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Understanding Resistance to and Facilitation of Managerial and Non-Managerial Role Transitions in the Shift from Traditional Hierarchical to Agile Structures

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Abstract

Contemporary organizations – particularly medium-sized IT firms in Germany – operating in environments characterized by increasing change are under growing pressure to shift from traditional, hierarchical and centralized structures to more agile, virtually hierarchy-free and decentralized structures to remain effective. Consequently, managerial authority must increasingly be delegated to teams, leading to a redistribution of power and status and necessitating substantial changes in managerial and non-managerial roles. However, despite the theoretical appeal of agile structures, their implementation in practice is constrained by managerial and non-managerial resistance to role transitions – where understanding this resistance and its facilitation represent a significant research gap.

To address this gap, this study employs a qualitative, phenomenological research approach, conducting semi-structured interviews with executive managers/owners, former department and deputy department managers, and non-managers within a medium-sized IT company in Germany undergoing a shift from a traditional hierarchical to an agile organizational structure.

The study reveals that managers and non-managers resist role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile structures due to perceived threats to their needs – particularly power, status, and income – and underpinning identity. Individuals resist role transitions by engaging in protective behaviours, either through struggles within the organization or by leaving it. Both managerial and non-managerial role transitions can be facilitated through differentiated organizational support that addresses individuals' perceived threats, while acknowledging that some individuals may need to leave the organization if their needs fundamentally misalign with the new structure and cannot be met within the changed role.

This study contributes to theory by clarifying the impact of role transitions on power, status and identity, and how these factors drive resistance to change. It further emphasizes the practical limitations of implementing theoretical agile structures. This study's practical contribution lies in specifying how executive managers, former managers, non-managers, and organizations should adapt their practices and actions in light of a deeper understanding of resistance to, and facilitation of, role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile structures.

Key words: traditional hierarchical organizational structures; agile organizational structures; managerial and non-managerial role transitions; resistance to change; power; status; identity

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List of Abbreviations

CAQDAS	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
DBA	Doctor of Business Administration
HR	Human Resources
IT	Information Technology
PIS	Participant Information Sheet
SMEs	Small and medium-sized Enterprises

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides a concise introduction to the theoretical research background, identifies existing research gaps as well as challenges in practice, and articulates this study's research aim and questions. Further, it introduces the research context and the researcher. Finally, the structure of the remaining chapters and their contributions to this study are outlined.

1.1 Introducing the Theoretical Research Background

Traditional organizational structures are characterized by hierarchical systems with a top-down command-and-control structure (Sturmberg & Gainsford, 2024) where authority and control are centralized at the top levels of management (Burns & Stalker, 1961). These hierarchical structures have long dominated organizational design and remain persistent in contemporary organizations, demonstrating remarkable resistance to change (Lee & Edmondson, 2017). However, as contemporary environments become increasingly complex, volatile (Lee & Edmondson, 2017), dynamic, and rapidly changing, traditional hierarchical, centralized structures hinder organizations in their ability to foster agility, adaptability, responsiveness, and innovation – factors crucial for maintaining competitiveness in such environments (Gaspary, de Moura & Wegner, 2020). Consequently, to sustain competitiveness, organizations operating in these contexts are under growing pressure to move away from traditional hierarchical organizational structures and adopt more agile organizational structures (Lee & Edmondson, 2017) that are characterized by virtually hierarchy-free systems (Rump, Eilers & Wilms, 2020), where authority and control are decentralized to self-organized teams (Burns & Stalker, 1961).

Thus, an increasing number of organizations are attempting to transition to agile organizational structures (Holbeche, 2019), as these are widely postulated to overcome the limitations of traditional hierarchical structures in contemporary contexts (Rigby, Sutherland, & Takeuchi, 2016). However, despite their theoretical appeal, academics emphasize notable resistance to change when transitioning to agile organizational structures in practice (Rigby et al., 2016), aligning with practitioners emphasizing the substantial inherent challenges (Holbeche, 2019). This tension is further accentuated in the specific context of medium-sized enterprises operating in competitive, innovation-driven sectors such as information technology (IT) in Germany. Beyond the economic significance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the scarcity of research on organizational change within medium-sized enterprises (Banham & He, 2013), these organizations face unique challenges in balancing an optimal degree of structure

with agility (Wapshott & Mallett, 2015), a challenge intensified by the German cultural context, which traditionally values structure, predictability, and clear authority (Hofstede, 2010). Thus, this study responds to scholars' call for further research to better understand the practical dynamics and limitations associated with transitioning to agile, decentralized organizational structures (Lee & Edmondson, 2017), particularly through context-specific studies (Stremersch, Gonzalez, Valenti & Villanueva, 2023).

In traditional hierarchical organizational structures, individuals' formal positions or roles within the hierarchy constitute a significant source of power and status (Magee & Galinsky, 2008), whereas in agile organizational structures, expertise constitutes the predominant source of power and status (Burns & Stalker, 1961). Consequently, transitioning from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures necessitates fundamental changes in power and status dynamics (Rump et al., 2020) – an area that scholars have identified as requiring further research and which is still underexplored when it comes to power and status dynamics when shifting from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures (Humphrey & Aimes, 2014). The more consistently an agile organizational structure is implemented, the more managerial authority and responsibility are delegated to and assumed by teams, leading to a redistribution of power and status and reducing the organization's reliance on traditional hierarchical roles. Consequently, changes in both managerial and non-managerial roles become necessary, requiring a willingness from managers and non-managers to adapt to evolving expectations and ultimately transition their roles (Rump et al., 2020). Existing research highlights organizational members´ resistance to role transitions as a significant barrier to the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures (Stewart et al., 2017). Such resistance to role transitions has been observed among both managers and non-managers (Rump et al., 2020). In the context of this study, managerial resistance to role transitions is understood as obstructive behaviour by managers who refuse to share tasks, decision-making authority and responsibility with their teams (Stewart et al., 2017). Conversely, non-managerial resistance to role transitions is understood as obstructive behaviour by non-managers who refuse to take on former managerial tasks, decision-making authority and responsibility (Rump et al., 2020).

More broadly, scholars argue that organizational members do not inherently resist change itself but rather the perceived negative consequences associated with it (Dent and Goldberg, 1999), often having legitimate reasons for their resistance (Nord & Jermier, 1994). Thus, to develop a more valid understanding of what resistance is really about, scholars emphasize the importance

of addressing employees' subjective experiences (Nord & Jermier, 1994) and recognizing the people side of change as a critical factor in the effectiveness of change efforts (Hiatt & Creasey, 2003). Yet, despite these insights, the specific domain of resistance to role transitions, particularly when moving away from traditional power and status dynamics, remains insufficiently understood, with limited explanations of the reasons for such resistance (Stewart et al., 2017).

Stewart et al.'s (2017) study focused on the perspectives of formal leaders, was conducted within the healthcare sector, and examined the implementation of team-based empowerment, where formal leadership roles are retained within teams. Stewart et al. (2017) demonstrate that role transitions create status threats for individuals in formal leadership roles, leading to resistance. Furthermore, Stewart et al.'s study links role transitions to identity by differentiating between leaders who adopt a new identity and those who seek to protect their old hierarchical one, suggesting a linkage between leaders' resistance to role transition and the intention to protect their identity. However, it does not explore the deeper underlying relationship between dynamics of power, status, and identity, although existing literature identifies the importance of identity threats for organizational change in general, emphasizing that individuals' identity concerns and perception of identity threats can strongly influence resistance to organizational change, calling for further exploration of these factors and their facilitation (Petriglieri, 2011). Consequently, the limited understanding of managerial and non-managerial resistance to role transitions constrains the field's ability to provide insights into how such role transitions may be facilitated in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile structures. In this thesis, facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions is understood in terms of organizational support provided to assist individuals with these transitions.

Taken together, the existing literature reveals significant gaps in understanding the reasons why managers and non-managers resist role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures and which forms of organizational support may facilitate these transitions from their perspective. These research gaps primarily derive from the work of Lee and Edmondson (2017), Rump et al. (2020) and Stewart et al. (2017), who collectively highlight the limited understanding of resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transition in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures, including the insufficient exploration of how dynamics of power, status and identity shape these role transitions. Alongside these gaps in the literature, there is a clear practical need for this

study. Synthesising the work of Lee and Edmondson (2017), Rigby et al. (2016) and Holbeche (2019) shows that organizations are increasingly pressured to shift away from traditional hierarchical towards more agile structures, yet they face substantial inherent challenges when attempting implement theoretical agile structures in practice. These practical pressures and transition difficulties further reinforce the need to understand the resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile structures.

This study makes an original contribution as it directly addresses the identified gaps by uncovering the underlying reasons and the processes through which managers and non-managers resist role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures, and by clarifying which forms of organizational support may facilitate these transitions.

Academically, the study advances current understanding by foregrounding the largely unexplored interplay between power, status and identity in shaping resistance and facilitation during role transitions in the shift towards agile structures. It also offers a critique of prevailing assumptions in the agile literature by demonstrating the limitations of agile structures in practice, which are often presented as the preferred or necessary way of organising. In addition, it extends current knowledge by incorporating both managerial and non-managerial perspectives, thereby providing a more comprehensive view of how different organizational groups experience and respond to these transitions.

Practically, the study offers an illustration of the lived experiences of managers and non-managers, revealing the issues and human consequences of role transitions that organizations should be aware of when seeking to shift from traditional hierarchical towards agile structures. It equips organizations with a deeper understanding of the significant dynamics underpinning this structural change and clarifies the forms of organizational support that individuals perceive as facilitating their role transitions. In doing so, it provides a critical perspective on the limitations of implementing idealised theoretical agile structures in practice.

Against this background, the following section outlines the research aim, questions and objectives that guide this study.

1.2 Research Aim, Questions, and Objectives

Building on the gaps identified in the preceding section, the aim of this study is to understand the reasons why managers and non-managers resist role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures and to clarify which forms of organizational support may facilitate these transitions.

To address this aim, the study is guided by three interrelated research questions. These research questions and their corresponding objectives, along with the rationale underpinning each and the associated data collection methods, are summarised in Table 1.

Research Question	**Research Objective/s**	**Rationale**	**Data Collection Methods**
RQ1: Why do managers and non-managers resist role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures?	- To explore the reasons that managers and non-managers perceive as underpinning their resistance to role transitions.	Addresses the limited empirical insight into individuals' perceived reasons for resisting role transitions, which is essential for understanding resistance.	Semi-structured interviews with executive managers, former managers, and non-managers.
RQ2: How do managers and non-managers resist role transitions?	-To examine the behaviours through which managers and non-managers enact resistance. -To clarify the functions these resistance behaviours fulfil.	Addresses the limited empirical insight into how resistance is enacted and the underlying purpose it fulfils, which are key gaps in understanding resistance.	Semi-structured interviews with executive managers, former managers, and non-managers.
RQ3: What organizational support facilitates managerial and non-managerial role transitions?	- To explore the forms of organizational support that managers and non-managers perceive as facilitating role transitions.	Addresses the lacking insight into facilitation from organizational members' perspectives, which is essential for supporting role transitions.	Semi-structured interviews with executive managers, former managers, and non-managers.

Table 1: Research Questions, Objectives, Rationale and Data Collection Methods

Own illustration

To address these research questions, this study employs an interpretivist qualitative design that seeks to understand how organizational members make sense of their experiences during role transitions. Data are collected through semi-structured interviews with executive managers, former managers and non-managers, directly enabling the exploration of perceived reasons for resistance (RQ1), the behaviours and intentional functions of enacted resistance (RQ2), and the forms of organizational support perceived as facilitating these transitions (RQ3). This design ensures a strong alignment between the research questions and the methodological approach, allowing for rich, experience-near insights into the human dynamics of organizational change. The following section introduces the research context in which this study is situated.

1.3 Introducing the Research Context

The research context is a medium-sized IT company in Germany that provides cloud-based, do-it-yourself billing software for the German healthcare sector. Founded in 2007 by three executive managers, the organization grew from a start-up into a medium-sized organization and developed traditional hierarchical structures characterized by a pyramid-shaped organizational chart. This structure comprising multiple layers of management ranging from executive management at the top, through a middle tier of department managers, to non-managerial employees at the base, each linked by clearly defined reporting lines.

In 2020, the executive management initiated and led a shift from this traditional hierarchical structure towards an agile structure. This decision, including the justification for the shift, was developed exclusively at the executive-management level. The change entailed removing the middle managerial tier, thereby eliminating the formal role of department managers, and decentralizing their former authority and responsibilities to non-managers within self-managed, cross-functional teams aligned with different product domains. Despite this decentralization, the tier of executive managers remained at the top of the organizational structure, retaining ultimate authority and responsibility within the organization.

The following section builds on this contextualisation by introducing the researcher and outlining the researcher's personal experience and positionality within the study.

1.4 Introducing the Researcher

Acknowledging the researcher's personal experience and positionality, and critically reflecting on how these influence interpretations and interactions within the study, enhances transparency and analytical depth within the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

To provide insight into my personal perspectives and positionality within this study, and thus to situate the inquiry within its context, I introduce myself in the first person. However, to maintain academic rigor and consistency, the remainder of this study is presented in the third person, except for the final section, which contains my personal reflection on undertaking this study.

As an insider researcher, my engagement with this study is professional, academic, and personal, shaped by my evolving experiences within organizational structures and their influence on my professional development.

When I started my professional career, I operated within a traditional hierarchical structure in which managerial roles conferred formal power and status. Accordingly, accessing formal power and status through obtaining a managerial role, initially shaped my professional aspirations.

However, these aspirations were fundamentally challenged when the executive management of the organization in which this study is situated decided and initiated the shift from its previous traditional hierarchical towards an agile structure. Although I was responsible for HR within the organization, I had no agency in this decision and could not influence the strategic direction. My involvement was therefore not based on advocacy for agile structures but rather from proximity to a change process externally determined by the executive management.

Within this change, I Initially experienced tension between the executive management's narrative, which justified and framed the shift as both necessary and beneficial, and its implications, which threatened my own professional aspirations. At that time, I also assumed that this rationale had to be accepted and that the organization indeed needed to transition towards an agile structure.

However, observing that resistance to this shift was widely shared across the organization, and recognizing the limitations of implementing agile structures in practice led me to adopt a more critical stance. I increasingly questioned the executive management's narrative, while these experiences simultaneously drove my research interest.

Turning to the literature, I recognized a notable empirical gap concerning the underlying reasons for resistance among both managers and non-managers in role transition, the intentional functions that enacted resistance serves, and the forms of organizational support that may facilitate these transitions.

I approach this setting as a critical observer, which forms a central interpretive lens for this study. My positionality as an insider researcher provides nuanced experiential insights that enhances access and interpretation. Nonetheless, I have integrated rigorous methodological reflexivity to uphold academic rigour, which is outlined in Chapter 3.

By investigating the lived experiences of managers and non-managers within this change, I aim to contribute both practically and academically relevant insights into resistance and facilitation in role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile structures.

1.5 Overall Structure

The remaining chapters, two to six, are structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2: Literature Review:** This chapter reviews literature on traditional hierarchical and agile organizational structures, comparing their characteristics, managerial and non-managerial roles, and the configuration of power and status within each. It then provides a focused conceptual examination of power and status, followed by an exploration of the challenges to power and status resulting from the shift to agile structures and introduces the link to identity. Thereby this chapter provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the reasons underlying managerial and non-managerial resistance to role transitions.
- **Chapter 3: Research Methodology:** This chapter outlines the methodology, including the research philosophy, research design, data collection and analysis. It also discusses how the study ensures research quality and addresses ethical considerations.
- **Chapter 4: Findings:** This chapter presents the findings of the data analysis, organized around the three research questions. It examines the reasons why managers and non-managers resist role transitions and the forms of organizational support that participants perceive as facilitating these transitions.
- **Chapter 5: Discussion:** This chapter interprets and discusses the findings within the context of existing literature.
- **Chapter 6: Conclusion:** The final chapter demonstrates how the research aim and questions of this study have been addressed. It highlights the study's contributions to theory and practice, critically reviews its limitations, provides recommendations for future research, and concludes with a personal reflection on undertaking this study.

1.6 Summary

This introductory chapter has presented the theoretical research background, identified the key research gaps and the practical need for addressing them, and articulated this study's research aim and questions. It has introduced the research context in which the study is situated as well as the researcher. Finally, it has outlined the overall structure of the study.

The following chapter presents the literature review, which establishes the theoretical foundation for understanding resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Drawing on Chigbu, Atiku and Du Plessis (2023), this study's literature review should be understood as an evaluation of existing studies on the specific subject under investigation, undertaken to delineate the theoretical territory, identify knowledge gaps, and establish a firm foundation for advancing understanding of resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures.

According to Munn et al. (2018), different types of literature reviews are performed for different purposes; accordingly, this study adopts a scoping rather than a systematic review, as a scoping review is especially appropriate where the purpose is to determine the scope or coverage of existing literature on the subject under investigation, provide an overview of its focus, identify knowledge gaps, map and delimit a body of literature, clarify key concepts, and examine how research within a field has been conducted (Munn et al., 2018).

Building directly on the theoretical rationale and research gaps outlined in Section 1.1, this scoping literature review is structured around key themes central to understanding resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures. Specifically, the review addresses the limited understanding of why managers and non-managers resist such role transitions and the insufficient exploration of how dynamics of power, status, and identity shape these processes.

In light of these gaps, the review begins by examining traditional hierarchical and agile organizational structures, comparing their characteristics, managerial and non-managerial roles, and the configuration of power and status within each. It then proceeds with a focused conceptual examination of power and status, followed by an exploration of the challenges to power and status resulting from the shift to agile structures and introduces the link to identity.

2.1 Organizational Structures

To develop a coherent comparative framework, this review draws on Burns and Stalker's (1961) seminal conceptualization of a structural continuum between mechanistic and organic forms of organizing, which represents a polarity between which organizations are capable to shift. The concept is selected because it enables a systematic comparison of structural characteristics, managerial and non-managerial roles, and the configuration of power and status within traditional hierarchical and agile organizational structures. While power and status feature in this conceptualization, identity does not and is therefore not considered here in relation to organizational structure but is instead introduced and discussed separately in Section 2.5.

The following subsections examine each pole of the continuum and theoretically situate them in relation to traditional hierarchical and agile organizational structures.

2.1.1 Traditional Hierarchical Organizational Structures

Traditional hierarchical organizational structures correspond closely to the mechanistic pole of Burns and Stalker's (1961) structural continuum, thereby providing a theoretically grounded basis for examining their defining characteristics, and the structural configuration of managerial and non-managerial roles, power, and status.

2.1.1.1 Characteristics of Traditional Hierarchical Organizational Structures

A mechanistic system is characterized by a hierarchical structure of authority, control, and communication, in which interactions tend to be vertical between superior and subordinate, with operations and working behaviour being governed by the instructions and decisions of superiors (Burns and Stalker, 1961).

Traditional hierarchical organizational structures reflect those mechanistic characteristics. The origins and theoretical foundations of traditional hierarchical organizational structures can be traced to Taylor's (1911) principles of scientific management and Weber's (1947) theory of bureaucracy with hierarchical authority, formalized rules, and standardized procedures, both of which aimed to conceptualize efficient management and organizational structures. Building on these foundational concepts, Chandler (1977) demonstrated how these principles were applied in practice as businesses expanded, leading to the rise of managerial hierarchies as a response to the increasing operational complexity of organizations. Contemporary literature describes

traditional hierarchical organizational structures as hierarchical with a top-down command-and-control structure and fixed reporting lines with concentrated power at the top organizational layer, while individuals in lower layers are instructed on what to do and when (Sturmberg & Gainsford, 2024).

In this study traditional hierarchical organizational structures are defined as hierarchical systems with a top-down command-and-control structure, in which authority and control are centralized at the top levels of management.

These structural characteristics also shape organizational roles, as outlined in the following section.

2.1.1.2 Managerial and Non-Managerial Roles in Traditional Hierarchical Organizational Structures

Within a mechanistic system, tasks and roles are functionally differentiated, with precisely defined rights and obligations attached to each role. At each hierarchical level, immediate superiors reconcile the distinct tasks and performance of subordinates, while being responsible themselves for ensuring that subordinates contribute to the main organizational task. The final reconciliation is exclusively made at the top of the hierarchy, where the knowledge of actualities is located (Burns & Stalker, 1961).

Accordingly, in traditional hierarchical organizational structures, responsibility is divided between managerial planning and non-managerial execution (Taylor, 1911), giving rise to layered managerial hierarchies responsible for the structural coordination of non-managerial roles (Chandler, 1977). As a result, organizational hierarchies differentiate into managerial roles and non-managerial roles. More contemporary research continues to demonstrate that organizational members in hierarchical organizational structures occupy hierarchically different roles, with different levels of authority and a clear division of labour requiring coordination (Halevy, Chou & Galinsky, 2011).

How these differentiated roles shape power and status within traditional hierarchical organizational structures is examined in the subsequent section.

2.1.1.3 Power and Status in Traditional Hierarchical Organizational Structures

In their seminal work, French and Raven (1959) emphasize formal position within a hierarchy as a primary source of legitimacy, while Magee and Galinsky (2008) argue that individuals' formal positions or roles within a hierarchy constitute a significant source of both power and status. According to this, within the boundaries of the organization, greater value is inherent in positions of higher formal rank, as the sources of value increase from positions of lower to higher rank, including control over resources and deference from subordinates. Accordingly, the distribution of power and conference of status is unequal across individuals and groups, as positions or roles differ in the amounts or resources, they confer upon the individuals who occupy them. As a result, a few central individuals gather the majority of power and status within the organization.

Power in Traditional Hierarchical Organizational Structures

Individuals have power to the extent that their formal position or role provides control over resources that others value (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). The possession of a position or role of higher formal rank within the organizational hierarchy confers authority through associated prerogatives, which provide them with both reward and coercive power. Individuals possessing such a position or role, such as executive and line managers, control the reward system, including control over the setting of salaries, the distribution of fringe benefits and psychic rewards, the determination of promotions, the firing of personnel. This enables them to reward those subordinates who comply with their wishes and punish those who do not (Mintzberg, 1983), thereby controlling subordinates' career advancement (Magee & Galinsky, 2008).

Synthesizing these insights in light of this study, individuals within traditional hierarchical organizational structures attain power based on possessing managerial roles that carry prerogative authority, providing them control over valued resources to reward and punish their subordinates, particularly with respect to their career advancement.

Status in Traditional Hierarchical Organizational Structures

Individuals have status to the extent that their formal position or role garners respect in the eyes of others (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). However, the mere possession of a position or role of higher formal rank leads others to infer that the individual possesses characteristics or resources that reflect instrumental social value, regardless of whether this is actually the case (Leary et al., 2014). Moreover, the higher the number of group members who confer status and defer to

an individual, the higher the status that individual is perceived to have within the group (Anderson et al., 2015).

Synthesizing these insights in light of this study, individuals within traditional hierarchical organizational structures attain status based not only on possessing managerial roles but also on the number of organizational members, such as subordinate department members, that confer status and defer to them.

Synthesis: Power and Status in Traditional Hierarchical Organizational Structures

Taken together, traditional hierarchical organizational structures centralise power and status through formal hierarchical roles. Power is primarily derived from the possession of managerial roles that confer prerogative authority and control over valued resources. Status is primarily conferred through others' inferences that individuals occupying higher hierarchical positions possess characteristics or resources reflecting instrumental social value. Together, these dynamics create a structural context in which managerial roles function as key sources of both power and status.

Having examined the characteristics of traditional hierarchical organizational structures, and the configuration of roles, power, and status within them, the following section turns to agile organizational structures.

2.1.2 Agile Organizational Structures

Agile organizational structures correspond closely to the organic pole of Burns and Stalker's (1961) structural continuum, thereby providing a theoretically grounded basis for examining their defining characteristics, and the structural configuration of managerial and non-managerial roles, power, and status.

2.1.2.1 Characteristics of Agile Organizational Structures

An organic system is characterized by a network structure of authority, control, and communication, in which the location of knowledge relevant to specific tasks becomes the ad hoc centre of authority, control, and communication. Communication tends to be lateral across functions and ranks, where interactions resemble consultation rather than command, and the content of communication consists of information and advice rather than instructions and decisions (Burns and Stalker, 1961).

Agile organizational archetypes incorporate and operationalise key organic elements (Holbeche, 2019). In particular, agile organizational strutures incorporate decentralized authority, lateral communication, and adaptive coordination, resulting in less hierarchy and a flattish structure (Holbeche, 2019).

The conceptual roots of agile organizational structures can be traced to earlier scholarship emphasising self-organising teams, adaptive coordination, and subtle control to achieve speed and flexibility in the product developement (Takeuchi & Nonaka, 1986). These principles were subsequently, popularised within software development practices (Holbeche, 2019) and formalised through the Agile Manifesto (Beck et al., 2001). Over time, agile extended beyond software development and applied to broader organizational design and structure (Holbeche, 2019).

Contemporary literature positions agile organizational structures as a contrast to traditional hierarchical structures, characterizing them by decentralized, virtually hierarchy-free systems in which individuals operate on equal footing, as decision-making authority is decentralized to self-organized teams (Rump et al., 2020).

In this study agile organizational structures are defined as virtually hierarchy-free systems, where authority and control are decentralized to self-organized teams.

These structural characteristics also shape organizational roles, as outlined in the following section.

2.1.2.2 Managerial and Non-Managerial Roles in Agile Organizational Structures

Within an organic system, formal role differentiation is attenuated, and lines of authority and responsibility are characterized as vague or even avoided. Individual tasks, authority, and responsibility are continually adjusted and re-defined through interactions with others, based on individuals' task-relevant knowledge and experience (Burns & Stalker, 1961).

Accordingly, in agile organizational structures, authority and responsibility are distributed across individuals and teams at all levels of the organization (Holbeche, 2019). Authority and responsibility that were traditionally concentrated in managerial roles are delegated to and embedded within self-organized teams (Rump et al., 2020). Accordingly, managers share tasks,

decision-making authority and responsibility with their teams (Stewart et al., 2017), while non-managerial members take on expanded responsibilities, including tasks and decision rights that were previously associated with managerial roles (Rump et al., 2020).

How these role configuration shapes power and status within agile organizational structures is examined in the subsequent section.

2.1.2.3 Power and Status within Agile Organizational Structures

Explicit discussions of power and status within agile organizational structures remain limited in the existing literature. However, given that agile organizational structures incorporate key organic elements, insights derived from the conceptualization of organic systems provide a theoretically grounded basis for analysing how power and status may be configured within agile contexts.

Within an organic system, formal lines of authority and responsibility, as well as positional status are attenuated or even avoided. Instead, expertise constitutes the predominant source of both power and status (Burns & Stalker, 1961).

Power in Agile Organizational Structures

Authority in joint decisions is taken by the individual who shows himself most informed and capable. Thus, the location of authority is settled by consensus regarding the best authority relevant for a specific task or problem (Burns & Stalker, 1961).

According to this literature on agile organisations, therefore, individuals within agile organisational structures attain power based on their superior expertise.

Status in Agile Organizational Structures

Prestige and importance are attached to expertise (Burns & Stalker, 1961). Specifically, individuals have status to the extent that their expertise garners respect in the eyes of others. Possessing superior expertise or competence leads others to infer that the individual possesses characteristics or resources that reflect instrumental social value as they want assistance, advice, or the opportunity to learn from this individual and in exchange confer status through displays of respect and voluntary deference (Anderson et al., 2015).

Synthesizing these insights in light of this study, individuals within agile organizational structures attain status primarily based on possessing expertise, prompting others to seek assistance from them and in exchange confer status through displays of respect and voluntary deference.

Synthesis: Power and Status in Agile Organizational Structures

Taken together, in agile organizational structures power is primarily derived from superior expertise, while status is primarily conferred through others' recognition of that expertise as instrumentally valuable. These dynamics create a structural context in which expertise function as key sources of both power and status.

Having examined the characteristics of agile organizational structures, as well a the configuration of roles, power, and status, the following section provides a comparative synthesis of traditional hierarchical and agile organizational structures.

