

## ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

# From Liberating Leader to Shared Leadership: A Process of Role Distribution

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## Abstract

A liberated company is an emerging concept, which is based on trust and autonomy and is radically opposed to hierarchical principles. The empirical literature describes liberation as a complex process of cultural and organizational transformation, wherein managerial functions are questioned or even eliminated, and blind spots are a source of numerous pitfalls. Against this backdrop, the central issue of transforming leadership, and the roles it entails, remains underexplored in liberated companies, whereas reflections are primarily focused on the liberating leader. Using a single case study and a processual, multilevel approach to liberation, this study analyzes the evolution of key leadership roles at the individual (supporting), collective (catalyst), and organizational (driving) levels. The results show that the distribution and sharing of leadership roles is an evolutionary and dynamic process rather than a tipping point and question the opportunities and limits of role distribution at different stages of the process.

**Keywords:** *Liberated company; Liberating process; Shared Leadership; Case Study; Qualitative Methodology*

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In a competitive, multipolar world, the management science literature calls for a rethinking of organizational models to address major strategic, technological, economic, societal, or environmental *grand challenges* (Burns & Stalker, 1961; George et al., 2016; Hamel, 2007). Sharing the observation that traditional models are ineffective in responding to these challenges, Lee and Edmondson (2017) suggest considering more radical forms of non-hierarchical organizations and self-managing organizations (SMOs).

Among these new forms of organization (Ajzen et al., 2015; Grosjean et al., 2016), the concept of a liberated company (LC) is one of the most widely known. Popularized a decade ago by the groundbreaking book *Freedom Inc* (Carney & Getz, 2009) and the French TV documentary *Le bonheur au travail* (Meissonnier, 2014), this radical, non-hierarchical concept relies on employees' trust and autonomy rather than respect for authority figures. Based on a dozen success stories (Gilbert et al., 2014) and spectacular results, it supposedly enhances organizational performance, creativity, innovation, and employee commitment.

However, various experiments with liberated companies have revealed several shortcomings that necessitate further

exploration of the strengths and limitations of the concept. Specifically, the removal of the traditional hierarchical authority position, the redesign of processes, and the adoption of a collective decision-making mode seem to represent a turning point, subject to unexpected effects (De Ridder & Taskin, 2021; Gilbert et al., 2017), blind spots (Weil & Dubey, 2020), and cases of instrumentalization (Brière, 2017; Cultiaux & Léon, 2019; Duan, 2019; Picard, 2015). These pitfalls could be explained by the lack of reflection on leadership in these organizations. While the managerial figure, and the disappearance thereof, forms the core of the model, collective leadership is rarely discussed in the literature (Holtz, 2017; Holtz & Zardet, 2022), or only from the perspective of a liberating and charismatic single leader (Carney & Getz, 2012). However, leadership is a process of influence that is essential for all organized collective action and can be viewed from both individual and collective perspectives (Yukl, 2012).

To address this gap, we draw on the theoretical framework of shared leadership. Rather than focusing on the leader, we perceive leadership as a set of roles (Morgeson et al., 2010)

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that can be distributed, shared, or collectively assumed by a group (Pearce & Conger, 2002; Pearce & Manz, 2005). This allows us to address the question of leadership roles outside the hierarchical framework, to study their transformation and distribution during the liberation process. Therefore, the central question of this research is how does the sharing of leadership roles evolve during the corporate liberating process?

Based on a case study, and adopting an evolutionary and processual approach to liberation, this research moves from a static vision to highlight the different phases of the liberation process, and the transformation in the leadership roles they generate. The findings also qualify the role of the liberating leader in the process, while paving the way for an extended conception of role sharing.

## Literature review

### ***Moving from theory to practice: the value of a process approach***

The concept of LC or 'F-form' company or 'freedom form' company was first formalized by Isaac Getz as 'an organizational form in which employees have complete freedom and responsibility to take actions that *they*, not their bosses, decide are best' (Getz, 2009, p. 34). Based on the Y-theory of motivation developed by McGregor in 1960, this concept posits that if individuals are placed in an environment of trust, autonomy, and responsibility, they will be more willing to do their jobs and perform better. Academically, LC is an emerging concept (Mattelin-Pierrard et al., 2020), radically opposed to hierarchical principles (Carney & Getz, 2012; Gérard, 2017; Laloux, 2015; Zobrist, 2020). This generic term covers many other names (Mattelin-Pierrard et al., 2020), including the concepts of Teal organization (Laloux, 2015) and Holacracy (Robertson, 2016). A recent systematic review of the concept (Mattelin-Pierrard et al., 2020) is enlightening in this regard: a first stream attempted to characterize its organizational model, identifying a number of relatively stable attributes (radical decentralization, self-organized teams, mutual adjustment, standardization by results, etc.).

The process-oriented approach to change, which has enabled researchers to renew their understanding of organizational phenomena (Langley et al., 2013), has inspired a second trend. Indeed, according to Getz (2016, p. 416), 'liberation is never complete, but represents a path'. The latter identifies four stages relevant for the liberating leader: (1) promoting equality and actively listening to employees; (2) sharing the vision; (3) creating an environment conducive to self-determination; and (4) sustaining culture in the long term (Carney & Getz, 2012; Getz, 2009; Sferrazzo & Ruffini, 2019). Indeed, longitudinal analyses conceiving liberation as organizational change (Fox & Pichault, 2017; Gilbert et al., 2019; Hauch &

Loufrani-Fedida, 2020; Holtz, 2017; Poli, 2020, 2022) have shown promise not only in studying the process and mechanisms of adoption and implementation of the concept but also in formulating conditions for success and risks (Battistelli et al., 2023; Poli, 2022; Weil & Dubey, 2020). Battistelli et al. (2023) highlighted the gradual adoption of 'bundles of practices' during the liberating process and emphasized their temporal interdependence, thus confirming the interest in such an approach. This empirical work highlights the diversity of forms and the complexity of liberation pathways, generating both benefits and pitfalls. Overall, 'all [companies undergoing liberation] seem to follow similar paths, but punctuated by difficulties of different kinds' (Coutrot, 2019, p. 277). The radical removal of any vestige of hierarchical organization can generate blind spots, disorientation, and even suffering and disengagement (De Ridder & Taskin, 2021; Gilbert et al., 2017; Holtz & Zardet, 2022; Poli, 2020; Weil & Dubey, 2020). Thus, a process-based approach seems essential for studying the phenomenon of liberation.

### ***Rethinking leadership in liberated organizations: The contribution of shared leadership***

LC is characterized by the decentralization of decision-making and the elimination of hierarchical structures in the case of 'hard' transformations (Weil & Dubey, 2020), corresponding to the abolition of official 'manager' roles and the adoption of collective processes. This calls for rethinking power and influence in organizations where hierarchical authority no longer exists. Unlike a manager, a leader's authority is not based on any hierarchical status and can be observed at all levels of the organization (Zaleznik, 1981). Indeed, leadership is defined as 'the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to achieve common goals' (Yukl, 2012, p. 66). It is based on the power to influence a group and enable it to achieve its collective goals. Following the work initiated by Holtz (2017), Holtz and Zardet (2022), and Picard and Islam (2020), we believe that the leadership framework is particularly appropriate for studying the transformation of roles traditionally held by managers, in the context of liberation.

