

This file was downloaded from BI Open Archive, the institutional repository (open access) at BI Norwegian Business School <http://brage.bibsys.no/bi>.

It contains the accepted and peer reviewed manuscript to the article cited below. It may contain minor differences from the journal's pdf version.

Yu, M., Vaagaasar, A. L., Müller, R., Wang, L., & Zhu, F. (2018). Empowerment: The key to horizontal leadership in projects. *International Journal of Project Management*, 36(7), 992-1006 Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijproman.2018.04.003>

Copyright policy of Elsevier, the publisher of this journal.

The author retains the right to post the accepted author manuscript on open web sites operated by author or author's institution for scholarly purposes, with an embargo period of 0-36 months after first view online.

<http://www.elsevier.com/journal-authors/sharing-your-article#>



Empowerment: the key to horizontal leadership in project teams.

Miao Yu^a, Anne Live Vaagaasar^b, Ralf Müller^b, Linzhuo Wang^a, Fangwei Zhu^{a*}

^a Dalian University of Technology China, Faculty of Management and Economics, No. 2 Linggong Road, Ganjingzi District, Dalian, China

^b BI Norwegian Business School, Dpt of Leadership & Organizational Behavior, Nydalsveien 37, 0442 Oslo, Norway

Abstract

Leadership in projects can shift between the project manager (a.k.a. vertical leadership) and one or more team members (a.k.a. horizontal leadership). Our study examines the processes, dimensions, and conditions for empowerment of project team members to temporarily assume leadership of project processes. Twenty interviews were conducted in 10 organizations in China. Results show that empowerment for horizontal leadership is a 3-stage process, wherein the project manager takes justification perception and demand factors as essential conditions for his/her empowerment orientation, which in turn frames the announcement, acceptance, control, autonomy and future of horizontal leaders. Four categories of horizontal leaders were revealed, namely Deputies, Future Stars, Bench Players and Oysters. Managerial and theoretical implications are discussed.

Keywords:

Project leadership; Horizontal leadership; Vertical leadership; Empowerment; Project teams

1. Introduction

Bill Gates famous quote "As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others" (cited in (Kruse, 2013)) anticipated the developments that the community of project management is facing now. That is, the growing awareness that leadership in

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: yum@dlut.edu.cn (M. Yu), anne.l.vaagaasar@bi.no (A.L. Vaagaasar), ralf.muller@bi.no (R. Müller), arroy@hotmail.com (L. Wang), zhufwdlut@foxmail.com(F. Zhu).

projects is a dynamic interaction between project managers and those being empowered by project managers to temporarily lead the project.

Historically, research on leadership in projects either investigated vertical leadership in form of formally appointed leaders (such as project managers) and their personality (e.g. Turner and Müller, 2003), or horizontal leadership, as a collective activity of people, emerging from people's interaction within processes and practices (Crevani et al., 2010). Both streams build on a long heritage of research in management and organizational behavior, such as leadership styles for vertical leadership (e.g. Northouse, 2007) or shared/distributed leadership for horizontal leadership (e.g. Pearce and Conger, 2003). Recently these two streams converged into a new stream, which aims to understand leadership in projects as being carried out by the project manager (as vertical leader) and members of the project team (as horizontal leaders) in a dynamic alteration over the course of the project life-cycle (Hsu et al., 2017; Müller et al., 2017). This new approach leverages the capabilities of all team members, including the project manager, by assigning leadership authority to the best suitable person at any given situation in a project. Examples include the leadership by an expert in the team to solve a particular technical issue. Granting this leadership requires empowerment in the sense of Bill Gates' quotation above, which can be paraphrased into: as good leaders, project managers need to empower those who have the most suitable leadership capability at any situation, to solve issues at hand in order to efficiently accomplish the project objectives. For that to happen, empowerment is used by the vertical leader to enable the horizontal leader to share power and decision making authority with the vertical leader (Leach et al., 2003), and take on extended responsibilities (Conger and Kanungo, 1988). Hence, horizontal leadership is enabled and controlled by the vertical leader through empowerment (Cox et al., 2003).

Literature on horizontal leaders and their empowerment in projects is sparse. Most of the literature addresses the empowerment of the project manager, which is not the topic of this article. Packendorff (1995) was among the first to mention the need for different degrees of empowerment for different types of projects. Nauman et al. (2010) highlighted the importance of an empowerment culture for effective virtual project management. However, no study addressed the empowerment of team members into leader roles in projects. The general management literature typically distinguishes between structural empowerment,

which describes the situational indicators for empowerment in terms of organizational structures (cf. Kanter, 1977) and psychological empowerment, which addresses the perspective of the empowered employees, i.e. their perception about their situation (cf. Kirkman et al., 2006). Moreover, general management literature has placed emphasis on the conditions enabling and disabling empowerment in organizations (see for example Maynard et al., 2012, Sharma and Kirkman, 2015). We take the notion of empowerment in to the realm of projects, assuming that projects are temporary organizations (in the sense of Turner and Müller, 2003), which differ from permanent organizations in their requirements for leadership (Turner et al., 2009) and therefore we ask:

RQ1: How are team members empowered into horizontal leader roles in projects?

RQ2: What are the characteristics of the situation and the processes that condition the empowerment of horizontal leaders in projects?

The Unit of Analysis is the interaction between project managers as vertical leaders and project team members as empowered horizontal leaders. The study takes the ontological stance of Critical Realism, which combines objectivity at the level of mechanisms underlying the phenomenon with the subjectivity of situational experiences by the actors. Through that we aim for a relatively robust, but not necessarily the only explanation of the phenomenon of empowerment of horizontal leaders (Bhaskar, 2016). Data were collected through 20 interviews in ten organizations in China, and analyzed using an abductive approach, following Miles et al. (2014) in order to develop a model for empowerment of horizontal leaders that addresses both research questions

Practitioners will benefit from this study through the insights in the situational specifics, and interaction processes that lead to empowering of project team members. Further benefits are in better insights into the role-understanding of individuals in the context of empowerment, which allows for better preparation of individuals for and their improved consciousness in horizontal leadership.

Academics benefit from the study's results through the contribution to theory development, especially the contribution of further levels of detail on the particular process and conditions of empowerment for the theory on balanced leadership, which is elaborated later in this paper.

The next section will briefly review relevant literature on leadership and empowerment in projects. This is followed by the methodology, analysis, and discussion sections. The last section answers the research questions and concludes on the study results.

2. Literature review and conceptual framework

Based on observations of projects being driven forward through combinations of vertical and horizontal leadership processes, the concept of balanced leadership (Müller et al., 2015; 2018a) emerged, which describes this shifting of leadership authority between project managers and team members. Empowerment is key to this shift (Müller et al., 2015; 2018a), as horizontal leadership requires, at the outset, a level of empowerment that must be supported by the vertical leader, that is, the project manager (Cox et al., 2003). As indicated in the introduction, we have not been able to locate research on the nature of the empowerment process in projects. This section first looks into the concept of balanced leadership as this is the context for the empowerment process, then explores the concept of empowerment as well as the role empowerment plays in leveraging horizontal leadership.

2.1. Balanced leadership in projects

A recent development that overcomes the dichotomy of vertical and horizontal leadership, described in the introduction, is the concept of balanced leadership. It is defined as the leadership stemming from the dynamics of temporary back and forth transitions of leadership authority between vertical and horizontal leaders for the accomplishment of desired states in projects (Müller et al., 2018a). Balance is reached by having the best possible leader appointed at any point in time in the project. Balanced leadership builds on the notion that vertical leadership can be supplemented by horizontal leadership, which is “is executed by a team member upon nomination by the project manager (vertical leader), and governed by the vertical leader for the time of the nomination (Pretorius et al., 2017, p.96; Müller et al., 2015; 2018a). This distinguishes it from existing team-based concepts such as shared or distributed leadership, which emphasize the emergence of leadership from and within the team, and not through the vertical leader, as in horizontal leadership (Cox et al., 2003; Lindgren and Packendorff, 2009).

Projects often rely on a mix of vertical and horizontal leadership (O'Toole et al., 2003). However, the horizontal leadership does not emerge automatically, it must be enabled by vertical leadership (O'Toole et al., 2003; Cox et al., 2003; Burke et al., 2003). Horizontal leadership (as well as other team-centered concepts of leadership) implies problem solving and decision-making by team member(s).

The phenomenon of balancing leadership has been the focal interest in a global research program that, based on 166 interviews, developed a theoretical framework that describes how balanced leadership develops through the interaction of vertical leaders (i.e. project managers) and team members (i.e. potential horizontal leaders). It consists of a cycle of five events. An event is hereby defined in the sense of Whitehead (2010, p73) as “a nexus of actual occasions, interrelated in some determinate fashions” in the actual world. These events are (for more details see Müller et al., 2018a).

1. **Nomination** of project team members to the project. They are the potential candidates for enacting horizontal leadership.
2. **Identification** of possible candidates for horizontal leadership through a two way process aiming for a fit between the characteristics of the situation and the empowered person.
3. **Empowerment** of the identified horizontal leader to actually enact leadership.
4. **Execution** of horizontal leadership and its governance by the vertical leader.
5. **Transition** of leadership from the team member(s) to the vertical leader or other team member(s).