2.1.3 Summary

The analysis of traditional hierarchical and agile organizational structures reveals fundamentally different configurations of roles, power, and status. In traditional hierarchical structures, roles are functionally differentiated into managerial and non-managerial roles, with individuals' formal hierarchical role functioning as the predominant source for power and status. In contrast, in agile organizational structures formal role differentiation is attenuated with individuals' expertise functioning as the predominant source for power and status.

Accordingly, the comparison highlights power and status as a key difference between both organizational structures, identifying them as key concepts for further analysis in order to understand resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions. The following section therefore provides a focused conceptual examination of power and status as foundational constructs for the subsequent analysis.

2.2 Power and Status

This section defines social power and status, outlines their respective sources, and distinguishes both constructs from each other. It provides the foundation for understanding power and status dynamics within traditional hierarchical and agile organizational structures and, as well as how individuals, through their organizational roles, can support power and status.

2.2.1 Power

In this study, power is defined as the ability to influence others through the asymmetric control over valued resources in social relations. This definition integrates two complementary perspectives: Anderson, Hildreth, and Howland (2015, p. 576) define power as "the ability to influence others through the control over resources", highlighting its functional and resource-based foundation. Magee and Galinsky (2008, p. 361) define power as "asymmetric control over valued resources in social relations", thereby emphasizing the relative state of dependence between two or more parties and the requirement that a resource must be subjectively valued by at least one party. Together, these perspectives underscore that the ability to influence others is both resource-based - through asymmetries in access to valued resources - and relational, due to dependencies existing in social relations.

This study's conceptualization of power builds upon early foundational theories and is situated in the theoretical lineage of power research. Accordingly, French and Raven's (1959) seminal work on the bases of social power provided an important foundation for this study's contemporary definition. They defined power as the ability to influence or change the opinions, attitudes, or behaviour of others, grounded in the relationship between individuals.
French and Raven proposed five distinct bases of power: rewards, coercion, legitimacy, identification, and expertise. Three of these bases - reward, coercive, and expert power – closely align with the notion of power as asymmetric control over valued resources (Magee & Galinsky, 2008):

Reward power is based on an individual's ability to reward others, either by administering positive valences or by removing or decreasing negative valences. Its strength depends on the magnitude of the rewards and the probability to receive them. The range of this power is limited to regions where an individual can reward others for conforming (French & Raven, 1959).

Coercive power is based on an individual's ability to punish others by manipulating the attainment of valences for non-conformity. Its strength depends on the magnitude of the negative valence of the threatened punishment and the perceived probability to avoid it through conformity. The range of this power is limited to regions within which an individual can punish others for non-conformity (French & Raven, 1959).

Expert power is based on an individual's special knowledge or expertness. The strength of expert power depends on the extent of the knowledge or perception which others attribute to an individual within a given area, relative to their own knowledge and an absolute standard. The range of this power is limited to areas within which an individual is perceived as having superior knowledge or ability (French & Raven, 1959).

In contrast, legitimate and referent power have been subject to reinterpretation in more recent research:
Legitimate power is based on an individual's legitimate right to prescribe behaviour, which is often grounded in the acceptance of the social structure of his group, organization or society. Especially when the social structure involves a hierarchy of authority, others are likely to accept the legitimate authority of an individual which occupies a superior formal position in the hierarchy. Its range is specified along with the designation of that power and can be very broad (French & Raven, 1959). However, Magee and Galinsky (2008) argue that legitimacy of an individual's power should be treated as a separate variable independent of actual power; however they agree that in organizations, position in the formal hierarchy often function as a source of legitimacy.

Referent power is based on others' identification with an individual. Others' identification with an individual can be established or maintained if others behave, believe, and perceive as the individual does. Its strength depends on the magnitude of the attraction of an individual towards others. Accordingly, the greater the attraction, the broader the range of this source of power. However, if the basis for attraction is specific, the range of this source of power may be limited accordingly (French & Raven, 1959). Magee and Galinsky (2008), however, note that referent power more closely resembles status than power. Power and status are further distinguished in subsection 2. 2.3.

Mintzberg 's (1983) work on power in and around organizations expanded the analysis of power to the organizational domain. Beyond defining power as "the capacity to effect (or affect) organizational outcomes" (p. 5), he emphasized that understanding power within organizations requires understanding who gets it, when, how, and why – the basic elements of an organization's power configurations. To this end, Mintzberg examined the means or systems of influence individuals use to gain power, proposing four systems of power - including the system of authority and expertise. In doing so, Mintzberg expanded upon prior research in a manner that aligns with this study's contemporary conceptualization of power by emphasizing its contingency on organizational structures, particularly who controls which resources, when a resource is valued, and how the organizational structure enables or constrains access to resources.

In summary, the conceptualization of power as the ability to influence others through the asymmetric control over valued resources in social relations that are contingent upon the organization's structure, is clearly relevant to this study's focus on shifting organizational structure and their implications for managerial and non-managerial roles.

2.2.2 Status

In this study, "status is defined as the respect, admiration, and voluntary deference an individual is afforded by others, based on that individual's perceived instrumental social value." (Anderson et al., 2015, p. 575). To be perceived as having instrumental social value, an individual must appear to possess resources and/or personal characteristics that will facilitate others´ goal accomplishment (Leary et al., 2014) and must also appear willing to use these to help others (Anderson et al., 2015). As the resources perceived as being valuable are contingent upon the social environment, an individual may be perceived to have high instrumental value - and thus high status - in one group, but low value and status in another. To attain status individuals must therefore promote their instrumental social value in different ways depending on what others value in a particular setting (Leary et al., 2014). Moreover, there can be multiple paths to attaining higher status, as individuals can provide instrumental social value to a group in multiple ways (Anderson et al., 2015). Thus, the process of status affordance is inherently a social exchange, whereby individuals confer status through displays of respect and voluntary deference with the goal of receiving help in accomplishing their own goals in return (Anderson et al., 2015).

In summary, the conceptualization of status as the respect, admiration, and voluntary deference an individual is afforded by others based on perceived instrumental social value - whose associated resources are contingent upon the organization's structure - is clearly relevant to this study's focus on shifting organizational structure and their implications for managerial and non-managerial roles.

2.2.3 Distinguishing between Power and Status

Although related, power and status are conceptually distinct constructs (Anderson et al., 2015). While power refers to an individual's ability to influence others through the asymmetric control over valued resources in social relations, status refers to the respect, admiration, and voluntary deference an individual is afforded by others, based on that individual's perceived instrumental social value. An essential distinction lies in their source and nature of influence. Power is relatively more a property of the individual, while status is relatively more a property attributed by co-actors and observers (Blader & Chen, 2014). That is, power derives from resources an individual controls, while status exists entirely in the eyes of others, depending on how they evaluate an individual's social value (Magee & Galinsky, 2008).

However, power dynamics are not wholly independent of others' perception, as others may challenge whether an individual truly possesses power or challenge the value of the resource that individual controls (Blader & Chen, 2014). Power and status can be causally related (Magee & Galinsky, 2008), as the possession of valued resources can give an individual power and status simultaneously (Leary et al., 2014). For instance, power and status cooccur when individuals perceived to possess high social value are placed in managerial roles that grant them authority and thus control over resources (Anderson et al., 2015). Moreover, power and status can also be mutually reinforcing, whereby power can lead to status and vice versa. However, individuals can also have power without status and vice versa (Magee & Galinsky, 2008) – for instance, when they possess the capacity to harm others but are not respected or admired (Leary et al., 2014). Moreover, the nature of influence is different for power and status: while power grants individuals the ability to force their will upon others, status elicits voluntary deference from others. Others defer to powerful individuals because they have to but defer to high-status individuals because they want to (Anderson et al., 2015).

Having conceptually examined power and status, the following section turns to the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures.

2.3 The Shift from Traditional Hierarchical to Agile Organizational Structures

This section examines why organizations may initiate a shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures and considers broader issues associated with such structural change. In doing so, it begins by situating structural shifts within broader theories of organizational structure and contingency, followed by change management theories. Subsequently, it critically examining the strategic rationales underlying the adoption of agile organizational structures.

2.3.1 Structural Contingency Theory

Universalistic theories of organization assume that there is a single best way to structure organizations, arguing that maximum organizational effectiveness results from maximizing a particular structural variable (Donaldson, 2001), for instance from maximum specialization (Taylor 1947). Parts of the management literature on agile organizations similarly present agile structures as broadly appropriate and superior (Teece et al., 2016). For example, De Smet, Lurie, and St George (2018, p. 2) claim that "(a)gile organizations … are far better equipped than traditional ones for the future."

However, contingency theory challenges such universalistic assumptions by arguing that organizational effectiveness results from achieving alignment between structure and situational contingencies. Rather than maximizing a particular structural variable, maximum effectiveness is argued to be attained by adopting the appropriate level of the structural variable that fits the organization's specific situational contingencies. Maintaining effectiveness over time therefore requires organizations to adapt their structures as contingencies change (Donaldson, 2001).

Thus, contingency theory is adopted as the theoretical lens in this study, as it offers a critical explanatory perspective on why organizations may consider shifting their structure. Contingency theory emphasises that different contextual conditions require different structural responses rather than offering normative prescriptions about which organizational structure is inherently superior.

Moreover, this contingency perspective aligns with Burns and Stalker's (1961) assertion that neither a mechanistic nor an organic system is superior under all circumstances, and that appropriateness is contingent on contextual demands.

However, while contingency theory provides an explanatory perspective on why organizations may consider shifting their structures in response to changing contextual contingency, it offers limited insight into how such structural change is enacted within organizations. Understanding the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures therefore also requires engagement with theories of organizational change management.

2.3.2 Organizational Change Theory

When examining organizational change theory, Burnes (2017) argues that the reasons for organizational change can be explained in terms of organizational effectiveness. This aligns with Donaldson (2001) structural contingency theory, which conceptualises organizational change as an organizationally rational process of restoring effectiveness. When changes in contingencies lead an organization out of fit with its existing structure, which lowers effectiveness, the organization seeks to resolve this by adopting a new structure that fits the changed contingency, thereby restoring effectiveness. This model of organizational change is reflected in Burns and Stalker (1961), where changes in contingency may prompt the organization to change from a mechanistic to an organic structure in order to maintain effectiveness.

Further, Burnes (2017) emphasizes that organizational change has to be managed whether it occurs at the organizational, group or individual level. Managers therefore have considerable discretion regarding what to change and how to change it. This places significant responsibility on managers, as the ways in which organizations change can have enormous consequences for organizational stakeholders.

Having pioneered the study of organizational change (Burnes, 2017), Lewin (1947) provided a seminal conceptualisation of organizational change as a three-step process consisting of unfreezing, moving, and freezing. According to this conceptualisation, organizational change involves unfreezing the present level, moving to a new level, and freezing on the new level in order to secure it against further change.

Moreover, Burnes (2017) emphasizes that different approaches to organizational change affect the nature and pace of change that organizations experience. When assessing the appropriateness of a particular approach to managing change, it is therefore important to

consider whether organizational change is to be a continuous feature or a one-off event, whether it occurs on a small or large scale, and whether change unfolds slow or fast.

Building on these insights into the dynamics and management of organizational change, the following section examines the strategic rationales underlying the adoption of agile organizational structures and the organizational benefits that such shifts are argued to produce.

2.3.3 Strategic Rationales Underlying the Adoption of Agile Organizational Structures

Building on contingency-based explanations of structural adaptation and the conceptualization of structural change as managed organizational transformation, this section critically examines the strategic rationales underlying the adoption of agile organizational structures.

Subsequent developments in contingency theory further emphasise environmental contingency as a key driver of structural adaptation (Donaldson, 2001). From this perspective, different environmental conditions require different organizational structures to be effective, with emphasis on the degree of environmental change affecting an organization's operations (Child, 1972). In line with contingency theory, Burns and Stalker (1961) conceptualize the effectiveness of mechanistic and organic systems as contingent upon environmental conditions, particularly upon the change in an organization's environment. Accordingly, a mechanistic system is argued to be appropriate to a stable environment, whereas an organic system is argued to be appropriate to an unstable, changing environment that generate continually fresh problems and unforeseen requirements for action (Burns & Stalker, 1961).

Considering the effectiveness of traditional hierarchical and agile organizational structures contemporary research (e.g. Holbeche, 2019) similarly emphasizes that structure should align with an organization's situational contingencies. In this regard, traditional hierarchical organizational structures are argued to be appropriate for stability, whereas agile organizational structures are argued to be appropriate in unstable and complex environments (Holbeche, 2019). Numerous scholars emphasize that contemporary organizational environments are becoming increasingly complex, volatile (Lee & Edmondson, 2017), dynamic, and rapidly changing (Gaspary et al., 2020).

Within this contingency-based logic, Burns and Stalker (1961) suggest that an organization that has an environment that oscillates between relative stability and change may also need to

oscillate between a mechanistic and an organic system to remain effective. Child (1972) argues that increasing environmental change and uncertainty, implies that an organization needs to shift their prevailing structure towards an adaptive one. Contemporary research proposes that organizations must develop adaptive capability – or agility – in order to survive and thrive amid increasingly powerful and various forces driving change in the business environment (Holbeche, 2019).

Accordingly, a substantial body of literature positions agile organizational structures as a contrast to traditional hierarchical structures (e.g. Rump et al., 2020), widely suggesting that agile structures overcome the limitations of traditional hierarchical structures in contemporary contexts characterized by change (Rigby et al., 2016). Organizations operating in these contexts are therefore argued to be under growing pressure to move away from traditional hierarchical organizational structures and adopt more agile (Lee & Edmondson, 2017), decentralized organizational structures to adapt faster to changing environments (Gaspary et al., 2020).

Contemporary research (e.g. Gaspary et al., 2020) is explicating the reason why agility is argued to be more effective under conditions of increasing environmental change, arguing that decentralization enables rapid decision-making and implementation in complex and constantly changing environments. Conversely, traditional hierarchical structures, characterized by centralized authority (Sturmberg & Gainsford, 2024), are argued to hinder organizations in their responsiveness, adaptability, thereby limiting overall organizational agility in such contexts (Gaspary et al., 2020).

In contrast, agile organizational structures are characterized by decentralized decision-making authority, which accelerates decision-making processes, enables rapid responses to changes and unforeseen problems, and thereby potentially reducing time and resource expenditure (Rump et al., 2020). Rzepka and Bojar (2020) define organizational agility as an organization's ability to react immediately to changes in both the internal and external business environment and to make use of emerging opportunities.

While parts of the management literature suggest that organizations should doggedly seek to adopt agile structures irrespective of the cost (Teece et al., 2016), Teece et al. (2016) caution that adopting agile structures is neither universally necessary nor always feasible. They emphasize that knowing when - and to what extend - agility is required constitutes a crucial

managerial capability and that agile structures should be sought only in alignment with the requirements of an organization's environment. For instance, in relatively stable environments it may be rational to prioritize operational efficiency over agility, as its costs may outweigh its benefits (Teece et al., 2016).

Furthermore, beyond environmental contingencies, other important contingency variables – organizational size and strategy - also affect which structure is appropriate (Donaldson, 2001). These additional contingencies may therefore further limit the appropriateness of agile organizational structures, which primarily emphasise adaptation to environmental contingencies.

Accordingly, the following section turns to the implications of the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures for power and status.

2.4 Implications of the Shift from Traditional Hierarchical to Agile Organizational Structures for Power and Status

Having examined why organizations may shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures, this section analyses the implications of such a shift for power and status. It begins with a general discussion of resistance to change, then considers resistance to shifts to agile organizational structures, and from this literature identifies how challenges to power and status are central to understanding resistance.

2.4.1 Resistance to Change

Resistance to change is argued to be a major challenge for organizational change management and a key reason why organizational change initiatives fail (Bateh, Castaneda, & Farah, 2013). Oreg (2006) defines resistance to change as a tridimensional negative attitude towards change, comprising cognitive, affective, and behavioural components.

Consequently, Burnes (2017) emphasizes that for organizational change to be successful, employee resistance needs to be anticipated and overcome by those responsible for managing the change process.

Ford, Ford and D'Amelio (2008) argue that, rather than understanding resistance as a dysfunctional and irrational reaction of change recipients, those responsible for initiating and

managing change contribute to the occurrence of resistance through their actions or inactions. Further, they emphasize that resistance can also function as a resource for change, providing a valuable source of feedback for improving the change process.

Consistent with this perspective, scholars argue that change recipients do not inherently resist change itself but rather the perceived negative consequences associated with it (Dent & Goldberg, 1999), and that they may therefore have legitimate reasons for their resistance (Nord & Jermier, 1994).

Bateh et al. (2013) point out that it is not resistance per se that determines the success of change, but rather how organizations perceive resistance, and that organizations must recognize the human dimension and its implications for the success of change.

Having outlined resistance to change in general, the subsequent section details resistance to shifts to agile organizational structures.

2.4.2 Resistance to Shifts to Agile Organizational Structures

Both, academics (e.g. Rigby et al., 2016) and practitioners (e.g. Holbeche, 2019) emphasize notable resistance to change when shifting to agile organizational structures. Consistent with the preceding discussion, existing research highlights that structural shifts towards agility stall when the human dimension of change is neglected or misunderstood (Holbeche, 2019).

Existing research argues that organizations frequently struggle to adopt agile organizational structures due to entrenched leadership behaviour, hierarchical structures and governance mechanisms (Holbeche, 2019), as well as uncertainty regarding roles, responsibilities and decision-making authority (Rump et al., 2020).

More specifically, Stewart et al. (2017) point out organizational members' resistance to role transitions as a significant barrier in the shift away from traditional hierarchical towards more agile organizational structures. Similarly, Rump et al. (2020) emphasize that resistance to role transitions among both managers and non-managers represents a key challenge in agile transitions. However, Stewart et al. (2017) further note that little is known about the underlying reasons and processes driving individuals' resistance to such role transitions.

The subsequent section therefore synthesizes existing literature detailing the reasons underlying managerial and non-managerial resistance to the shift towards agile organizational structures.

2.4.3 Challenges to Power and Status as Central Reasons of Resistance

Rump et al. (2020) argue that the more consistently an organization adopts agile structures, the less they rely on traditional hierarchical roles, as managerial authority and responsibility are increasingly delegated to teams. They therefore argue that this shift implies fundamental challenges to established hierarchical power and status dynamics. In particular, power and status that are traditionally associated with formal managerial hierarchical position must be redistribution when organizations shift towards agile organizational structures. This aligns with Stewart et al. (2017) who found that role transitions create status threats for individuals in formal leadership roles, leading to resistance during such structural shifts. Taken together, the literature indicates that managerial resistance to the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures is systematically linked to changes in power and status.

However, the significance of such changes becomes clearer when considering their implications for identity. Research demonstrates that the desire for status (Anderson et al., 2015) and power are key to individuals' identities (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Individuals are argued to attach greatest importance to those identity elements that shape feelings of self-efficacy and self-esteem (Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, Golledge & Scabini, 2006), with power shaping self-efficacy (Heckhausen & Heckhausen, 2008) and status shaping self-esteem (Anderson et al., 2015). As individuals are argued to resist challenges to their identity during organizational change (Petriglieri, 2011), changes in power and status may therefore present challenges to identity, which is supported by Stewart et al. (2017) indicating that status threats perceived by leaders during role transitions may be understood through the link with identity. However, the existing literature only suggests the link between resistance and challenges to power and status for leaders or managers. Consequently, a significant gap remains, as the literature does not consider how such challenges may also be experienced by non-managers.

To better understand why changes to power and status may result in resistance to role transitions in the shift from traditional to agile organizational structures, the following section introduces the concept of identity and explores how identity underpins power and status

2.5 Identity Underpinning Power and Status

By introducing identity and synthesizing existing literature on how identity underpins power and status, this section provides a more foundational explanatory lens for understanding resistance to managerial and non-managerial role transitions.

2.5.1 Identity and Identity Motives

Identity refers to an individual's self-definition – that is, how the individual answers the question, "Who am I?". The process through which an individual comes to define themselves, is referred to as identity construction or identity work (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016). Consciously and subconsciously, identity construction processes are guided by individuals' identity motives, which represent pressures towards certain self-conceptions and away from others. Individuals strive to construct identities that maximize the satisfaction of their motives and minimize their frustration. As such, aspects of their current identity that satisfy these motives are typically associated with positive emotions and are perceived as particularly central or self-defining, whereas aspects that frustrate identity motives tend to be associated with negative emotions (Vignoles et al., 2006). Identity motives are also reflected in individuals' desired and feared future identities (Vignoles et al., 2006), which refers to the concept of possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Possible selves represent individuals' ideas of who they hope to become - hoped for selves - and who they fear to become - feared selves. These identities provide a conceptual link between individuals' identity related cognition and motivation, as they embody the cognitive components of an individual's hopes, fears, desires, and threats, giving these internal dynamics a self-relevant form, meaning, organization, and direction (Markus & Nurius, 1986). As desired and feared possible selves directly reflect identity motives (Vignoles, Manzi, Regalia, Jemmolo & Scabini, 2008), individuals desire to realize possible selves that satisfy their identity motives, while fearing the realization of possible selves that would frustrate them (Vignoles et al., 2006). The strength and salience of identity motives are influenced by individual predispositions and features of the context. Since identity construction inherently involves the development of a sense of self over time, the satisfaction of certain identity motives also remains an ongoing process, in which individuals strive to approximate their desired selves and thereby address identity motives through gains rather than completion (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016).

2.5.2 Power and Status as Identity Motives

Identity motives theory proposes that individuals are motivated to maintain or enhance key aspects of their identity, including efficacy, self-esteem, distinctiveness, belonging, continuity, and meaning (Vignoles et al., 2006). In particular, identity elements that concern feelings of efficacy and self-esteem are argued to be more central to individuals (Vignoles et al., 2006). Importantly, Vignoles et al. (2006) emphasize that there is little consensus about the range of human motives influencing identity construction and explicitly call for future research on identity motives and how each of these may be satisfied.

Building on identity motives theory, existing research on power motivation suggests that power is closely linked to individuals' identity. Veroff (1957) defines the power motive as a "disposition directing behavior toward satisfactions contingent upon the control of the means of influencing another person(s)" (p. 1). This definition aligns with this study's definition of power, emphasizing the control of resources to influence others. Further, Heckhausen and Heckhausen (2008) argue that this sense of control yields positive affective consequences, particularly the feeling of self-efficacy, thus linking the motivation for power to the efficacy identity motive identified by Vignoles et al. (2006). Similarly, Ashforth and Schinoff (2016) identified the need to influence domains perceived as important as an explicit identity motive, although they referred to this as control rather than power. Moreover, Markus and Nurius (1986) explicitly demonstrated that individuals' possible selves reflect the identity desire for power, providing further evidence of its salience in identity motivation, even if not explicitly labelled as such.

Status can also be understood through this lens. Anderson et al. (2015) demonstrate that the desire for status is a fundamental human motive and outline its positive psychological effects, particularly increased self-esteem among individuals with higher status in their groups or organizations. Although Anderson et al. do not explicitly label status as an identity motive, their conceptualization is consistent with Vignoles et al. (2006) argument that individuals are motivated to maintain or enhance a sense of self-esteem within their identities.

Taken together, research on power motivation (e.g. Heckhausen & Heckhausen, 2008) and status motivation (Anderson et al., 2015) suggest that power and status are closely linked to identity motives theory (Vignoles et al., 2006). However, existing literature does not explicitly conceptualize of power and status as identity motives. Building on these theoretical

perspectives, this study explicitly conceptualises power and status as identity motives by synthesising research on power and status motivation with identity motives theory. In doing so, the study extends existing theoretical frameworks by linking power and status to identity motives in the context of organizational role transitions.

However, existing research provides limited insight into how identity is affected by the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures and how resulting changes in power and status affect identity. Addressing this gap is therefore essential not only for understanding resistance of managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift towards agile structures, but also for knowing how to address it effectively.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has developed the theoretical foundations for examining resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures. Drawing on a scoping review of the literature, it has delineated the theoretical territory surrounding traditional hierarchical and agile organizational structures, power and status, structural contingency and organizational change theory, resistance to change, as well as identity, and has synthesized these bodies of literature into an integrative interpretive lens for understanding resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions.

The chapter demonstrated that shifts in organizational structures change individuals' access to power and status, which may also be underpinned by identity motives, consequently resulting in managerial and non-managerial resistance.

However, the review identified significant gaps in the existing literature. While prior research recognizes resistance to role transitions among both managers and non-managers, there remains limited understanding of why such resistance arises from the perspective of those undergoing role transitions and how role transitions may be facilitated through organizational support. Studies tend to examine structural change, power and/or status dynamics, or identity processes in isolation, rather than integrating these dimensions into a coherent framework grounded in individuals' lived experiences of role transitions.

This study addresses these gaps by examining the reasons why managers and non-managers resist role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures, and by clarifying which forms of organizational support may facilitate these transitions. In doing so, the study contributes to current understanding by foregrounding the largely unexplored interplay between organizational structure, power, status, and identity in shaping resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures.

These interrelations are integrated in the conceptual framework introduced in the following section, which synthesises the reviewed literature into an interpretive model that guides the empirical investigation undertaken in this study.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

Building on the synthesis of the literature reviewed in this chapter, this section introduces a conceptual framework that integrates organizational structure, power, status, and identity as interrelated dynamics shaping resistance of managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures.

The purpose of this conceptual framework is not to propose causal relationships, but to provide an interpretive structure that clarifies how the core concepts identified in the literature relate to one another within the context of this study. Consistent with the interpretivist and phenomenological orientation of this study, the framework serves as an analytical lens for examining and interpreting managers' and non-managers' lived experiences of role transitions.

At the organizational level, the framework conceptualises traditional hierarchical and agile organizational structures as distinct yet contingent configurations positioned along a structural continuum. These structures shape power and status dynamics within organizations by enabling or constraining access to role-related resources.

At the role level, the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures and its corresponding changes in power and status dynamics are enacted through managerial and non-managerial role transitions. These role transitions result in changes in individuals' access to power and status, which may also be underpinned by identity, resulting in managerial and non-managerial resistance.

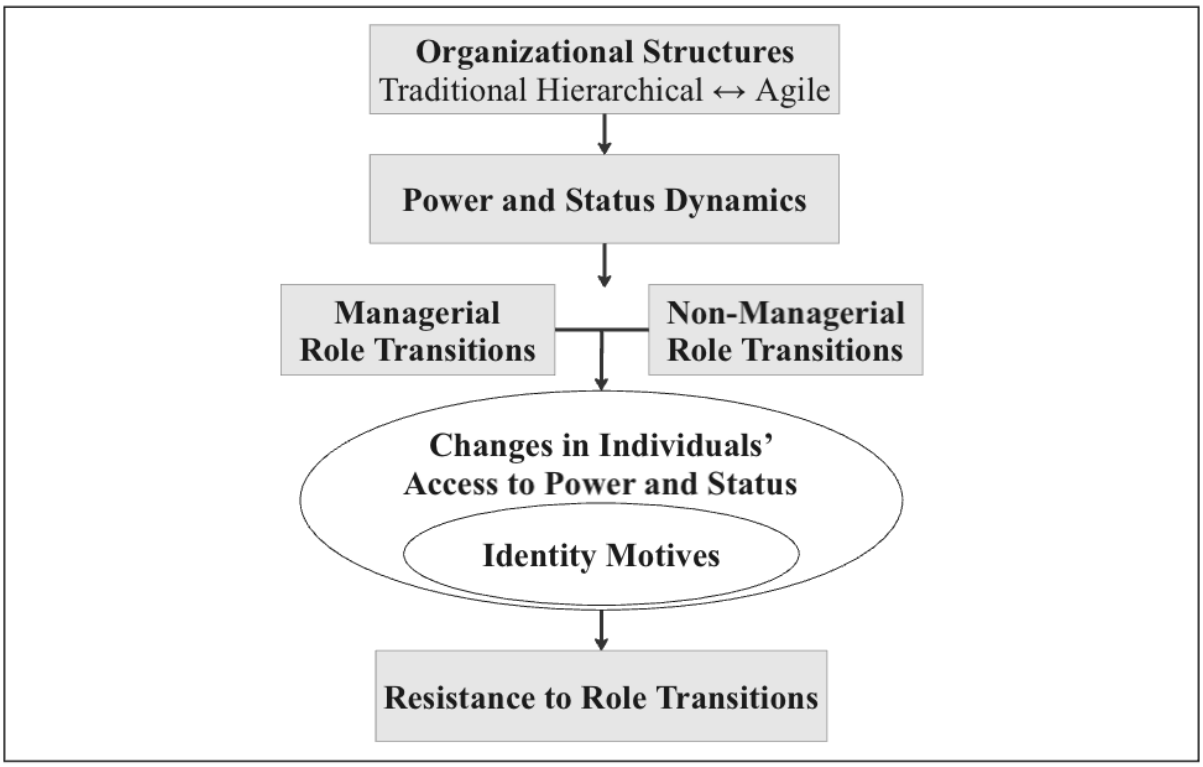

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Integrating Organizational Structure, Power, Status, and Identity in Managerial and Non-Managerial Role Transitions

Own illustration

As summarized in Figure 1, the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures changes power and status dynamics, which are enacted through managerial and non-managerial role transitions. These role transitions imply changes in individuals' access to power and status, which literature suggests may be identity motives, therefore providing reasons for resistance to managerial and non-managerial role transitions. Within this framework, resistance to role transitions is understood as meaningful responses to individuals' implications of shifting from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures to individuals power, status, and identity.