In the literature on liberated companies, leadership has been studied mainly from the perspective of liberating leadership (Cultiaux & Léon, 2019; Getz, 2009; Holtz, 2017). In this context, liberating leadership embodies a paradigm shift; liberating leaders promote humanistic and egalitarian values rather than influence and power (Picard & Islam, 2020). Indeed, this is the approach adopted by Getz, who, in his seminal article (2009), describes liberating leadership that focuses on equality and empowerment. However, in organizational practice, the story of a company's liberation is often that of a liberating leader, who systematically turns out to be an unusual character. Portraits of J.-F. Zobrist, Bill Gore, Stan Richards, and Bob

Davids are eloquent on this point (Carney & Getz, 2012). Thus, the description of a liberating leader in practice corresponds more to a heroic vision of leadership, equated with the solitary figure of a charismatic individual, who is capable of profoundly transforming an organization (Crevani et al., 2007, 2010; Denis et al., 2012). Instead of a true transformation of leadership, Gilbert et al. (2017) and Cultiaux and Léon (2019) observed that the elimination of middle management roles often results in the recentralization of influence around a charismatic liberating leader. This paradox allows us to formulate a first gap: despite a conceptual definition oriented toward shared leadership, for the benefit of employee emancipation and autonomy, the empirical literature essentially focuses on the heroic figure of the liberating leader.

Therefore, the post-heroic era of leadership implies freeing ourselves from the image of a liberating leader and considering collective leadership. However, this collective dimension is missing from the LC concept (De Ridder & Taskin, 2021; Poli, 2022; Sferrazzo & Ruffini, 2019; Shymko & Frémeaux, 2022). Like Picard and Islam (2020), De Ridder and Taskin (2021) showed that the personal freedom promoted in these organizations leads to the individualization of human relationships at the expense of a collective dimension of cooperation and solidarity. According to Shymko and Frémeaux (2022), this enhanced individualization is inherent to the principles of liberation and even reflects the quintessence of neoliberalism. Instead of fostering solidarity among actors, the promotion of freedom provides an incentive for entrepreneurship and competitive individualism. Gilbert et al. (2019) observed how individualization creates paradoxical situations when it needs to be articulated with collective functioning, guided by shared values. Therefore, thinking about the collective dimension of power and influence requires a reflection on the distribution of leadership. A second paradox emerges from the empirical literature, which allows us to formulate a second gap: in practice, individual freedom seems to take precedence over the collective dimension, even though the latter is described as essential in the founding works of the LC concept.

To elucidate the dual paradox of the heroic and individualizing liberating leader, it is necessary to understand how the liberating process apportions leadership among the liberating leader, ex-managers, and employees. To this end, this research mobilizes the theoretical framework of shared leadership, which is part of a broader approach to post-heroic leadership (Crevani et al., 2007, 2010). Conceptualized in the early 2000s by Pearce and Conger (2002), shared leadership can be defined as a 'dynamic process in which a designated leader or set of leaders selectively use skills and expertise within a network, effectively distributing the elements of the leadership role according to the situation or problem to be solved.'

The following section identifies the leadership roles covered by this distribution.

### **Shared leadership roles in liberated companies**

Shared leadership is conceptualized, not as a personal characteristic, but as a set of roles that can be distributed, shared, or assumed by a collective (Engel Small & Rentsch, 2010). Consequently, the focus is not on the individual but on leadership roles that enable the achievement of a collective goal (Engel Small & Rentsch, 2010; Morgeson et al., 2010).

Using Yukl's (1989) definition, Carson et al. (2007) proposed three categories of roles likely to be shared within a group: leadership, motivation, and support. We enriched and detailed this first categorization to study it in a liberated organizational context. To this end, we reviewed the literature on role theory and the typologies proposed by Burke (2010), Morgeson (2010), and Shuffler et al. (2010). We cross-referenced these with literature on liberating and transformational leadership to ensure that the different roles were appropriate for the liberation context in which this study was conducted. Because liberation affects the entire organization, we then recategorized these roles to reflect a multilevel structure. These different literatures allowed us to enrich the original categorization by Carson et al. (2007) and to propose an ad hoc analysis grid that includes the different roles at organizational, collective, and individual levels, which we have respectively entitled: 'driving', 'catalyst', and 'supporting', to reflect the retained dimensions (appendix 1).

At the organizational level, the leader has a driving role: he or she defines a vision of the future and the values that underpin it and acts on the general philosophy of the organization and its implicit and explicit rules. Thus, by proposing a vision focused on the future and innovation and by communicating the mission and values, the leader will tend to create an organizational culture conducive to employee commitment. Setting unambiguous, motivating goals and clear project planning are also important aspects of this role. Finally, leading by example is a key characteristic of driving leadership.

At the team level, the leader acts as a catalyst stimulating collaboration and collective creativity. In this role, the leader stimulates and challenges people's ideas and encourages participation, debate of ideas, mutual aid, proactivity, and even the chaos and complexity of interactions.

At the individual level, a leader's has a supporting role, aimed at fostering employees' intrinsic motivation. In this role, a leader supervises employees without imposing strict controls, provides meaning to their mission, preserves a sense of freedom, and encourages autonomy and initiative.

Therefore, the aim of this research is to gain a better understanding of the transformation of leadership in LC, following

from Holtz's work on the role of 'neo-managers' (2017; Holtz & Zardet, 2022), by tracing the evolution of leadership roles during the liberating process. Thanks to a process-based, multi-level approach, the results should allow us to understand how the elimination of the traditional figure of a hierarchical manager gives way to a distributed leadership and to study the dynamics and conditions of this distribution.

Thus, the research question we attempt to answer is as follows: How does the sharing of leadership roles evolve during the corporate liberating process?

## Methodology

Our research approach is process-based (Langley et al., 2013), comprehensive, and abductive (Dumez, 2013). It is based on a single longitudinal case study (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2018). The selected case, 'liberated HEA', presented all the characteristics of a liberating process: the presence of a 'liberating leader', radical and systemic suppression of hierarchical management. It relied, for its implementation, on inspirations characteristic of the 'liberated' movement, in particular Frédéric Laloux's *Reinventing Organizations* (2015), which proposes the concept of the Teal organization.

Thales AVS France, which integrates most aeronautical activities, is a global business unit of the electronics group Thales. It is home to several business lines, including Flight Avionics (FLX), which employs 5,300 people. HEA, one of FLX's three business segments, is dedicated to the helicopter market. It has approximately 80 employees, the vast majority of which are engineers.

We developed an exploratory interview grid, based largely on the liberation narrative, asking about changes in the department, including their impact on individuals' work and relationships with other members.

The analysis is based on ethnographic data derived over a week of full-time involvement in the organization, which allowed for numerous observations and 24 interviews, with an average duration of 55 min each (see Table 1). Finally, extensive documentation helped us understand the tools used throughout the liberating process. All interviews were audio

recorded and transcribed. A three-stage analysis was conducted, with each stage resulting in a chronological template, a narrative, and a theoretical template on leadership roles.