The coordination of these events across the vertical and horizontal leaders and the team are described through the concept of the socio-cognitive space, which is the common mental space between teams and project managers to identify situations for and synchronization of the transfer between vertical and horizontal leadership (Müller et al., 2015). The concept was empirically tested and validated through case studies in Australia and China (Müller et al., 2018a, 2018b), showing that in an enabling context, the empowerment by the vertical leader fosters the self-management of the empowered and, in parallel, updates the shared mental models of the other team members about the new role and authority of the empowered

horizontal leader.

In summary, research has indicated that leadership in projects can shift between vertical and horizontal leadership and that the shifts materialize through a process including 5 events, whereby the empowerment process is a key event, which has not been sufficiently researched yet.

2.2. Empowerment

The concept of empowerment has been a part of organizational science for more than 50 years and has gained massive attention, as it has been suggested to provide benefits at individual and organizational level, enhancing the performance of individuals, teams (Carmeli et al., 2011) and organizations (Stewart et al., 2012). Empowerment was also found to have a number of positive effects for employees, for example enhancing their well-being and positive attitudes of various kinds related both to themselves, their work situation and the organization they work with (e.g. Harris et al., 2014).

Empowerment is often equated with delegation of decision power from leaders to subordinates. It can be defined as “a practice, or set of practices involving the delegation of responsibility down the hierarchy so as to give employees increased decision-making authority in respect to the execution of their primary work tasks” (Leach et al., 2003, p. 28). As this focuses on conditions and structures in the organization that help sharing of power, decision making, and control over resources, it is often labeled *structural* empowerment. These conditions can also serve as indicators of empowerment (Kanter, 1977; Kirkman and Rosen, 1999; Spreitzer, 2007).

Another form of empowerment relates to the enabling of subordinates to take on responsibility. Enabling implies motivating through enhancing personal efficacy (Conger and Kanungo, 1988). This is a form of psychological empowerment. It refers to employee perception of themselves as having competence, autonomy, and impact, as well as their experience of meaningfulness in their work (cf. Z. Chen et al., 2007; Maynard et al., 2012; G. Chen et al., 2007).

Structural and psychological empowerment are highly related, and the first form is seen as a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for psychological empowerment (Mathieu and Taylor 2006; Seibert et al., 2011). Seibert et al. (2011) reports a significant positive relationship between managers' structural empowerment of subordinates and subordinates' perceptions of being empowered, especially when they communicate well (Seigall and Gardner, 2000) and supervisory support is provided (Logan and Ganster, 2007; Dysvik et al., 2016).

2.2.1 Structural empowerment

For project members to be empowered and take on leadership authority, the project manager must transfer this authority to employees (Sharma and Kirkman, 2015). A number of studies have looked at the organizational conditions enabling this transfer, such as job design, procedures and policies, and also organizational arrangements (Lawler, 1986; Hackman and Oldham, 1976, 1980). The job characteristics of autonomy has been found particularly important for enabling of employees assuming responsibility for the outcomes of their work (Hackman and Oldham, 1980). Autonomy in doing the job refers to having considerable freedom and independence in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out as well as scheduling the work. High autonomy makes tasks more meaningful to the ones performing them, because they feel greater personal responsibility for their own actions on the job (Hackman and Oldham, 1980).

One central way to install autonomy is through delegation (Sharma and Kirkman, 2015). Delegation is a complex process of assigning new tasks to subordinates, giving them responsibilities for decision making that is formally a responsibility of the manager, and increasing the authority of the subordinate to act without asking the manager for approval. (Yukl, 1989; Yukl and Fu, 1999). Management can also enable structural empowerment through techniques that induce delegation, such as management by objectives and the goal setting by subordinates (Conger and Kanungo, 1988). Delegation can be contrasted to consultation which means asking for advices, getting ideas and concerns from subordinates before making decisions (Leana, 1986; Chen et al., 2011). For the latter, the manager remains the decision authority. While consultation is not as empowering as delegation, it is an

empowering mechanism often taking the form of joint problem solving and negotiation involving both managers and subordinates (Yukl and Fu, 1999).

Managers state a number of reasons for delegation (Yukl and Fu, 1999); most importantly to develop subordinates, to motivate them and enhance commitment, to move the decision closer to the actions, as well as to reduce their own work load and manage time better. Research has also indicated a number of factors determining who the managers will delegate responsibility and authority to. Where, by far, the two most important are employees' dependability and self-reliance, and their competence/expertise. Another reason for delegation, is if the matter is related to the person's other responsibilities. In addition, the manager's reason that an employee needs to develop certain skills is a reason for delegation, and that they have time to take on the delegated matter. Furthermore, whether the employee wants to do it, that he/she shares the managers' task objectives, or that he/she deserves it – as a reward (Yukl and Fu, 1999). Delegation tends to be higher for persons holding some form of managerial roles, for persons that the managers have spent more time with (longer relationship), and for persons that are in reciprocal trust relationship with the manager (Yukl and Fu, 1999).

In our study, the structural empowerment comes about as delegated authority and responsibility, the situations where the project manager actually hands over the token to a project team member, and as involvement in decision processes and goal setting.

2.2.2 Psychological empowerment

Psychological empowerment is about employees feeling capable to take on extended responsibility (Sharma and Kirkman, 2015). It is a motivational construct to perform well, because empowered individuals and teams believe they can impact their organization through the way they perform their work. This form of empowerment is closely linked to the concept of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1982), and often spoken of as “the process of enhancing self-efficacy among organizational members” (Conger and Kanungo 1988, p. 474). Psychological empowerment is often treated as a four dimensional concept, as proposed by Spreitzer (1995,

1996). The first dimension is finding meaning or caring about the task, and it is based on the degree of fit between the task goals and the person's beliefs and values. The second dimension is feeling competent in terms of performing activities in an adequate and skillful way. The third dimension is self-determination or autonomy, in terms of sensing control/autonomy over the work processes one is engaged in. The last dimension refers to a feeling of impact in terms of perceiving that one can influence work processes and outcomes. These dimensions describe a dynamic state that creates the highest empowerment when all dimensions are high (Spreitzer, 1995).

What are the contingency factors for leaders trying to enhance the psychological empowerment of employees? Individual differences of leaders, such as their cultural values or low power distance is positively related with efforts to enhance employee empowerment (Sharma and Kirkman, 2015), and risk avoidance orientation is negatively associated with empowerment (Offerman and Hellmann, 1997). Organizational context, in terms of experienced level of job stressors (i.e. the circumstances that seem beyond one's control) and feelings of role overload can affect the effort to engage in psychological development (Sharma and Kirkman, 2015). It may leads to less empowering behavior; or in the case of feeling overloaded, it may leads to increased empowering behavior by the leader in order to diminish the felt overload.

The level of effort to psychologically empower is also determined by the relationship between the project manager and the employees who are empowered. It is likely that project managers who experience higher quality relationships with one or more subordinate will empower these more (Sharma and Kirkman, 2015). For example, the leaders' perception of subordinates as capable and trustworthy predicts the tendency to delegate (Leana, 1986, 1987) as well as to make efforts to psychologically empower (Maynard et al., 2012). Also, the subordinates' proactive behavior to influence on the self or environment (Parker et al., 2006), like showing personal initiative, speaking up, using influence tactics, seeking feedback taking charge, (Morrison and Milliken, 2000; Van Dyne and LePine, 1998) enable empowerment to happen (Sharma and Kirkman, 2015). However, if the proactive subordinate shows dominant and controlling behavior, the likelihood of being empowered by the leader is reduced.

In our study the psychological empowerment comes about as the project member's accounts of their own perceptions of having impact on the direction the project is taking, their enactment of leadership and relative autonomy to choose how to execute their tasks, as well as feeling that they are capable of executing leadership. It is also indicated by the project manager's accounts of their activities to psychologically empower project team members. The review above shows that very little is known about the empowerment of team members into the role of horizontal leaders. Hence, an empirical investigation is needed to answer the research questions.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

The exploratory nature of the study calls for a qualitative approach to identify the key dimensions of the characteristics of empowerment of horizontal leaders. The study design followed Saunders et al. (2007), who suggest a sequence of decisions, starting with underlying philosophy, followed by research approach, strategy, methodological choices, time horizons, and ending with techniques and procedures.

The philosophical stance of Critical Realism was chosen. This stance combines the perspective of an objective and measurable reality with the assumption that people's interpretation of this reality is situation dependent and subjective. Hence, similar experiences are interpreted differently by different actors (Archer et al., 1998) and studying phenomena aims for identification of a possible, but not necessarily the only explanation of phenomena (Bhaskar, 2016). This philosophical stance also underlies the theoretical framework to which this study contributes (Müller et al., 2018a), which provides for consistency in perspectives and reduction of philosophical clashes. Abduction was chosen as research approach, which combines the credibility of deductive reasoning rooted in existing publications on empowerment, with the creativity of inductive reasoning from new empirical insights and the researchers' own experience (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009) in order to derive at new knowledge. Interviews were chosen for qualitative data collection in a cross-sectional time setting. Data analyses followed Miles et al. (2014).

3.2 Sampling

Maximum variation sampling was chosen in order to identify the key characteristics of the phenomenon (Teddlie and Yu, 2007). For that, we conducted 20 interviews in ten organizations. Selection criteria included a) that organizations were both project-oriented and project-based in the sense of Miterev et al. (2017), which means they use projects as a way to conduct their business both from a strategic, as well as an operations perspective, and b) variety in the sense of the criteria listed in the demographics. The industries ranged from engineering of various types (environmental, industrial etc.) to consulting, business process outsourcing, shipbuilding, and Information Technology. Organizational size ranged from 40 to 8,000 employees (mean=2,457), and the scope of business from national to global. A summary of the organizations and the related interviews is shown in Appendix 1. Sampling continued until theoretical saturation was reached.