The research methodology employed to examine these dynamics empirically is outlined in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Building on the theoretical and empirical foundations from the literature review, this chapter outlines the research methodology employed to fulfill this study´s aim to understand the reasons why managers and non-managers resist role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures and to clarify which forms of organizational support may facilitate these transitions and address the following research questions:

- RQ1: Why do managers and non-managers resist role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures?
- RQ2: How do managers and non-managers resist role transitions?
- RQ3: What organizational support facilitates managerial and non-managerial role transitions?

It details and justifies the methodological choices, beginning with the philosophical underpinnings of the study and approaches to theory development, followed by a discussion of the research design, data collection and analysis. Additionally, research quality, and ethical considerations are discussed, concluding with a summary.

Figure 2 provides an overview of the philosophical spectrum and possibilities in research design, as well as a summary of the choices made for this study in green. Each section is explored in detail in the respective subchapters, concluding with a summary at the end.

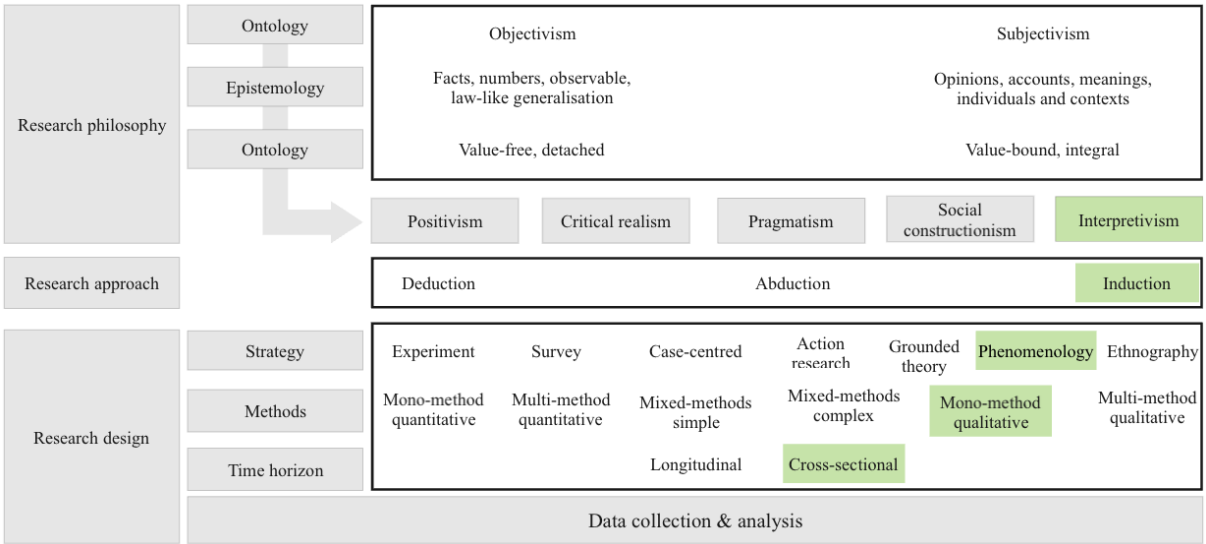

Figure 2: Overview of the philosophical spectrum, approaches to theory development, research design, and adapted choices for this study

Adapted from: Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019)

3.1 Research Philosophy: An Interpretivist Perspective

Research philosophy refers to the system of beliefs and assumptions that underpin the development of knowledge (Saunders et al., 2019). As each research philosophy offers a unique and valuable contribution to research, the choice of an appropriate research philosophy is primarily determined by the researchers´ own beliefs and assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge objectives, and the extent to which their own values influence the research process (Saunders et al., 2019). Choosing an appropriate research philosophy significantly impacts a study's quality, as it is central to shaping the research design by determining how the research aim is explored - defining what constitutes satisfactory research outcomes, what evidence is required, and which methods provide access to them (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe, 2002).

Accordingly, Table 2 provides an overview and comparison of three research philosophies – positivism, interpretivism, and pragmatism – along with their underlying assumptions. Furthermore, interpretivism is the chosen research philosophy for this study and thus marked in green. The justification for this choice, and its implications for this study, are outlined below.

	Positivism	**Interpretivism**	Pragmatism
Ontology (reality)			
Nature of reality	Real, external, independent One true reality (universalism) Granular (things) Ordered	Complex, rich Socially constructed Multiple meanings, interpretations, realities (relativism) Flux of processes, experiences, practices	Complex, rich External Reality is the practical consequences of ideas Flux of processes, experiences, practices
Epistemology (knowledge)			
Consideration of acceptable knowledge	Facts	Opinions	Practical meaning of knowledge in specific contexts
Constitution for good-quality data	Numbers Observable phenomena	Written, spoken and visual accounts Attributed meanings	Problems, practices and relevance Enabling actions to be carried out successfully
Contribution to knowledge	Law-like generalisations Causal explanation and prediction	Individuals and contexts, specifics New understandings and worldviews	Problem solving and informed future practice
Axiology (values)			
Role of values in research	Value-free	Value-bound	Value-driven
Dealing with research participants' values	Researcher is detached, neutral and independent of what is researched Researcher maintains objective stance	Researchers are part of what is researched, subjective Researcher interpretations key to contribution Researcher reflexive	Research initiated and sustained by researcher's doubts and beliefs Researcher reflexive
Typical methods			
Focus	Description and explanation	Understanding and interpretation	Practical solutions and outcomes
Approach	Deductive	Inductive	Following research problem and research question
Sample	Large samples	Small samples	Small and large samples depending on chosen research method
Type of investigation	Highly structured, measurement	In-depth investigations	Depending on research problem and question
Research methods	Quantitative methods of analysis, but a range of data can be analysed	Qualitative methods of analysis, but a range of data can be interpreted	Range of methods: mixed, multiple, qualitative, quantitative, action research

Table 2: Overview and comparison of three research philosophical positions

Adapted from: Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019)

This study adopts interpretivism as its guiding research philosophy, drawing on Crotty's (1998) conceptualisation of interpretivism as a theoretical perspective developed as a critique of positivism and oriented towards the interpretation of meanings in social and human reality. Consequently, adopting an interpretivist research philosophy has significant implications for the ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions of this study as well as for the methods applied. The following sections outline these assumptions and their influence on the research design.

3.1.1 Ontology: An Interpretivist View of Reality

From an interpretivist perspective, reality is understood as complex, rich, and socially constructed, rather than constituting a single, universally true reality or a solely subjective construct (Saunders et al., 2019). Consistent with this ontological position, Gioia, Corley & Hamilton (2013) argue that in social and organizational study much of the reality is socially constructed and that investigating social construction processes therefore requires a focus on how organizational members construct and make sense of their experiences. In this study, resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile structures are therefore conceptualized as socially constructed – acknowledging that managers and non-managers may and interpret these transitions in fundamentally different ways. Accordingly, this study acknowledges the existence of multiple meanings, interpretations, and realities to address the research aim of understanding the resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions.

3.1.2 Epistemology: An Interpretivist Approach to Knowledge

From an interpretivist epistemological standpoint, knowledge is generated through narratives, stories, perceptions and interpretations, with new understandings and worldviews constituting as key contribution to knowledge, rather than seeking absolute truth (Saunders et al., 2019). Gioia et al. (2013) emphasize this approach to knowledge, particularly within social and organizational study, by conceptualizing theory development as beginning with the identification of concepts grounded in organizational actors' lived experiences, which subsequently inform the development of more abstract theoretical constructs. Such an epistemological position is especially appropriate for investigating the resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures, grounded in the lived experiences of those

undergoing it, as these processes are complex and shaped by individuals' sensemaking and interpretations.

3.1.3 Axiology: The Role of Values in Interpretivism

In interpretivism, research is inherently value-bound, acknowledging the researcher as part of what is researched with his subjective interpretations as key to contribution while being reflective, rather than adhering to the notion of value-free inquiry or a researcher entirely detached from the subject of research (Saunders et al., 2019). In this study, the researcher's role and values are particularly relevant, as the research was conducted as insider research, which is detailed in Subchapter 1.4.

3.1.4 Methodology: An Interpretivist Approach to Methods

An interpretivist methodological approach typically adopts an inductive logic of inquiry, utilises small samples, and emphasises in-depth investigation through qualitative methods of analysis (Saunders et al., 2019). Gioia et al. (2013) argue that gaining a meaningful understanding requires a methodological approach capable of capturing concepts that are relevant to the human organizational experience, by being adequate both at the level of the meanings of those living that experience and at the level of scientific theorizing. Accordingly, the specific methodological choices adopted in this study to address the research aim are outlined in detail in Subchapter 3.3.1.

3.1.5 Summary and Justification

In summary, interpretivism provides a coherent and appropriate guiding research philosophy for this study, as it closely aligns with the research aim of understanding resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures. The ontological assumption of reality as complex, rich, and socially constructed foregrounds the multiple meanings that managers and non-managers ascribe to their role transitions. Epistemologically, knowledge is generated through managerial and non-managerial participants' lived experiences, enabling the development of new understandings. The axiological stance recognizes the value-bound nature of the research while emphasizing methodological rigor through reflexivity, allowing the researcher's role, assumptions, and values to be critically examined throughout the research process. Methodologically, interpretivism justifies the use of qualitative, in-depth methods that are capable of capturing the complexity inherent in the resistance to and facilitation of

managerial and non-managerial role transitions. Collectively, these philosophical assumptions provide a consistent and robust foundation for the methodological choices adopted in this study and ensure that the findings are both theoretically meaningful and practically relevant.

3.1.6 Approaches to theory development: Inductive

This study adopted an inductive approach to theory development, which is particularly appropriate where existing theoretical constructs provide limited understanding and where advances in knowledge may be constrained by being too strongly rooted in what is already known (Gioia et al., 2013). Gioia et al. (2013) further argue that, particularly in organizational study aimed at making sense of organizational words, inductive research enables the development of novel concepts that more adequately capture and explain the phenomenon under investigation, rather than merely refining existing theoretical constructs. Consistent with the exploratory nature of this study's research aim, the inductive approach enabled the development of novel, empirical insights that reflect participants' lived experiences, rather than imposing pre-existing theory.

3.2 Research Design

The following sections detail and justify the research design employed in this study by outlining the chosen research strategy, method, and time horizon, to understand the resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures.

3.2.1 Strategy of Inquiry – Phenomenology

This study adopts a phenomenological strategy of inquiry, which seeks to describe the common meaning of individuals' lived experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Moustakas (1994) further emphasizes that phenomenology, rather than being concerned with matters of fact, seeks to understand meanings of experiences. Specifically, it aims to determine what an experience means for individuals who have lived it, drawing on first-person accounts of lived experience provided by those able to describe it. In doing so, phenomenology relies only on data available to individuals' consciousness. Through the analysis of these individual descriptions, general meanings, referred to as the essence of the experience, are derived.

Accordingly, this approach is well suited to this study, as resistance and facilitation in role transitions are experienced, interpreted, and made meaningful by managers and non-managers who undergo these changes. A phenomenological approach therefore enables an exploration of the meanings of managers and non-mangers ascribe to their lived experiences of role transitions.

3.2.2 Method – Qualitative Mono-Method Design

This study applies a qualitative mono-method design, aligning with the previously outlined philosophical and methodological choices. Applying a qualitative approach is justified by its suitability for this study's research problem, as it enables a complex, in-depth understanding of the problem through subjective experiences from multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2013). Accordingly, a qualitative approach generates knowledge about the processes that managers and non-managers experience in role transitions, the underlying reasons for their responses, and their deeper thoughts and behaviours shaping those responses (Creswell, 2013) thereby appropriately addressing the research problem. In contrast, a quantitative approach, which relies on numeric data, lacks the capacity to generate such insights and thus to address the research problem appropriately (Creswell, 2013). Applying a mono-method approach is justified as it enables a concentrated, in-depth examination of managers' and non-managers' subjective experiences directly addressing the research questions.

3.2.3 Time horizon – Cross-Sectional Study

This study adopts a cross-sectional rather than a longitudinal time horizon, as it seeks to capture a snapshot of participants' experiences at a particular point in time (Saunders et al., 2019). This is consistent with the study's aim as well as with its interpretivist and phenomenological orientation, as it prioritises understanding managers' and non-managers' experiences of role transitions at a particular point in time, rather than tracing their development longitudinally.

3.2.4 Summary

In summary the chosen research design aligns with the interpretivist research philosophy, incorporating a phenomenological strategy of inquiry, a qualitative mono-method, and a cross-sectional time horizon.

The phenomenological approach enables the study to derive the essence of managers' and non-managers' lived experiences from first-person accounts, thereby supporting an in-depth

understanding of how role transitions are experienced. The qualitative mono-method design facilitates a concentrated and in-depth examination of these subjective experiences from multiple perspectives. The cross-sectional time horizon further supports this by capturing participants' experiences as they are currently experienced within the research context.

Taken together, this design provides a coherent and appropriate framework for addressing the study's research questions and achieving its research objectives, as it enables the study to explore perceived reasons for resistance (RQ1), the behaviours and intentional functions of enacted resistance (RQ2), and the forms of organizational support perceived as facilitating these transitions (RQ3).

Building on this research design, the following subchapters outline the procedures for data collection and analysis.

3.3 Data Collection

Building on the research design outlined in the previous subchapter, this subsection details the data collection process, ensuring alignment with the interpretivist research philosophy, the chosen phenomenological strategy, and the qualitative mono-method approach.

3.3.1 Data Collection Method - Semi-Structured Interviews

This study employs semi-structured interviews as the data collection method. A research interview refers to a purposeful conversation in which the interviewer asks questions while actively listening to the interviewee's responses. Research interviews can be categorized based on their level of structure, distinguishing between structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Saunders et al., 2019). In semi-structured interviews, each conversation is guided by a predetermined list of themes and key questions that the interviewer intends to explore. The purpose of this interview guide is to ensure a consistent thematic focus across all interviews while allowing flexible probing to elicit more elaborate responses (Qu & Dumay, 2011). In alignment with this study's interpretivist philosophical assumptions, each interview was structured around key themes and guiding questions. While a systematic approach ensured consistency across interviews, flexibility was maintained by adapting to the conversational flow and participants' responses. The development of the interview guide used in this study is detailed in Section 3.3.4.

The rationale of employing semi-structured interviews in this study, along with their associated advantages, is outlined below. Semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to acquire in-depth information (Ruslin, Mashuri, Rasak, Alhabsyi, & Syam, 2022) and to draw out more complete narratives from the interviewees, by probing topics through scheduled and unscheduled follow-up questions, thus facilitating the disclosure of important and underlying facets of human and organizational behaviour (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Its flexible and adaptable nature allows new questions to be brought forward during the interview as a direct response to the interviewee's input, thereby allowing both the interviewer and interviewee to develop unpredictable themes throughout interviews (Ruslin et al., 2022). Moreover, interviewees are able to respond in their own language, and in ways that reflect their thinking, which is particularly valuable for understanding how they perceive the phenomenon under investigation (Qu & Dumay, 2011). This approach is particularly appropriate for this study, aiming to gain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the resistance to and facilitation of managerial

and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures through subjective experiences.

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews provide the interviewer with the flexibility to modify the style, pacing and ordering of questions to evoke the fullest responses from interviewees (Qu & Dumay, 2011). This is well-suited for this study, as it demands adjusting the order and wording of questions based on participants' individual experiences, enabling fluid transition between topics to address multiple interrelated themes, such as resistance to and facilitation of role transitions for executive managers, former managers, and non-managers.

In addition, semi-structured interviews offer flexibility in addressing themes and questions, ensuring completeness in data collection. Accordingly, if participants do not provide sufficient responses to a particular theme or question within the intended structure, semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to reintroduce the topic at a later stage. This also influences the necessary duration of interviews, as additional time may be required to thoroughly explore all themes - a contrast to structured interviews, which do not allow for such flexibility (Saunders et al., 2019). This is particularly crucial for this study, due to the complexity of the resistance and to facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transition, requiring participant reflection. Thus, revisiting a previously discussed theme or question later in the interview may enable a more in-depth discussion, leading to richer insights.

Moreover, managers and non-managers are more likely to participate in semi-structured interviews than in structured questionnaire-based interviews, especially when the interview topic is perceived as relevant to their current work, as these allow participants to reflect on their experiences, making them a more engaging and insightful data collection method (Saunders et al., 2019). In this study, this approach is essential for facilitating participant engagement to capture in depth insights concerning the research problem, aligning with the phenomenological approach. Furthermore, it ensures the meaningful capturing of how managers and non-managers experience their own resistance to and facilitation of role transitions.

In this study, 33 semi-structured interviews were conducted as one-to-one online interviews. Each interview took place on an individual basis with a single participant, using a synchronous electronic format via a web conferencing service. Data collection was conducted once as a

cross-sectional study within a defined period between 18th November and 29th December 2022.

3.3.2 Sampling

Consistent with the interpretivist and phenomenological orientation of this study, sampling was guided by the aim of capturing rich accounts of lived experience related to managerial and non-managerial role transitions within the research context. Creswell and Poth (2018) describe the exploration of a phenomenon through a group of individuals who have all experienced it as a defining feature of phenomenological inquiry, providing a clear justification for the sampling approach adopted in this study. Accordingly, all organizational members who were potentially affected by the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures were therefore considered relevant participants. The sampling approach prioritised access to diverse perspectives and experiences that could illuminate how resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions are perceived and interpreted by organizational members. The primary inclusion criterion was therefore current employment within the organization at the time of data collection, ensuring participants' direct engagement with the phenomenon under investigation.

At the time of data collection, the organizational population comprised 44 members - excluding the insider researcher - being invited to participate in the study. Of the 44 invited organizational members, 33 individuals participated in the study, providing a substantial participation rate of 75%. Importantly, representation from both managers and non-managers was achieved, incorporating a diverse range of perspectives to address the research aim. Table 3 provides a detailed breakdown of participant representation across organizational roles.

Participant group	**Population**	**Participants**	**Participation rate**
Executive managers/Owners	3	3	100%
Former department managers	2	2	100%
Former deputy department managers	4	2	50%
Non-managers	35	26	74%
Total	**44**	**33**	**75%**

Table 3: Sample characteristics

Own illustration

3.3.3 Recruitment

The recruitment process was designed to ensure transparency and voluntary participation while adhering to ethical research standards. After obtaining ethical approval from the University of Worcester's Ethics Committee (see Appendix 3.1 Ethical Approval and section 3.6 below) the recruitment of the participants for the semi-structured interviews started.

Obtaining the Organization's Permission

To obtain the organization's permission, the executive management/owners were contacted via email. This email contained key information about the study along with an invitation to a joint virtual meeting. During this meeting, the background, aim, and procedure of the study were discussed, providing an opportunity for the executive management/owners to ask questions and offer feedback. After obtaining approval from the organization's executive management/owners, they were not further involved in the recruiting process to ensure there was no coercion to participate.

Participant Recruitment Process

The researcher's initial contact with potential participants was via an email from his academic email address. This initial recruitment email was sent to all organizational members and contained essential details about the study, including the purpose and aim, data collection method, individual and organizational added value, and procedure. If a potential participant expressed interest in participating in the study, they were asked to reply to the researcher's academic email with their preferred contact email address. Interested participants then received a second email with further information including the Participant Information Sheet (PIS) and Privacy Notice (see Appendix 3.2) as well as the Consent Form (see Appendix 3.3) attached. With these documents, the potential participant was offered the opportunity to arrange an appointment to clarify things relating to the study. To encourage participation, three reminder emails were sent after one, two, and four weeks. Once the signed informed consent form was received, an interview appointment was scheduled.

3.3.4 Developing the Semi-Structured Interview Guide

The semi-structured interview guide for this study was developed through a systematic five-phase process including (1) identifying the prerequisites for using semi-structured interviews; (2) retrieving and using existing knowledge; (3) formulating the preliminary interview guide; (4) pilot testing the guide; and (5) presenting the complete interview guide (Kallio et al., 2016).

Accordingly, each phase of this development process is detailed, and the decisions made throughout are justified.

Phase 1: Identifying the Prerequisites for Using Semi-Structured Interviews

The first phase involved assessing the suitability of semi-structured interviews as a data collection method in relation to the research questions (Kallio et al., 2016), as detailed in Section 3.3.1.

Phase 2: Retrieving and Incorporating Existing Knowledge

The second phase aimed to develop a comprehensive and well-grounded understanding of the study's subject. This required a critical appraisal of existing knowledge through an extensive literature review focused on the study's purpose (Kallio et al., 2016), as detailed in Chapter 2.

Phase 3: Formulating the Preliminary Semi-Structured Interview Guide

The third phase focused on developing a preliminary interview guide as a research instrument for data collection, ensuring that it was structurally sound, logically sequenced, and coherently formulated based on existing knowledge (Kallio et al., 2016). This study's preliminary semi-structured interview guide is provided in Appendix 3.4.

Phase 4: Pilot Testing of the Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Pilot studies can generally be categorized into two main types: feasibility studies and pre-testing. Feasibility studies are smaller-scale versions of the main study, assessing its practical feasibility from the perspective of implementation and resources such as costs and time. In contrast, pre-testing focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of a specific research instrument before full-scale data collection (Malmqvist et al., 2019). This study employed pre-testing as a pilot study to evaluate the preliminary semi-structured interview guide. Rather than simply declaring that a pilot study has been conducted, its purpose is to identify the necessary modifications to the interview guide where it does not elicit appropriate responses or enable the researchers to obtain rich data (Malmqvist et al., 2019). Accordingly, the fourth phase of developing the interview guide aimed to validate the coverage and relevance of the preliminary guide's content, identify necessary revisions or refinements, and test their implementation (Kallio et al., 2016). Scholars emphasize the importance of pilot work in undertaking qualitative studies (Sampson, 2004). This emphasis is based on the potential of pilot studies to enhance research quality, as their outcomes can inform the research process by helping the researcher to

better understand potential challenges, increase confidence in the chosen data collection instrument, and identify and correct weaknesses in the data collection process through an analysis of procedure and results (Malmqvist et al., 2019). To achieve these objectives, this study employed a field-testing technique in which the preliminary interview guide was tested with actual study participants in a real interview setting (Kallio et al., 2016) - four participants, including two former managers and two non-managers, ensuring that perspectives from both managerial and non-managerial roles were considered. The resulting changes from the pilot testing are presented in phase 5.

Phase 5: Presenting the Final Semi-Structured Interview Guide

As a result of the conducted pilot interviews the interview procedure as well as the formulation of the interview questions were evaluated and improved including the following changes:

- The question *"Do you perceive that you hold a formal or informal leadership role in the organizational hierarchy?"* was expanded with an optional follow-up: *"What role do you have?"*
- The question *"How did your leadership role change during the adoption?"* was adapted to include non-managers by rephrasing it to: *"How did your (leadership) role change during the adoption?"*
- The question *"How did your abilities/capabilities to exercise leadership change during the adoption?"* was extended to all participants.
- A new general question was added: *"How you perceive the distribution of (managerial) power during this adoption how did it change?"*

These adjustments ensured that the final semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix 3.5) enhanced the inclusivity, clarity, and relevance of the interview guide across all participant groups.

Beyond validating the preliminary interview guide, the findings from the pilot interviews provide initial insights into the resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures. Following the evaluation of the interview questions and given that only minor alterations were made to the interview guide, the data from the pilot study was incorporated into the main study's data analysis. This approach is considered legitimate as both methodologies and sampling frames were consistent, to increase the efficiency of the main study (Thabane et al., 2010).

3.4 Data Analysis

3.4.1 Justification for Reflexive Thematic Analysis

This study employs reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022), an evolved approach that builds on thematic analysis as a foundational technique for analyzing qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis involves developing, analyzing, and interpreting patterns across a qualitative dataset through systematic data coding, with the ultimate analytic purpose of developing themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The defining characteristic of reflexive thematic analysis is the active role of the researcher in meaning-making, recognizing researcher reflexivity as a fundamental aspect of the analytical process (Braun & Clarke, 2022). When choosing an appropriate data analysis technique, key aspects to consider include the philosophical and methodological foundation of the research, the approach to theory development, and the analytical approach used in the technique (Saunders et al., 2019). Based on these key aspects to consider, the choice of thematic analysis is subsequently justified.

- **Alignment with Philosophy, Methodology, and Approach to Theory Development**

Thematic Analysis is appropriate to this study's interpretivist research philosophy, qualitative methodology, and inductive theory development approach, due to its accessibility, flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2022), as it is not tied to a specific or prescriptive research philosophy, methodology, and approach to theory development (Saunders et al., 2019). A reflexive approach to thematic analysis is particularly appropriate, as it embraces the researcher's active role in the data analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2022), aligning with this study's broader perspective on the researcher's role as being advantageous.

- **Analytical Approach Used in the Technique**

Qualitative analytical techniques can be distinguished based on their approach to data fragmentation and reduction versus maintaining data integrity, as well as to analytical focus (Saunders et al., 2019). In this study, Thematic Analysis is beneficial as it fragments and reduces data to summarize their meanings, facilitating their comprehension and analysis (Saunders et al., 2019). Furthermore, thematic analysis focuses on identifying and analyzing themes within the data (Saunders et al., 2019), aligning with this study's research questions and objectives to understand resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions.

3.4.2 Data Analysis Procedure

Following Braun and Clarke's (2022) reflexive thematic analysis, the procedure of data analysis involved six phases – starting with dataset familiarization, moving into a systematic coding process, exploring, developing, reviewing, and refining themes, and finally producing the written analytic report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Phase 1: Dataset familiarization

Dataset familiarization involved a process of immersion, which practically included listening to the audio recordings of the conducted semi-structured interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2022), transcribing the voice recordings – which was solely undertaken by the researcher –, and reading and re-reading the data during analysis, identifying meanings, recurring themes and patterns (Saunders et al., 2019).

Phase 2: Coding

Coding involved identifying potentially interesting data segments relevant to the study's research questions and applying analytically meaningful descriptions – code labels – to them (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The primary aim of this phase was to capture the meaning or analytic take on the data, while simultaneously summarizing and reducing content (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This process involved fragmenting the original data and regrouping data segments with similar meanings together, ultimately making each relevant piece of data accessible for further analysis (Saunders et al., 2019). Accordingly, the entire dataset was coded systematically and thoroughly, with code labels collated and relevant data segments compiled for each code (Braun & Clarke, 2022). To facilitate data analysis, MAXQDA was systematically used as Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), increasing transparency and methodological rigor (Saunders et al., 2019). An example of a coded transcript is included in the appendix to illustrate this phase (see Appendix 3.6). As the outcome of this phase a set of codes was established, each with a working definition to ensure consistency in further analysis.