First, in a double longitudinal movement of 'seriation' and 'synopsis', in the chronological template (Dumez, 2013), we detailed the history of liberation, considering the context, motivations, triggers, major events, crises, etc., over the time available, and at 6 levels, that is, environment, organization, leader(s), managers, team, and individuals. This step of chronological 'seriation' by level allows us to classify and arrange the material in a systematic and readable way. At the end of the process, the template takes on the function of a 'synopsis': it allows us to view the entire process at a glance, visually reconciling key elements (Dumez, 2013) and delimiting 'phases'. Appendix 2 provides an overview of the chronological templates.

Second, a multi-thematic coding phase (Dumez, 2013), facilitated by the NVivo software, allowed the first level of inductive conceptualization of the liberation process. Processual categories (chronological and thematic, such as effects, representations, organizational modalities, and emotions) were identified, and once arranged, constituted the unfolding of the liberating process, allowing us to draft a complete narrative form.

Third, we mobilized our leadership role grid and mapped all the identified process components to each dimension of the three leadership roles, through a multi-level thematic analysis in a theoretical template using Excel. This allowed us to qualify them in a 'dinosaur' matrix (Miles & Huberman, 2003). We arranged the process components in columns (34 in all) and the leadership role dimensions in rows. By adopting Miles and Huberman's (2003) qualitative 'counting' technique in the form of scoring, we were able to access a level of synthesis and visualization not possible with narrative alone, without any pretense of quantification. The constant back-and-forth between scores and narratives allowed us to create synthetic matrices with short texts to avoid losing sight of the reality covered by these reductive scores.

Thus, we observed and qualified the evolution of the roles as the process progressed. Syntheses using matrices and accompanying texts allowed us to gradually reduce the mega-matrix obtained and facilitate its restitution (Miles & Huberman, 2003).

## Results

The synthetic multilevel chronological template for the HEA liberation story is presented in Appendix 2. Later, we present the results of our analyses, combining narrative, verbatim quotes, and descriptions of the evolution of leadership roles, distinguishing the four phases of the process.

**Table 1.** Categories and number of respondents

	No. of respondents	No. of interviews
'Liberating leader' (VP of HEA)	1	3
Transformation leader	1	3
Ex-directors or ex-manager	3	3
Employees	13	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>24</b>

Source: own elaboration.



## **Analepsis: Bureaucratic, vertical, and top-down leadership (2009–2017)**

Liberation is rooted in the culture of the group and the context of the team and emerges when these two factors crystallize with an economic crisis and the revelation of an inspired leader. Thales is a group with a strong hierarchical and bureaucratic culture, including that of risk management, through strict and numerous procedures. Until 2016, the organization was characterized by vertical, top-down leadership. The vice president (VP) of HEA led a team of functional departments: Engineering, Programs, Sales and Business Development, Operations, Marketing, and Strategy. The directors were responsible for their respective business teams, worked cross-functionally on a project-by-project basis, and included a single middle manager.

At Thales, it's a boss-driven culture. (Laura, transformation leader)

The imprisonment we feel in our processes, with the layers we add to solve the previous problem, we're right in the middle of it! And we're dying! [...] No one is responsible. You just follow the process. [...] It's like glue, if you like, because everywhere you put your hands, there's resistance, and you cannot blame people. They are trapped in this magma. [...] It is terrible. It is terrible to look at. (Marc, sales)

Most employees had been with the company for 15–20 years, and the average age of the team was 48 years. There was a common spirit of entrepreneurship, strong attachment to autonomy and freedom, strong need for intellectual stimulation, and sense of frustration related to the weight of administrative processes.

In 2017, Thales AVS had been experiencing an economic crisis for several years. HEA had a depleted 'order book', to the point of threatening its survival (-40% in sales between 2016 and 2017). It was presented like, "If we don't do something, we're dead!" (Nicolas, HEA buyer). Simultaneously, in the 2 years prior to liberation, all levels of HEA's top management were gradually renewed. These successive arrivals marked a break with the historical management style described as 'tyrannical', 'micromanagement', 'very very directive', 'top down', and 'pyramidal'.

At the time of the analepsis, when the beginnings of a liberating process appeared, bureaucratic, vertical, and top-down leadership were in place.

A new VP, Antoine, appointed in 2016 as head of HEA, was offered a copy of Frédéric Laloux's *Reinventing Organizations* in 2017 by one of the board members he was close to. For Antoine, this reading was a revelation; the HEA transformation project was launched with a strong and decisive vision. Antoine saw an opportunity to reconcile the need to revitalize HEA's performance with his desire to contribute to 'something bigger'.

Thus, we had no choice but to reinvent ourselves, given the market context we were in. And then, more generally, there is a bit of an idea behind it: what do we bring into our lives, what are we good for? And there you have it. There is the notion of saying, well, this is my stone! [...] And it is a real revelation for me. (Antoine, VP HEA)

This event constitutes a 'major epiphany' in the sense of Dumez (2013), the first tipping point in the liberation process: after this decisive reading, Antoine decided to liberate HEA, marking the transition from bureaucratic, vertical leadership to liberating leadership.

## **Phase 1 – Crystallization: The emergence of the liberating leader (summer 2017)**

Thus, the liberating process was driven by Antoine, the embodiment of the 'liberating leader' in LC theory. This impetus is characteristic of the driving role, which draws vision from the Teal model, adapted and contextualized to HEA's survival imperative in the helicopter market and the constraints of the Thales group. This inspiration and context will 'frame' the liberating process: overturning the status quo and challenging a cultural foundation of Thales: hierarchy. This act of liberation is exemplary because it breaks the normative hierarchical framework of the group.

During this crystallization phase, Antoine's leadership role was refocused and strengthened, through motivating objectives, clear vision, values, flexible project structuring, and exemplarity.

In August 2017, Antoine shared his enthusiasm with the HEA Executive Committee and distributed Laloux's book to the team to convey the values and vision of the project. This was the second tipping point in the process, which allowed leadership to spread to the collective.

## **Phase 2 – Collective design of 'liberated HEA': 'restricted' shared leadership in a pilot group (Sept.–Dec. 2017)**

The book was emulated, and a pilot group of 10 curious and passionate employees emerged (including Marc, below) around the department's only middle manager, Benoit, who was appointed by the board and given carte blanche.

There was this proposal from Antoine. [...] When he came back from vacation in 2017, he said 'I've discovered something, it's great!' I thought, 'Well, what a load of crap! When I had the time, I picked up Laloux's book and read it. [...] From A to Z, and I thought, shit! There is really something. [...] I said to myself, it's worth trying to put it into practice, so at the beginning, I was one of those who organized...' (Marc, sales)

Thereafter, the leadership of the liberation process was shared between Antoine and the pilot group, while traditional

management remained to maintain the department's operational activities. This pilot group provided the project with a clear structure and plan, in accordance with the recommendations of F. Laloux. Eight working groups were defined (mission, performance, daily life, governance, etc.). Laura joined the team as the 'transformation leader'. Approximately 2 weeks later, a kick-off seminar was organized, during which Antoine and the pilot group unveiled the project to the entire team, and each member was invited to join one of the eight working groups. Beginning from this seminar, the involvement of the people in the process of designing the new organization was massive, with a certain euphoria. The process was autonomous and participatory, with numerous debates, and was sometimes a source of tension and conflict. 'For the first time, employees feel that they are "the main actors" in [their] own organization' (Victor, supply chain manager). There was a real desire not to 'impose' the Teal model, but to co-construct a tailor-made organization, especially as there were many constraints to integrate, coming from the 'non-liberating' environment.