3.3 Interviews

Fourteen of the 20 interviews were with project managers and six with project team members. The age of the interviewees ranged from 25 to 50 (mean=35.5) years, with a tenure from 2 to 12 (mean=6.5) years in their current position, and project team sizes from 4 to 50 (mean=19) team members.

The interviews were carried out by a team of 2 to 4 researchers, whereby one was leading the discussion, while others took notes. The interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes and were tape recorded, after approval by the interviewee, for later reference during analysis. Interviewees' informed consent was aimed for by carefully explaining the nature, scope and aims of the study, as well as the ethical implications for the interviewee (anonymity, can stop at any time, free to skip questions, no right or wrong answers).

All interviews followed the same set of questions, which was developed upfront and piloted in four interviews. Three blocks of questions were asked: a) general information about the organization, its projects, interviewee role and tenure, b) questions on structural empowerment (ways of granting empowerment, vertical leader's leadership style when empowering, impact on relationships, ways of controlling, horizontal leader's leadership style, process of transition of horizontal leader at end of assignment), and c) psychological

empowerment (expectations of parties, building of self-confidence, perceived influence on the project, freedom to exercise influence, termination of influence).

Validity and reliability approaches followed Yin (2009) and Miles et al. (2014). Validity was pursued by deriving the interview questions from existing and published constructs for empowerment (Sharma and Kirkman, 2015), by identifying the best informants for the questions, and continuation of data collection until clear patterns emerged. Reliability was ensured by cross-validating the interview statements, and later the final results, across the entire set of interviews, as well as by using constant-comparison approaches during data analysis.

Ethics approval was obtained beforehand from the Norwegian Social Science Data Services.

3.4 Analysis approach

We followed Miles et al. 's (2014) process of data collection, data display, data reduction and conclusion finding. Initial coding provided for identification of relevant information, by interpretation of the interviewee responses in light of existing concepts, like structural and psychological empowerment. Codes related to the process of empowering horizontal leaders and situational characteristics of empowerment emerged through constant comparison of newly gathered data with previously collected data and their coding. Categories were developed and refined after checking the relevance of previously coded text and newly created codes. Emergent codes and connections among categories led to the identification of variables, and their interpretation in the context of the interviewee data led to the identification of reoccurring patterns of empowerment processes and dimensions. Consistency of patterns was validated by comparing emergent insights and searching for negative cases or falsifying evidence constantly (Bowen, 2008). Interpretation of the patterns in the context of the situations described by the interviewees allowed for theory building, including the context dependency of some patterns and the situations that led to them.

Coding started deductively by looking for support of existing theories on empowerment, and then gradually expanded into inductive interpretation in light of the additional information given through the interview data and the display of the findings. For example, the presence of the elements of structural empowerment were deductively looked for in the interview data,

giving raise to generalization towards a theory of their existence in balanced leadership. Building on this, the situational conditions and organizational/personal actions were identified for these structural elements in order to identify their situational contingencies and actions, such as shown in Figure 1. The process of iterating between theory, data and existing literature refines our findings about empowering horizontal leaders in project context. Until no new ideas and insights related to emerging theory can be gained from additional data and further analysis, the sampling and coding process are ended and theoretical saturation is achieved (Bowen, 2008). Following Miles et al.'s (2014) suggestions the final model was assessed against each interview and thereby successfully validated and tested.

4. Data Analysis

The Analysis of the interview data demonstrated the characteristics of empowerment of horizontal leadership, namely the process of empowerment, the key dimensions of empowerment, and the conditions that frame the empowerment orientation. We first describe the findings and then provide the underlying empirical evidence.

4.1 The process of empowerment

Our data indicate that HL empowerment is a process of authority transition from vertical leader to horizontal leader. Our analysis followed the process described above, for example, the interviewee's description of *thinking about whether the HL candidate is a desirable person for the job in terms of team member's positive attitude towards him* is coded as *evaluating the HL's acceptance*. The interviewee's description of *to a great extent he made the announcement of HL official* is coded as *HL's decision announcement*. Similar steps were taken to generate the other codes for HL empowerment. By comparing the differences between identified codes the categories, such as *Empowerment Orientation*, *Decision Announcement* were formed. By putting these codes back into the context of the interviews, we could order these six categories into three stages. These stages can be interpreted as involving decision-making before empowerment, implementation of empowerment and power-retrieving after the empowerment, and they constitute the chronological order of the empowerment process. Then, all cases were cross-analyzed to compare the differences in amount or sequence of these categories and stages. Data were then purified and confirmed, for example, some mentioned *empowerment decision up-reporting* is falsified and not considered as part of the

process models, for it is not widely confirmed by the data. Therefore, the process of empowerment can be summarized in three stages: pre-empowerment stage, empowerment stage, and post-empowerment stage (Figure 1). Those stages can be divided into 6 steps. Interactions between the horizontal leader and project team members happen along the entire process. The process aims to provide structured and psychological support for horizontal leaders to perform in the new relationship with other project team members. Meanwhile, the process also helps project managers to clarify the appropriate empowerment behaviors, which are needed for facilitating the horizontal leadership.

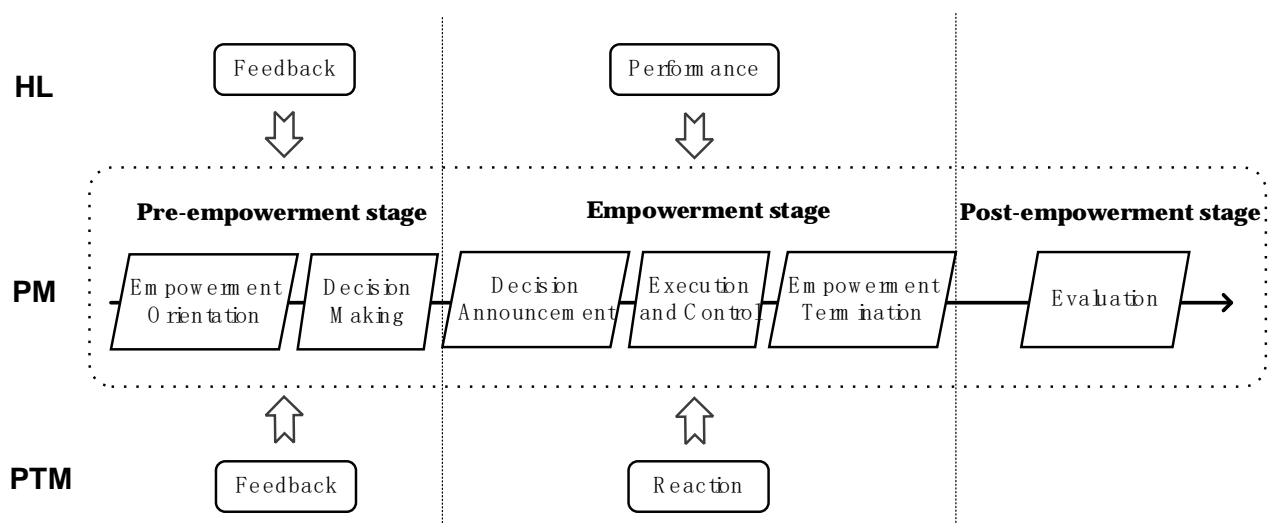


Fig. 1 The process of HL empowerment. HL= horizontal leader, PM=project manager, PTM=project team member

The project managers described three stages that are executed during the whole empowerment process:

1. *Pre-empowerment stage*: during this stage, the project manager prepares cognitively and structurally before empowering the horizontal leader. Two steps constitute the stage of empowerment orientation and decision-making. Empowerment orientation is the process by which the project manager analyzes the conditions by interacting with the horizontal leader and team members before finalizing the decision, which in turn frames how the empowerment process is carried out. The process aligns the pre-identified horizontal leadership candidate with the

specific leadership situation. Decision-making refers to the optional process of formalizing the decision, either by the project manager or his/her superior, before carrying out the empowerment process.

2. *Empowerment stage*: during this stage, the project manager implements the empowerment procedures sequentially. The process consists of three distinctive steps: decision announcement, execution and control, and empowerment termination. Decision announcement refers to an official or unofficial claim of horizontal leadership towards the rest of project team. Execution and control refers to how the horizontal leader is controlled or regulated by the project manager, during the horizontal 's execution of power. Empowerment termination refers to ending the temporary horizontal leadership role, and the retrieving of leadership authority by the project manager.

3. *Post-empowerment stage*: during this stage, the project manager evaluates the horizontal leader's overall performance in order to obtain feedback for future direction. It consists of only one step which is evaluation. For this step, the project manager gathers information from stakeholders, such as project team members, suppliers, judges on the achievement of expectations and other performance criteria, to judge on the role fulfillment of the horizontal leader.