Phase 3: Generating initial themes

While data are organized through coding, codes themselves are organized by grouping them into themes. A theme is a broad analytic category that incorporates multiple related codes and represent an idea that is significant to the research questions (Saunders et al., 2019). Generating themes is an active process in which the researcher constructs themes in relation to the data, research questions, and his own insights and knowledge, rather than simply excavating meaning

as if it exists inherently within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Thus, as the outcome of this phase, all codes across the dataset were grouped based on shared patterned meaning and subsequently collated into initial themes, each with the potential to provide a meaningful answer to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Phase 4: Developing and reviewing themes

In this phase the initial fit of the themes to the data and the viability of the overall analysis were assessed. Developing and reviewing themes involved evaluating whether each theme coherently aligned with the coded extracts and make sense in relation to the full dataset. Each theme needed to tell a convincing and compelling story about an important pattern of shared meaning within the dataset. Additionally, the themes collectively had to capture the most important patterns across the dataset in relation to the study's research questions. This process required a critical review of both the core focus, idea, and scope of each individual theme, as well as the relationships between themes. As a result, this phase involved revising themes by collapsing, splitting, retaining, and discarding themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Phase 5: Refining, defining, and naming themes

This phase aims to ensure that each theme is clearly demarcated, built around a strong core concept, and contributes to a coherent overall story about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). As the outcome of this phase the devised themes and their proposed relationships were refined (Saunders et al., 2019), a brief synopsis of each theme was developed by defining the scope and focus of each theme and determining the narrative of each, and a concise, informative name was assigned to each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This process resulted in 6 key themes with a total of 413 collected codes (see Appendix 3.7 Overview of Final Themes and Codes).

Phase 6: Writing up

Writing up involves finessing and finalizing the writing process, aiming to integrate the analytic narrative with vivid and compelling data extracts to tell a coherent, persuasive story about the dataset that addresses this study's research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Thus, as the outcome of this phase, a final report was developed on resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures, incorporating meaningful quotes from both managerial and non-managerial participants.

3.4.3 Reflection on the Evolution of the Focus of Analysis

At the time of ethical approval and data collection, the initial focus was on identifying perceived barriers and success factors in the transition from traditional hierarchical to agile leadership structures, as well as employee voice in a medium-sized IT firm in Germany and guided the study's planning and the development of the semi-structured interview guide. However, the analysis of the findings showed that the participants' core issues were not about employee voice but rather related to the resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions, with particular importance of power and status. Based on these empirical insights, the focus of analysis was refined and specified. The study shifted from a broad examination of barriers and facilitators to a more precise investigation of the resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures.

3.4.4 Translation

Since this study's data collection was conducted in German - the researcher's native language - within a German organization, non-English data needed to be translated for this English-language publication.

In qualitative research, where the interpretation of meaning in subjective experiences is central, language plays a dual role as both a medium for expressing meaning and as a factor influencing how meaning is constructed. Translation between languages is inherently interpretive, posing challenges that may distort meaning, hinder its transfer and thus potentially compromise the validity of the study due to language differences (van Nes, Abma, Jonsson, & Deeg, 2010).

Therefore, translation between languages must ensure that the meanings conveyed in the source language are authentically reproduced in the target language (Saunders et al., 2019) enabling readers to comprehend the intended meaning as originally expressed (van Nes et al., 2010). To provide insight into how potential meaning loss was mitigated and validity maintained, transparently outlining this study's translation process is essential (van Nes et al., 2010) and merits explicit consideration in the study's reporting (Chidlow, Plakoyiannaki & Welch, 2014).

As staying in the original language for as long and as much as possible helps mitigate potential limitations in data collection, transcription, and analysis, and given that both the participants and the researcher share the same language (van Nes et al., 2010), the German data was

translated into English post-thematic analysis. Moreover, this study adopts a more complex approach to translation (Chidlow et al. 2014), extending beyond the mere technical production of language equivalence (Saunders et al., 2019). Accordingly, translational equivalence, defined as conveyance of identical meaning (Hult et al., 2008) between the source and target language versions, cannot be achieved by mere lexical transfer, as a word or concept may carry fundamentally different meaning across languages or may be entirely absent in the target languages. Given this inherent asymmetry between languages, translation is not merely a technical process but a highly situated and context-dependent practice embedded in intercultural interaction (Chidlow et al. 2014). Practically translation requires the resolution of multiple communicative tensions, including those between source and target cultures, fidelity to the original text versus intelligibility to the reader (Chidlow et al. 2014).

This sequencing ensured that the core analytical process remained grounded in the original language, preserving accuracy, linguistic nuances, and culturally embedded expressions essential to maintaining the authenticity of participant narratives. By adopting a complex approach to translation, entailing careful comparison between the original German text and its English rendition, with ambiguities resolved through revisiting the data context, fidelity was upheld. Thus, the risk of misinterpretation was mitigated, preventing premature distortions or oversimplifications while strengthening the data foundation for addressing the research aim and questions. Given the study's focus on resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions - situated within a German firm - an inherently subjective and culturally nuanced process, this approach to translation was essential to ensuring the validity and depth of the findings.

3.5 Research Quality

Ensuring research quality is essential to establish the trustworthiness of this study's findings. Grounded in the concept of trustworthiness, research quality in this study is evaluated based on four key criteria: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.5.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the degree of confidence in the truthfulness of a study's findings in relation to the experiences and context of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It concerns whether the participants' realities and the context studied are authentically represented by the researcher (Tobin & Begley, 2004). To strengthen the alignment between participants' experiences and the researcher's representation of them, this study employed several credibility-enhancing activities, as outlined subsequently:

- Prolonged engagement

Prolonged engagement involves investing sufficient time within the research context to gain an in-depth understanding of the culture, minimize potential distortions from both the researcher and participants, and build trust, thereby increasing the likelihood of producing credible findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, prolonged engagement was inherently facilitated by the researcher's insider role (see Subchapter 1.4 Introducing the Researcher), which enabled sustained interaction with participants throughout the transition process and beyond data collection. This extended immersion provided nuanced insights into participants' perceptions, enhancing the depth, truthfulness, and contextual richness of the findings. Furthermore, continuous exposure fostered trust and rapport with participants, thereby mitigating response biases.

- Questioning techniques

Credibility can be enhanced through the careful use of questioning techniques, including clarifying questions, probing meanings and exploring responses from multiple perspectives (Saunders et al., 2019). As semi-structured interviews were employed in this study, the researcher actively engaged in probing responses, seeking elaboration, clarification, and contextual insights to ensure a rich and accurate representation of participant s' experiences to role transitions.

- Researcher reflection

Acknowledging and critically reflecting on the researcher's positionality within the study (see Section 1.4), facilitated the minimization of bias and ensured that findings remained grounded in participants' perspectives, thereby further enhancing credibility.

- Post-analysis, context-sensitive translation approach

A post-analysis, context-sensitive translation approach was adopted to ensure that meaning was accurately conveyed in English, thereby maintaining the credibility of the findings (van Nes et al., 2010) (see Section 3.4.4).

By incorporating prolonged engagement, careful questioning techniques, researcher reflection, and a post-analysis, context-sensitive, post-analysis translation approach this study strengthened the overall credibility of its findings.

3.5.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which a study's findings can be applied to other contexts or with other participants beyond the original research setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As the assessment of applicability lies with the research's recipients, the study needs to provide sufficient contextual detail to enable informed judgements about potential transferability of the study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The findings extend beyond this study by having a broader theoretical significance (Saunders et al., 2019). In particular, the study contributes to understanding resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures, thus supporting the development of theory with relevance to similar organizational contexts (see Section 6.2).

3.5.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the degree to which a study's findings remain consistent and replicable if the study were conducted with the same or similar participants in a comparable context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, in qualitative research - particularly when using semi-structured interviews – findings are not necessarily intended to be fully repeatable, as they capture participants' perspectives at a specific moment in time within a dynamic and evolving context. Instead, evaluating a study's dependability involves ensuring methodological rigor through a well-justified research design, a clearly articulated rationale for the chosen strategy and methods, and a transparent account of data collection and analysis.

Providing sufficient detail on these aspects enables others to understand and evaluate the research process, its conclusions, and its dependability (Saunders et al., 2019). In this study, dependability was established through a logical, traceable, and clearly documented audit trail of the research process (Tobin & Begley, 2004) – referring to auditing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This audit trail includes detailed records of data collection, methodological decisions, and analytical procedures, enabling research recipients to critically examine how the study was conducted and how the findings were derived (Tobin & Begley, 2004).

A transparent and consistent data handling process was implemented using MAXQDA as a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), ensuring that all phases of data management were rigorously documented (for example see Appendix 3.6 Example of Coded Interview Transcript). Collectively, these offer a robust, transparent foundation for assessing the dependability of the study.

3.5.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which a study's findings are shaped by the experiences and context of the participants rather than by researcher bias, assumption, or personal agenda (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure that the conclusions drawn are grounded in the data and not merely the researcher's interpretations or preferences, this study maintains a high degree of transparency through a detailed audit trail of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) (see previous subchapter).

3.5.5 Summary

In summary, this study ensured research quality by applying the four criteria of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement, careful questioning techniques, member and researcher reflection, and a post-analysis, context-sensitive translation approach. Transferability was addressed through descriptions of the research questions, design, context, findings, and resulting interpretations to enable research recipients to make informed judgements about applicability beyond the research context of this study. Dependability and confirmability were reinforced through a transparent, detailed, and well-justified audit trail of the entire research process. Collectively, these measures ensure the trustworthiness of this study's findings.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted in accordance with accepted methodological and ethical standards (see Appendix 3.1 Ethical Approval). This section outlines the key ethical risks identified and the measures taken to address them. Ethical considerations relating to the insider researcher and associated power dynamics over participants are discussed first, as these framed the broader ethical considerations of this study such as informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality.

As an insider researcher, it is essential to remain critically aware of how occupying dual roles - both as an organizational member and as a researcher - can influence the research process and outcomes. This includes reflecting on how the researcher's position in relation to the population group may shape their interactions (Berger, 2015). Awareness of these dynamics was particularly important given the researcher's dual role as both an insider and Head of HR. Although no direct line management relationship existed between the researcher and any potential participants at the time of the study, the researcher's organizational role raised potential ethical concerns. These related to organizational members' potentially perceived coercion to take part in the study or constraint in expressing critical views about the study's topic, due to fear of potential negative consequences, as participants were not anonymized to the insider researcher in his organizational HR role.

To address and mitigate these concerns, transparency regarding the researcher's dual role, the purpose of the study, the limits of anonymity, and the organization's commitment to valuing employee perspectives throughout the research process was maintained. The study was framed as an opportunity for mutual learning and organizational improvement, and clear communication aimed to empower participants to make their own assessment of comfort and risk before making an informed, autonomous decision whether to participate. This emphasis on informed, voluntary participation was reinforced at each contact point to foster an atmosphere of trust and openness, enabling participants to express themselves freely, raise concerns or criticism, and withdraw from the study if they wished. Specifically, these contact points were the email to gatekeepers (see Appendix 3.8), the initial recruitment email for potential participants (see Appendix 3.9), the second recruitment email for potential participants (see Appendix 3.10), the PIS, the consent form, and the introductory remarks made at the start of each interview. All recruitment emails and accompanying research documents were translated into German to ensure linguistic accessibility and to allow participants to make fully informed decisions regarding their involvement.

These documents communicated key aspects of the study transparently and clearly through explicit phrasing, including:

- Purpose of the study: *"participating in this project is an opportunity for the participants to express their voice and thus improve their organization's practice."* (see Appendix 3.2, PIS)
- Voluntary nature of participation without impact on employment: *"It is up to you to decide whether or not you want to take part in this study. ... Deciding to take part or not will not impact your job".* (see Appendix 3.2, PIS)
- Right to withdraw: *"Once you have agreed to participate you can withdraw from the study anytime until 14 days following data collection."* (see Appendix 3.2, PIS)

To ensure participants were fully informed before giving consent, they were also offered the opportunity to ask questions or arrange a voice or video call with the researcher if they needed further clarification or had concerns, to ensure that they were properly informed in advance of participation.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

This section outlines the measures taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of both the participant and the organization in which this study is situated, while acknowledging the limitations to anonymity inherent in insider research conducted within a medium-sized organization.

Confidentiality of Participants

Although the insider researcher knew the identity of participants, no identifiable information was disclosed publicly. Access to raw data was restricted to the researcher and supervisory team. To further safeguard participant confidentiality, the following measures were implemented:

- All collected data was stored securely on encrypted devices with limited access.
- Quotes included in the findings were anonymized and participants were informed about their use during the consent process.
- Only pseudonymized data were used in analysis and reporting.

Anonymity of Participants

Since the participants' identities were known only to the insider researcher, and their narratives could potentially make them identifiable to other organizational members, measures were taken to protect participants' identities from external readers:

- Personal identifiers (e.g., names, ages, tenure, specific job titles or team memberships) were removed or generalized.
- Organizational roles were aggregated to reduce traceability.
- All participants were assigned random participation numbers, later replaced with neutral pseudonym codes (e.g., "EM1" for Executive Manager 1, "FNM1" for Former Non-Manager 1) (see Table 4, Chapter 4).
- Teams were anonymized using alphabetical designations (e.g., "Team A", "Team B").
- Information with potential deductive disclosure risk was paraphrased or excluded.

Confidentiality of the Organization

The organization in which this study is situated is known only to the researcher and participants. To ensure confidentiality, all sensitive information was handled in a way that prevented external disclosure:

- Sensitive organizational details were consistently altered or removed in research outputs.
- Statements with potential to reveal the organization's identity were paraphrased or omitted.
- Access to raw organizational data was restricted to the researcher and supervisory team and securely stored.

Anonymity of the Organization

Since the organization's identity was known to the insider researcher and the participants, measures were taken to safeguard the organization's identity from outside readers:

- Identifying information, such as location data and unique organizational characteristics, was generalized or paraphrased.
- The organization was referred to in general terms throughout the thesis, without using its name, branding, or directly identifying language.
- No documentation (e.g. interview quotes or contextual descriptions) included references that would allow an external reader to deduce the organization's identity.

3.7 Summary

This chapter has outlined and justified the methodological framework adopted to investigate the resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures.

Table 4 reintroduces the research questions and their corresponding objectives, along with the rationale underpinning each and the associated data collection methods, to provide a structured overview of how this methodological framework addresses the study's research questions and objectives.

Research Question	**Research Objective/s**	**Rationale**	**Data Collection Methods**
RQ1: Why do managers and non-managers resist role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures?	- To explore the reasons that managers and non-managers perceive as underpinning their resistance to role transitions.	Addresses the limited empirical insight into individuals' perceived reasons for resisting role transitions, which is essential for understanding resistance.	Semi-structured interviews with executive managers, former managers, and non-managers.
RQ2: How do managers and non-managers resist role transitions?	-To examine the behaviours through which managers and non-managers enact resistance. -To clarify the functions these resistance behaviours fulfil.	Addresses the limited empirical insight into how resistance is enacted and the underlying purpose it fulfils, which are key gaps in understanding resistance.	Semi-structured interviews with executive managers, former managers, and non-managers.
RQ3: What organizational support facilitates managerial and non-managerial role transitions?	- To explore the forms of organizational support that managers and non-managers perceive as facilitating role transitions.	Addresses the lacking insight into facilitation from organizational members' perspectives, which is essential for supporting role transitions.	Semi-structured interviews with executive managers, former managers, and non-managers.

Table 4: Research Questions, Objectives, Rationale and Data Collection Methods

Own illustration

Guided by an interpretivist research philosophy, the study adopts an inductive, qualitative, phenomenological approach with a cross-sectional time horizon to understand how organizational members make sense of their experiences during role transitions. Data collection is conducted through semi-structured interviews with executive managers, former managers and non-managers, drawing on an inclusive sampling approach to capture diverse lived experiences relevant to the resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions. This design ensures strong alignment between the research questions and the methodological approach, directly enabling the exploration of perceived reasons for resistance (RQ1), the behaviours and intentional functions of enacted resistance (RQ2), and the forms of organizational support perceived as facilitating these transitions (RQ3).

Reflexive thematic analysis was applied to generate rich, meaningful themes using a context-sensitive, post-analysis translation approach to accurately convey meaning from German into English. The trustworthiness of this study was ensured through the application of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Further, this study was conducted in accordance with accepted methodological and ethical standards, with ethical considerations carefully evaluated and addressed to mitigate potential concerns.

The next chapter presents the findings derived from the data collected through the methods outlined above.

Chapter 4: Findings

Building on the methodological framework established in the previous chapter, this chapter presents the findings of the study. The data collected through the interviews were analyzed to uncover key insights related to resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from a traditional hierarchical to an agile organizational structure.

This chapter is structured thematically in alignment with the research aim and questions. Accordingly, the reasons why managers and non-managers resist, how they resist, and what organizational support facilitates role transitions are presented as overarching themes. Within each theme, managerial and non-managerial perspectives are examined comparatively, highlighting both shared and contrasting experiences.

The participants, categorised in Table 5, are distinguished as executive managers/owners, former department managers, former deputy department managers, and non-managers.

Executive Managers/Owners	EM1, EM2, EM3
Former Department Managers	FDM1, FDM2
Former Deputy Department Managers	FDDM1, FDDM2
Non-Managers	NM1, NM2, NM3, NM4, NM5, NM6, NM7, NM8, NM9, NM10, NM11, NM12, NM13, NM14, NM15, NM16, NM17, NM18, NM19, NM20, NM21, NM22, NM23, NM24, NM25, NM26

Table 5: Labeling participants

Where relevant, findings are supported by direct quotations and visual representations to enhance clarity and depth. However, only indicative quotations are presented; the data set is provided in the appendix.

The summary of the entire findings from the interviews is reflected in Figure 3. Each section is explored in detail in the respective subchapters, concluding with a summary at the end.

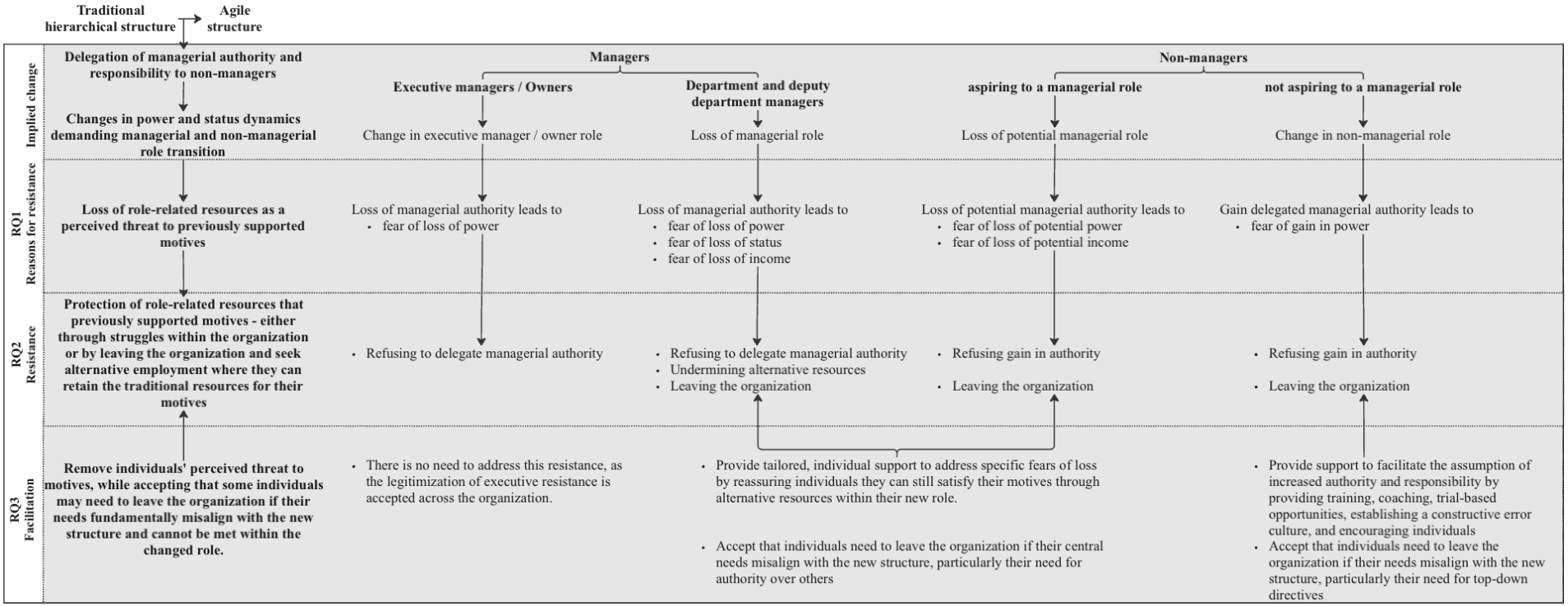

Figure 3: Summary of findings

Own illustration

4.1 Participants' Definition of Traditional Hierarchical and Agile Structures and Implied Changes

This section presents participants' general definitions of traditional hierarchical and agile structures, along with their lived experiences, compares them and identifies key changes in transition, which are fundamental for addressing the study's research questions. These insights are crucial for identifying characteristics that participants fundamentally associate with traditional hierarchical and agile structures and that are impacted by structural changes. Additionally, participants' definitions provide a basis for comparing their understanding of these structures with definitions from the literature, while their experiences offer insight on whether, and how, they have experienced these structures by themselves. Understanding the facets that influence the resistance to and facilitation of role transitions from the perspectives of managers and non-managers themselves is crucial.

4.1.1 Participants' Definition and Experiences of Traditional Hierarchical Structures

This section explores how participants defined and experienced traditional hierarchical structures. Examining participants' conceptualizations offer insight into the characteristics they associate with traditional hierarchical structures, while examining their personal experiences reveals how these characteristics manifested in practice. Interview findings across all participant groups aligned with existing literature: traditional hierarchical structures were described as hierarchical systems with a top-down command-and-control structure where authority and control are centralized at the top levels of management. Participants consistently reported experiencing this structure by themselves, shaping organizational roles. The data set supporting these findings is provided in Appendix 4.1.1.

This was outlined by an executive manager:

> *"Traditional leadership structures are top-down. Accordingly, the management gives directives - above all the executive management - which are executed by the employees." (EM1, Executive Manager)*

Former department and deputy department managers similarly reported:

> *"Traditional leadership structures are hierarchical and decisions are made and passed on from the top down. … The executive management is at the top, then department managers, deputy department managers or team managers down to the lowest light." (FDDM1, Former Deputy Department Manager)*

Non-managers also noted:

> *"When I hear traditional leadership structures, I think of organizations that have a very hierarchical structure. There are clear levels of responsibility and authority to give directives, where it is clear that person A tells person B what to do or at least is legitimized to do so." (NM1, Non-Manager)*

In summary, participants across all hierarchical levels shared a consistent understanding of traditional hierarchical structures, which they also reported experiencing uniformly. Having established these shared definitions and experiences, the following section explores how participants defined and experienced agile structures in contrast.

4.1.2 Participants' Definition and Experiences of Agile Structures

This section explores how participants defined and experienced agile structures. Exploring participants' definitions offers insight into the characteristics they associate with agile structures, while examining their personal experiences reveals how these structures function in practice.

Interview findings across all participant groups aligned closely with existing literature: agile structures were described as virtually hierarchy-free systems, where authority and control are decentralized to self-organized teams. Participants consistently reported experiencing this structure by themselves, shaping organizational roles. The data set supporting these findings is provided in Appendix 4.1.2.

Reflecting on the organization's growth, one executive manager conceptualized agile structures as follows:

> *"In principle, it's what we had in the very beginning, no designated managers. ... The employees in their teams are all egalitarian and have different functions ... and endeavor to produce everything we require but, as I said, on an equal footing." (EM1, Executive Manager)*

A former deputy department manager similarly described his experience of agile structures:

> *"We no longer have a department manager. There is the executive management working with the newly created teams, which are interdisciplinary. We have abolished this middle management level." (FDDM1, Former Deputy Department Manager)*

Non-managers also share a consistent understanding and perception of agile structures:

> *„Hierarchies as flat as possible. ... So ideally there is a team structure that reports directly to the executive management. ... In our company, we currently have a team structure in which we are able to make decisions very autonomously and then report directly to the executive management. ... That means that all hierarchical levels were removed [in our team]." (NM8, Non-Manager)*

In summary, participants across all hierarchical levels shared a consistent understanding of agile structures, which they also reported experiencing uniformly. Participants reported that their organization's hierarchy was flattened by reducing managerial levels, resulting in a team-based structure directly reporting to the executive management without a middle management level. Thus, at team level, roles are no longer differentiated between managerial and non-managerial, though a partial hierarchy remains due to the executive management. Having established these shared definitions and experiences, the following section examines implied role transitions for both managers and non-managers in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile structures.

4.1.3 Role Transitions in the Shift from Traditional Hierarchical to Agile Structures

Coming out from the data, and consistent with existing literature, the more traditional hierarchical structures are shifted to agile structures, the more managerial authority and responsibility are delegated to and assumed by non-managers. This results in a redistribution of power and a reduced reliance on traditional hierarchical roles, particularly through the abolition of formal managerial roles within teams. As such, the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures necessitates fundamental changes in power and status dynamics. This demands substantial changes in both managerial and non-managerial roles, requiring a willingness from managers and non-managers to adapt to those expectations and ultimately transition their roles. For the data set supporting these findings, see Appendix 4.1.3.

4.1.3.1 Managerial Role Transitions

4.1.3.1.1 Executive Managers'/Owners' Role Transition

The shift from a traditional hierarchical to an agile structure implies fundamental changes to the role of executive managers and owners, as they are required to relinquish authority that has traditionally served as the primary basis for legitimizing their power. As emphasized by an executive manager:

> *"The executive management has to relinquish all or a substantial part of its power." (EM1, Executive Manager)*

Another executive manager reflected on the changing basis of power in role and the personal challenges this implies:

> *"I have something in my head, I think it's right, and then other people see it completely different but that can also be justified. And to engage with that is difficult when you come from a top-down structure. Because I am just used to 'this is how it's done, no backchat'. And now this is suddenly happening and it is also desired. And I have to get used to that." (EM2, Executive Manager)*

This quotation reflects the requirement to relinquish managerial authority, the traditional sources of power, in favour of the distributed authority embedded in agile structures. In particular, the shift from issuing top-down directives to engaging in dialogue and collaborative decision-making is perceived as a significant change that challenges established power dynamics.

4.1.3.1.2 Department and Deputy Department Managers' Role Transition

Similar to the role changes experienced by executive managers, department and deputy department managers are also demanded to relinquish role-related resources that have traditionally served as the primary basis for legitimizing their power. Moreover, they lose their formal managerial role altogether. One executive manager described this shift by emphasizing the loss of authority over teams as agile structure no longer includes department managers:

> *"Previously, in several departments, they [the department managers] had exercised near-absolute authority over relatively large teams. ... An agile team does not have a department manager and they were aware that ... they themselves are no longer department managers." (EM1, Executive Manager)*

Another executive manager explained that this authority over a team had previously served as the main source of their power

> *"A department manager's power primarily derives from the fact that he has a team or department that he commands. ... Managers have to let go of this managerial role completely." (EM2, Executive Manager)*

Several participants also reflected on the changing basis of power. A former deputy department manager reflected on his challenges to maintain influence without the legitimacy to give directives:

> *"I have to try to keep everyone together somehow and try to insist on processes without having the legitimacy that anyone has to obey me. Because I'm just one of many. I am one of those who have no authority to give directives. That doesn't work. That means I can't act top-down." (FDDM1)*

A non-manager similarly noted the behavioural adjustments former managers must make in light of this changing bases of power:

> *„If you were actually legitimized to give directives beforehand that had to be followed - in other words, if you were authorized - you have to deal with the fact that this is no longer the case. Instead you have to deal with the employees in a completely different way. So, do not give top-down directives, but instead have a conversation with the employee and discuss it with them. So, you have a lot more need to explain things and you also have to live with the fact that employees have other opinions that they want to contribute and that you do not just dismiss them and insist on your point of view." (NM14, Non-Manager)*

The shift in power was summarized concisely by another non-manager:

"These former managers have to relinquish power." (NM21, Non-Manager)

4.1.3.2 Non-Managerial Role Transition

In alignment with the role changes experienced by managers, non-managers are expected to assume greater authority and responsibility as power is redistributed more equally across self-organized teams.