It was funny because ... [...] we were given carte blanche, so it could go very far! Including, managing raises, promotions, salary transparency, etc. (Sébastien, sales)

Everyone started brainstorming on a whole range of things, and ideas flowed in all directions... (Françoise, HEA lawyer)

### Evolution of driving leadership

This design phase witnessed a transformation of the driving role through an emergent mechanism. Antoine's vision was disseminated opportunistically, and the pilot group was formed spontaneously, out of interest and curiosity, headed by a leader advocating empowerment. This group naturally adopted 'driving' practices, as it structured the collective design work through clear thematic groups, whose objectives were set in advance. When the project was launched, members of the pilot group took the lead in thematic groups and ensured the continuous, active dissemination of the values advocated by it. These actors remained important relays of leadership throughout the design phase.

### Evolution of catalyst leadership

The pilot group, supported by the driving force of Antoine and F. Laloux's ideas, acted as a powerful catalyst, providing intellectual stimulation and encouraging debate and exchange of ideas and participation. The 'carte blanche' given to Benoit allowed him to give the pilot group all the freedom, trust, and autonomy it needed – values that he cherished. The right to make mistakes, a key value of the project, also helped to avoid premature censorship, freeing the imagination and allowing the boldest ideas. The formation of working groups played a catalytic role, in that

tasks were assigned to individual team members on a voluntary basis, representing clear support for new ideas and confidence in their ability to design the new organization, combining many key practices associated with catalytic leadership.

After 3 months of intense reflection, the new organization was consolidated and collectively validated in a new seminar in the mountains, in December 2017. The design and finalization of the organizational project created a *raison d'être* and a constitution, with formal development of new rules (the 10 'commandments'), roles, and practices, especially in the case of conflict management.

The validation of the new organization in a seminar and its official launch in January 2018 represented the third tipping point in the process, toward the implementation phase and a broader distribution of leadership roles.

### Phase 3 – Implementing 'liberated HEA' and establishing 'extended' shared leadership (2018)

#### Evolution of the driving role

The driving role is embodied in the HEA's *raison d'être*. Its formulation encourages trust, creativity, and customer orientation: 'HEA, the trusted partner. Our heart and creativity at the service of our customers', independent of the HEA VP (his attitude, practices, and speeches), who becomes a 'mere' sponsor, partially deprived of his driving role. On the other hand, the Constitution becomes the guarantor of the values ('trust, solidarity, commitment, joy and integrity') and rules that now structure the operation of the organization. Co-constructed within the team and collectively validated, it acquires democratic legitimacy. However, once formalized, the constitution disappears from everyday life, and new driving roles – the circle captains – are required to revive it.

The hierarchical legitimacy and the roles of directors were radically challenged by the distribution of driving roles. The replacement of the former board by the 'base' (ambassadors + sponsor), coupled with a policy of non-replacement, will gradually lead to the disintegration of the management structure, which will be tightened around the sponsor and only three ambassadors. Although these actors retained their official responsibilities in the eyes of the group; in practice, they were deprived of their decision-making power within the department. Consequently, they sometimes have to take responsibility for decisions that they do not share.

When we're in Thales, the job description still says director of strategy, director of something, but with us it was ambassador of strategy, ambassador ... and the ambassador of strategy can no longer say 'you do this, you do that'. (Laura, transformation leader)

In the end, it is true that middle management has had a hard time, not necessarily for good reason, because they have to play an ambassadorial role. (Marc, sales)

However, some employees may view this removal from the hierarchy as a lack of leadership and a sense of abandonment. In terms of the distribution of leadership, former managers have relinquished their driving role to become 'ambassadors', playing a more 'catalytic' and 'supporting' role. It is no longer about 'leading' but about acting as an interface with the group. This represents a radical change in attitude.

On the other hand, the driving role is also distributed more widely owing to participative practices; the ex-board meeting is replaced by a meeting connecting the base and captains. Participative goal setting reinforces driving leadership.

Functional teams were replaced with customer-focused multi-disciplinary circles. Weekly circle meetings were held to steer the activities, and each circle adopted its own *raison d'être*. Captains now provided the driving leadership within these circles. This redefinition of role provided opportunities for self-effacing personalities. The weakening of the hierarchical 'chain of command' and the creation of alternative roles based on peer recognition created new leaders with a new form of legitimacy, notably through the election (with or without a candidate) of circle captains. The latter was a source of pride and recognition among peers. This is especially true for Victor: 'A guy like me, who is captain of the circle today. Proudly elected ... [...] This is a great sign of group recognition'. (Victor; supply chain manager)

The majority of employees surveyed attested to this emergence of leaders:

It was really motivating to choose the 'circle captain' [...] He became my leader in terms of how we are going to improve customer satisfaction, how we are going to improve, [...] develop the business partner side of things. (Céline, finance manager)

You see people emerging. In reality, new people are emerging. At every level. (Marc, sales)

Unfortunately, the role of captain was not very attractive and an additional burden, so it was sometimes shared among several 'heads' (up to four), which diluted and weakened the responsibility of this role. Coaches are also important relays in the driving role since they must support the implementation of the liberation project, in particular, by ensuring that the constitution, values, and practices of liberated HEA are properly applied within the circles.

## Evolution of the catalyst role

The dissolution of the hierarchical link also transformed social interactions and distributed the role of catalytic leadership. We observed an increase in group practices, such as mutual aid, frequency and nature of interactions, plurality, debates, and so on. Decision-making by soliciting opinions was a new collective decision-making body; anyone who raised a need or problem had to solicit the opinions of those affected by the decision and

draw on the necessary expertise. A decision was made when there were no further reasoned objections. This is known as a 'decision by consent', implying that the group is committed to it. Squads are temporary working groups, formed autonomously after an organizational problem has been identified, to resolve it collectively by involving the people most affected.

The collective awareness of 'we can do better, and what is really important?' And why am I doing this? Just asking this question was already a revolution. (Nathan, sales)

We have done assistant squads, we have done mission squads, we have done squads on everything and nothing ... but on topics that were perhaps a source of frustration for them, or just they wanted to think about them. So that is interesting. (Laura, transformation leader)

The new organization, developed 'theoretically' with the help of Laloux's book, is not always easy to master and implement. Some speak of 'chaos', 'mess', or 'bazaar' to organize. Chaos can be a source of confusion, but it does not seem to affect well-being or cooperation. These different modalities, which emphasize problem-solving, interdependence, and constructive exchange, rather than submission to process or authority, play a key role in reinforcing catalytic leadership. During the implementation phase, leadership is largely reinforced and shared among different modalities, enabling these collective practices to be sustained and stimulated.