Empirical support for this is given, for example, by the project manager from the communications construction company, who said: *I always think highly of him, I know he could do the job, he just needs a chance to let others know what he is capable of. He is even more experienced than me [...] It [the decision of choosing the horizontal leader] is done democratically, but finally it's up to me. Before it's settled I will discuss the details with him and get feedback from other team members.* Then, he describes a series of actions he conducted for empowerment of the horizontal leader: *the announcement was made internally, through official files. Involved members could get the message [...] The control is done by outcome control, by which I make sure he could get desired rewards once he achieves the goal we set. [...] The roles end after the assignment is done.* Then, the project manager describes his evaluation of horizontal leader: *I cared about his performance after his task. He did a good*

job, most of the stakeholders were taken care of. The reason behind it, is that, he has a high EQ and he distinguishes himself through largeness and scope of his view. A key characteristic for the potential to get important things done.

4.2 Dimensions of empowerment

Our data indicate five main dimensions for the implementation of empowerment. They derived from constant comparison of codes, interpreting and connecting the categories. Hence, by following similar steps elaborated above for the process of empowerment. For example, for HL Announcement, we obtained patterns of official and unofficial announcement when comparing different cases. These differences gradually emerged as subcategories of HL Announcement: no or simple announcement, official announcement, and official announcement with assistance and explanation. These different categories are inherently the same in terms of announcement, but differ by degree. The five dimensions of empowerment that emerged were HL (horizontal leader) announcement, HL acceptance, HL autonomy, control of HL, future of HL.

HL Announcement refers to the project manager's methods or manners of making an announcement to the team members. The types of announcements vary according to descriptions of project managers and horizontal leaders. Three major announcement types were identified: no announcement or simple announcement, official announcement, and official announcement with explanation or assistance. The difference in announcement stem from situational differences in legitimating or supporting the horizontal leader accepted without difficulty. If no announcement or only a simple announcement is made, it is likely that the role is just assigned to a shorter or minor task: A project manager from a design company indicated that: *I do not really have to tell other team members about his/her (horizontal leader's) role, they will follow whoever contacts them about the task. That's just part of a regular task, no need to make a big deal of it.* Official announcement is the practice by which management needs to indicate a certain degree of authorization or legitimation and involves the direct sending of specific information. A manager from the environmental engineering company said, *I called a meeting of project members and stakeholders to announce it, it's an oral but serious announcement.* Official announcement with explanation is not only about legitimation but also helps to clarify roles and responsibilities, and build psychologically

empowered state for horizontal leaders and those involved. A manager from the heavy industry company summarized that: *The announcement was made to all team members, during an official project meeting. Moreover, I will let all team members know what they need to do and what the horizontal leader can do. I will make sure everyone knows their roles and who they should be committed to (i.e. the horizontal leader).* The official announcement done with assistance, is an official declaration and unofficial backing up to support the legitimacy of the role. As the project team member from the Petroleum Engineering company states: *My project manager would ask others to not take it personally, even if they deem those tasks as annoying. She told them to follow my lead and behave cooperatively.*

HL acceptance refers to the extent to which project team members accept the horizontal leader and his/her decisions. Three sub-types of acceptance are identified from the data: easy acceptance, gradual acceptance, and indifference. Differences in acceptance are indicators and feedbacks for the project manager and his/her empowerment process and varies according to the cognitive and behavioral acceptance of the specific horizontal leader. Easy acceptance means project team members are showing behavioral and oral acceptance of the horizontal leader without intentionally being uncooperative. A project manager from the environmental engineering company stated: *Everyone took it quite well, they followed him and reported to him in a timely and cooperative manner.* Gradual acceptance refers to an initial difficulty team members face in understanding the decision, but gradually become comfortable with it over time. A project manager from the heavy industry mentioned: *Some might not take the decisions quite well. However, little by little, everyone would eventually accept the decision.* Indifference means team members are not taking the decision seriously enough to cause any noticeable incompatible behaviors. A project manager from the heavy industry company summarized that: *Actually, most of them would consider it as a temporary thing, which will not affect them much. Therefore, the decision did not really matter to them.* Here, project team members' perception of HL being capability is mainly our research focus, rather than HL's own attitude towards HL empowerment, since project manager and project team members together influence the HL and contribute to HL empowerment. HL's perception of being empowered has already been addressed in another study (Müller et al., 2017). Therefore, HL acceptance by project team members was prioritized as our main research focus.

HL autonomy refers to the horizontal leader's psychological perception and structural permission provided by the project manager of his/her power range and scope. It addresses autonomy related to work or decisions, limitations in autonomy, and limited autonomy with voice behavior (VB) encouragement. Here autonomy related to work refers to the horizontal leader not feeling comfortable with his or herself in the HL role. As long as the horizontal leader is aligned with the values of the task, the leader is open to act and speak as he/she sees fit. The project manager of the design company said that: *There is no strict rule attached, but he has to figure it out by himself. As long as he would not affect the project plan.* Autonomy related to decisions refers to limitations in types of decisions the HL is authorized to make. The project manager from the environmental engineering company mentioned that: *He can make the decisions on technical issues by himself, but not those that involve changes required by stakeholders.* Limited autonomy means that there is little to no opportunity for the horizontal leader to make personal choices. The project manager from the heavy industry company mentioned that: *She can only make decision by herself for minor things. More often than not she does not really need to make any decisions, the tasks are fixed ones.* Limited autonomy with VB encouragement refers to a horizontal leader who is limited to act with his own preference, however, expressing feedback and/or ideas are encouraged. The project team member from a petroleum engineering company said: *my project manager constantly encouraged me to talk to her in person, although the freedom I have was quite limited, I have ways to express my ideas.*

Control of HL refers to the control a project manager holds over the HL. It can be sub-categorized into three different kinds: outcome control, outcome control with checking proactively or mentoring, and outcome and process control. Outcome control means that the project manager controls horizontal leaders by setting goals and measuring outcomes. The project manager from the design company mentioned it as: *We [HL and project manager] talked about what we have achieved as planned.* Outcome control with checking proactively refers to the project manager controlling the HL by setting goals and constantly checking the HL's progress to ensure their achievement. The project manager from the environmental engineering company mentioned: *We [HL and project manager] discuss the work every day in the formal meeting, and he will also report to me by email, or I will check with him when the*

milestones come. Outcome control with mentoring means that project manager sets goals for the HL, during which the project manager offers instructions for HL to act more effectively. The project manager from the harbor engineering company summarized that: *I control him by using outcome control. I made sure he could get reasonable even desirable awards if he achieves the goals. [...] We talked on a daily basis and I gave him instructions for leading the task.* Outcome and process control refers to adopting both control by regulating process and setting goals. The project manager from the heavy industry company mentioned that: *On the one hand, I keep track of her performance through the weekly reporting system and by making sure she follows the procedures. On the other hand, we had a deal on what she has to achieve for the task.*

Future of HL refers to the position of the HL at a later point in time. The position typically be one of three types: back to the previous position, move to a leader position, or move to higher position. Back to the previous position means that the HL returns to the previous position or team role after the HL assignment is finished. The project manager from the engine manufacturing company mentioned: *He [the HL] went back to his previous role after completing his task.* Move to a leader position refers to a HL taking on a leadership role in subsequent projects: *actually, he moved with me after the project, and later we took on a new project, in which he plays a similar leader role.* Move to a higher position refers to the HL being promoted and moving into a manager position. The project manager from the environmental engineering said that: *He became the department associate later, which means that he got promoted by the high management team.*

4.3 The conditions for empowerment orientation

The distinctive characteristics of the dimensions of empowerment reveal different empowerment orientations behind each decision made, which leads to a set of diverse conditions which frame the empowerment scenario for HLs (Appendix 2). Examination and grouping of empowerment dimensions revealed clear empirical patterns about the ways project managers fit different empowerment opportunities with appropriate HLs. From the interview data we found that empowerments for HLs are driven by two sets of conditions, namely justification perception and demand factors. These two dimensions are summarized from coding of conditions of empowerment and comparing divergent and convergent

patterns, which follows similar steps elaborated in the process of empowerment. There were other factors mentioned by some interviewees, such as availability of the person, but those only appeared for a few times and were not prioritized. By comparing different attitudes of interviewees, we form these sub-categories of each conditions, to clarify the degree of variance. Then cases are divided into groups according to the justification perceptions and demand factors, whether they are either high or low in these conditions. Therefore, they end up in four different groups of justification perception and demand factors being (group1: Current Need, more Justifiable; group2: Current Need, less Justifiable; group3: Future Development, more Justifiable; group4: Future Development, less Justifiable, see Appendix 2).

Justification perception refers to project team members' (and potentially others) perception about the legitimacy of the empowered person, with less justifiable and more justifiable as the two ends of the same continuum. The former indicating a HL is perceived as less qualified than expected, which calls for the project manager to set up a supportive environment or removing undesirable hindrances for the HL. The project manager from the harbor engineering company mentioned: *"I told him [the HL] to take over field management first, and asked him to work harder and perform better, then he could show that his capability is higher than they expected, therefore I might have confidence and reasons in having others to believe in you."* More justifiable perceived by project team members means more qualified from their views, and then few legitimate tactics are required to facilitate horizontal leader's performance. The project manager from business outsourcing company described that: *With it [the achievement of a particular Key Performance Indicator (KPI)] the project team can clearly see that he is better than others. In our team if you would like to lead someone, you should have some prestige among others, otherwise it would be a problem. Our KPI indicators are quite mature, it says almost everything about you.*

Demand factors refers to the original reason of picking a HL, with current need and future need as two major factors. Current need means that the appointment of a HL is to stand in for the project manager, or to fill a temporary job vacancy. The project manager from the design company mentioned that: *This task emerges during the project implementation. We need to find the right guy among project team members. The candidate should match the task perfectly for this role.* Future need means that the appointment of a HL is to develop a

potential leader for the future. A project team member from the petroleum engineering company said that: *the project manager said to me, 'As a young member of the team, there is no harm in learning more things and doing more jobs. On the contrary, it would be quite helpful for you to grow up faster and better.'*

5. Discussion

The study revealed the empowerment process through which project managers share power and decision-making authority with the HLs, and the situational characteristics for empowerment of HLs in projects.