One executive manager highlighted this shift by noting the delegation of managerial power to former non-managerial employees, resulting in a gain of power:

"Power has been delegated to the employees. ... The employees gain a lot more power in the company." (EM1, Executive Manager)

This was echoed by non-managers, who described a redistribution of decision-making authority and shared responsibility within teams:

"The power has been distributed downwards to the individual teams. ... There is no longer one person who makes decisions from above like a dictator, instead we make decisions together as a team now and that of course requires everyone to share responsibility." (NM5, Non-Manager)

This background serves as a necessary foundation to understand the reasons why managers and non-managers resist role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures and to clarify which forms of organizational support may facilitate these transitions.

4.2 Reasons for Resistance to Role Transition (RQ1)

This section presents the findings related to Research Question 1: "Why do managers and non-managers resist role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures?"

To address this question, the findings are structured around hierarchical roles, differentiating between managers and non-managers. This distinction enables a more nuanced exploration of how reasons for resistance are shaped by participants' roles. By comparing both perspectives, the analysis contributes to a holistic understanding of key reasons that hinder role transition across hierarchical levels.

4.2.1 Reasons for Managerial Resistance to Role Transitions

This subsection explores the reasons why managers resist role transitions in the shift from a traditional hierarchical to an agile organizational structure. The findings are further differentiated into two groups: executive managers/owners and former department or deputy department managers.

4.2.1.1 Reasons for Resistance to Role Transition Among Executive Managers/Owners

In the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures, the key reason why executive managers/owners resist role transitions centred on power. For the data set supporting these findings, see Appendix 4.2.1.

- **Fear of Loss of Power**

Executive managers reported resistance during role transitions as the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures required delegating their managerial authority – the resource primarily legitimizing their established power – to employees, resulting in a fear of loss of power.

An executive managers outlined the implications of delegating managerial authority to former non-managers for his power and highlighted how executive managers' or owners' willingness to do so ultimately limits the extent to which agility can be effectively implemented within organizational structures. He further explained how fear of loss of power stemmed from both personal and strategic concerns:

> *"The fundamental prerequisite for something like this to actually work is, the willingness of the management to go down this path [to relinquish all or a substantial part of its power] and then stick to it. That is the foundation before anything else. ... It is extremely difficult to establish the entire mindset of 'delegating authority and letting employees act autonomously without interfering' with the executive management ... and to allow such a thing at all, to the extent necessary. ... We have spent years building a company that is probably worth tens of millions, and then handing over responsibility to employees when you don't know what will happen – well, this is a bit like giving your child a gun and saying, "watch out, you can be a sheriff too"." (EM1, Executive Manager)*

This metaphor reflects the executive manager's perceived fear of losing the capacity to effect or affect organizational outcomes, when delegating too much authority to employees within the organization with personal investment and financial value being at stake.

Notably, the fear of loss of power among executive managers is not only experienced by executive managers/owners themselves but is also perceived and acknowledged throughout the organization. A non-manager articulated how the executive management's desire to maintain a degree of power as a way of preserving alignment with personal convictions and the organization's trajectory, as well as to retain control if the organization begins to drift off course. The perceived loss of power was also linked to the perceived dissolution of one's personal imprint on the company. Thus, beyond fear of organizational derailment, this resistance results from fear that the organization develops contrary to one's own ideas.

> *"From the perspective of the executive management, it would be important to me to retain my influence on the company. So, if everyone works in an autonomous or agile way, I would still want to have enough influence over the company to be able to somehow set a certain line of development or take action if things don't go as planned. ... If I have built up a company and incorporated my ideas into it, then I would be afraid that if I give up control, the company will develop in a direction that a) I, as an executive manager, do not like and b) perhaps even drive the company into the wall." (NM21, Non-Manager)*

In summary, the key reasons why executive managers/owners resist role transition lies in the discomfort with decentralizing authority as it threatens their capacity to affect or effect organizational outcomes – that is, their power.

4.2.1.2 Reasons for Resistance to Role Transition Among Former Department and Deputy Department Managers

In the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures, the reason why former department and deputy department managers resisted role transitions centred on power, status, and income. For the data set supporting these findings, see Appendix 4.2.2.

- **Fear of Loss of Power**

Former department and deputy department managers reported experiencing challenges during role transitions, due to a perceived fear of loss of power, echoing reasons for resistance also raised by executive managers. As authority derived from their formal managerial role traditionally served as the primary resource and thus legitimizing their power, former department managers feared that the loss of this role would result in a loss of authority, thereby threatening their power.

This fear of loss of power was explicitly articulated by an executive manager:

> *„From the managers' perspective, it was certainly the perceived loss of power that led to many conflicts." (EM3, Executive Manager)*

In line with this, a former department manager, further described how this shift challenged former department managers' personal understanding of power.

> *"At managerial level this was often perceived as a loss of power. The personal understanding of the role, if we are talking about power, was seriously challenged." (FDM1, Former Department Manager)*

Non-managerial employees also recognized this dynamic, observing how managerial identity was often built around authoritarian power, and how its erosion created profound threats:

> *"Managers feared to lose power. ... A manager who defines himself in terms of his own managerial position and power can have the rug pulled out from under his feet if he loses his power." (NM19, Non-Manager)*

- **Fear Loss of Status**

Former Department and deputy department managers reported experiencing challenges during role transitions, due to a perceived fear of loss of status. As in traditional hierarchical organizational structures, status is primarily based on formal titles and symbolic distinctions associated with managerial roles, former department managers feared that the loss of this role may undermine the traditional resources supporting status, generating a fear of loss of status.

One former department manager explicitly linked the formal managerial role to status and articulated the resulting fear of loss of status associated with role transition:

> *„To be afraid that I will lose something if I am no longer a manager and instead have a different function. So, differentiating myself via status. [...] The formal role also has something to do with status." (FDM2, Former Department Manager)*

This quotation illustrates how the formal managerial role traditionally functions as an important resource for status. This was also echoed by a deputy department manager:

> *"The loss of the title ... The dissatisfaction because officially taking on a managerial role, with an official title, is of course more valued." (FDDM2, Former Deputy Department Manager)*

Non-managerial participants also recognized the importance of status and its traditional resources erosion. For example, one non-manager pointed to the perceived status consequences of role transitions:

> *"Of course one challenge is the loss of status, that has to be said quite clearly." (NM14, Non-Manager)*

Moreover, the same participant emphasized that status through work role has implications on how individuals' status is perceived outside the work context in their private context and managers fear to lose it.

> *"We still live in a hierarchical society to some extent and you naturally feel more valued if you say that you are the department manager rather than a team member in a team. ... Even if you are simply going to a family celebration, for example. If someone asks you "What do you do for a living?", then of course you would rather say you are the department manager than just a team member." (NM14, Non-Manager)*

- **Fear of Loss of Income**

Department managers reported experiencing challenges during role transitions, due to a perceived fear of loss of income. In traditional hierarchical structures income is closely tied to formal roles, with managerial roles typically associated with higher income than non-managerial roles. Consequently, role transitions that demand department managers to relinquish their formal managerial role, result in fears of both immediate reduction of income and future financial disadvantage as they perceive to lose the resource that traditionally legitimized their income.

An executive manager acknowledged the centrality of salary in shaping managerial resistance to role transitions, when income is threatened:

> *"Money is also a very important factor. Of course, the role of a department manager comes with more salary, "If that is gone now, what will happen to my salary?" (EM2, Executive Manager)*

In line with this a former department manager shared a dual concern: first, the potential downgrading of current salary if the managerial role is dissolved, and second, the loss of future bargaining power, when seeking new employment from a non-managerial position.

> *"Of course, salary was an issue, probably also for the others. … Salary is important. If I earn €100,000 a year as a manager, for example, and then lose this managerial role, do I also have to be afraid that my salary will be downgraded? Secondly, if I want to apply for another job as a manager, I can of course ask for a completely different salary from such a managerial position than if I were a simple employee." (FDM2, Former Department Manager)*

Non-managers echoed this perception of department managers:

> *"You might be afraid that you will not have as much room to negotiate your salary, and think to yourself, "Maybe I will get less pay or maybe I will not be able to increase my salary in the future"." (NM17, Non-Manager)*

In summary, the key reasons why department managers resist role transition lies in the discomfort with decentralizing authority as it threatens their power, status, and income.

4.2.2 Reasons for Non-Managerial Resistance to Role Transition

This subsection explores the reasons why non-managers resist role transitions in the shift from a traditional hierarchical to an agile organizational structure. The findings are further differentiated into two groups: non-managers aspiring to a managerial role and non-managers not aspiring to a managerial role.

4.2.2.1 Reasons for Resistance to Role Transition Among Non-Managers Aspiring to a Managerial Role

In the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures, the key reason why non-managers aspiring to a managerial role resist role transitions centered on power and income - themes that closely mirror those expressed by actual managers. As the differentiation in managerial and non-managerial roles is dissolved within the agile structure, non-managers lose a potential future pathway for accessing the traditional resources for supporting power and income gained through upward progression into a managerial role. The absence of this pathway gave rise to perceived fear of losing potential power and income, which had previously been associated with advancing into a managerial role. For the data set supporting these findings, see Appendix 4.2.3.

This was acknowledged by an executive manager:

> *“The hope of a traditional career with a managerial position at some point, that was taken away from them.“ (EM3, Executive Manager)*

This was echoed by a former deputy manager:

> *"They [the executive management] simply expect more from you. But as an employee, it doesn't feel like you're being rewarded for doing it.” (FDDM1, Former Deputy Department Manager)*

This perception was clearly outlined by a non-manager:

> *"For employees, the problem is also that they are given much more responsibility - that's just a fact - but don't necessarily get the reward for it." (NM17, Non-Manager)*

This statement highlights the challenges of non-managers aspiring to a managerial role due to the expectation to take on responsibilities traditionally tied to a formal managerial role, without the prospect of receiving the rewards typically associated with such role.

- **Fear of Loss of Potential Power**

As authority derived from formal managerial role traditionally served as the primary resource and thus legitimizing power, some non-managers feared that the elimination of this role within agile structures would diminish their future opportunities to acquire such authority, thereby threatening their potential power.

One non-manager outlined how some non-managerial employees desire traditional hierarchical structures as these offer power over others:

> *"There are a lot of [non-managerial] employees who like this traditional leadership approach, as they desire to have and exert power over others." (NM21, Non-Manager)*

- **Fear of Loss of Potential Income**

Participants reported an erosion of the traditional resources legitimized higher income, while simultaneously being expected to take on responsibilities previously associated with higher pay, without receiving an increased income.

This was noted by a former deputy department manager:
"No one is officially paid to take on these responsibilities anymore, yet they still have to be taken on … but you are not compensated for them, because the role no longer exists." (FDDM1, Former Deputy Department Manager)

This was also noted by non-managers:

> *"The responsibility is distributed among employees, but they don't get paid more." (NM17, Non-Manager)*

4.2.2.2 Reasons for Resistance to Role Transition Among Non-Managers Not Aspiring to a Managerial Role

In the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures, the key reason why non-managers not aspiring to a managerial role resist role transitions centered on power. For the data set supporting these findings, see Appendix 4.2.4.

- **Fear of Gain in Power**

Non-managers not aspiring to a managerial role reported resistance during role transitions as the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures required increasingly assuming authority delegated by managers, resulting in fear of gain in power. This fear stemmed from personal concerns related to the capacity to affect or effect organizational outcomes. The participants indicated that many non-managers were not used to being able and demanded to make decisions, especially in complex situations, without the top-down directives and responsibility taken for them previously provided by department managers. For some, this shift made their roles more demanding and strenuous. It also raised concerns of might being unable to fulfil the new role well, and thus consequently risking no longer being a successful employee doing their job well, with potentially negative personal consequences.

This was noted by an executive manager:

> *„Many employees currently don't have the mindset to work without a department manager. ... For many employees, it's not possible to envision how this kind of self-organization is supposed to work. ... It's not something you will learn easily. It's really difficult and really demanding. It's not necessarily a desirable state for employees. ... The employees are more demanded. Previously, they hid behind their screens and did tasks that the department manager thought were the right thing to do. Now it is discussed in the team. ... A lot of the time you are operating in a complex space, which is very challenging because it's not always clear what you actually have to do. You really have to switch on your head. You don't have anyone to tell you what to do and you don't have anyone to take responsibility. So, for employees, it's a strenuous job if it's done properly." (EM1, Executive Manager)*

This was also noted by a former department manager:

> *"There are people who consider it more strenuous to decide things on their own now." (FDM1, Former Department Manager)*

Non-managers themselves also acknowledged these challenges:

> *"Many employees asked themselves, "What makes sense now? What am I supposed to do now?" - as they previously always received this top-down directives, being told what to do by their department manager. Now, they really have to make their own decisions." (NM14, Non-Manager)*

Similarly, another non-manager shared her own difficulties with gain in decision-making authority:

> *"It was a challenge to organize myself without having to follow top-down directives, but to decide for myself." (NM24, Non-Manager)*

4.2.3 Summary of Findings on Reasons for Resistance to Role Transitions

This section summarizes the findings related to Research Question 1:
"Why do managers and non-managers resist role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures?"

The findings reveal that managers' and non-managers' reasons for resisting role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile structures result from perceived fears - either of loss or gain. These fears vary according to hierarchical level and individual role aspirations, as individuals lose role-related resources, resulting in perceived threat to motives traditionally supported by those roles.

Managers

The key reasons why managers - including executive managers/owners, former department and deputy department managers - resist role transitions in the shift from a traditional hierarchical to an agile structure are:

- Fear of loss of power
- Fear of loss of status
- Fear of loss of income

Non-Managers

Non-managers can be differentiated into two groups based on role aspirations:
The key reasons why non-managers who do aspire to a managerial role resist are:

- Fear of loss of potential power
- Fear of loss of potential income

The key reason why non-managers who do not aspire to a managerial role resist is:

- Fear of gain in power

How these reasons shape the ways in which managers and non-managers resist role transitions is explored in the following section.

4.3 Resistance to Role Transitions (RQ2)

This section presents the findings related to Research Question 2:
"How do managers and non-managers resist role transitions?"

4.3.1 Resistance to Role Transitions Among Managers

4.3.1.1 Resistance to Role Transitions Among Executive Managers/Owners

In line with their fear of loss of power, executive managers/owners resist role transitions by refusing to delegate their managerial authority.

- **Refusing to Delegate Managerial Authority**

One executive manager pointed out, that although executive managers initially supported redistribution in the shift towards an agile structure, there were a lot of fears and resistance to relinquish power:

> *"In the beginning, we were all in favour of it [to relinquish all or a substantial part of our power]. But soon there were a lot of fears and resistance." (EM1, Executive Manager)*

Another executive manager explained protective behaviour as a fundamental psychological response to losing, especially when losing power linked to formal managerial authority:

> *"It's a primal instinct - when you have something and perceive that it's being taken away from you, your initial reaction is resistance and of course you try to protect it. And if we talk about managers - if I move into an agile structure, that position no longer exists. So, I can well understand the reasons behind this fear, it is something I also grapple with at executive management level." (EM2, Executive Manager)*

A third executive manager further highlighted the individual differences in resistance among the executive management:

> *"Speaking for the three of us, it [relinquishing power] is difficult - for one more, for the other less. So, there are individuals in the executive management with a strong compulsion for control." (EM3, Executive Manager)*

4.3.1.2 Resistance to Role Transitions Among Former Department and Deputy Department Managers

In line with their fear of loss of power, status, and income, former department and deputy department managers resistance aimed at protecting role-related resources that traditionally legitimized their power, status, and income. These protective behaviours manifest in various ways: refusing to delegate their managerial authority, undermining alternative resources within the organization or leaving the organization and seek alternative employment that allows them to retain a formal managerial role. For the data set supporting these findings, see Appendix 4.3.1.

This range of resistance was outlined explicitly by a non-manager, who highlighted the internal struggle former managers experience, manifesting as a form of cognitive dissonance between adapting to a new role and preserving their former role and associated resources:

> *"They [former department managers] were struggling with it. How they dealt with it varied. Some escalated, others withdrew. ... It was perceivable that some were on the verge of leaving and others were still fighting with themselves or fighting with others." (NM14, Non-Manager)*

- **Refusing to Delegate Managerial Authority**

Despite formal demands for role changes, some former managers resisted by refusing to delegate authority. Instead, they continued to exert authority over others, thereby attempting to recreate traditional hierarchical power dynamics. In doing so, they sought to preserve or even expand former role-related resources that had traditionally legitimized their power, status, and income.

An executive manager provided detailed insight into this resistance, noting how some former managers, despite no longer holding formal managerial positions, continued to act as if they did:

> *"These employees [former managers] try to maintain these hierarchical levels. ... So, they behave like department managers and try to enforce or extend this. ... The aim is to pull as many employees as possible into their team so that they can extend their supposed managerial authority over them and ultimately re-establish a hierarchical role for themselves." (EM1, Executive Manager)*

This resistance illustrates a deliberate attempt to retain traditional resources for power, even in the absence of formal role legitimization. By informally expanding their sphere of influence and control, these individuals sought to reconstruct a version of their former managerial role within the new agile structure.

Non-managers also noted this persistent attempt to exert authority over them and emphasized how such behaviour complicated their own role transitions:

> *"It was extremely difficult because those people [former department managers] just couldn't let go of the fact that things were different now, instead we were still supposed to report, and they were still trying to influence our work." (NM6, Non-Manager)*

> *"Some people still feel like managers, even if they no longer have the title, and they make this very clear. So, they were managers here and from their point of view they remain managers." (NM12, Non-Manager)*

- **Undermining Alternative Resources**

Moreover, some former managers resisted by undermining alternative resources of legitimacy - particularly those based on expertise - by devaluing others' input and elevating their own, thereby reinforcing traditional hierarchical power-dynamics and resisting shifts toward decentralized power.

An executive manager described this resistance:

> *"People made a contribution and then it was torn apart, like, "What kind of nonsense is this idea. Let us do what I propose". ... These were actively prevented by devaluation models like, "What kind of a crap idea is that? I will decide this now". And you could already see that no matter what, certain department managers always did it." (EM2, Executive Manager)*

- **Leaving the Organization**

Rather than adapting to the new role expectations, some former managers left the organization and sought alternative employment in organizations where they could retain a formal managerial role and role-related resources.

This was noted by an executive manager:

> *"We also received resignations from some department managers because they said, "If I cannot assert myself here and be a department manager, then I will do somewhere else." (EM1, Executive Manager)*

Similarly, a former department manager explained:

> *„Some managers could not cope with it at all, they changed companies and are now managers somewhere else to live these hierarchical structures." (FDM2, Former Department Manager)*

This was also reported by non-managers:

> *"A lot of them resigned voluntarily because these people loved the previous way of working too much to change." (NM6, Non-Manager)*

These accounts collectively reflect resistance where perceived threats prompted former managers to seek environments more aligned with their values. Rather than contesting the change internally, these individuals resisted by preserving their traditional hierarchical role elsewhere.

4.3.2 Resistance to Role Transitions Among Non-Managers

4.3.2.1 Resistance to Role Transitions Among Non-Managers Aspiring to a Managerial Role

In response to perceived fear of loss of potential power, and income non-managers aspiring to a managerial role may resist by refusing gain in authority, traditionally associated with a managerial role, or leaving the organization.

- **Refusing Gain in Authority**

Rather than taking on decision-making authority that align with a formal managerial role, some individuals consciously reduce their engagement, effectively withholding discretionary effort they previously provided.

As noted by a former deputy department manager:

> *"If there aren't enough new people to take on these roles, even if they aren't paid or valued for it, we won't reach our objective. "If I get paid for my previous work, it's also my right to do that instead of going that extra metre"." (FDM1, Former Deputy Department Manager)*

- **Leaving the Organization**

Rather than adapting to the new role expectations, some non-managers left the organization.

This was noted by the same former deputy department manager:

> *"We don't have enough people in the company who are willing to do this additional work - and that's a problem. And perhaps we even had more people who were once willing to do so, but who simply said, 'No, it's not rewarded anyway' and simply resigned due to their dissatisfaction. A few months ago, I could have named a few more employees who simply gave up on being managers. They all left. We've lost really good people who were professionally competent, ... and when they're gone, they leave a vacuum." (FDM1, Former Deputy Department Manager)*

4.3.2.2 Resistance to Role Transitions Among Non-Managers Not Aspiring to a Managerial Role

In line with their fear of gain in power, resistance among non-managers not aspiring to a managerial role aimed at retaining ingrained, traditional hierarchical power dynamics with former managers or, alternatively executive managers. These behaviours manifest in various ways: refusing gain in authority or leaving the organization and seek alternative employment that allows them to retain their traditional hierarchical role. For the data set supporting these findings, see Appendix 4.3.2.

- **Refusing Gain in Authority**

Despite formal demands for role changes, some non-managers resisted by refusing gain in authority. Instead, they re-delegate decision-making authority to former managers or alternatively to executive managers instead.

This tendency to re-delegate decision-making authority upward was noted by the executive management:

> *"Top down is also demanded by some employees. ... With some employees, I have experienced really massive requests to now please make the decision for whatever." (EM2, Executive Manager)*

A former department manager described how, despite the formal removal of their managerial role, former subordinated team members continue to re-delegate decision-making authority to them:

> *"I am still approached by the team, like in the role of the department manager, where they say, "Please take charge of this"." (FDM2, Former Department Manager)*

Similarly, a non-manager described how some colleagues continued to defer to former managers, reinforcing traditional hierarchical authority structures even in the absence of formal hierarchy within the team:

> *"There are still employees who look up to a former manager and say, "Well, if he says so, then that's the way we'll do it" or "He'll have the last word and that's how we'll do it". Which doesn't really have to be the case anymore, because we're actually all on the same level. We all have the same authority in some way. We are all part of the team and it is sometimes noticeable that people still look up or say, "He can do it better than me, he should take this on"." (NM12, Non-Manager)*

- **Leaving the Organization**

Rather than adapting to the new role expectations associated with increased decision-making authority, some non-managers left the organization and sought alternative employment in organizations where they could retain their traditional hierarchical role.

This was recognized by executive managers:

> *"If we consider the abolition of department managers metaphorically, we imagine a chicken farm with chicken cages that we have opened. The chickens came out and some of them flew away because they did not want this freedom at all, they wanted to get into another cage, they quit." (EM3, Executive Manager)*

This metaphor reflects how some non-managers perceived gaining decision-making authority not as liberating but rather sought traditional hierarchical roles and structures by altering the organization.

This was also described by a former department manager, who observed that many employees who struggled with the role transition frequently resigned and moved to organizations with traditional hierarchical structures where they are able to retain their traditional hierarchical role:

> *"Many people are no longer with us who didn't fit in and said they needed a clear structure. ... Probably these are the employees who don't fit into an agile environment. They have resigned of their own accord. They said, "I don't fit into an environment like this. I need to have someone, for example an executive manager or a manager, who tells me what I have to do"." (FDM2, Former Department Manager)*

Importantly, this sense of conflict was not only observed in others, but also experienced first-hand by non-managerial participants.

One non-manager described their own internal struggle during role transition:

> *"As an employee, you then had to decide "Okay, either I go along with this now and let it affect my psyche or I take the step and decide to go somewhere else where I get this safety, where I get these clear instructions and clear structures and am then safe again"." (NM15, Non-Manager)*

These findings suggest that for some non-managers that do not aspire managerial roles, exit served as a form of resistance by returning to traditional hierarchical organizational structures.

4.3.3 Summary of Findings on Resistance to Role Transitions

This section summarizes the findings related to Research Question 2:
"How do managers and non-managers resist role transitions?"

The findings reveal that both managers and non-managers resist role transitions by engaging in protective behaviours aimed at protecting resources that traditionally support their motives and that they perceive as threatened. This resistance manifests either through struggles within the organization or by leaving the organization and seeking alternative employment. Former managers refuse to lose managerial authority, while non-managers refuse to gain it. These behaviours mutually reinforcing the persistence of traditional hierarchical roles, thereby hindering the shift to agile structures.

Managers

Managers - including executive managers/owners, as well as former department and deputy department managers – resist role transitions by:

- refusing to delegate managerial authority
- undermining alternative resources
- leaving the organization

Non-Managers

Non-managers, both those not aspiring to a managerial role and those who do, resist role transitions by:

- refusing gain in authority
- leaving the organization

However, resistance to role transitions need to be considered differentiated depending on the legitimacy to do so. In contrast to other organization members, executive managers/owners can legitimize their resistance – such as refusing to delegate authority and to give up their role - as they have the power to do so. Whether due to unwillingness or legal constraints, they are not necessarily obligated to give up their power. By contrast, former department and deputy department managers as well as non-managers, do not hold the power or institutional legitimacy to resist structural changes in this way. Which forms of organizational support may facilitate these role transitions, is explored in the next section.

4.4 Facilitation of Role Transitions (RQ3)

This section presents the findings related to Research Question 3:
"What organizational support facilitates managerial and non-managerial role transitions?"

4.4.1 Facilitation of Managerial Role Transitions

4.4.1.1 Facilitation of Role Transitions Among Executive Managers/Owners

The interviews showed that none of the interviewees perceived a need for facilitating the executive managers' perceived fear of loss of power, as they all accepted the legitimacy of this fear, given that executive managers appeared unwilling or even unable to give up all of their power. In line with this, the interviews did not address the facilitation of role transitions among executive managers.

4.4.1.2 Facilitation of Role Transitions Among Former Department and Deputy Department Managers

To address the reasons why former department and deputy department managers resist role transitions, interview findings reveal that the organization needs to focus on removing managers' perceived threat to motives - particularly, power, status, and income. However, the organization needs to accept that some individuals may need to leave if their needs fundamentally misalign with the new structure and motives cannot be satisfied within the changed role. For the data set supporting these findings, see Appendix 4.4.1.

- **Provide Tailored, Individual Support to Address Specific Fears of Loss by Reassuring Individuals They Can Still Satisfy Motives Through Alternative Resources Within Their Changed Role**

Although, fear of loss of power, status, and income were identified as the most important general issues among managers, participants consistently emphasized the importance of tailoring support to individual needs to meaningfully address individuals' specific fears of loss. As people are individual, different managers may have different motives and for some, certain motives are more important than for others, and may also experience fears in distinct ways. Consequently, facilitating managers role transitions demands organizations to work individually with people based on the general identified motives. This involves understanding which aspects are most important to each manager and actively addressing their perceived fears of loss by demonstrating how these motives can be satisfied within their changed role.

Depending on the individual manager, this may involve the engagement of the executive management and HR through one-on-one conversations, as well as the provision of tailored support such as coaching, further training, or mediation.

One executive manager described the several specific support strategies that were implemented to facilitate individual managers' transition processes:

> *"We had to hold individual conversations with the department managers, we even hired coaches who tried to introduce agile thinking to individual department managers and tried to allay any fears of losses they might perceiving." (EM1, Executive Manager)*

A former department manager shared how to facilitate managerial role transitions from his perspective:

> *„Having lots of conversations, individual conversations ... with the executive management and HR. That you take away their fears and listen to them first. I think it is very important to listen to them. That you take a step back and say "I will listen to you. What are your fears?" and try to address them in conversations. ... So, it is more about the fear of loss and being taken seriously, about getting a proactive conversation offer from HR or the executive management: "Hey manager x, you are important to us, of course we want to work with you, you have a lot of qualities. Let us have a personal conversation to find out how we can proceed"." (FDM2, Former Department Manager)*

This was echoed by a former deputy department manager:

> *"Ultimately, the success factor at the managerial level is appreciation, it is communication. ... With an empathetic conversation, with an explanation of how the whole thing is intended and what it actually implies. ... As the executive management, I have to convince my management level below me, the department managers, that a future without department managers with these people is possible and sensible and that it does not imply a loss of value and importance for these people and that they have a future in the company." (FDDM1, Former Deputy Department Manager)*

Coming out from the interview data, it is essential for organizations to reassure individuals that they are still able to satisfy those motives within the new structure and showing them how they can still support those aspects through their new role without being a manager. Consequently, they don't need to engage in protective behaviour and thus resist role transition as they got assurance and a future-oriented perspective.

