions did you experience?			
17	How did it resonate with your personal history? (a parallel with the same feeling in your life)			
18	What did you find attractive? Can you explain more?			
19	What did you find negative? Can you explain more?			
20	What was your perception of your key personal challenges to enter this new model?			
21	How did the <u>behaviour of your boss</u> affect you about this shift? (explore leadership LOCI) How did you interpret them in terms of who they are, what they felt and what they thought?			
22	How did the behaviour of your <u>colleagues middle managers</u> affect you about this shift? (explore leadership LOCI) How did you interpret them in terms of who they are, what they felt and what they thought?			
23	How did the behaviour of <u>the people reporting to you</u> affect you about this shift? (explore leadership LOCI) How did you interpret them in terms of who they are, what they felt and what they thought?			



24	<p><u>Chapter 2: When your personal shift happened, when you become genuinely open to the new model</u></p> <p>When did you accept to shift to horizontal (or liberated) leadership? What were the circumstances then for you and for the organization?</p>			
25	<p>Why did you gain openness to accept this change? What were your top 3 driving forces to accept the shift?</p>			
26	<p>How did the behaviour of your boss, colleagues middle managers and subordinates affect you? (leadership LOCI)</p>			
27	<p>Which resistances did you let go? Why? Which did you not let go? Why?</p>			
28	<p>Why was it not possible to escape it and keep your role and posture? (explore the survival anxiety)</p>			
29	<p>What were you certain / convinced about this change?</p>			
30	<p>How did you feel at that moment?</p>			
31	<p><u>Chapter 3: The new situation</u></p> <p>THE SYSTEM</p> <p>How would you describe the new system?</p>			
32	<p>Organogram, decision making (guidelines and reality), communication style, meeting style, politics,</p>			
33	<p>How would you describe the company culture now in terms of leadership (style)?</p>			
34	<p>How would you describe the transition path / the transformation process?</p>			
35	<p>How do you see the behaviours of your boss, colleagues middle managers and subordinates? How do you interpret them? How do they affect you? (leadership LOCI)</p>			
36	<p>YOUR ROLE</p> <p>How would you describe your role as middle manager now?</p>			
37	<p>What is your decision power, level of autonomy and responsibility?</p>			



38	What are the differences between how you imagined the new role and the reality? How do you feel about this?			
39	Describe your posture as leader? Have you acquired a new leadership style? Describe your posture versus your boss (former boss)?			
40	YOU How do you feel now as professional?			
41	How does your role resonate with your life in general (past and present)?			
42	What have you learned over this period? What was easy and not easy to learn?			
43	What do you find improved over the past?			
44	What do you regret from the past?			
45	FINISH If necessary, would you agree for a short follow up session to dig into few aspects? Now that we know each other, we could do that remotely, which would be more flexible for both.			