5.1 The empowerment process of HL

A process was identified that allows for interaction among project managers, HLs and other team members during empowerment. Project managers start by ensuring empowerment orientation and decision-making based on the appraisal feedback from the project team, then implement empowerment, and provide support to HLs in leading the project. In the end, project managers evaluate the performance of the HL and give the feedback to him/her, which effects the next empowerment decision.

As a team-centered leadership (Crevani et al., 2010), horizontal leadership enables a substantial authority for the HL to move the project forward and influence the project manager and the rest of the team (Müller et al., 2018b). Thus, compared to the empowerment processes described in the general management literature, empowering HLs in projects starts not only from a task-orientation and situational need for management, but from a leader development need. The empowerment of HLs involve interaction among project manager, HL and other team members. In this scenario, the role of the project manager changes from supervisor to facilitator in order to build a supportive climate and help the HLs to learn and apply leadership, skills, enhance self-efficacy and play a leader role in projects. According to the concepts of structural empowerment and psychological empowerment, the empowerment of HLs in projects should emphasize especially psychological empowerment to make HLs feeling capable to take on extended responsibility (Sharma and Kirkman, 2015). As Menon (2001) stated, structural and psychological approaches are not antithetical, structuring acts sometimes as antecedent leading to employees' psychological states. Thus, the

empowerment process of HLs is a process that utilizes conditions and structures to grant power and delegate authority (Burke, 1986), at the same time enhancing self-efficacy and experience of meaningfulness (Neilsen, 1986; Maynard et al., 2012) of HLs to lead the project.

Back to the empowerment process of HLs, project managers delegate decision authority to HLs by assigning temporary leadership authority for tasks. At the same time, project managers actions to guarantee the final empowerment decision - such as talks with HL candidates and dispel their misgivings, inquiring the team members' feedback to develop an adequate empowerment strategy - are all supervisory support which enhances HLs' perception of meaning, competence, self-determination and impact (Spreitzer, 1995). During empowerment execution, the efforts of project managers in creating favorable conditions (Neilsen, 1986), removing conditions that foster HL powerlessness (Conger and Kanungo, 1988) and providing supervisory support (Logan and Ganster, 2007) all aim to enable psychological empowerment of HLs to play a more confident role. With the importance of performance feedback in the empowerment literature (e.g. Spreitzer, 1995, p. 1447; Lawler, 1992), the performance evaluation and feedback of HLs reinforce a sense of competence and support their future empowerment.

Moreover, the HL may be empowered several times in one project or across projects. In this situation, the evaluation of the last case will affect the next empowerment decision and process, which indicates imperceptible changes of each empowerment process of HLs.

5.2 Four types of HL in empowerment

Based on the demand factors and the justification perception of the team (both described above) four HL types and their situational characteristics emerge. We refer to them as Deputies, Future Stars, Oysters, and Bench Players (see Figure2).

The first type, *Deputies*, refers to HLs who are empowered for currently existing substitute requirements for the project manager and are deemed justifiable by other team members. Empowering deputies is a task-oriented delegation, which usually happens when the project manager is overloaded and unavailable for task execution. In this case, the project manager

prefers to choose a competent and reliable team member (Yukl and Fu, 1999), such as a specialist who is admitted by team members to accomplish the task sound and quick. Because of high leader legitimacy (Mintzberg, 1993), deputies are generally positively perceived for their competence and self-efficacy around the task in question, which becomes the basis of their psychological empowerment. Thus, the project manager will have a brief talk with the deputy to transfer authority and assign leadership of the task. The empowerment decision of the deputy only needs a simple announcement or even no announcement and is typically easily accepted by team members. Due to the task orientation of the situation, the autonomy of deputies is usually related to work, such as skill discretion and means discretion (Copper, 1973). The control of empowered deputies focuses more on outcome control, which is aligned with the viewpoint of "pulled" by the task rather than "pushed" by management (Berlew, 1986). Typically, deputies have less needed for social support from project managers during the empowerment process, and will be back to their previous position when empowerment terminates. Thus, the empowerment of deputies is a task-oriented empowerment, which can be realized with structured approaches and needs less efforts on psychological empowerment.

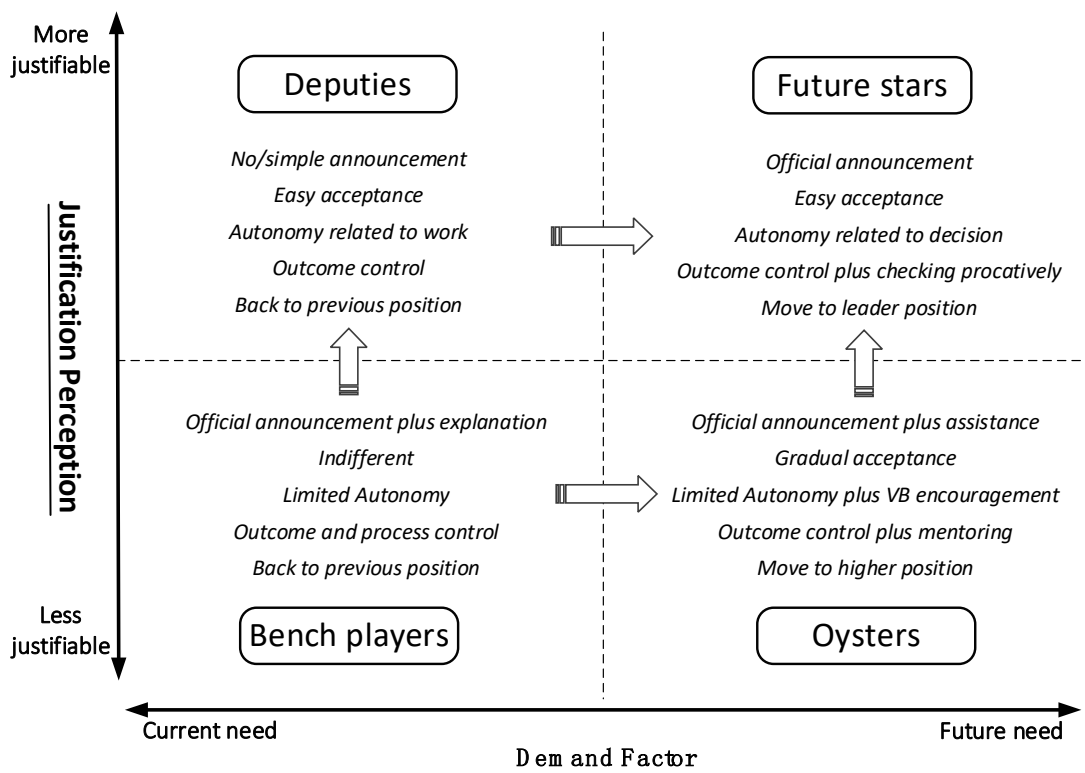


Figure 2 The HL empowerment matrix

Future Stars, refers to HLs who are empowered for further development and are deemed justifiable by other team members. Compared with deputies, stars are members who already showed leader talents, proactive behaviors or intentions to become project managers, and are regarded as future leader candidates. Thus, empowering stars is a leader training-oriented empowerment which intends to cultivate future leaders through practices of leading collective tasks (Drath et al., 2008). In this case, even though stars are perceived as justifiable by project team members, project managers will still have a long conversation with them to show attention, expectation and support, and make an official announcement to the rest of the team. These leadership behaviors and reciprocal trust relationships will impact HLs' experience of psychological empowerment and make stars more confident to assume a leadership role (Konczak et al., 2000; Maynard et al., 2012). As a result, team members will accept this empowerment more easily due to the justifiable perception of stars and strong support from the project manager. Different to empowering deputies, stars will be given more autonomy and opportunity for decision-making by the project manager, which enhances their feelings of self-determination (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Besides control by outcome, project managers will also keep attention to stars to maintain a supportive and trusting relationship with them (Spreitzer, 2008) and avoid potential negative effects such as work overload, like Sharam and Kirkman (2015) speculates. After leaving the role of HL, stars with outstanding performance will move to a leader position within/out of the project.