One executive manager described how this was implemented in practice by reframing legitimacy in terms of expertise rather than formal managerial position:

> *„We accommodated this [former managers' realization that they no longer possess legitimacy through a managerial role in an agile structure] by explaining that they are still legitimized through their expertise but no longer through their position. ... The person who has the competence automatically takes the lead, or more precisely, can contribute to fulfil the work assignment. This person then automatically has a certain standing in the team, but this is not explicitly predetermined - it simply emerges." (EM1, Executive Manager)*

This was echoed by a former department manager who emphasized the continued value of former managers' expertise within agile teams beyond their previous managerial function:

> *„I am convinced that every manager was not only a department manager by function, but that the people also have competences that not every other employee in the team has, and they would still be people with special competences and capabilities in a team that operates in a flat and agile way." (FDM1, Former Department Manager)*

A non-manager highlighted the challenge of supporting managers through this transition by addressing their perceived threats to motives and offering viable alternatives:

> *"It is a significant challenge to take such people [former managers who perceive that they are no longer able to satisfy motives in the way they would like to] along. ... You simultaneously have to give them the perception that this [motive, e.g.] power is not taken away from them, but that they are able to retain it so that they can go along with the change. ... Of course, it is essential that the executive management explain to department managers or managers why this change is important and to give them a perspective, i.e. to say, "You don't have to worry". ... In other words, offer them an alternative so that these people don't try to maintain their [traditionally role-related resources for their motives, e.g.] power at all costs, but instead have a perspective." (NM5, Non-Manager)*

- **Accept That Some Individuals May Need to Leave the Organization**

While organizations can offer tailored support to individual managers' needs, not all needs can be accommodated. In cases where managers' needs fundamentally misalign with the new structure and motives cannot be satisfied within the changed role, the organization needs to accept that some managers need to leave the organization, along with all consequences this may entail. The data suggest that a key determinant of former managers continued fit was an individual's need for authority over others. When this need remained central to individuals, role transition proved difficult.

One executive manager explicitly pointed out, that former managers' need for authority over others cannot be accommodated as they can´t meet this in the new organizational structure as organizations can´t give them authority over others any longer, resulting in the ultimate consequence to part ways:

> *"If someone places importance on having authority over a team - well, that possibility no longer exists. If he is unwilling to accept an alternative now, then what remains? ... If it ultimately does not work out, then we had to part ways." (EM2, Executive Manager)*

This was echoed by non-managers emphasizing the importance of parting ways with managers whose need for authority over others remained central, framing this separation as essential to the success of the broader transformation:

> *"It was obvious that managers who had worked as managers for a long time under this traditional model were unable to accomplish this change. I think they were all individuals who loved the hierarchy and power or the fact that they were authorized to give directives to others. And what I take away as a conclusion is that most of them actually did not accomplish this change. We had to weed them out." (NM6, Non-Manager)*

> *"The most important step was to get rid of managers who simply did not fit in with agility, who simply represented these big blockages in the organization. ... We parted ways with some of the managers or they left - rather, we parted ways. I believe that this break was necessary. ... If people seek authority over others, there is no solution. Because that is a mindset where everyone has to decide for themselves if they go along with it. And if someone does not want to go along with it, I cannot convince them to move into agility, they need to look for an alternative company." (NM19, Non-Manager)*

4.4.2 Facilitation of Non-Managerial Role Transitions

4.4.2.1 Facilitation of Role Transitions Among Non-Managers Aspiring to a Managerial Role

- **Reassure Individuals They Can Still Satisfy Motives Through Alternative Resources Within Their Changed Role**

Facilitating role transitions among non-managers aspiring to a managerial role largely mirrors the support required to address former managers' resistance, particularly concerning the perceived potential loss of power and income. In both cases, the organization needs to reassure individuals that these motives remain satisfiable in the new structure and show them how they can still support these motives through their new role even without relying on formal managerial authority.

While perceived loss of potential income is the most explicitly voiced perceived barrier to role transitions by participants, the findings indicate that effective facilitation must go beyond increasing income. Although income adjustments may play a role in acknowledging increased responsibility or expertise, they must form part of a broader, integrated approach that demonstrates how individuals are able to achieve power, and income through their expertise, rather than through a formal managerial position. This reframing addresses not only economic concerns but also the psychological needs associated with traditional career progression.

As one former department manager explained:

> *"The only way to counteract this is to make it clear that everyone in the company is able to achieve what is important to them, regardless of where others are developing. This is more difficult in hierarchical structures as there can only ever be one person becoming manager. And the advantage of flatter organizations is that everyone can develop where they want and take on responsibilities that suit them and that they enjoy. It is then also possible for everyone to achieve things that they would otherwise not have been able to do if they were not a manager." (FDM1, Former Department Manager)*

4.4.2.2 Facilitation of Role Transitions Among Non-Managers Not Aspiring to a Managerial Role

To address the reasons for resistance to role transitions among non-managers who do not aspire to a managerial role, the organization must focus on removing individuals' perceived fear of gain in power. However, the organization must also accept that some individuals may need to leave the organization if their needs fundamentally misalign with the new structure and cannot be met within the changed role. For the data set supporting these findings, see Appendix 4.4.2.

- **Provide Training, Coaching, and Trial-based Opportunities**

Participants consistently emphasized the need for organizational support in facilitating non-managers' role transition through training, coaching, and low-stakes, trial-based opportunities:

> *"We try to empower our employees so that they are able to do it on their own. ... Providing employees with coaching and training." (EM1, Executive Manager)*

> *„Experimenting is very important. In other words, giving employees the opportunity to try out such forms of work at an early stage. ... So let them "grow into it" on a trial basis." (FDM1, Former Department Manager)*

> *"Providing workshops or training courses is a good way to prepare employees intellectually to take on this responsibility." (NM21, Non-Manager)*

- **Establish a Constructive Error Culture**

As non-managers are expected to gain greater authority in their new role, participants underscored the need for a psychologically safe environment by communicating and practicing a constructive error culture. In such culture mistakes are openly acknowledged and framed as opportunities for growth, rather than failure with negative consequences for individuals:

> *"It's important that this open error culture is communicated and practised. Communicate, "It's okay if we make mistakes, but we need to talk about it". ... To communicate that we are genuinely convinced that everyone has done their best at all times under the given circumstances. ... To establish this as a basic attitude at company level." (NM5, Non-Manager)*

"It is important to communicate: "We live an open error culture here, an honest feedback culture. You are given responsibility, and you are allowed to make mistakes. That's what it's all about here, that we also make mistakes and learn from them, because we want to improve"." (NM20, Non-Manager)

- **Encourage Individuals**

Participants highlighted the importance of former managers and executive manager supporting this process by encouraging individuals.

One executive manager shared his experiences on the positive effects of encouraging non-managers:

"In my experience, if you actively encourage employees to take responsibility and give them responsibility for their own work, they actually accomplish it and get a certain satisfaction from doing so." (EM1, Executive Manager)

Encouragement also includes refusing re-delegation attempts, where non-managers try to transfer decision-making authority back to former managers or executive managers. One former department manager explained:

"I then say, "Dear employees, please take care of this on your own". There's no need for me to get involved anymore." (FDM2, Former Department Manager)

From the perspective of non-managers, this encouragement was also symbolic, reinforcing their sense of legitimacy in the new structure and in their changed role:

"Giving people the feeling that they are able to try this now, that they are able to take on this responsibility now and that it does not just have to be done by the former team manager." (NM12, Non-Manager)

- **Accept That Some Individuals May Need to Leave the Organization**

While organizations can support individuals in their role transition, not all individual needs can be accommodated. In cases where non-managers' needs fundamentally misalign with the new structure and motives cannot be satisfied within the changed role, the organization needs to accept that some individuals may need to leave. The data suggest that a key determinant of non-managers continued fit was an individual's need for top-down directives. When this need remained central to individuals, role transition proved particularly difficult.

One executive manager reflected on this realization, noting that non-managers' need for top-down directives had initially been underestimated by the executive management:

> *"Some just want to fulfill their role as they did previously. Some may even want or need direction from the top. And of course that has to be taken into account, which we didn't consider initially." (EM3, Executive Manager)*

A non-manager echoed this perspective, expressing surprise at how many employees appeared disoriented rather than relieved by the shift away from a traditional hierarchical structure:

> *"I don't think this mental switch - that people adapt - works for everyone. This agile way of working is really very positive, but I think that some people can't do it. ... If someone attaches great importance to adhering to processes and structures and wants everything to be predetermined exactly and then doesn't look to the left or right, they are not suitable for this. ... People who are too attached to this and always need directives to follow, regardless of whether it makes sense in the situation or not, then I think it's going to be extremely difficult with this agile way of working. I think it's a personal thing, whether you are able to do it or not. ... I found that really interesting to observe and was surprised because I would have thought that there would be such a general sigh of relief. ... And it was interesting to see that this was not actually the case for many of them, but that there were actually some who obviously needed these top-down directives. (NM6, Non-Manager)*

Another non-manager explicitly linked non-managers' mismatch in mindset to the necessity of accepting that some may need to leave the organization:

> *"It quickly became apparent that there are employees who need a certain degree of guidance in order to perform at their best and that has simply been removed. And there are others who don't need this guidance ... Many employees are no longer with us and it was probably necessary because we simply needed a different mindset here in the company. ... You can't take all employees with you when you shift to the new structure. ... I think that was part of the plan. I believe that the executive management was already aware of this and accepted this risk. Simply because otherwise this change would not have been possible." (NM19, Non-Manager)*

4.4.3 Summary of Findings on Facilitation of Role Transitions

This section summarizes the findings related to Research Question 3:
"What organizational support facilitates managerial and non-managerial role transitions?"

The findings reveal that both managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile structures can be facilitated by removing individuals' perceived threats through differentiated, organizational support. However, the findings also acknowledge that some individuals may need to leave the organization if their needs fundamentally misalign with the new structure and cannot be met within the changed role. The effective facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transition requires differentiated measures, tailored to individuals' roles and aspirations.

Managers

There is no perceived need to facilitate role transitions among executive managers or owners, as resistance due to fear of loss of power is accepted as legitimate across the organization.

Role transitions among former department and deputy department managers can be facilitated through differentiated organizational support that addresses their perceived fears of loss of power, status, and income:

- Provide tailored, individual support to address their specific threatened motives by reassuring individuals they can still satisfy their motives through alternative resources in the new structure without being a manager.
- Accept that some former managers need to leave the organization if their needs fundamentally misalign with the new structure, such as the need for authority over others.

Non-Managers

Role transitions among non-managers aspiring to a managerial role can be facilitated through organizational support that addresses their perceived fears of loss of potential power and income:

- Reassure individuals they can still satisfy their motives through alternative resources in the new structure without becoming a manager.

Role transitions among non-managers not aspiring to a managerial role can be facilitated through differentiated organizational support that addresses their perceived fear of gain in power:

- Facilitate the assumption of increased authority and responsibility by providing training, coaching, trial-based opportunities, establishing a constructive error culture, and encouraging individuals.
- Accept that some non-managers need to leave the organization if their needs fundamentally misalign with the new structure, such as the need for top-down directives.

4.5 Summary

The findings of this study shed light on the resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures. In doing so, they provide an empirical foundation for addressing the research questions and contribute towards achieving the research aim.

- **RQ1: Why do managers and non-managers resist role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures?**

In response to RQ1, the findings revealed that managers and non-managers resist role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures due to perceived fears underlying role transitions. Specifically, these transitions disrupt individuals' access to role-related resources supporting motives, thereby threatening these motives. The motives threatened varied depending on hierarchical level and role aspirations. For managers, the more specific reasons underpinning their resistance are fear of loss of power, status, and income. For non-managers aspiring to a managerial role, the more specific reasons underpinning their resistance are fear of loss of potential power and income. In contrast, for non-managers not aspiring to a managerial role, the more specific reason underpinning their resistance is fear of gain in power.

- **RQ2: How do managers and non-managers resist role transitions?**

Addressing RQ2, the findings showed that both managers and non-managers resist role transitions by engaging in protective behaviours. These behaviours aim to protect threatened resources traditionally supporting their motives, either through struggles within the organization or by leaving the organization and seeking alternative employment. More specifically, former managers refuse to lose managerial authority, while non-managers refuse to gain it. These behaviours mutually reinforcing the persistence of traditional hierarchical roles and structures, thereby hindering the shift to agile organizational structures.

- **RQ3: What organizational support facilitates managerial and non-managerial role transitions?**

Regarding RQ3, the findings found that both managerial and non-managerial role transitions can be facilitated through differentiated, organizational support that addresses individuals' perceived threat. However, the findings also acknowledge that some individuals may need to leave the organization if their needs fundamentally misalign with the new structure and cannot

be met within the changed role. The effective facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transition requires differentiated measures, tailored to individuals' roles, aspirations and motives. For executive managers or owners, it is accepted as legitimate across the organization, that there will be no role transition for them and that they have the right to resist it. Role transitions among former department and deputy department managers can be facilitated through differentiated organizational support that addresses their perceived fears of loss of power, status, and income. Such support includes providing tailored, individual support to address their specific threatened motives by reassuring individuals they can still satisfy their motives through alternative resources in the new structure without being a manager, while accepting that some former managers need to leave the organization if their needs fundamentally misalign with the new structure, such as the need for authority over others. For non-managers who aspire to a managerial role the measures to address perceived fear of loss of potential power and income mirror those of former managers. In contrast, for non-managers who do not aspire to a managerial role, fear of gain in power can be addressed by differentiated organizational support based on non-managers motives. Such support includes facilitating the assumption of increased authority and responsibility where appropriate, while accepting that some non-managers need to leave the organization if their needs fundamentally misalign with the new structure, such as the need for top-down directives.

A key insight across the findings is the central role of power, status, and income in shaping managerial and non-managerial resistance to role transition in the shift from a traditional hierarchical to an agile organizational structure.

While this chapter has presented the empirical findings, the subsequent discussion chapter will explore their implications at a more fundamental level and contribute to a more theory-informed response to the research aim and questions.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter critically discusses the findings in relation to existing literature, demonstrating how they contribute to existing knowledge. It identifies areas where the findings align with, diverge from, or challenges existing literature, and extends it by introducing new insights. Following the thematic structure guided by the research questions, this discussion assesses the significance of the findings on resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions, linking them to broader debates on power, status, identity, contingency theory, and change management.

While existing literature has shown that shifts from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures lead to resistance (Rigby et al., 2016), particularly in relation to shifting dynamics of power and status (Rump et al., 2020), and has hinted at the relevance of status threats and their link to identity (Stewart et al., 2017), with individuals resisting threats to their identity during organizational change (Petriglieri, 2011), little is known about the underlying reasons and processes driving resistance to role transitions in the shift away from traditional towards more agile structures (Stewart et al., 2017). By discussing this study's findings with existing literature on identity, it suggests how managerial and non-managerial resistance to role transition is not solely a reaction to changes in power, status, and income but also arises because these changes threaten underpinning identity. Thus, by linking existing research on power motivation (e.g. Heckhausen & Heckhausen, 2008), status motivation (Anderson et al., 2015), and identity motives theory (Vignoles et al., 2006), this study extends existing theoretical frameworks by conceptualizing power and status as identity motives.

Overall, the findings, when interpreted through broader theoretical lenses, extend both theory and practice in the context of agile transitions by providing a more in-depth explanation of why role transitions lead to resistance among both managers and non-managers, and why such resistance is often difficult - and in some cases impossible - to overcome because changes to power and status threaten identity.

5.1 Reasons for Resistance to Role Transition

Building on prior research that has identified employees' resistance to empowerment as a response to misalignment between organizational initiatives and employees' needs (Maynard, Mathieu, Marsh, & Ruddy, 2007), the findings of this study extend this perspective by linking resistance to identity, suggesting that resistance arises when organizational initiatives are inconsistent with employees' identity needs.

These findings further resonate with Ashforth and Schinoff's (2016) work on individuals identity construction in organizations, which suggests that organizational interests and prescribed identity possibilities often conflict with those of organizational members, and organizations may utilize their power to impose identities on individuals, which individuals may resist. Extending this perspective, the present study links such resistance resulting from misalignment between organizational interests and individual needs to identity, which are reflected in individual's desired and feared possible selves (Vignoles et al., 2006), this study suggests perceived identity threat to be a core issue underlying both managerial and non-managerial resistance to role transitions from a traditional hierarchical to an agile organizational structure.

Accordingly, the findings challenge literature that presents adopting agile organizational structures as broadly desirable or beneficial for organizational members (e.g. Tripp, Riemenschneider, & Thatcher, 2016), by pointing out that such change is not unproblematic, as it impacts power, status, and income, and much of the resistance to the loss of power, status, and in some instances income, arises because of its perceived threat to identity. Interpreted through the lens of structural contingency theory (Donaldson, 2001), these findings extend existing theory by suggesting that the effectiveness and appropriateness of agile organizational structures are also partly contingent on the individuals within the organization and the extent to which they are willing and able to accommodate changes to power, status, and identity.

Therefore, although parts of the management literature suggest that organizations should doggedly seek to adopt agile structures (Teece et al., 2016), the findings of this study critique these perspectives while further responding to Lee and Edmondson's (2017) call for further research into the practical dynamics and limitations associated with transitioning to agile, decentralized organizational structures, by identifying inherent limits to the extent to which agility can be practically implemented within organizational structures. Specifically, the

findings highlight that these limits are significantly influenced by managers' and non-managers' resistance to role transitions and thus by the extent to which individuals are willing or able to lose and adapt their existing resources to support their needs and, in some cases, their identity, which has limitations.

5.1.1 Reasons for Managerial Resistance to Role Transitions

The findings of this study build on prior work by Stewart et al. (2017), which suggests that role transitions when moving from traditional hierarchical structures towards team-based empowerment can create status threats for individuals in formal leadership roles, thereby leading to resistance – with their analysis distinguishing between leaders who adopt a new identity and those who seek to protect their old hierarchical one. While Stewart et al. (2017) focus solely on status, the key extension of the present study lies in identifying additional critical aspects – namely power and income – which may intersect with, but are not fully captured by, status. Moreover, while Stewart et al. (2017) look at status and identity separately, the present study advances this perspective by showing the relationship between them, emphasizing that status threats lead to resistance because they threaten identity.

This interpretation is further supported by prior research from Alvesson and Willmott (2002), which suggests that experiences of superiority or subordination in relation to significant others, as well as status distinctions between different roles within organizational hierarchies, can be central to individuals' identity construction. Building on this perspective, the present study makes an additional contribution by identifying managerial income as an additional critical motive underpinning identity, one that has not been recognized in the existing literature and demonstrates that it is likewise perceived as threatened during role transitions.

Furthermore, the findings support prior research highlighting the interconnectedness between work-related and non-work-related identity. As Ramarajan and Reid (2013) argue, work identity shaped by organizational roles can influence how individuals think and feel about themselves in relation to their non-work identity. For example, managers fear of loss of status at work may extend beyond the organizational context, affecting individuals perceived social standing and relationships outside the work context. Similarly, managers who view themselves as primary income providers may fear that losing their role will undermine their ability to support their families, thereby intensifying the perceived threat to their identity.

Moreover, while prior work by Rump et al. (2020) on agile transitions treats all managers as a homogeneous group without considering executive managers or owners as a distinct group, the findings of this study extend this perspective by identifying distinct barriers that are specific to executive managers or owners. Furthermore, while Rump et al (2020) emphasize managerial willingness to delegate power as crucial for successful agile transitions, the findings of the present study add executive managers' and owners' capacity to delegate power in terms of legal responsibilities and economic considerations, particularly in privately held, owner-led firms, as an additional aspect, which is distinct from other managerial levels. Therefore, implementing a theoretically fully agile organizational structure in practice is ultimately constrained by the extent to which executive managers or owners are willing and able to relinquish their traditional authority as a core resource of power.

5.1.2 Reasons for Non-Managerial Resistance to Role Transition

While the existing literature only suggests a link between resistance and challenges to status for leaders (e.g. Stewart et al., 2017), this study adds to the literature by finding out that non-managers also resisted because of challenges to status and power, rather because they want to become managers or do not want to get power.

While the potential losses experienced by non-managerial employees aspiring to a managerial role have been overlooked previously, the study reveal that non-managers aspiring to a managerial role perceive threats to motives - potential power and income - that closely mirror those experienced by managers. These individuals perceive threat because the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile structures obstructs access to the resources traditionally associated with attaining managerial roles. As such, these potential resources previously viewed as attainable pathways to enhance organizational power, status, and income are now perceived as inaccessible as managerial roles are no longer attainable.

The findings of this study further challenge existing literature suggesting that agile organizational structures are broadly desirable or beneficial for non-managers, with an important value proposition being their potential to increase motivation and job satisfaction, particularly through enhanced perceptions of empowerment and autonomy (e.g. Tripp et al., 2016), by demonstrating that not all individuals desire or embrace the shift to an agile organizational structure, particularly those who do not aspire to a managerial role. Instead, some resist it, as they experienced gain in power as a perceived barrier as their motives are around

security, for example being told what to do and not have responsibility. These findings align with existing literature suggesting individual differences in the power motive, whereby some individuals desire gain in power, while others avoid it (Anderson et al., 2015). These findings therefore extend prior research by emphasizing that some individuals have power as an identity motive, others do not, as their identity motive is around security, so they need to be treated differently. Therefore, the findings highlight a disconnect between theoretical claims that agile organizational structures are desirable for all non-managers and the more nuanced identity needs and motivational differences observed in practice, particularly in relation to power. Thus, this study demonstrates that resistance among non-managers can arise when organizations delegate increased managerial authority and responsibility without considering non-managers' respective identity motives, particularly their motive for power.

5.2 Resistance to Role Transitions

When interpreted through the theoretical lens of identity, the study's findings extend prior research on identity-protective behaviours in response to perceived identity threat (Petriglieri, 2011) by demonstrating that both managers and non-managers enact resistance behaviours during role transitions to protect their identity motives when perceiving threats to their identity. Moreover, the findings of this study build on prior perspectives suggesting that individuals' decision-making is guided by imagining the self under various potential outcomes (Markus & Nurius, 1986), whereby individuals assign particular meaning to work-related labels - such as job titles or roles - depending on the identities they convey and the extent to which these resonate with an individual's current or desired self, thereby influencing the activities individuals engage in as well as the jobs and organizations they are willing to pursue (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016). Extending these perspectives, the findings suggest that individuals evaluate role transitions in terms of their alignment with desired selves or their potential to evoke feared selves, thereby shaping their willingness to accept or resist such role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures. This finding about the link to identity is important as it affects the strength of resistance. Thus, the intensity of resistance may vary depending on the significance of the threatened motives and its underpinning significance to identity to the individual. For instance, individuals for whom power also serves as a key identity motive are likely to struggle more with role transitions, whereas those for whom power is less central to their identity may exhibit lower levels of resistance.

These findings align with change management perspectives that challenge the view of resistance as a dysfunctional or irrational reaction of change recipients (Ford et al., 2008). Instead, they support the argument that change recipients do not inherently resist change itself, but rather the perceived negative consequences associated with it (Dent & Goldberg, 1999) and may therefore have legitimate reasons for their resistance (Nord & Jermier, 1994). Building on this, the present study advances these perspectives by demonstrating that change recipients resist as a meaningful and functional response to protect their identity motives in response to perceived identity threat.

5.2.1 Resistance to Role Transitions Among Managers

The findings of this study extend existing literature on resistance to change, arguing that the full spectrum of responses to identity threat is not always equally available to all individuals (Petriglieri, 2011) by showing that the perceived legitimacy of resistance varies across organizational roles. This suggests that it is not only the availability, but also the social acceptance of certain responses to identity threat, that is unequally distributed. This study makes a novel empirical contribution, by illuminating how self-legitimation of resistance is enabled through continued access to power, as exemplified by executive managers or owners. This dynamic creates a notable, understandable irony: while executive managers or owners decide that all other organizational members have to become agile, which would necessitate profound identity changes, they exempt themselves from such transformation - maintaining their own identity and role-related resources largely unchanged.

Furthermore, when interpreted through the theoretical lens of power and status, the study's findings align with prior research on individuals' resistance to perceived power threats (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003) and status threats (Anderson et al., 2015). Specifically, Keltner et al. (2003) argue that when social hierarchies are destabilized – either by challenging the legitimacy of those in power or by enhancing those with less power – individuals in power defend the status quo against challenges to the legitimacy of their position. Similarly, Anderson et al. (2015) suggest that individuals respond to perceive status threats by engaging in behaviours aimed at attaining higher status or avoiding status loss by attempting to project the image of their instrumental social value, regardless of their actual value, by signalling their competence to others, publicly portraying their abilities in disproportionately positive ways, and taking credit for successes while blaming others.

5.2.2 Resistance to Role Transitions Among Non-Managers

The resistance behaviours exhibited by non-managers in this study are consistent with Maynard et al 's (2007) conceptualization of resistance to empowerment as the rejection of authority and responsibility associated with empowerment. The present study further critiques Anderson et al.'s (2015) claims that individuals select roles and organizations that afford them higher status – particularly in relative comparison to others – by finding that not all employees select roles that afford them higher status – e.g. some non-managers – as status it is not an identity motive for all individuals.

Moreover, Cordery, Mueller, and Smith (1991) found that organizational transitions to empowered teams were followed by higher turnover among non-managerial employees – an outcome consistent with this study's findings. However, when interpreted through the theoretical lens of identity the findings of this study deepen the understanding of non-managers resistance when gaining power, specifically during role transitions in the shift towards agile organizational structures, by suggesting that such resistance is not merely a rejection of authority and responsibility but can also reflect underlying identity-related concerns in some instances, that may intensify their resistance.

5.3 Facilitation of Role Transitions

The findings of this study build on prior work of Ashforth and Schinoff (2016), which emphasize that organizations have a key role in setting the stage for individuals identity construction by influencing how individuals see themselves. Specifically, during critical changes individuals may struggle to comprehend the meaning of a changed job label and the identities it conveys, particularly in terms of how well those identities resonate with their desired selves, making individuals most receptive to organizational identity-related cues and interpretations to help them make sense of their environs and who they are within them. However, identity construction is strongly influenced by the given context (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016) as the identity individuals are able to construct is inherently influenced, mediated, and limited by the given resources available within a particular context (McKenna, Garcia-Lorenzo & Bridgman, 2010). The present study's findings are consistent with and extend this perspective by demonstrating how organizations can actively facilitate individuals' role transitions through supporting them in performing their identity construction, suggesting that facilitating individual's role transitions is about creating identity given the resources available within the organizational structure. Although, these given resources depend on the

specific organizational structure, this study's findings demonstrated possible given resources within the context of agile organizational structures and how identity-related cues and interpretations can be provided, to support individuals in performing their identity construction. In doing so, the findings of this study respond to calls for further research into the specific processes and situations of identity construction within organizations (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003), particularly how organizational members actively use identity-related information for their own identity construction (Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006).

Responding to Petriglieri's (2011) call for future research to better understand how organizational change can be facilitated when individuals resist due to identity threats, the findings of the present study highlight that organizations need to recognize the identity motives of different individuals and address perceived threats to those motives in order to effectively address managerial and non-managerial resistance to role transitions.

Moreover, the findings respond to Petriglieri's (2011) call to consider both individual and organizational perspectives when examining the consequences of identity threat. The findings support Petriglieri's (2011) argument that consequences of identity threats may point in opposite directions for individuals and their organizations. Extending this perspective the present study specifies that individuals must reflect on their identity motives and possible selves and evaluate whether their identity needs align with, or conflict with the transition, while organizations need to accept that some individuals may need to leave the organization if their identity needs fundamentally misalign with the new structure and cannot be met within the changed role.