When you start to take questions not in denial of the hierarchy, of the process, and say to yourself, 'They are all pissing me off!' ... but when you say to yourself, 'We have to do it anyway to meet the standards, otherwise we will not have any more work ...' it inevitably changes the will to do it. [...] And the energy you put into the documents or real substantive issues. (Nathan, sales)

We lean towards one another more. We are less closed in. I find that there is more exchange, and as a result, whereas before the person I turned to when I had difficulties was my line manager, now I understand that there are many other people around me [...] I can go and ask them for their opinion. (Stéphanie, assistant)

An unprecedented type of contract is signed at the end of a 'solicitation process'. Antoine admits that he would never have validated the costing of this project if he had been the sole decision-maker. The only obstacle to this group dynamic was the weight of Thales' processes and culture, which caused friction and frustration when they go against the department's desire to transform themselves.

## Evolution of the supporting role

Supporting leadership at the individual level was poorly represented in the new organization and was ultimately penalized

by liberation. Positive career development experiences were rare. In fact, traditional HR processes, such as talent development and career management, had not been sufficiently considered and integrated into the design of the system, resulting in shortcomings at the individual level.

However, the new interview procedure allowed employees to choose their appraisers. The latter had to ensure that they prepare for assessments by interviewing colleagues, who are best placed to formulate feedback based on concrete work. In mid-2018, 6 months after liberation, one-third of the employees chose to change their interviewer. Training plans, whether individual or collective, were discussed in the circle and considered the needs related to the assumption of new roles. These conditions promoted trust and psychological security, as well as the possibility of constructive and fair feedback, which are key dimensions of supporting leadership. Coaches are also important relays in supporting leadership, since they must 'help the people in the circle reach maturity in terms of transformation', 'accompany role changes', and 'promote the development of each individual'.

However, their support for this role was insufficient. This lack of support for assuming new key roles is a weakness of the liberation system. Because new support roles are unevenly distributed among individuals, employees sometimes express a sense of abandonment, are not guided toward the expected attitude, and are not able to formulate, let alone solve, problems on their own. Finally, the lack of recognition of the additional workload involved in the redistribution of tasks traditionally assigned to managers and, more generally, the investment of people in the process of liberation proves to be a blind spot in the system and an obstacle to the liberation process.

After 1 year of implementation, the results were considered positive. The increase in well-being and the general climate was highlighted by all those interviewed, including the most critical (in particular, the staff representatives). As far as the survival of the department is concerned, the results seem to be as follows: the order book is full again in the medium term.

The dissemination and storytelling of the story of HEA's liberation, both internally and externally (through seminars, books, workshops, etc.) helped to legitimize the process and reinforce the driving role of leadership.

A final tipping point characterized the liberating process: the announcement at the highest level of reorganization of the entity to which HEA belongs, heralding the end of the process and the return to vertical leadership.

#### **Phase 4 – End of liberation and return to vertical leadership (2019)**

The HEA experiment reached a premature end. It was absorbed during the reorganization of its parent company, FLX. As soon as the reorganization was announced, the

liberating dynamic was put on hold, as employees waited in anticipation and were unwilling to invest in vain for an uncertain organizational future. The liberation process ended when the new FLX organization was fully implemented. This transformation involves the top-down appointment of program directors, a return to hierarchical operations, and vertical leadership. Liberation will leave a legacy (the circles, the mindset, etc.), but it will have to find its place in a new hierarchical function and balance.

Figure 1 summarizes the different leadership roles within the liberated HEA according to the different phases of the liberating process.

#### **The three leadership roles: synthesis and balance**

Antoine's driving role as a liberating leader was essential at the beginning of the process. However, it was soon distributed among relay roles and within the system itself. First in an emergent and limited way within the 'pilot' group and then extended within the 'liberated HEA' organization. Unfortunately, this distribution seemed to penalize the mobilizing force of the 'vision' at the organizational level, since the roles in question were unstable, and the vision of the circle took precedence over the vision of the department. The result was a weakening of the driving leadership within the circles, with the roles of 'local leaders' themselves being neglected or even redistributed among four people.

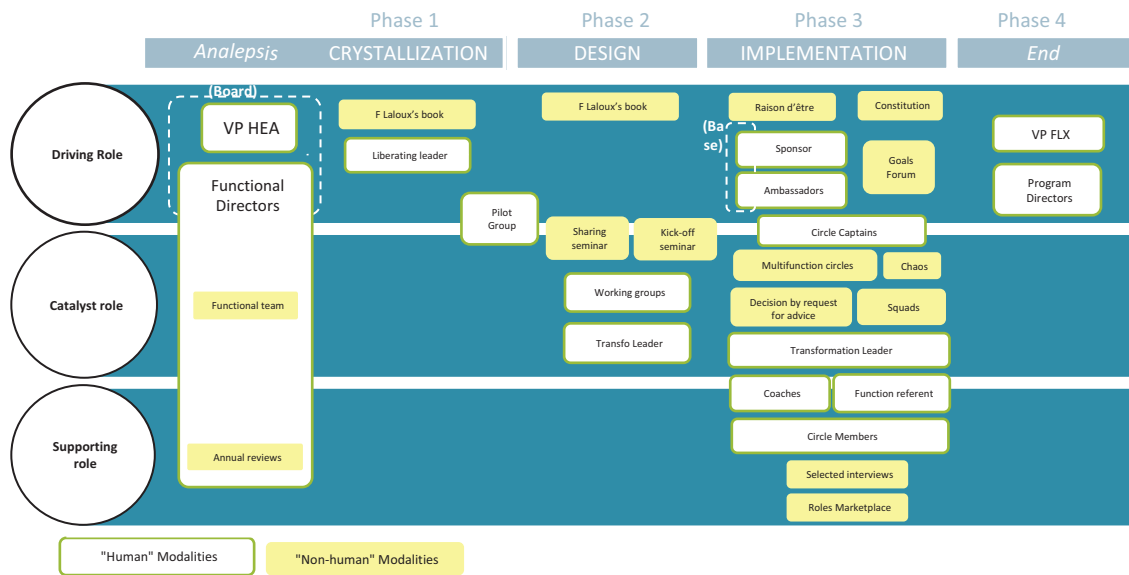
On the other hand, the elimination of the hierarchy, the emergence of various bridging roles, the creation of circles, and new decision-making rules made it possible to strengthen catalytic leadership, thanks to the transformative effects of the system adopted: participation, involvement, support for new ideas, intellectual stimulation, debate of ideas, and interdependence.

However, the system seemed to lack supporting roles (at the individual level), which can be detrimental to team dynamics.

In short, the HEA liberation system was 'sophisticated' and tailor-made, which enabled a relatively effective distribution of all leadership roles. HEA liberation appeared to benefit the catalyst (collective) role more than the driving (organizational) or supporting (individual) roles.

#### **Discussion**

In both shared leadership (Sweeney et al., 2019) and LC (Holtz, 2017; Holtz & Zardet, 2022) research, the dynamics of transforming leadership and its roles remain largely unexplored. By focusing on the liberation of the HEA department, this study sheds light on these dynamics, by highlighting the



**Figure 1.** Distribution of leadership roles within 'liberated HEA'.  
Source: own elaboration.

redistribution of leadership roles, rather than the disappearance of leadership.