Oysters, refers to HLs who are empowered for further development and are deemed less justifiable by other team members. The empowerment of oysters and stars are all leader training-oriented and long-term interests driven, differences between them are the distinct justification perception by team members. Oysters show leader potential to the project manager but not to all of the team members, which makes project managers offering them a chance to be delegated (Leana, 1986) and manifest their capabilities. Thus, compared with deputies and stars, oysters tend to lead highly specialized/skilled people while facing more challenges of leader legitimacy (Mintzberg, 1993), which requires more efforts to evade powerlessness. In this case, a long talk between project manager and oysters (Seigall and Gardner, 2000), and an official announcement with assistance (Dysvik et al., 2016) are necessary to motivate them and initiate psychological empowerment. This kind of social and environmental support leads to feelings of high competence (Gist and Mitchell, 1992) and

impact (Robbis et al., 2002) of HLs. Because of the low perception of justification, the empowerment of oysters is usually hard to accept by team members in the beginning, but can change gradually with the powerful supervisory support from the project manager. Oysters are typically granted limited autonomy to make critical decisions due to their ability and experience, but are encouraged to behave proactively (Parker et al., 2006), like expressing themselves and making decisions about methods, pace and effort, which enables psychological empowerment to happen (Sharam and Kirkman, 2015). Project managers act hereby as mentors and supporters, and utilize not only outcome control but also social control to avoid disempowering (Spreitzer et al., 1999). When the HL task is finished, dutiful oysters often have gained an opportunity to move to a higher position or become a HL again further on in the project.

Bench players, refers to HLs who are empowered for current work needs and are deemed less justifiable by other team members. Similar to deputies, empowering bench players is also a task-oriented empowerment, but tasks in this case are more urgent, specific and uncomplicated. Thus, the empowerment of bench players often happens when no suitable candidate is available and a collective task needs to be led as soon as possible. Even though bench players are not the best candidates and perceived less justifiable by team members, project managers still empower them as temporary HLs to drive the task accomplishment as required. Nevertheless, an official announcement and an elaboration will be made to ensure fairness and create a supportive climate. Different from the reactions to oysters, project team members will understand the empowerment of bench players as merely required for the temporary task and pay less attention to it. Because of insufficient leader experience of bench players, project managers will grant limited autonomy in operational issues to them. Due to the measurability and programmability of the task (Eisenhardt, 1985), process and outcome control were conducted simultaneously (Ouchi and Maguire, 1975). Bench players are typically back to their previous position immediately after they accomplished their task.

In the present study, the project manager as a vertical leader offers the HL job latitude, influence in decision making, and social support to enhance the extent of psychological empowerment and improve the HL's performance. Stemming from the intention of leader development, oysters and stars need more efforts from project managers than deputies and

bench players in terms of psychological empowerment to fulfill the intrinsic needs of autonomy and growth (Hackman and Oldham, 1980). Furthermore, the four types of HLs in projects indicate that the development of HLs happens along two different career paths (see Figure 2). Starting as bench players, leader candidates can be trained into specialists, as deputies, and then evolve into stars eventually within or across projects. Alternatively, they can be perceived at the bench player stage as possessing leadership potential and be empowered to become an oyster by leading and managing the team as HL, before they become stars in succession. Thus, the two transition paths among the four types of HLs diverge as specialized role or managerial role, which provides a direction for horizontal leader development practices.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the process and contextual factors in the empowering of HLs by their project managers. A qualitative approach was chosen, using data collected through 20 interviews in ten organizations of different sizes and industries in China. Applying abductive reasoning allowed for the identification of the empowerment process and the dimensions executed during this process. Interpretation of the findings in their particular contexts identified four types of empowerment. By modeling these four types of empowerment, two possible career paths for horizontal leaders were identified. This allows us to answer the research questions.

RQ1 asked how team members are empowered into horizontal leader roles in projects. A three step process of pre-empowerment, empowerment, and post-empowerment was identified (Figure 1). Here, the first step includes the project manager's alignment of the particular situation that calls for a HL with the identified team member, followed by the decision on how to announce the empowerment. The second step (empowerment) refers to the act of officially announcing the HL candidate and the subsequent control of the HL throughout the time of empowerment, followed by the termination of the empowerment. The last step refers to the feedback and evaluation of the HL – task fit, including performance and lessons learned. Throughout this process, five dimensions of empowerment are enacted, which are HL announcement, HL acceptance, HL autonomy, control of HL, future of the HL. The first dimension refers to the particular and situation-specific way of announcing a HL. HL

acceptance is the extent the HL accepts the empowerment, including possible personal reservations or support requirements the HL demands from the project manager. HL autonomy refers to level of decision-making authority that is granted to the HL during the empowerment. HL control refers to modes of control and governance the project manager employs during the HL's time of empowerment. HL future refers to the career impact of the HL assignment, hence the future developments after the empowerment finishes. The details of this process and the dimensions underlying the process, are described in detail in the beginning of the analysis section of this article.

RQ2 asked for the situational characteristics for empowerment of HLs in projects. Four categories of situations were identified (Figure 2), depending on the team's perceived level of justification for a person being empowered, and the timely urgency of the demand for a HL. Each of these categories is characterized by the type of announcement, level of acceptance, autonomy given to the HL, type of control of the HL, and post-empowerment role of the HL. Four situational contingent types of HL empowerment were identified.

Deputies – HLs whose empowerment is perceived as highly justified by the team and intended to fill a current/existing need in leadership. These HLs require little announcement and are easily accepted by the team. They are granted broad autonomy in terms of how they control the team in doing their work. They typically fall back to their earlier position when the empowerment period ends.

Future Stars – HLs whose empowerment is perceived equally highly justified as for deputies, but they are empowered as part of a future leader development activity. These HLs are officially announced, easily accepted by the team, and granted decision-making authority for the task at hand. They are typically closely controlled by both their work outcomes and the process they follow to get there. They often move into other leadership positions after the present HL role.

Oysters – HLs whose empowerment is less justified, but serves the development of the individual as potential leader in the future. Hence, a first stage in becoming a future star. These HLs are officially announced and subsequently supported by the project manager to establish

themselves in their role, which is paralleled by a gradual acceptance by the team. The level of autonomy granted to these HLs is limited and controlled by the project manager psychologically through mentoring and physically by controlling work outcomes and results. The HLs are occasionally identified by upper management for higher positions, or they become future stars.

Bench players – HLs whose empowerment is less justified in the eyes of the team, but needed to fill an immediate gap in leadership. Their empowerment is officially announced and supported by arguments. The teams often react indifferent to the announcement, and the candidate is given little autonomy in the HL task. Accordingly, they are strictly controlled for delivering expected outcomes and using related work processes. They typically go back to their prior role after the assignment.

The relationship between the four types of empowerment indicates a career path for bench players. Those with high technical skills can become deputies and then move into future stars, while bench players who show strengths in leadership can develop into oysters and then move on to become future stars. The details for the answer to RQ2 can be found in the discussion section.

The findings have several implications for practicing managers. The combination of process and situational empowerment as outlined in the above paragraph can be used for the deliberate and agreed upon development of future leaders. Examples for this include the outline, agreement and implementation of a career development path, agreed between line/project manager and the high potential candidates in leadership. The pre-empowerment stage will be used to actively search for situations suitable for the development of the candidate from his/her current position into a more qualified leadership position. Depending on the candidate's current skills and experience (technical or leadership) and prior experience, the starting position can be either one of the bench player, deputy, or oyster, which then would be used to develop the candidate into a future star, so that he/she becomes a project or line manager in the future. This requires an agreed upon plan, as well as coordination with related training programs in leadership, (project) management, and/or technical skills. Moreover, the results are of interest for Human Resource departments in designing

trainee/internship programs for newly hired junior professionals, who can be developed in line with the mid-term needs of the organization (technical versus leadership) into qualified leaders with a solid understanding of the organization's technology and management in the long term.

Other implications are the deliberate use of Figure 2 to explain team members the long-term reasons for empowering a currently less justified individual into a HL role. Thereby reducing situations of slow or indifferent acceptance of candidates. In a similar vein can the process shown in Figure 1 be used by project manager and HL candidate to agree on a way forward, by providing a) transparency in the process and its duration, b) defining accountability through agreement on each party's definite role during the life-cycle of the empowerment, c) agreeing on the specific responsibilities and work methods during the assignment, and d) ensuring fairness in the process across the project and its team. Thus, providing for fulfillment of the four governance principles defined by the OECD (2004).

Theoretical implications include foremost the empirical validation of the empowerment event in the theoretical framework for balanced leadership. In combination with the empirical studies on the other events of this framework, the results provide a contribution to a larger theory on leadership in project management, the theory of balanced leadership. This theory proposes that the dynamic transfer of leadership authority substitutes for hindrances in leadership efficiency that are described in existing theories, such as the frequent change of team members, which is described as causing a loss in team maturity (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988) and team development (Hackman, 1987). Instead of seeing this as a hindrance, balanced leadership proposes that project managers use this change in team members to ensure that, at any given time in the project, the best possible person is empowered to lead. The process and steps for this empowerment are outlined above. They link seamlessly to the identification event of balanced leadership, which precedes the empowerment event and connects to it by selecting the candidate for empowerment, prepares and gets him/her ready for the role of being empowered. During the identification event, the candidates are selected based on their personality, acting with professionalism and attitude, following a process of evaluation, development and assessment for the task in question (Müller et al., 2018b). The empowerment event continues this process through the pre-empowerment stage, which lays

the cognitive and psychological foundation for the subsequent empowerment of an individual. Similarly connects the subsequent Horizontal Leadership event, where the leadership style of the empowered leader unfolds and agreements are made on the nature and types of decisions that are made by the vertical and horizontal leaders (Drouin, Sankaran and Müller, submitted) This provides for highest efficiency in project execution and contributes to the competitiveness of the organization in their market.