5.3.1 Facilitation of Managerial Role Transitions

This study responds to the call of McKenna et al. (2010) to stimulate debate on managerial identity within contemporary organizations by deepening the understanding of identity-related concerns experienced by managers and former managers during role transitions in the shift towards an agile organizational structure, while also demonstrating the forms of organizational support to address the challenges they face.

When interpreted through the theoretical lenses of identity and change management, this study's findings challenge existing perspectives stating that managers need to fully change their identity during such role transitions (e.g. Stewart et al., 2017). Building on Vignoles et al. (2006), who

propose that identity threat in a given situation can be avoided if it does not undermine the satisfaction of identity motives, or if it provides alternative means through which these satisfactions can be restored, the present findings offer a more nuanced understanding of identity and identity change, indicate that identity, particularly identity motives do not necessarily need to be changed during role transitions. Instead, the resources supporting those identity motives shift, enabling individuals to retain their identity motives within the new organizational context. Consequently, the focus should be on facilitating individuals to perceive that their identity motives do not have to be inherently threatened by their new roles. By demonstrating how existing identity motives can still be supported - albeit through many means - organizations can alleviate perceptions of identity threat. Overcoming this perception at its root could preempt resistance behaviours as this may be sufficient to make individuals overlook other potential threats. Therefore, facilitation should focus on enabling individuals to construct and maintain their identities within the resources and opportunities available, in such a way that it enables them to still meet their identity motives. For instance, during role transitions, managers do not necessarily need to change power as an identity motive. Instead, they are required to shift from their managerial position as a source of power, to sources such as expertise. This shift enables them to retain power as an identity motive within their new organizational role and structure.

Furthermore, the findings of this study are consistent with Ashforth and Schinoff's (2016) argument that organizations need to recognize individuals' diverse identity motives and underscore how they intend will support individuals to address their respective motives while individuals simultaneously need to recognize their diverse identity motives and how each contribute to their desired selves, making their possible selves explicit to enable a more deliberate and proactive identity construction. While this discussion of organizational support is limited to the context of recruitment and socialization, the findings of the present study extend this perspective by explaining how organizations can actively support individuals in performing their identity work in the context of organizational change, particularly role transitions. Thus, organizations must adopt a tailored approach by working individually with employees to address their unique identity motives. As individuals prioritize different identity motives with varying levels of importance, organizations should engage in personalized discussions to identify and support these motives during transitions. Starting with the general identity motives identified as important to most employees, organizations can then focus on one-on-one

dialogues with both managerial and non-managerial employees to help them retain their motives within their new roles and the restructured organization.

Further, to deepen the interpretation of findings concerned with addressing managerial resistance, it is essential to recognise the limits of Vignoles et al.'s (2006) perspective, which suggests that identity threat in a given situation may be avoided if individuals can draw on alternative sources to satisfy their identity motives. However, the findings of the present study extend this literature by demonstrating that such substitution is not always feasible in practice. Specifically, managers must possess the necessary resource, such as expertise and be also confident in possessing greater expertise than others, to replace their formal managerial position as a source of power to sustain power as a motive. Consequently, if managers doubt their ability to leverage this alternative resource, they may continue to perceive their motives as threatened by role transitions, thereby intensifying resistance to change.

Moreover, this study's findings on accepting that some former managers may need to leave the organization if their need for authority over others remains central, align with Li et al. (2024), suggesting that individuals qualitatively differ in their desire for power and that power motives covary within individuals.

5.3.2 Facilitation of Non-Managerial Role Transitions

The findings of this study extend current knowledge, as existing research focuses on managerial perspectives during role transitions, leaving non-managers unconsidered (e.g. Stewart et al., 2017). Accordingly, the findings contribute to a more nuanced understanding of non-managerial perspectives during organizational change by demonstrating that facilitating non-managers' role transitions requires differentiated approaches depending on non-managers' role aspirations and identity motives, particularly whether they aspire to a managerial role or not.

5.4 Summary

This chapter has critically discussed the study's empirical findings in relation to existing literature on power, status, identity, contingency theory, and change management, providing a more theory-informed interpretation on resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures.

The discussion has highlighted the impact of shifting from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures on power, status, and income, and how these changes can threaten individuals' underlying identity. In particular, it has demonstrated the significance of individuals' identity motives, especially power, status, and income, how the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures alters role-related resources for these motives, thereby making associated role transitions threatening to individuals' motives and underlying identity. Moreover, it discusses how organizations are able to influence managerial and non-managerial perception of these threats. Furthermore, the chapter has discussed the limitations when shifting to agile organizational structures.

Overall, the discussion further develops the findings of this study by demonstrating that resistance to role transitions stems not solely from changes in power, status, and income but also arises because these changes threaten individuals' identity. Accordingly, Figure 3, which summarizes the findings, has been revised to reflect these insights, with changes marked in green. Figure 4 summarizes how changes in role lead to managerial and non-managerial resistance due to identity threat, how these barriers can be overcome to facilitate role transitions, and highlights the limitations encountered during such transitions.

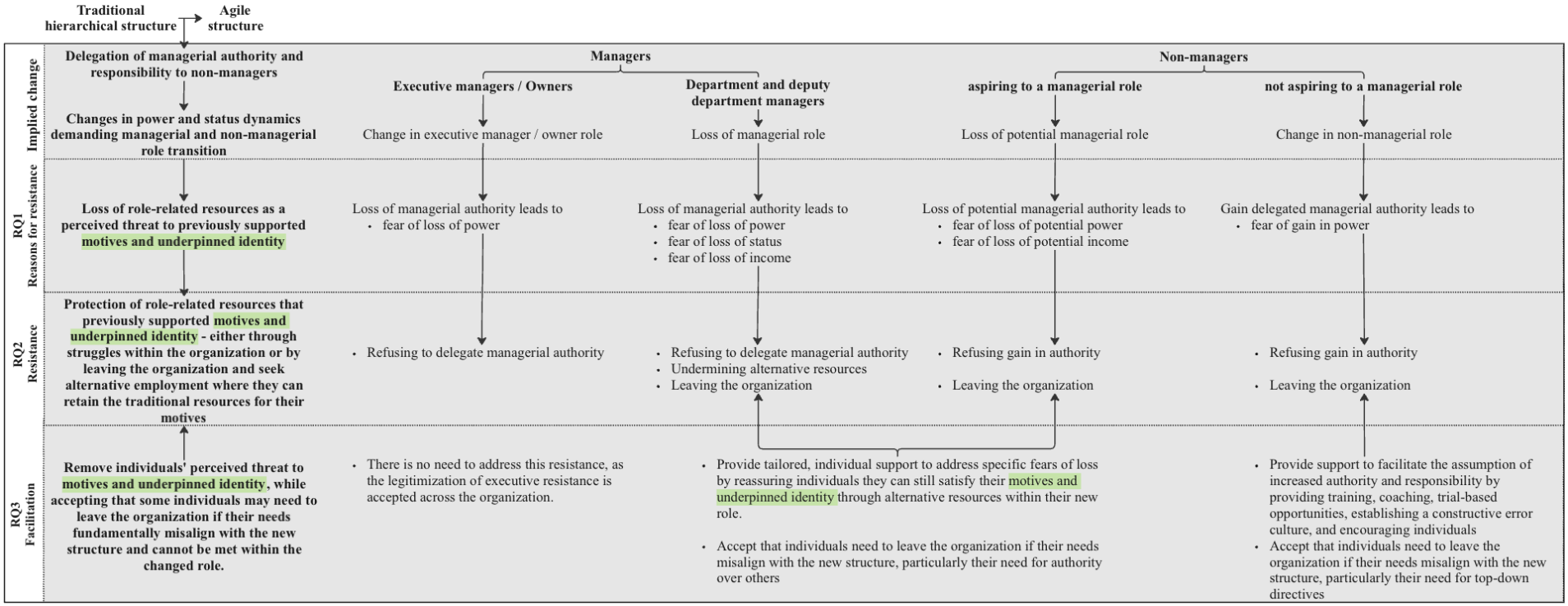

Figure 4: Summary model explaining how change in role leads to managerial and non-managerial resistance due to underpinned identity threats, how it can be facilitated, and indicating limitations when transitioning.

Own illustration

Following the theory-informed discussion of the findings, the final chapter begins by restating the research aim and questions and demonstrates how they have been addressed.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Based on the previous discussion, this concluding chapter restates the research aim and questions and summarizes how they have been addressed. It then outlines the study's contributions to theory and practice, reviews its limitations and suggests avenues for future research, concluding with a personal reflection on undertaking this study.

Research Aim and Questions:

The overarching aim of this research study was to understand the reasons why managers and non-managers resist role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures and to clarify which forms of organizational support may facilitate these transitions.

- **RQ1: Why do managers and non-managers resist role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures?**

In response to RQ1, the study revealed that managers and non-managers resist role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures due to perceived threat to their motives and underpinning identity. Specifically, these transitions disrupt individuals' access to role-related resources supporting motives, thereby threatening these motives and underpinning identity. The motives threatened varied depending on hierarchical level and role aspirations. For managers, the more specific reasons underpinning their resistance are fear of loss of power, status, and income. For non-managers aspiring to a managerial role, the more specific reasons are fear of loss of potential power and income. In contrast, for non-managers not aspiring to a managerial role, the more specific reason is fear of gain in power.

- **RQ2: How do managers and non-managers resist role transitions?**

Addressing RQ2, the study found that both managers and non-managers resist role transitions by engaging in protective behaviours. These behaviours aim to protect threatened resources traditionally supporting their motives and, in some cases, the underpinning identity. Where resistance relates to identity threats, such threats may result in particularly strong resistance as identity is particularly important to individuals. Resistance manifests either through individuals' struggles within the organization or by leaving it and seeking alternative employment where they can retain the resources traditionally supporting their motives.

Specifically, managers and former managers refuse to lose managerial authority, while non-managers refuse to gain it.

- **RQ3: What organizational support facilitates managerial and non-managerial role transitions?**

Regarding RQ3, the study found that both managerial and non-managerial role transitions can be facilitated through differentiated, organizational support that addresses individuals' perceived threat to motives and underpinning identity. However, the study also acknowledge that some individuals may need to leave the organization if their needs fundamentally misalign with the new structure and cannot be met within the changed role. The effective facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transition requires differentiated measures, tailored to individuals' roles, aspirations, and motives. For executive managers or owners, it is accepted as legitimate across the organization, that there will be no role transition for them and that they have the right to resist it. Role transitions among former department and deputy department managers can be facilitated through differentiated organizational support that addresses their perceived fears of loss of power, status, and income. Such support includes providing tailored, individual support to address their specific threatened motives and in some cases their identity by reassuring individuals they can still satisfy their motives through alternative resources in the new structure without being a manager, while accepting that some former managers need to leave the organization if their needs fundamentally misalign with the new structure, such as the need for authority over others. For non-managers who aspire to a managerial role the measures to address perceived fear of loss of potential power and income mirror those of former managers. In contrast, for non-managers who do not aspire to a managerial role, fear of gain in power can be addressed by differentiated organizational support based on non-managers motives. Such support includes facilitating the assumption of increased authority and responsibility where appropriate, while accepting that some non-managers need to leave the organization if their needs fundamentally misalign with the new structure, such as the need for top-down directives.

6.1 Theoretical Contribution

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in explaining why role transitions lead to resistance in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures, by extending structural contingency theory through the introduction of additional human contingencies, and by identifying limitations to the degree of agility that organizations can achieve in practice.

- **How Changes in Roles Lead to Resistance and Critiquing the Challenges Inherent in Transitioning to Agile Structures**

The key theoretical contribution of this study lies in explaining how role transitions lead to resistance and in critiquing the challenges inherent in transitioning from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures.

Much of the existing literature exploring models of agile working postulates the advantages of implementing agile structures within organizations (e.g. Rigby et al., 2016) and presents them as broadly desirable or beneficial for organizational members (e.g. Tripp et al., 2016). However, research has explored that such structural change leads to resistance (Rigby et al., 2016), particularly in relation to shifting dynamics of power and status (Rump et al., 2020).

The findings of this study clarify how resistance to role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures is harder to overcome - and in some cases cannot be overcome - because changes to power and status threaten identity. Thus, the study provides a more in-depth explanation of why role transitions lead to resistance among both managers and non-managers and why this resistance is so difficult and in some cases impossible to overcome. In doing so, this study further addresses an important gap in the literature by clarifying how identity is affected by the shift to agile organizational structures and the resulting changes to power and status.

The findings therefore highlight that such change is not unproblematic, as it impacts power, status, and income, and much of the resistance to the loss of power, status, and in some instances income, arises because of its perceived threat to identity.

- **Structural Contingency Theory: Individuals' Willingness and Ability to Accept Changes to Power, Status, and Identity as Contingency Variables**

This study contributes to theory by extending structural contingency theory. Structural contingency theory focuses on contingencies such as environment, size, and strategy when assessing the effectiveness of organizational structures (Donaldson, 2001). The findings of this study extend structural contingency theory by suggesting that organizational structure is also partly contingent on the individuals within it – executive managers, managers and non-managers – and the extent to which they are willing and able to accept changes to power, status, and identity. This identification of additional human contingencies suggests that the appropriateness of agile organizational structures is also contingent on the extent to which individuals within the organization can accommodate changes to power, status, and identity.

- **Limitations to the Degree of Agility that Organizations can Practically Achieve**

By identifying inherent limits to the degree of agility that organizations can practically achieve, this study contributes to theory by extending existing perspectives on agile organizational structures and highlight the practical constraints that shape their implementation.

Despite the widely postulated appeal of agile organizational structures in theory (Rigby et al., 2016), and although parts of the management literature suggest that organizations should doggedly seek to adopt agile structures (Teece et al., 2016), the findings of this study indicate that the degree of agility organizations can achieve in practice is subject to important limitations.

In particular, these limits are significantly influenced by managers' and non-managers' resistance to role transitions. In particular, managers' and non-managers' resistance to change their roles stems from threats to individuals' needs, with much of this resistance driven by perceived threat to identity. Consequently, the degree of agility that organizations can practically achieve is limited by the extent to which individuals, especially executive managers or owners, are willing or capable to lose and adapt their existing resources to support their needs, and in some cases their identity, which has limitations. The findings particularly highlight the challenges experienced by executive managers or owners in relinquishing power to the extent required for transitioning to a theoretically complete agile organization. These limitations stem from economic considerations and legal responsibilities that contradict the relinquishment of such resources. Consequently, facilitating their resistance may not be

appropriate or reasonable, given the legitimate constraints tied to their roles and responsibilities, which represents a significant barrier to achieving complete agility in practice, which has not been overcome. Moreover, limitations also exist among non-managers. The findings reveal that not all individuals aspire to access resources such as power, creating a disconnect between the assumptions prevalent in the literature, as well as those held by executive managers, and the diverse preferences and motives of organizational members.

Additionally, there are limitations to the concept of a theoretically fully agile organization, in which decision-making authority is redistributed to employees, when applied in practice. Paradoxically, the decision to shift to an agile organizational is often made top-down by executive managers or owners, rather than by the employees themselves, while still expecting them to fully embrace this agile transition.

Building on these theoretical contributions, the following section outlines the practical contributions of the findings for managers, non-managers, and organizations.

6.2 Practical Contribution

The practical contribution of this study lies in specifying how executive managers, former managers, non-managers, and organizations should adapt their practices and actions in light of a deeper understanding of resistance to, and facilitation of, role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile structures.

6.2.1 Implications for Managers Adopting Agile Structures

This subsection distinguishes between practical implications for managers and former managers, in order to reflect the distinct experiential dynamics associated with each group.

Implications for Executive Managers/Owners

The findings of this study demonstrate that role transitions among executive managers/owners are inherently constrained. Their resistance is driven by threats to power, tied to their formal authority to affect or effect organizational outcomes, as well as to their responsibility for the organization's strategic direction, financial performance, long-term viability, and the preservation of their personal imprint on the company. These threats to power can be distinguished into perceived threat concerning power as an identity motive, as well as formal / legal reasons beyond their control why they cannot give away all power. This reframes executive managers'/owners' resistance to role transitions as a protective response to the risks associated with delegating power.

Therefore, the practical implications for executive managers/owners lie in raising critical awareness of the constraints when shifting to agile organizational structures as there are limitations about how much role transitions can be achieved at the executive/owner level.

Executive managers/owners therefore need to reflect and decide on the extent to which they are both willing and able to relinquish their power. Accordingly, rather than trying to achieve a fully agile organization in practice, executive managers/owners need to define the boundaries of their power redistribution, align their structural ambitions realistically with these constraints, and communicate this to others in the organization, so everyone understands the limitations of agile structures. This reframes the adoption of agile structures as limited by executive managers' willingness and/or capability to relinquish power to a bounded extent, rather than as a process of complete decentralisation of authority.

Implications for Former Managers

The findings demonstrate that former department and deputy department managers resist role transitions due to a perceived threat to valued identity motives, particularly fears of loss of power, status, or income. Facilitation appears contingent upon the extent to which these motives can continue to be satisfied within the new structure and role.

The practical implications for former managers therefore lie in recognising that they should reflect on their identity motives and assess whether these can be met in the new agile organizational structure and may need to leave the organization if they cannot.

6.2.2 Implications for Non-Managers Adopting Agile Structures

Similarly, the practical implications for non-managers, both those who aspire to a managerial role and those who do not, lie in recognising that they should reflect on their identity motives and assess whether these can be met in the new agile organizational structure and may need to leave the organization if they cannot.

6.2.3 Implications for Organizations Adopting Agile Structures

The findings point out that some role transitions can be supported by organizations through reassuring individuals that their motives can still be satisfied through alternative resources or by facilitating the assumption of increased authority and responsibility. Furthermore, organizations need to recognise that role transitions are not always possible and exit is therefore a legitimate outcome. The key practical implication for organizations therefore lies in recognizing that facilitating managerial and non-managerial role transitions demands differentiated organizational support tailored to individuals' roles, aspirations, and identity motives. Accordingly, organizations must adapt their practices and support mechanisms to reflect these differences, rather than relying on uniform transition strategies.

Further, organizations should not assume universal adaptability among organizational members in the shift towards agile organizational structures, nor interpret employee exit automatically as a failure of implementation. Instead, they need to adapt their practices by acknowledging the limits to facilitation.

The findings further demonstrate that resistance among managers and non-managers can mutually reinforce the persistence of traditional hierarchical roles and structures, thereby

impeding the shift towards agile organizational structures. Practically this implies that organizations should not focus solely on reducing managerial resistance. Rather they must recognize that non-managers resistance can also sustain hierarchical dynamics and therefore requires deliberate attention and mitigation.

Moreover, the findings underscore that resistance to, and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions is closely tied to how the dynamics of power, status, and income are configured when shifting towards agile organizational structures. Practically, rather than focusing predominantly on structural redesign when shifting towards an agile organizational structure, organizations should adapt their practice by raising awareness of the importance of changes in access to role-related resources for satisfying individuals' identity motives and the associated experiential consequences.

Overall, the facilitation of non-managerial role transitions requires differentiated organizational support that aligns with individuals' identity motives and aspirations. From a practical perspective, this highlights the importance of recognising that facilitation efforts may have different meanings and consequences for different groups of non-managers, rather than assuming a uniform experience or intervention.

While this section discussed the practical contribution of the findings, the following section outlines potential limitations of this study.

6.3 Research Limitations

While this study provides valuable insight into the resistance to and facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures, three limitation areas must be acknowledged.

First, the study draws exclusively on data from participants who were employed at the time of data collection. Former managerial and non-managerial employees, who left the company as a result of the shift to an agile organizational structure, were not invited to participate. This exclusion potentially limits the breadth of perspectives captured. On the one hand, including these individuals might have provided deeper or more critical reflections on role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile structures. On the other hand, their responses may have been disproportionately negative due to unresolved dissatisfaction, potentially introducing bias. Nevertheless, even without the inclusion of these individuals, the findings offer critical insights from those who were employed at the time of data collection and some of whom may have subsequently left the organization.

Second, the study employed a cross-sectional research approach, collecting data at a single point in time during the shift from a traditional hierarchical to an agile organizational structure. While this static snapshot enabled an in-depth exploration of how participants experienced role transitions at a particular stage, and also allowed for reflecting on their role transition up to that point, it does not capture evolving perceptions or how these perceptions and experiences may continue to develop over time.

Third, the researcher's dual role as both an insider and HR responsible. While this dual role provided privileged access to participants, context-specific insights, and a nuanced understanding of organizational dynamics, it may also have introduced bias into the research process and its outcomes. Specifically, participants may have felt constrained in expressing critical views related to the study's topic due to fears of potential negative consequences, as participants were not anonymized to the insider researcher in his organizational HR capacity. Moreover, participants may have tailored their responses due to assumptions about the researcher's expectations. Although, measures were taken to address and mitigate these concerns, such as ensuring transparency about the researcher's dual role, the purpose of the study, the limits of anonymity, and the organization's commitment to value employee perspectives, the potential for unconscious bias cannot be entirely excluded. Accordingly, the

findings should be interpreted with due consideration of the researcher's positionality within the study.

These limitations point out important boundaries of this study's findings and inform directions for future research outlined in the next section.

6.4 Future Research Directions

This section outlines potential avenues for future research, informed by the findings and limitations of this study.

Future studies should explicitly aim to deepen the understanding of identity threat arising from managerial and non-managerial role transitions in the shift from traditional hierarchical to agile organizational structures. In doing so a longitudinal research approach could offer valuable insights by tracing individuals' perceptions of identity-related challenges and how these are navigated over time, particularly in relation to the presence or absence of organizational support. Such longitudinal designs could also incorporate the perspectives of individuals who decide to leave the organization. This would allow for a deeper understanding of how unresolved identity threats and role misalignment contribute to exit, whether voluntary or initiated by the company.

Future research could also focus on examining strategies for addressing individuals' identity-related challenges during role transitions when organizational support is limited or absent.

Future studies could employ quantitative or mixed-methods designs to examine the perceived threats underlying managerial and non-managerial role transitions identified in this study, thereby potentially validating these findings and enhancing their generalizability across different contexts.

Moreover, given the potential limitation associated with the researcher's dual role as both an insider and HR responsible, future research could benefit from replicating this study in a comparable organizational setting by combining insider and outsider perspectives to leverage contextual understanding while maintaining critical distance. Having outlined directions for future research, the following section turns to a personal reflection on undertaking this study.

6.5 Personal Reflection Undertaking this Study

The final section of this study provides a reflexive account of my role as an insider researcher. It reflects on what I have learned throughout the process of undertaking this study, how it changed me, and what I hope recipients will take away from it. Drawing on Schön's (1983, 1987) concept of the reflective practitioner and structured through key elements of Gibbs' (1988) reflective cycle, I position reflection as an integral component of learning through action within the research process.

Reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action

Schön (1983) distinguishes between reflection-in-action, which occurs during an activity, and reflection-on-action, which takes place retrospectively. In this study, reflection-in-action occurred, for example, during interviews when I consciously adapted my questioning to avoid responding from my HR perspective. Thus, by recognizing an instinctive tendency to reassure participants or reframe their concerns in organizational terms, I deliberately used more neutral language, allowing participants' accounts to unfold.

Reflection-on-action occurred after interviews and during data analysis, when I confronted an implicit assumption I had initially carried into the study: that the shift towards agile organizational structures, and the implied managerial and non-managerial role transitions, were inherently necessary, and that resistance therefore constituted a problem of individual adaptation that I interpreted as something to be "addressed". Reflecting on and challenging this assumption directly informed the conclusions of this study by underpinning a critique of idealised agile organizational structures, demonstrating that resistance often reflects legitimate constraints rather than individual obstructive behaviour.

Applying Gibbs' reflective cycle

Gibbs' (1988) reflective cycle provided a structured framework for learning from experience, comprising 6 stages: (1) description of the experience, (2) feelings and thoughts about the experience, (3) evaluation, (4) analysis, (5) conclusion regarding key learnings, (6) action plan to inform future practice.

Applied to this study, I experienced tension between the executive management's narrative, which framed the shift towards an agile organizational structure as both necessary and beneficial, and its implications, which threatened my own professional aspirations. At that time,

I largely accepted this rationale, assuming that the shift to agile structures was necessary and that managers and non-managers should not have resisted it, shaping my initial interpretation of resistance.

However, engagement with participants' accounts during the interviews prompted a critical re-evaluation of this initial interpretation. Participants' accounts made me recognize the substantial challenges that the shift to agile organizational structures posed for managers and non-managers, particularly in relation to perceived threats to identity, power and status shaping their responses, which made it difficult or impossible for them not to resist the change.

This recognition marked a turning point in my reflective process, as it exposed how my initial acceptance of the executive narrative may have constrained my sensitivity to the lived experiences of those undergoing managerial and non-managerial role transitions. Through learning from reflection, I adopted a more reflexive stance towards resistance and the facilitation of managerial and non-managerial role transitions grounded in the perspectives of those undergoing it, rather than framing resistance as a deficit or failure on the part of managers and non-managers. This informed my future practice.

Reflexive implications for practice and scholarship

Conducting this study as an insider researcher in my HR capacity provided a valuable lens, as I am accustomed to balancing the interests of both employer and employee, often adopting a position that seeks to accommodate the needs of both parties. By engaging with the subjective experiences of owners functioning as executive managers, former department and deputy department managers, as well as non-managers, I was able to develop a more nuanced understanding of resistance. What I came to realize is that this organizational shift, beyond its structural appearance, entails significant human consequences. It is deeply personal for individuals, shaped by legitimate concerns that must be acknowledged and addressed. Consequently, undertaking this study has fundamentally transformed the way I approach the facilitation of role transitions in practice. I now recognise that addressing managerial and non-managerial resistance requires engaging with identity-related concerns.

Finally, what I hope recipients will take away is this: employers, particularly the top management, who strive to shift towards agile organizational structures, and consequently expect employees to change their role, must confront the inherent limitations of such a shift.

Moreover, employee resistance should be recognized as a signal of what is personally at stake for the individuals involved, rather than dismissing resistance as mere opposition. Facilitating managerial and non-managerial role transitions requires a deep sensitivity to the identity-related challenges experienced by those expected to adapt, as well as a genuine willingness from employers to acknowledge and support these challenges.

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Appendix

Appendix 3 – Research Methodology

Appendix 3.1 Ethical Approval

BUSINESS, PSYCHOLOGY & SPORT RESEARCH ETHICS PANEL (BPS REP)

CONFIRMATION OF APPROVAL

8 November 2022

REP CODE: CBPS22230004-R

IDENTIFYING PERCEIVED BARRIERS AND SUCCESS FACTORS MOVING FROM TRADITIONAL TO AGILE LEADERSHIP STRUCTURES AND EMPLOYEE VOICE IN A MEDIUM SIZED IT FIRM BASED IN GERMANY

Dear Martin

Thank you for your revised application for proportionate review ethical approval to the Business, Psychology and Sport Research Ethics Panel submitted on 31 October 2022.

Your application has been reviewed in accordance with the University of Worcester Ethics Policy and in compliance with the Standard Operating Procedures for proportionate ethical review.

The outcome of the review is that the Panel is now happy to grant this project ethical approval to proceed.

Your research must be undertaken as set out in the approved application for the approval to be valid. You must review your answers to the checklist on an ongoing basis and resubmit for approval where you intend to deviate from the approved research. Any major deviation from the approved application will require a new application for approval.

As part of the University Ethics Policy, the University undertakes an audit of a random sample of approved research. You may be required to complete a questionnaire about your research.

Yours sincerely

DR BLAIRE MORGAN
Chair – BPS Proportionate Review Panel
Deputy Chair - Business, Psychology and Sport Research Ethics Panel
ethics@worc.ac.uk

Appendix 3.2 Participant Information Sheet and Privacy Statement - English Version

University of Worcester

Version: 1.0

Date: 10.11.2022

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND PRIVACY NOTICE

TITLE OF PROJECT:
Identifying perceived barriers and success factors moving from traditional to agile leadership structures and employee voice in a medium sized IT firm based in Germany

Invitation

The University of Worcester engages in a wide range of research which seeks to provide greater understanding of the world around us, to contribute to improved human health and well-being and to provide answers to social, economic and environmental problems.