### **Liberated companies: A three-phase, multilevel leadership distribution process**

This process-based approach to liberation offers a novel perspective of the mechanisms of leadership transformation over time. By studying the dynamics of the distribution of leadership roles, our research complements and refines the work of Holtz and Zardet (2022), which focused more on a contrasting 'before/after' description of the roles played by 'neo-managers' in a liberated firm. It also helps to clarify the reflections already underway on the 'rhythm' of liberation: 'by changeover or by experimentation/testing' (Weil & Dubey, 2020). Finally, it responds to a repeated call in the literature on liberated organizations (Lee & Edmondson, 2017; Mattelin-Pierrard et al., 2020) to shed more light on the transitional phase between an 'unliberated' and 'liberated' state.

Our results do not show a sudden shift from a vertical to a radically decentralized mode of leadership, but a gradual distribution over three distinct phases, that extend to all levels of the organization and are characterized by different tipping points, forms of leadership, and modalities (Figure 2).

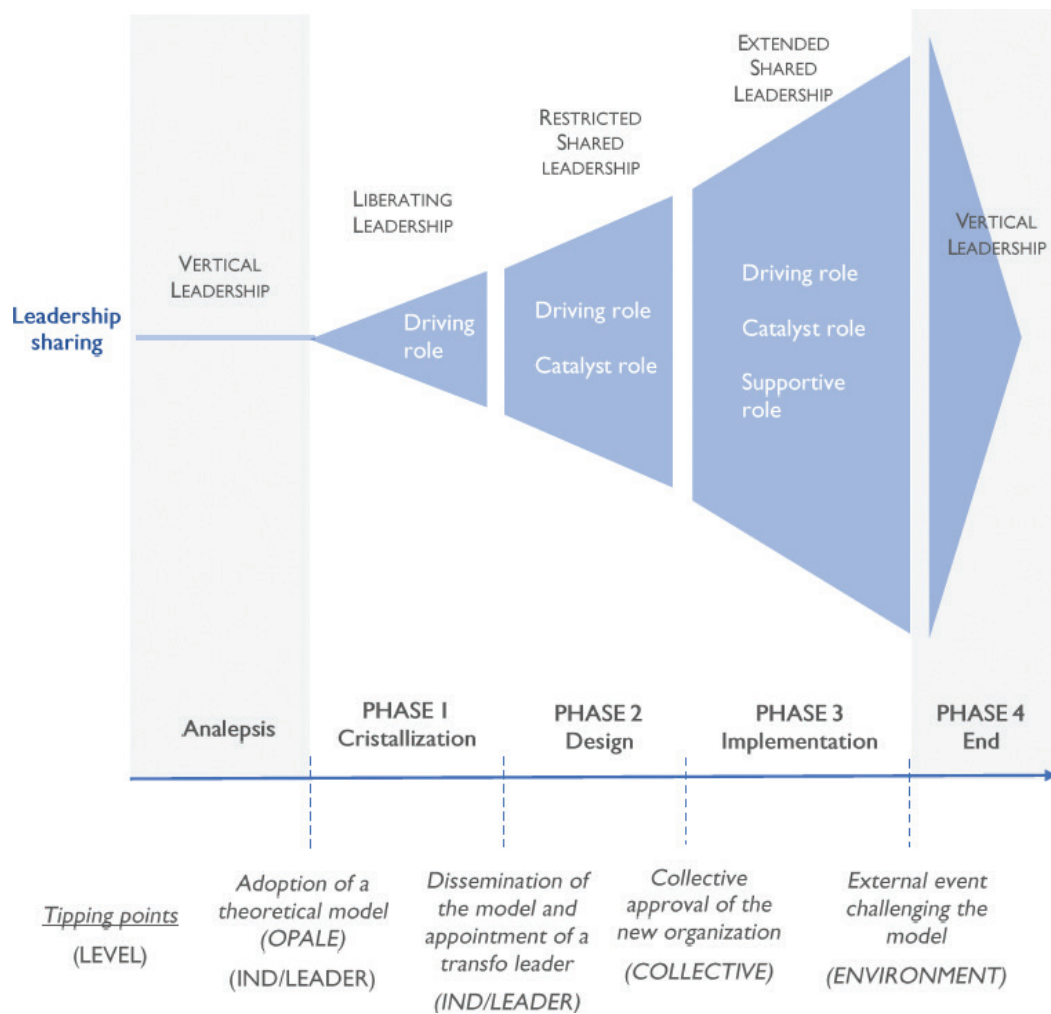
The highlighted process can be compared to the description of Getz (2009; Sferrazzo & Ruffini, 2019): we find the sharing of the vision in phases 1 and 2, and the design of an environment conducive to participation ('liberated HEA') in phase 3. However, the process proposed here goes far beyond the role of the liberating leader in these stages, showing the role of the collective and modalities of the device in the distribution of power at different levels of analysis.

From one phase or level, to the next, the vision of the project is not only transmitted, but translated by the actors involved, through appropriate devices and roles to give it a 'local' meaning: from the Teal model (individual leader level) to the structuring of work groups (collective pilot group level), then to the design of 'liberating HEA' (organizational level), to circles (collective level) and individual roles (individual level), defined on the basis of the specific activity and constraints of the department. This translation phenomenon can be easily compared to the *sensemaking* process, which is a well-established success factor in organizational change processes (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010; Weick, 1995). This cascading 'transmission/translation' mechanism appears to be one of the key leadership-sharing mechanisms within the liberation process and contributes to its success. Conversely, the occurrence of an external event can slow down or even completely absorb the distribution dynamics, as happened in the case of HEA.

Furthermore, the process-based analysis adopted in our research highlights two phases of shared leadership: first, the time when the driving and catalyst roles are distributed to a restricted group of 10 people (phase 2), the time when the liberation of the company is effective, and the distribution of the three types of roles (driving, catalyst, and supporting) is extended and formalized throughout the organization (phase 3).

While the literature on shared leadership agrees that the collective is generally more effective in exercising leadership than the individual alone (O'Toole et al., 2002), it remains divided according to the type of configuration adopted. The term encompasses a variety of models, ranging from a *restricted* conception, wherein leadership is shared by a small collective of two or more individuals (Denis et al., 2012) to an *extended* conception, in which leadership is shared by all members of





**Figure 2.** Leadership sharing during the liberating process. Source: own elaboration.

the organization at all levels (Luc, 2010; Pearce et al., 2014). In its most extreme form, shared leadership is what it sounds like: all social actors in an organization or group are involved in the process of guiding each other toward a productive goal (Pearce et al., 2014, p. 277). These two conceptions of shared leadership – one restricted and the other extended – characterize the HEA liberating process and are represented in Figure 2 to qualify phases 2 and 3. Our case shows that these two types of configurations are not antagonistic but can follow and complement each other as part of the liberating process.