Empowerment, as an event in balanced leadership theory, enacts horizontal leadership. Without it, horizontal leadership cannot happen. Its manifestation is situation dependent, hence idiosyncratic for the time, situation and people in the project. Some of the related enablers have been described in earlier publications, such as the project manager's attitude towards balanced leadership. If a project manager does not like horizontal leadership, then it cannot happen in a project. Another enabler is the nature of the task. Team members will only be empowered for leadership in their particular area of expertise. Some project tasks are typically outside the scope of the team and merely in the sphere of the project manager, such as business decisions and general decisions of the accomplishment of time, cost, quality/scope and/or safety goals. Leadership in these areas will remain mainly by the project manager as a vertical leader (ibid).

The study uncovers a number of future research opportunities. These include the quantitative and global validation and possible expansion of the present findings, in order to generalize the results and develop a more robust and credible theory on empowerment in projects. Furthermore, it indicates the need for deeper studies on each of the identified process elements and empowerment dimensions, to better understand how they work and how they mutually impact each other. This will provide for micro-theories on the activities at the detailed level for deliberate use in improving efficiency and effectiveness in project leadership. Other indicated studies are in the broader context of empowerment in balanced leadership, addressing the timely and situational contingency of empowerment versus non-empowerment by investigating the corporate/industry/national cultural influences on the phenomenon, as well as the influences stemming from the default leadership styles of the vertical and horizontal leaders. Yet another series of studies may take a HL perspective and investigate the psychological implication of being empowered to a HL. Of particular interest

are hereby studies on HL stress during the period of empowerment, the long-term impact on self-perception, self-management etc. stemming from successful or unsuccessful empowerments to HL roles. Similar opportunities exist for studies taking an economics or strategy perspective.

The strengths of the present study include the deliberate attempt to look for the most generic patterns of the phenomenon of empowerment in projects by using a maximum variety sampling approach. This allowed to identify generic patterns, which can now be refined for specific industries, project types, cultures etc. A further strength lies in the abductive approach, which made use of existing concepts, but allowed to extend and refine them using the data collected. The use of theoretical saturation as a criterion to stop further sampling can be seen as strength as well as a weakness. In terms of strength it provided for clear and robust patterns to emerge, which seamlessly fall into the models shown above, and allowed for generalization toward a theory. However, it can also be seen as a weakness as it does not provide for generalization toward a wider population (for differences see e.g. Yin (2009)). Another seemingly weakness is the geographical limitation to China. However, the sample included some large organizations headquartered in North America. The corporate culture of the Chinese subsidiaries showed clearly the dominance of the headquarters' culture, using the same corporate language, processes, value system that were found when doing interviews with the same organizations in North America in earlier studies. To that end relatively little difference was found between predominantly western and predominately eastern organizations, giving support to the notion of globalization/internationalization and gradual alignment of business practices through global business models, use of maturity models and certifications like those by ISO or professional organizations like PMI[®] or IPMA.

In summary, the study's contribution to knowledge is in the more detailed understanding of empowerment of HL's and the process, dimensions, and context-related categories that stem from it. The study has provided another bit in the mosaic for building a theory on balanced leadership.

Acknowledgements

This publication has been developed and reproduced with grants from the Project Management Institute (PMI) and the Natural Science Foundation of China (NNSFC) (No. 71702022, No. 71772024, and No. 71702023) and is copyrighted material of and owned by, PMI, Copyright (2018). Unauthorized reproduction of this material is strictly prohibited.

References

- Alvesson, M., & Skoldberg, K. 2009. *Reflexive Methodology* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications, London.
- Archer, M. S., Bhaskar, R., Collier, A., Lawson, T., & Norrie, A. 1998. *Critical Realism: Essential Readings*. Routledge, London, UK.
- Bandura, A. 1977. Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191–215.
- Bandura, A. 1982. Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American Psychologist*, 37(2), 122–147.
- Berlew, D. E. 1986. Managing human energy: Pushing versus pulling. In S. Srivastva (Ed.), *Executive power*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- Bhaskar, R. 2016. *Enlightened Common Sense: The Philosophy of Critical Realism*. Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon, UK.
- Bowen, G. A. 2008. Naturalistic inquiry and the saturation concept: a research note. *Qualitative Research*, 8(1), 137-152.
- Burke, W. 1986. Leadership as empowering others. In S. Srivastva (Ed.), *Executive power*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- Burke, C. S., Fiore, S. M., & Salas, E. 2003. The role of shared cognition in enabling shared leadership and team adaptability. In C. L. Pearce & J. A. Conger (Eds.), *Shared Leadership: Reframing the Hows and Whys of Leadership* (pp. 103–122). Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Carmeli, A., Schaubroeck, J., & Tishler, A. 2011. How ceo empowering leadership shapes top management team processes: implications for firm performance. *Leadership Quarterly*, 22(2), 399-411.
- Chen, Z., Lam, W., & Zhong, J. A. 2007. Leader-member exchange and member performance: a new look at individual-level negative feedback-seeking behavior and team-level empowerment climate. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(1), 202.
- Chen, G., Kirkman, B.L., Kanfer, R., Allen, D. & Rosen, B. 2007. Multilevel Study of Leadership, Empowerment, and Performance in Teams, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 2007, 92(2), 331–346.
- Chen, G., Sharma, P. N., Edinger, S. K., Shapiro, D. L., & Farh, J. L. 2011. Motivating and demotivating forces in teams: cross-level influences of empowering leadership and

- relationship conflict. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(3), 541.
- Conger, J. A., & Kanungo, R. N. 1988. The empowerment process: integrating theory and practice. *Academy of Management Review*, 13(3), 471-482.
- Cooper, R. 1973. Task characteristics and intrinsic motivation. *Human Relations*, 26(3), 387-408.
- Cox, J. F., Pearce, C. L., & Perry, M. 2003. Toward a model of shared leadership and distributed influence in the innovation process: How shared leadership can enhance new product development team dynamics and effectiveness. In C. L. Pearce & J. A. Conger (Eds.), *Shared leadership: Reframing the How's and Whys of Leadership*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Crevani, L., Lindgren, M., & Packendorff, J. 2010. Leadership, not leaders: on the study of leadership as practices and interactions. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 26(1), 77-86.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. 1985. *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*, Plenum, New York.
- Drath, W. H., Mccauley, C. D., Palus, C. J., Velsor, E. V., O'Connor, P. M. G., & Mcguire, J. B. 2008. Direction, alignment, commitment: toward a more integrative ontology of leadership. *Leadership Quarterly*, 19(6), 635-653.
- Drouin, N., Sankaran, S. & Müller, R. submitted. Balancing vertical and horizontal leadership in projects: Empirical studies from Australia, Canada and Scandinavia.
- Dysvik, A., Kuvaas, B., & Buch, R. 2016. Perceived investment in employee development and taking charge. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 31(1), 1-12.
- Eisenhardt, K. M. 1985. Control: organizational and economic approaches. *Management Science*, 31(2), 134-149.
- Gist, M. E., & Mitchell, T. R. 1992. Self-efficacy: a theoretical analysis of its determinants and malleability. *Academy of Management Review*, 17(2), 183-211.
- Hackman, J. R. 1987. The design of work teams. In J. W. Lorsch (Ed.), *Handbook of organizational behavior* (pp. 67–102). Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- Hackman, J., & Oldham, G. 1976. Motivation through design of work-Test of a theory. *Organisational Behaviour and Human Performance*, 16, 250-279.
- Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. 1980. *Work redesign*. Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA.
- Harris, T. B., Li, N., Boswell, W. R., Zhang, X. A., & Xie, Z. 2014. Getting what's new from newcomers: Empowering leadership, creativity, and adjustment in the social-ization context. *Personnel Psychology*, 67(3): 567- 604.
- Hersey, P., & Blanchard, K. H. 1988. *Management of Organizational Behaviour*. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- Hsu, J. S., Li, Y., & Sun, H. 2017. Exploring the interaction between vertical and shared leadership in information systems development projects. *International Journal of*

- Project Management*, 35(8), 1557–1572.
- Kanter, R. M. 1977. Some effects of proportions on group life: skewed sex ratios and responses to token women. *American Journal of Sociology*, 82(5), 965-990.
- Kirkman, B. L., & Rosen, B. 1999. Beyond self-management: antecedents and consequences of team empowerment. *Academy of Management Journal*, 42(1), 58-74.
- Kirkman, B. L., Lowe, K. B., & Gibson, C. B. 2006. A quarter century of culture's consequences: A review of empirical research incorporating Hofstede's cultural value framework. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 37(3), 285-320.
- Konczak, L. J., Stelly, D. J., & Trusty, M. L. 2000. Defining and measuring empowering leader behaviors: development of an upward feedback instrument. *Educational & Psychological Measurement*, 60(2), 301-312.
- Kruse, K. 2013. What is leadership? *Forbes*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinkruse/2013/04/09/what-is-leadership/#5c7a1f9a5b90>
- Lawler III, E. E. 1986. High-involvement management. participative strategies for improving organizational performance. *Academy of Management Review*, 12(3), 567-570.
- Lawler III, E. E. 1992. *The ultimate advantage*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- Leach, D. J., Wall, T. D., & Jackson, P. R. 2003. The effect of empowerment on job knowledge: an empirical test involving operators of complex technology. *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology*, 76(1), 27-52.
- Leana, C. R. 1986. Predictors and consequences of delegation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 29(4), 754-774.
- Leana, C. R. 1987. Power relinquishment versus power sharing: theoretical clarification and empirical comparison of delegation and participation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 72(2), 228-233.
- Lindgren, M., & Packendorff, J. 2009. Project leadership revisited: towards distributed leadership perspectives in project research. *International Journal of Project Organisation & Management*, 1(3), 285-308.
- Logan, M. S., & Ganster, D. C. 2007. The effects of empowerment on attitudes and performance: the role of social support and empowerment beliefs. *Journal of Management Studies*, 44(8), 1523–1550.
- Mathieu, J. E., & Taylor, S. R. 2006. Erratum: clarifying conditions and decision points for mediational type inferences in organizational behavior. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 27(8), 1031-1056.
- Maynard, M. T., Mathieu, J. E., Rapp, T. L., & Gilson, L. L. 2012. Something(s) old and something(s) new: modeling drivers of global virtual team effectiveness. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 33(3), 342–365.
- Menon, S. T. 2001. Employee empowerment: an integrative psychological approach. *Applied Psychology*, 50(1), 153-180.

- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A., & Saldana, J. 2014. *Qualitative Data Analysis* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- Miterev, M., Mancini, M., & Turner, R. 2017. Towards a design for the project-based organization. *International Journal of Project Management*, 35 (3), 479-491.
- Mintzberg, H. 1993. *Structure in Fives. Designing Effective Organizations*. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- Morrison, E. W., & Milliken, F. J. 2000. Organizational silence: a barrier to change and development in a pluralistic world. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(4), 706-725.
- Müller, R., Vaagaasar, A. L., Nikolova, N., Sankaran, S., & Drouin, N. 2015. The socio-cognitive space for linking horizontal and vertical leadership. *In Proceedings of the APROS/EGOS Conference 2015*, December 9-11, 2015, Sydney, Australia.
- Müller, R., Packendorff, J., & Sankaran, S. 2017. Balanced Leadership: A New Perspective for Leadership in Organizational Project Management. In S. Sankaran, R. Müller, & N. Drouin (Eds.), *Cambridge Handbook of Organizational Project Management* (pp. 180–193). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Müller, R., Sankaran, S., Drouin, N., Vaagaasar, A., Bekker, M. C., & Jain, K. 2018a. A theory framework for balancing vertical and horizontal leadership in projects. *International Journal of Project Management*, 36(1), 83–94.
- Müller, R., Zhu, F., Sun, X., Wang, L., & Yu, M. 2018b. The identification of temporary horizontal leaders in projects: The case of China. *International Journal of Project Management*, 36(1), 95–107.
- Nauman, S., Khan, A. M., & Ehsan, N. 2010. Patterns of empowerment and leadership style in project environment. *International Journal of Project Management*, 28(7), 638–649.
- Neilsen, E. 1986. Empowerment strategies: Balancing authority and responsibility. In S. Srivastara (Ed.), *Executive power*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- Northouse, P. G. 2007. *Leadership: Theory and practice* (4th editio). SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- OECD Publishing. 2004. *OECD Principles of Corporate Governance 2004*. OECD Publishing, Paris.
- Offermann, L. R., & Hellmann, P. S. 1997. Culture's consequences for leadership behavior: national values in action. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 28(3), 342-351.
- Ouchi, W. G., & Maguire, M. A. 1975. Organizational control: two functions. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 20(4), 559-569.
- O'Toole, J., Galbraith, J., & Lawler, E. E. 2003. The Promise and Pitfalls of Shared Leadership: When Two (or More) Heads are Better Than One. In C. L. Pearce & J. A. Conger (Eds.), *Shared Leadership* (pp. 250–268). SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- Packendorff, J. 1995. Inquiring into the temporary organization: New directions for project management research. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 11(4), 319–333.

- Parker, S. K., Williams, H. M., & Turner, N. 2006. Modeling the antecedents of proactive behavior at work. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91(3), 636-52.
- Pearce, C. L., & Conger, J. A. 2003. *Shared Leadership*. (J. L. Pearce & J. A. Conger, Eds.). SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- Pretorius, S., Steyn, H., & Bond-Barnard, T. J. 2017. Exploring project-related factors that influence leadership styles and its effect on project performance: A conceptual framework. *South African Journal of Industrial Engineering*, 28(December), 95–108.
- Robbins, T. L., Crino, M. D., & Fredendall, L. D. 2002. An integrative model of the empowerment process. *Human Resource Management Review*, 12(3), 419-443.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. 2007. *Research Methods for Business Students*. Pearson Education Limited, Harlow, England.
- Seibert, S. E., Wang, G., & Courtright, S. H. 2011. Antecedents and consequences of psychological and team empowerment in organizations: a meta-analytic review. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(5), 981-1003.
- Sharma, P. N., & Kirkman, B. L. 2015. Leveraging leaders: a literature review and future lines of inquiry for empowering leadership research. *Group & Organization Management An International Journal*, 40(2), 193-237.
- Siegall, M., & Gardner, S. 2000. Contextual factors of psychological empowerment. *Personnel Review*, 29(6), 703-722.
- Spreitzer, G. M. 1995. Psychological empowerment in the workplace: dimensions, measurement, and validation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 38(5), 1442-1465.
- Spreitzer, G. M. 1996. Social structural characteristics of psychological empowerment. *Academy of Management Journal*, 39(2), 483-504.
- Spreitzer, G. 2007. Giving peace a chance: organizational leadership, empowerment, and peace. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 28(8), 1077-1095.
- Spreitzer, G. M. 2008. *Taking stock: A review of more than twenty years of research on empowerment at work*. In J. Barling & C. L. Cooper (Eds.), *Handbook of organizational behavior*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Spreitzer, G. M., Janasz, S. C. D., & Quinn, R. E. 1999. Empowered to lead: the role of psychological empowerment in leadership. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 20(4), 511–526.
- Stewart, G. L., Courtright, S. H., & Barrick, M. R. 2012. Peer-based control in self-managing teams: linking rational and normative influence with individual and group performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 97(2), 435-47.
- Teddle, C., & Yu, F. 2007. Mixed Methods Sampling: A Typology With Examples. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(1), 77–100.
- Turner, J. R., & Müller, R. 2003. On the nature of the project as a temporary organization. *International Journal of Project Management*, 21(1), 1-7.

- Turner, J. R., Müller, R., & Dulewicz, V. 2009. Comparing the Leadership Styles of Functional and Project Managers. *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business*, 2(2), 198–216.
- Van Dyne, L., & Lepine, J. A. 1998. Helping and voice extra-role behaviors: evidence of construct and predictive validity. *Academy of Management Journal*, 41(1), 108-119.
- Yin, R. K. 2009. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- Yukl, G. 1989. Managerial leadership: a review of theory and research. *Journal of Management*, 15(2), 251-289.
- Yukl, G., & Fu, P. P. 1999. Determinants of delegation and consultation by managers. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 20, 219-232.

Appendix 1: Organizations and interviewees

Organization	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Industry	Engineering and construction in the oil & gas industry	International economic and technical consulting group	Harbor engineering	Business process outsourcing provider for accounting and other processes	Construction and urban design consulting	Heavy Industry & Manufacturing	Engine Manufacturing	Shipbuilding Industry	Environmental Engineering	Design and research for coking, refractory and municipal projects
Size (employees)	383	2000	6000	1350	400	400	2000	8000	40	4000
Scope of business	International	Global		Global	National	International	Global	International	National	International
Description	Oil & Gas engineering, manufacturing organization.	State-owned corporation, for foreign economic and technical cooperation. Covers, among others, construction, real estate development, and sea transportation.	Design and construction of transportation infrastructure, and heavy machine manufacturing.	Local branch of a US-Headquartered global IT corporation, specialized in business process outsourcing.	Stated-owned company offering design services for construction, engineering, interior and exterior housing across China.	A private joint-equity group of enterprises. Business scope covers mining, electricity, ports, environmental protection, municipal construction, investment and trading of mineral resources etc	Chinese branch of a large global automobile manufacturer, specialized in engine manufacturing	Shipbuilding company, specialized in offshore engineering, construction, repair and conversion. Its main business covers drilling/production platforms, drilling ships, wind turbines installation and vessels.	Professional research institute of a large Chinese University. Focuses on environmental science and engineering technology. ,	State-owned international engineering company. Specialized in coke-making and refractory-making plants.
Interviewees (total 20)	1	1	1	1	4	4	2	3	2	1
Project managers (14)	0	1	1	1	3	3	2	2	1	0
Project team members (6)	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1

Appendix 2 Case Grouping by Conditions and Dimensions of Empowerment

	Case Group 1	Case Group 2	Case Group 3	Case Group 4
Interview No.	4;5;6;7;8;11;13;17	10;15;16	14;18;19	1;2;3;9;12;20
Demand Factor				
-Current Need	√	√		
-Future Development			√	√
Justification Perception				
-More Justifiable	√		√	
-Less Justifiable		√		√
Type of HL Announcement				
-No/simple announcement	√			
-Official announcement			√	
-Official announcement plus		√ explanation		√ assistance
HL acceptance				
-easy acceptance	√		√	
-gradual acceptance				√
-indifference		√		
HL autonomy				
-Autonomy related to	√ work		√ decision	
-Limited autonomy		√		
-Limited autonomy plus				√ VB encouragement
Control of HL				
-Outcome control	√			
-Outcome and process control		√		
-Outcome control plus			√ checking proactively	√ mentoring
Future of HL				
-Back to previous position	√	√		
-Move to leader position			√	
-Move to higher position				√