**Extended leadership and multiple roles: opportunities and limitations?**

The different phases highlighted by the process analysis help explain the diversity of role-sharing configurations. In the model of distributed leadership, as conceived by early authors (Pearce & Conger, 2002; Pearce & Manz, 2005) and illustrated

by phase 2 (restricted shared leadership), leadership is certainly distributed, rather than centralized around the leader figure, but this distribution is limited to few selected team members (Engel Small & Rentsch, 2010; Friedrich et al., 2009). Similarly, the LC literature on this issue has focused on ‘neo-managers’ (Holtz, 2017; Holtz & Zardet, 2022) or the ‘liberating leader’ (Carney & Getz, 2012; Getz, 2009; Picard & Islam, 2020). However, this individual-centered vision is a very narrow framework for reflecting on the HEA experience. The extended phase (phase 3) of sharing, which corresponds to the ‘liberated HEA’ period, opens up new perspectives on the distribution of leadership roles both, in human (captains, coaches, ambassadors, etc.) and ‘non-human’ modalities (squads, constitution, and solicitation for opinion process). For example, HEA’s constitution plays a ‘driving’ role, contributing to the sharing of vision and values, while squads play a catalytic role, stimulating collective problem solving. In a radical approach to shared leadership, some authors urge us to move

away from individuals and consider leadership as a process embodied in practices, devices, and social interactions (Crevani et al., 2010). Here, the experience of liberation invites us to consider leadership in practice, allowing us to rethink the exercise of leadership beyond the individual.

Additionally, we have seen how the driving and catalyst roles themselves can be distributed among several 'heads'. This raises the question of distribution and its limits. Can a role be distributed among several people? What is the relationship between the distribution of roles and the effectiveness of relays?

The limits of the 'extended' vision of distribution have already been mentioned by several authors (Denis et al., 2012; Sergi et al., 2012): by decentering from individuals to open up to a broad concept of leadership, the very notion of leadership risks being drained of its essence, and leadership roles in the collective are diluted. The results demonstrated that catalytic leadership (at the team level) seemed to have been reinforced during the liberation of HEA to the detriment of driving roles (at the organizational level) and supporting roles (at the individual level). Leadership roles can be affected by a lack of clarity, resources, coaching, or recognition.

However, several studies have supported the idea that dilution is not inevitable. First, the distribution of member appraisals (a supporting role) to a broader population than just the manager increases the legitimacy and relevance of feedback to appraised employees. Similarly, the distribution of captain roles (which, in themselves, are catalytic), according to election principles, reinforced the legitimacy of those elected. Finally, the solicitation of opinions effectively contributes to the legitimacy of the decisions taken by the collective (e.g., the unprecedented contract).

### ***From heroic liberating leader to collective leader, a role to be nuanced***

One of the goals of our research has been to move away from the figure of the liberating leader toward a more collective shared leadership. Rather than posing a contradiction, the HEA case invites us to think of leadership as a continuum between two poles: leadership embodied by an individual and that shared by a collective. Depending on needs and expectations, the two types of leadership are exercised alternately, complementing or replacing one another. These findings echo early thinkers on shared leadership, who conceptualized it as 'a process of influence [that] often involves peer or lateral influence, and, at other times, hierarchical upward or downward influence' (Pearce & Conger, 2002, p. 1). The process approach adopted in this study contributes to this definition by identifying the tipping points and the need for vertical (liberating) and shared leadership during the liberating process.

Thus, as Getz (2009) advocates, the vertical role of the liberating leader remains fundamental as the driving force

behind organizational transformations. He initiates the change and is part of the beginning of the process. However, our analysis of the process differs in terms of the role of the liberating leader in the LC. The evolution of the process toward a collective mode of organization implies that the liberating leader takes a back seat, assuming more of a deputy role. Contrary to the literature that depicts a process in the hands of an omnipotent liberating leader (Carney & Getz, 2012; Getz, 2009; Sferrazzo & Ruffini, 2019), this process-based research shows that the distribution of leadership is real and progressive, embodied in relay roles and a customized system. Therefore, the adoption of the theoretical model by the liberating leader is only a turning point; from the design phase onward, we observe an active transfer of the driving role, especially in the implementation phase. In this role, the authority embodied by the liberating figure acts only in subsidium, that is, when necessary to provide 'support, reinforcement, and relief' to troops on the battlefield (Detchessahar et al., 2015; Weil & Dubey, 2020), especially as a last resort in conflict resolution. Specifically, the 'formal' leader intervenes only when his or her authority is needed to frame, accompany, and guide the appropriation of driving, catalyst, and supporting roles. Thus, this case study integrates vertical and horizontal approaches (Ensley et al., 2006) and presents the formal leader as an orchestra conductor, who explicitly shares leadership roles or creates an environment for members to acquire these roles informally and emergently.

This interaction and distinction between the leadership embodied by the liberating individual, and that shared within a collective, allow us to rethink the two limitations highlighted in the literature. On the one hand, it makes it possible to limit the drifts associated with the centralization of influence and power in the hands of a single 'liberating' individual (Cultiaux & Léon, 2019; Gilbert et al., 2017). On the other hand, it mitigates the difficulties raised by the complete disappearance of an authority figure (individualization of relationships and lack of recognition) (De Ridder & Taskin, 2021; Picard & Islam, 2020).

### **Contributions**

The aim of our research was to analyze the evolution of shared leadership roles in a liberation context to identify the mechanisms and modalities of their redistribution. We observed that the disappearance of hierarchical positions did not mean the disappearance of the driving, catalytic, and supporting leadership roles that they once held. On the contrary, it highlights the need to consider and support redistribution at the organizational, group, and individual levels.

Through a dual methodological orientation that combines a process-based, multilevel approach to liberation on the one hand, and an analysis from a leadership perspective on the

other, this research contributes to both LC and shared leadership literature.

From a theoretical perspective, it first contributes to the field of LC by opening the 'black box' of the liberating process and implementing the concept in the field, and by shifting the focus from liberating single to collective, multilevel leadership. Adopting a role-based approach to leadership, this research highlights three phases within the liberating process, characterized by different leadership configurations: (1) liberating leadership (individual level), (2) restricted shared leadership (collective level), and (3) extended shared leadership (organizational level), followed in our case study by a fourth phase of return to vertical leadership (environmental level).

By moving away from a static approach to shared leadership (Döös & Wilhelmson, 2021; Lorinkova & Bartol, 2021) and exploring it as a dynamic, evolving process, this study contributes to the leadership literature on two levels. First, it allows us to study vertical and shared leadership, not in opposition to each other, but as a continuum wherein both can be practiced alternately according to organizational needs and constraints.

Second, the process-based approach to shared leadership integrates two views that have developed separately (Denis et al., 2012): restricted and extended conceptions of shared leadership roles. The latter radical conception opens up the possibility of transcending the individual prism to include 'non-human' modalities, practices, and institutions in sharing. However, the results also highlight the risks of diluting leadership roles, their essence, and their effectiveness when role holders are no longer formally identified or recognized.

Practically, the narrative approach proposed here enables leaders and managers to better understand the complexity of the liberating process, its impact on the transformation of leadership and its roles, and the problems that can arise. The results highlight the importance of the different leadership roles (not only the driving but also the catalyst and supporting roles), previously played by middle managers for smooth organizational operation, and the importance of addressing them within a multilevel system designed a priori and tailored to the needs of the organization. Despite a carefully and collectively designed system, most of the pitfalls observed in HEA were the result of poorly prepared and/or poorly supported implementation (frustration, feelings of abandonment, loneliness, lack of recognition, etc.). The ideas presented here are intended to enlighten and guide aspiring liberating leaders in their projects with a resolutely pragmatic vision of LC.

### Limitations and further research

Our research is based on a single case study; therefore, the results cannot be generalized to all types of companies. A comparison with other cases will allow us to highlight the similarities and differences between various contexts or release

mechanisms, allowing us to generalize the results more widely and improve our theoretical model.

The 'abrupt' and premature end of the liberation is a limitation of both the present study and probably of the liberation process itself. The integration of the HEA into a large 'non-liberated' group, whose upper hierarchical strata maintain an authoritarian hold over the units, is a contextual risk that was obviously underestimated by the liberating leader and the team. It would be interesting to explore this limitation and understand the conditions for the survival of this distributed form of leadership when extended to a larger organizational scale.

The inclusion of 'non-human' modalities in a system of social interactions or within a device has been a fruitful approach in sociology, giving rise to the concept of 'actants', extending the notion of actor from beings to things (or 'technical objects') (Akrich et al., 2006). The socio-technical approach, therefore, seems to be an interesting perspective for changing the way we look at the components of a liberation system, adopting a more systemic vision of liberation (Gilbert & Raulet-Croset, 2021).

Finally, this study confirms interest in the collective leadership prism in the study of liberation. However, this rich field offers other promising concepts, such as emergence, institutionalization, and formalization (Denis et al., 2012), and opens up interesting research avenues to extend this exploratory work.

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## Appendices

### Appendix I. Analysis grid: leadership roles

Level of analysis	Role type	Role dimensions
Organization	Driving role	<p>Set clear and motivating objectives, formulated in a participatory manner</p> <p>Proposes and shares an inspiring, meaningful long-term vision</p> <p>Disseminates and promotes values (place of creativity, right to make mistakes, etc.) – shares the organization's history</p> <p>Plan: clear but flexible structuring of the project and work</p> <p>Acts in an exemplary manner (expertise, creativity, etc.)</p>
Collective	Catalyst role	<p>Intellectually stimulates teams and the debate of ideas, facilitates and encourages the exchange of information and targets fundamental problems (rather than a financial objective)</p> <p>Encourages the participation and involvement of team members</p> <p>Expresses and demonstrates confidence in team members' ability to achieve objectives</p> <p>Has social skills: communicates actively, shows social intelligence – offers feedback</p> <p>Supports new ideas (tangible manifestations) and protects against premature criticism</p> <p>Allocates tasks appropriately and recognizes everyone's contribution</p> <p>Demonstrates political skill (develops and exploits a network of ambassadors, strategically manages resources, obtains strategic support, etc.)</p> <p>Guarantees the necessary freedom/autonomy (without obscuring the objectives)</p> <p>Guarantees access to resources and effective implementation of ideas</p> <p>Encourages interdependence, interactions, complexity and disrupts patterns</p>
Individual	Supporting role	<p>Provides individual attention</p> <p>Evaluates employees fairly and non-threateningly</p> <p>Prevents and removes unnecessary pressure</p> <p>Promotes and develops a sense of freedom, autonomy, and empowerment</p>

Source: own elaboration.

Appendix 2. HEA liberation chronology template

		ANALEPSIS 2008-2017		PHASE 1 08/17 CRYSTALLIZATION			PHASE 2 : End 2017 DESIGN		
Level	HEA's designation	2008-2016 The seeds	2016-2017 Weak signals	Aug. 2017 Decision	Sept. 2017 Framing	Oct. 2017 Sharing	Oct.-Dec. 2017 Collective elaboration	Dec. 2017 Validation	
Individual	Each member of the HEA department	Weight of Thales bureaucratic culture and frustration of disempowered HEA teams. Need for change.							
Collective	Collectif HEA	<p><b>A pilot group (Gip) takes up the project and structures it</b></p> <p>Embracing the vision. Commitment to design.</p> <p>Presentation of the structure and constitution of the 8 working groups.</p> <p>Co-construction of the organization and validation at the seminar.</p>							
Middle Management	HEA Directors/Ambass.	<p>Challenging hierarchical authority, eliminating the role of director</p> <p>Appropriation of new roles.</p>							
Leader	VP HEA (+ Laura)	Before 2016: period of "hyper-directive" management, "management by terror", "very very top-down" (VP HEA)	2016 Arrival of a new VP (Antoine)	VP FLX offers Laloux's book to Antoine. Perception of "authorization".	VP HEA questions existing organizational model. Decision to "liberate" HEA	Sharing within the Codir, and spreading the team. Appointment of Benoit, Pilot Group Leader	Antoine shares his vision and calls for commitment from all	Recruitment of Laura, Head of Transformation	
Organization	HEA Department	Helicopter crisis threatens HEA's survival. Decline in activity.							
Environment	Thales AVS/FLX + Group & ext. environment	Before 2015: Management period described as "tyrannical" (VP AVS)	2015 Arrival of a new VP and a new Dir. Performance at AVS level	Thales Group Chairman and CEO to initiate work on management styles	"Learning expeditions", sharing stories of liberation	Isaac Getz speaking at Codir AVS, invited by VP FLX. Arrival of the new VP FLX			
		2009-2017: economic crisis, deterioration in sales, depletion of order book. Need to find new business models. Introduction of "product policy".							



Tipping points

Reading of Laloux's book

Creation of a liberated pilot group

Validation of "liberated HEA"

Source: own elaboration.

		2018		2019	
		IMPLEMENTATION		PREMATURE END	
Level	HEA's designation	Jan-June 2018 : Experimentation-Adaptation	Jun-Dec 2018 : Refocusing	Jan-Sept 2019 : Threat of disappearance	Sept 2019 : Phagocytizing
Individual	Each member of the HEA department	Individual trajectories: comparison of representations and expectations with reality			
Collective	Collectif HEA	Coaches and captains are elected. Drafting of the constitution.	Trial and error. Collective learning. Deteriorating climate.	Laura returns. Squads launched. Climate restored.	Expectative vs FLX 2.0. Fatigue and worries about the future.
Middle Management	HEA Directors/Ambass.	Directors become ambassadors. The board welcome the captains. Violations of the decision-making process.	Progressive deletion and departure of ambassadors. Creation of the base. Change of posture for those who remain. Building new legitimacy.		Appointment of FLX Program Directors
Leader	VP HEA (+ Laura)	VP becomes "sponsor".			Diffusion and inspiration outside HEA and Thales.
Organization	HEA Department	Deployment of the new organization: decision by solicitation, role marketplace, goal forum, new roles...			Adoption and stabilization of basic principles. Partial return to the old organization.
Environment	Thales AVS/FLX + Group & ext. environment		Friction between HEA and Thales functioning.		Pressure to succeed and share outside HEA. Visit from the new VP FLX.

**Announcement of FLX 2.0 transformation**

**Tipping points**

Source: own elaboration.