I would like to invite you to take part in one of my research projects. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being done, what it will involve for you, what information I will ask from you, and what I will do with that information.

I will in the course of this project be collecting personal information. The UK continues to be bound by the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation which is now the "UK GDPR" Under UK GDPR I am required to provide a justification (what is called a "legal basis") in order to collect such information. The legal basis for this project is "**task carried out in the public interest**".

You can find out more about the approach to dealing with your personal information at https://www.worcester.ac.uk/informationassurance/visitor-privacy-notice.html.

Please take time to read this document carefully.

What is the purpose of the research?
This study aims to Identify perceived barriers and success factors moving from traditional to agile leadership structures and employee voice in a medium sized IT firm based in Germany.

Who is undertaking the research?
Martin Kistenich
Position / Role: Researcher in the "Doctor of Business Administration" (DBA) program, University of Worcester

Who has oversight of the research?
The research has been approved by the Research Ethics Panel for the College of Business, Psychology and Sport (CBPS REP) in line with the University's Research Ethics Policy. The University of Worcester acts as the "Data Controller" for personal data collected through its research projects and is subject to the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. We are registered with the Information Commissioner's Office and our Data Protection Officer is Helen Johnstone (infoassurance@worc.ac.uk). For more on our approach to Information Assurance and Security visit: https://www.worcester.ac.uk/informationassurance/index.html.

Why have I been invited to take part?
You have received this invitation because you are an organizational member of the case study organization and involved in its transition from traditional to agile leadership structures and employee voice. I would like to invite every organizational member to participate in this study and I am hoping to recruit 12-30 participants.

How do I take part?
It is up to you to decide whether or not you want to take part in this study. Please take your time to decide and talk to others about it if you wish. Deciding to take part or not will not impact on your job.

The process by which you can agree to participate is to respond by e-mail to kism1_20@uni.worc.ac.uk

If you do decide to take part, at the data collection stage, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

How can I withdraw from this study after agreeing to participate?
Once you have agreed to participate you can withdraw from the study anytime until 14 days following data collection. If you wish to have your data withdrawn please contact me (my contact details are given below) and your data will then not be used.

What will happen if I agree to take part?
If you agree to take part and signed the consent form, you will be contacted by me to arrange a joint interview appointment and conduct the video interview.

The interview will take place on-line (via MS-Teams) and is expected to last 60 minutes. The interview will ask about your perceptions on moving from traditional to agile leadership structures and employee voice as well as related barriers and success factors.

The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed and stored in a OneDrive password protected folder hosted on University of Worcester's secure server. All data will be stored until the DBA degree is obtained. After obtaining the degree, all data will be carefully destroyed so that digital files are permanently deleted.

What are the benefits for me in taking part?

The research project will engage every organizational member to reflect on his/her individual perceptions moving from traditional to agile leadership structures and employee voice and reveal challenges they might face as well as success factors. Accordingly, participating in this project is an opportunity for the participants to express their voice and thus improve their organization´s practice.

Participating in this research project offers you the opportunity to reflect on your personal perceptions on moving from traditional to agile leadership structures and employee voice and thus identifying challenges and success factors in order to improve organisational practice.

Are there any risks for me if I take part?

There are no known risks to you taking part.

What will you do with my information?

Your personal data / information will be treated confidentially at all times; that is, it will not be shared with anyone other than project supervisors. It will also not be shared with any third parties specified in the consent form unless it has been fully anonymised.

During the project, all data / information will be kept securely in line with the University's Policy for the Effective Management of Research Data and its Information Security Policy.

I will process your personal information for a range of purposes associated with the project primary of which are:

- To use your information along with information gathered from other participants in the research project to seek new knowledge and understanding that can be derived from the information I have gathered.
- To summarise this information in written form for the purposes of dissemination (through research reports, a thesis / dissertation, conference papers, journal articles or other publications). Any information disseminated / published will be at a summary level and will be fully anonymised and there will be no way of identifying your individual personal information within the published results.
- To use the summary and conclusions arising from the research project for teaching and further research purposes. Any information used in this way will be at a summary level and will be fully anonymised. There will be no way of identifying your individual personal information from the summary information used in this way.

If you wish to receive a summary of the research findings or to be given access to any of the publications arising from the research, please contact me.

How long will you keep my data for?

Your personal data will be retained until the project (*including the dissemination period*) has been completed. At the completion of the project, I will only retain your data in anonymised form destroy/delete all other data relating to the project.

How can I find out what information you hold about me?

You have certain rights in respect of the personal information the University holds about you. For more information about Individual Rights under GDPR and how you exercise them please visit: https://www.worcester.ac.uk/informationassurance/requests-for-personal-data.html.

What happens next?
Please keep this information sheet.

If you would be interested in taking part, please contact me using the details below and I will be delighted to answer any further questions you have about the research.

My contact details are:
Martin Kistenich
Email: kism1_20@uni.worc.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about the project at this point or at any later date you may contact me (the researcher) or you may contact the Supervisors:
Dr Catharine Ross, c.ross@worc.ac.uk
Professor Lynn Nichol, l.nichol@worc.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

If you would like to speak to an independent person who is not a member of the research team, please contact the University of Worcester, using the following details:

Secretary to Research Ethics Panel for College of Business, Psychology and Sport
University of Worcester
Henwick Grove
Worcester WR2 6AJ
ethics@worc.ac.uk

Appendix 3.3 UW Consent Form - English Version

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Project **Identifying perceived barriers and success factors moving from traditional to agile leadership structures and employee voice in a medium sized IT firm based in Germany**

Participant identification number for this study:
Name of Researcher **Martin Kistenich**

I, the undersigned, confirm that (**please initial boxes as appropriate**):

1.	I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided in the Information Sheet dated _____ or it has been read to me.	
2.	I have been able to ask questions about the project and my participation and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	
3.	I understand that taking part in this study involves participation in interview(s) and that the data will be audio recorded and that digital notes will be taken during the interview. I understand that the audio recordings will be transcribed as text after the interview(s). I was informed that the audio recordings will be kept until the degree is completed and will be deleted afterwards. I know that notes that have been taken during the interview(s) will be deleted and transcripts will be deleted after the completion of the dissertation.	
4.	I understand that taking part in the study might bear the risk of having psychological and/or emotional consequences of the participation.	
5.	I understand I can withdraw until 14 days after the interview without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.	
6.	I understand that the information I provide will be used for: reports, publications, recommendation for action, training/consulting activities (researchers' business website, social media channels).	
7.	I agree that my information can be quoted in research outputs	
8.	I understand that my real name will not be revealed, and pseudonyms will be used for quotes.	
9.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.) to me.	
10	I understand that personal information collected about me that can identify me, such as my name, or where I live, will not be shared beyond the study team.	
11.	I consent to the audio recording during the interview(s).	
12.	I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.	
13.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	
14.	I know who to contact if I have any concerns about this research	

Name of Participant	Signature	Date
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

Appendix 3.4 Preliminary Semi-Structured Interview Guide – English Version

Preliminary Semi-Structured Interview Guide – English Version:

Leadership structures:

- What you understand by traditional leadership structures?
- How have you experience this in your organization?
- What you understand by agile leadership structures?
- How have you experience this in your organization?
- Why you think the executive management decided to shift the leadership structure to an agile one?
- Can you talk me through how the adoption from traditional to agile leadership structures has developed up until now?
- How has the organization changed?
- How has this change affected your personally?
- Do you perceive that you hold a formal or informal leadership role in the organizational hierarchy?
    - If yes: How did your leadership role change during the adoption?
    - If no: How did your abilities/capabilities to exercise leadership change during the adoption?
- How you perceive your social status during this adoption how did it change?
- Where were/are challenges … when adopting agile leadership structures?
    - …to the organization
    - …to the employees
    - …to the management
    - …to you
- How were these challenges overcome?
- If they are not solved yet. What would be your approach for solving these?
- Where in the organization have agile leadership structures been successfully adopted?
- Which factors facilitated the successful adoption of agile leadership structures?
- What else would you like to tell me about related to this adoption?

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Employee voice:

- Can you talk me through how the enablement of employee voice has developed up until now in this adoption?
- How has the organization changed?
- How has this change affected you personally and your voice?
- Do you have voice in your organization?
    - Are you able to suggest new ways of doing things?
    - Can you freely express your thoughts with those you work closely with?
    - Are you able to challenge things?
- How can you speak up (e.g. in which organizational formats)?
- Where were/are challenges … when speaking up/expressing voice?
    - …to the organization
    - …to the employees
    - …to the management
    - …to you
- How have these challenges been addressed?
- If they are not solved yet. What would be your approach for solving these?
- Where in the organization employee voice has been successfully enabled?
- Which factors facilitated the successful enablement of employee voice?
- What else would you like to tell me about related to employee voice in your organization?

Appendix 3.5 Final Semi-Structured Interview Guide – English Version

Final Semi-Structured Interview Guide – English Version:

Understanding of traditional structures and experience within the organization

- What you understand by traditional leadership structures?
- How have you experienced this in your organization?

Understanding of agile structures and experience within the organization

- What you understand by agile leadership structures?
- How have you experienced this in your organization?

Adoption from traditional to agile structures and implied personal changes

- Why you think the executive management decided to shift the leadership structure to an agile one?
- Can you talk me through how the adoption from traditional to agile leadership structures has developed up until now?
- How has the organization changed?
- How has this change affected your personally?
- Do you perceive that you hold a formal or informal leadership role in the organizational hierarchy? What role do you have?
- How did your (leadership) role change during the adoption?
- How did your abilities/capabilities to exercise leadership change during the adoption?
- How you perceive your social status during this adoption how did it change?
- How you perceive the distribution of (managerial) power during this adoption how did it change?

Perceived barriers

- Where were/are challenges … when adopting agile leadership structures?
  - …to the organization
  - …to the employees
  - …to the management
  - …to you

Overcoming perceived barriers

- How were these challenges overcome?
- If they are not solved yet. What would be your approach for solving these?
- Where in the organization have agile leadership structures been successfully adopted?
- Which factors facilitated the successful adoption of agile leadership structures?

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Final reflections

- What else would you like to tell me about related to this adoption?

Enablement of employee voice and implied personal changes

- Can you talk me through how the enablement of employee voice has developed up until now in this adoption?
- How has the organization changed?
- How has this change affected you personally and your voice?
- Do you have voice in your organization?
    - Are you able to suggest new ways of doing things?
    - Can you freely express your thoughts with those you work closely with?
    - Are you able to challenge things?
- How can you speak up (e.g. in which organizational formats)?

Perceived barriers

- Where were/are challenges … when speaking up/expressing voice?
    - …to the organization
    - …to the employees
    - …to the management
    - …to you

Overcoming perceived barriers

- How have these challenges been addressed?
- If they are not solved yet. What would be your approach for solving these?
- Where in the organization employee voice has been successfully enabled?
- Which factors facilitated the successful enablement of employee voice?

Final reflections

- What else would you like to tell me about related to employee voice in your organization?

Appendix 3.6 Example of Coded Interview Transcript

	1	**I:** Ich habe jetzt die Tonaufnahme gestartet. Vielen Dank, dass du dir die Zeit nimmst. Was verstehst du unter traditionellen Führungsstrukturen?
..Traditional structure: Participants´ defi	2	**P (FDM1):** Traditionelle Führungsstrukturen bedeutet für mich das, was wir auch in diesem Unternehmen hatten - hierarchische Strukturen. Diese gehen einher mit Leitern, die viel Verantwortung tragen aber dann auch Aufgaben verteilen. Das Neue an diesen agilen Methoden ist die Verantwortung an die Mitarbeitern zu übergeben - also einer Verantwortungsverteilung.
..Agile structure: Participants´ definiti		
	3	**I:** Du hast ja schon angesprochen, dass die traditionellen Strukturen aus deiner Sicht auch bei deinem jetzigen Unternehmen ausgeprägt waren. Wie hast du diese in deinem Unternehmen erlebt?
	4	**P (FDM1):** Also bei uns war es immer ein bisschen anders, aber wir haben es an den Schnittstellen zu anderen Abteilungen als Unterschied wahrgenommen, wo die Rolle des Abteilungsleiters zum Teil ganz anders gelebt wurde.
	5	**I:** Wie hat sich dieser Wechsel von den traditionellen zu agilen Führungsstrukturen in deinem Unternehmen bisher dargestellt? Was waren Meilensteine, die dir dazu im Gedächtnis sind?
..Accepting that some individuals need t	6	**P (FDM1):** Meilensteine: Was am prägendsten bei mir im Kopf ist, dass es nicht ohne personelle Brüche auf der Führungsebene geht oder ging. Also für mich war der Eindruck, dass es auf Führungsebene Leute gibt, die finden es spannend und gehen mit und dann gibt es Leute, die wehren sich dagegen. Das ist immer, wenn man Neues einführt, damit ist zu rechnen. Wie kriegt man Leute dazu, dass sie mitziehen oder sich nicht wehren? Das ist die Frage. Mein Eindruck war, dass das auf der Führungsebene oft als Machtverlust empfunden wurde. Dass das persönliche Verständnis der Rolle, wenn man jetzt von Macht sprechen will, schwer in Zweifel gezogen wurde. Deshalb hat ein gewisses Streuben gegen den Prozess stattgefunden. Also das ist, was ich meine beobachtet zu haben, was zu personellen Brüchen führt. Der Fisch fängt vom Kopf an zu stinken und das zieht Dinge nach sich. Es gibt glaube ich, auch Gruppen, die sich besser verstehen, die besser miteinander können als andere Gruppen. Und wenn da einer mit mehr Verantwortung drinnen ist, der sich streubt und sich Mitarbeiter, die vielleicht prinzipiell dem aufgeschlossen wären, aus Loyalitätsgründen, also loyal sind, fällt es denen vielleicht auch schwerer mitzugehen, weil es ja quasi ein Loyalitätsbruch gegenüber seinem Vorgesetzten wäre, wenn er nicht die Meinung hätte bzgl. der agilen Arbeitsweise. Also solche
..Fear of loss of power		

1/12

Effekte meine ich. Diese kann man spüren oder beobachten. Ich meine schon auch zu beobachten, wenn dann gewisse Leute weg sind, dass anderer aufgeschlossener den neuen Dingen sind als sie vorher waren, weil sie vielleicht die Sorge hatten, damit ihren Vorgesetzten vor den Kopf zu stoßen.

7 **I:** Wir sprechen gleich auch noch mal über Herausforderungen und Barrieren bei dem Übergang. Ich würde trotzdem gerne schonmal auf die bereits genannten eingehen. Du hast gesagt, dass es für Führungskräfte eine Herausforderung war diesen Wechsel mitzugehen, da sie Angst vor Machtverlust hatten - das ist eine wichtige Thematik. Und den zweiten Punkt würde ich wie folgt zusammenfassen - sag bitte nochmal, wie du das verstehst: Es gibt ein Spannungsfeld zwischen Führungskräften, die eine neue Rolle einnehmen sollen, sich aber gegen den Wandel wehren, und ihren Mitarbeitern, die ihnen bis zu diesem Zeitpunkt disziplinarisch unterstellt waren und eine gewisse Bindung aufgebaut haben. In der neuen Welt sollen eigentlich alle auf Augenhöhe agieren. Das lehnen manche Führungskräfte ab oder versuchen es zu vermeiden und die Mitarbeiter stellen sich aus Loyalität zu ihrer Führungskraft auch gegen diesen Wandel. Habe ich das so richtig zusammengefasst?

8 **P (FDM1):** Ja.

9 **I:** Welche Lösungsmöglichkeiten oder Erfolgsfaktoren siehst du in diesen beiden Punkten? Also zu dem Thema Machtverlust der Führungskräfte und zu der zweiten Thematik, die du genannt hast.

10 **P (FDM1):** Das Schwierige daran ist, wie man so etwas verhindern kann oder in wie weit man es überhaupt verhindern will. Ich glaube, das Wichtigste wäre, Führungskräfte früh mitzunehmen. Weil das hat einen positiven Folgeeffekt: Wenn man es schafft, die Führungskräfte früh zu gewinnen, etwa durch Partizipation, und ihnen das Gefühl gibt es sei ihre Idee, dann stößt man sie weniger vor den Kopf. Vielmehr lässt man den Wandel von ihnen kommen, lässt das Ganze wachsen, vermittelt den Eindruck, dass es auch in ihrem Sinne ist - dass es von ihnen kommt. Nicht von außen zu sagen: "Wir werden jetzt agil", sondern diesen Prozess reifen zu lassen. Das wird vielleicht helfen, den einen oder anderen mehr zu gewinnen. Alle wird man wahrscheinlich nicht auf seine Seite bekommen, das stelle ich mir schwierig vor.

..Providing Tailored, Individual Support t

11 **I:** Gute Punkte. Wir waren davor dabei über Meilensteine zu sprechen. Gerne können wir auch direkt zum Thema der Herausforderungen und Barrieren

übergehen. Ich habe das in vier Ebenen aufgeteilt: Zum einen die organisationale Ebene - also wirklich auf dieser Metaebene, welche Herausforderungen sich für die Organisation insgesamt ergeben. Dann die Ebene der Geschäftsführung, die der Führungskräfte oder ehemaligen Führungskräfte und die Ebene der Mitarbeiter. Vielleicht kannst du einfach frei erzählen, welche Themen du hier siehst - zum Beispiel die Thematik des Machtverlustes bei Führungskräften oder die Spannungsfelder zwischen Führungskräften und Mitarbeitern. Überleg einfach mal frei, was dir dazu einfällt.

12 **P (FDM1):** Was mir frei einfällt... Also organisatorisch fällt mir die Herausforderung ein, dass man nicht von einem Schlag auf den anderen die ganze Organisation umstellen kann. Man muss schon irgendwo anfangen und das zu managen ist schwierig für die Geschäftsführung. Und Manche würden es sich halt wünschen, schon früher anders arbeiten zu können.

13 **I:** Was hast du beobachtet?

14 **P (FDM1):** Also die Beobachtung, wo ich meinte Neid wahrzunehmen war weniger auf die neuen Formen der Zusammenarbeit, sondern das ist irgendwie damit bei uns einhergegangen, dass irgendwo die Idee in den Köpfen entstanden ist, dass Neues nur in diesen neuen Teams passieren wird. Und die Alten flicken nur die Löcher und halten das Ding am laufen. Und ich glaube das ist es. Jeder will gerne innovieren oder Neues machen, neu Produkte, Neues verkaufen oder entwickeln und forschen. Das macht jeder lieber als wie der Notnagel zu sein, der den Betrieb am Laufen hält und Löcher stopft oder Support macht - wie gesagt, Außenperspektive, ich bin wenig betroffen. Es ist einhergegangen mit dem "Die coolen Sachen, dass wird nur in den neuen Teams gemacht". Wie man es unterbinden kann? Immer durch Kommunikation, reden mit den Mitarbeitern. "Geduld, wir wollen das ausrollen auf alle aber es geht nicht von heute auf morgen". Also auf einmal alles umstellen glaube ich wird schwierig. Kommunikation ist glaube ich das Einzige, was hilft: "Es wäre am besten, wenn wir gleich alle glücklich machen, aber das geht in dem Fall nicht". Meiner Meinung nach würde das nicht funktioniere, das wäre zu riskant.

15 **I**: Siehst du noch etwas auf organisationaler Ebene willst du zur Geschäftsführungsebene kommen?

16 **P (FDM1):** Geschäftsführungseben - ja, das ist ein bisschen schwieriger. Aber ich sehe auf Geschäftsführungseben einmal. Was toll ist, wenn die Erkenntnis da ist, dass es einen Wandel braucht und die

Bereitschaft einzugehen, weil die Erkenntnis ist das eine, man geht auch Risiken ein. Das ist ein massiver Wandel, der immer Gefahren birgt. Das ist beides toll und die große Herausforderung für die Geschäftsführung, wirklich so viele wie möglich von Anfang an mitzunehmen. Das geht von ganz oben los. Dass es irgendwie gefühlt nicht von der Geschäftsführung kommt, auch wenn es von der Geschäftsführung kommt. Ich will mir nicht anmaßen, dass ich wüsste, wie es besser ginge oder groß kritisieren. Der einzige Gedanke ist, wie viel Zeit man sich geben will, bevor man wirklich beginnt.

17 **I:** Also du meinst die Vorbereitungszeit vor der Umsetzung?

18 **P (FDM1):** Ja, genau. Also dieses Mindset zu schaffen, möglichst viele abzuholen und ihnen das Gefühl zu geben: "Ja, wir wollen das" - das hätte vielleicht mehr Zeit benötigt - aber man hat auch nicht ewig Zeit. Das macht es schwierig. Also dem genügend Zeit einzuräumen, auch wenn es dann Zeit kostet, wertzuschätzen, dass man durch eine gute Vorbereitung viel gewinnen kann.

19 **I:** Also die Schwierigkeit, dabei einen guten Mittelweg zu finden?

20 **P (FDM1):** Wenn ich es auf dieses Unternehmen beziehe, dann denke ich, dass da das Ganze garnicht so zum tragen hat kommen können, weil es quasi die Idee den Produktbereich X neu zu machen schon gegeben hat, vor der Idee des Agilen. Das ist dann so ein bisschen Hand in Hand gekommen. Mit der Idee das Produkt X neu zu machen, ist auch die Idee geboren anders zu Arbeiten. Also diese reflektierte Vorbereitung eines Wandels zum Agilen glaube ich ist ad hoc passiert im Zuge der Neugestaltung. Ich glaube auch im Zuge der Neugestaltung dieses Produktes ist bewusst geworden, welche Schwächen man mit dem aktuellen Produkt hat und und sich in Zukunft stellen wird müssen und wie man es auf die Beine stellen kann, dass es auch in Zukunft agiler und schneller am Leben gehalten und weiterentwickelt werden kann. Es war ein Prozess und dann fehlt natürlich eine reflektierte Vorbereitung. Also der Anlass war schon da und damit der Prozess gestartet.

21 **I:** Du hast ja jetzt gerade Punkte auf organisationaler Ebene und auf Ebene der Geschäftsführung dargestellt. Wie ist es auf der Ebene der Führungskräfte, gibt es da noch weitere Punkte, die du siehst?

..Accepting that some individuals need t

22 **P (FDM1):** Als Führungskraft müsste man eigentlich froh

..Accepting that some individuals need t

..Providing Tailored, Individual Suppor

sein, wenn man ein Team hat, das froh, motiviert und eigenverantwortlich arbeitet - als Führungskraft kann man sich eigentlich nichts anderes wünschen. Ich glaube da ist wirklich das Mindset der einzelnen Person entscheidend. Auf der Ebene der Führungskräfte müsste man schauen: Wenn jemand nicht dieses Mindset trägt, und stattdessen Macht und Kontrolle eine gewisse Rolle spielen - einhergehend mit dem Gefühl, etwas hergeben zu müssen -, dann sollte man versuchen, ihn zu motivieren, sich in eine andere Richtung zu verändern und seine Rolle anders zu interpretieren.

23 **I:** Also als Erfolgsfaktor gemeinsam ein neues Rollenverständnis zu schaffen? Oder was meinst du genau?

..Reassuring aspects important can be s

24 **P (FDM1):** Genau, weil ich denke, dass jede Führungskraft nicht nur qua Funktion Abteilungsleiter war, sondern dass die Leute auch Kompetenzen haben, die nicht jeder Mitarbeiter sonst in dem Team bringt und sie würden ja auch in einem Team, dass flach und agil agiert, nach wie vor Leute mit besonderen Kompetenzen und Fähigkeiten sein.

25 **I:** Wäre es dann schwierig, das zuvor Erlernte umzustellen - also wenn jemand vorher übergeordnet war -, dass dann wirklich alle auf Augenhöhe arbeiten?

..Accepting that some individuals need t

26 **P (FDM1):** Ja, das stelle ich mir schwierig vor - vor allem wenn es nicht vorher schon so war. Also wenn man sich vorher nicht schon als Teil dessen gesehen hat mit der Aufgabe, dass die Abteilung funktioniert und mit Kompetenzen ausgestattet ist, die allen helfen soll das Ziel zu erreichen, und auch als Servicedienstleister im Team. Jede Führungskraft arbeitet dem Team zu - mit anderen Funktionen teilweise oder in anderen Formen, aber immer auch mit einer "Team-Kappe". Wenn man das natürlich nicht so sieht, dann ist der Umstieg härter, wenn man das immer schon so gesehen hat, fällt das vielleicht leichter den Blick oder die Verteilung zu ändern, also diese Umverteilung. Aber ich kann mir auch vorstellen, dass es schwierig ist - kommt darauf an, wie man die Rolle ausgefüllt hat. Aber wenn es sehr von oben herab war, kann man dann schwer auf Augenhöhe gehen. Also wenn die Augenhöhe nicht schon immer da war, zumindest auf der menschlichen Ebene, dann wird es nicht funktionieren.

27 **I:** Was würdest du auf Mitarbeiter-Ebene sehen?

28 **P (FDM1):** Viele Dinge, die man nicht unterschätzen sollte, wenn jeder gleich ist. Da ist einfach jeder Mensch anders und solche Dinge brauchen Zeit. Also Mitarbeiter

brauchen vor allem Zeit, sich an neue Dinge zu gewöhnen und wenn das vorher nicht war, ist das oft schwierig. Zum Beispiel wenn so etwas wie Retrospektiven eingeführt werden, wo dann auch Dinge zur Sprache gebracht werden, die sonst vielleicht unausgesprochen geblieben sind und der Mitarbeiter mit den vorherigen Verantwortlichen kommuniziert, dann braucht es eine gewisse Zeit, bis man das auch in Anspruch nimmt. Bis man sich auch traut. Dass man sich so sicher fühlt. Es geht um ein sicheres Umfeld. Und wenn man sich vorher nicht sicher gefühlt hat, solche Sachen zu artikulieren, dann geht es auch nicht, indem man von einem Tag auf den anderen sagt, "So, wir haben jetzt einen sicheren Raum und du kannst artikulieren, was du willst". Das wird nicht passieren, solche Dinge brauchen Zeit.

29 **I:** Also was ich raushöre bei den von dir angesprochenen Herausforderung ist, dass die Mitarbeiter erst mal Zeit brauchen, sich an die Umstellung zu gewöhnen und die bisherige Sozialisation bzw. die bisherigen Denkweisen zu adaptieren oder anzupassen. Du hast jetzt gerade auch schon einen Erfolgsfaktoren angesprochen. Was sind Erfolgsfaktoren, damit die Mitarbeiter ihre Denkweise ändern oder sich daran anpassen können?

..Remove Perceived Fear of Gain in Powe

..Accepting that some individuals need t

30 **P (FDM1):** Vorleben, auf jeden Fall, ermutigen und immer wieder diese Räume öffnen und dem Ganzen Zeit geben. Selbst vorangehen, selbst vielleicht unangenehme Dinge ansprechen in den Retrospektiven. Und je öfter man das macht, um so mehr fühlen sich andere auch sicher das zu tun. Und manche Mitarbeiter wird man nie gewinnen. Es wird wohl welche geben, die werden sich nur denken: "Was für ein Scheiß". Also manche wird man nie gewinnen. Aber sie werden vielleicht in der einen oder anderen Situation gewisse Dinge dann doch schätzen lernen. Manche werden vielleicht über das ganze negativ denken, aber doch dann irgendwann die positiven Seiten sehen. Sprich, "Ich kann jetzt gewisse Dinge frei machen".

31 **I:** Wie siehst du diese Thematik, dass die Mitarbeiter dann Verantwortung und Führungsthemen übernehmen und nicht mehr diese Person haben, die von oben Anweisungen gibt?

..Fear of gain in power

..Remove Perceived Fear of Gain in Po

32 **P (FDM1):** Ich glaube, die allermeisten Leute sind am motiviertesten, wenn sie eigenständig etwas machen können und das Gefühl vermittelt bekommen, dass das Wert. Und jeder von uns kennt das: Es gibt sicher Leute, die das vielleicht anstrengender finden, jetzt eigenverantwortlich Dinge zu machen. Es ist anstrengend, aber es ist viel lohnender und

..Fear of gain in power
..Remove Perceived Fear of Gain in Po
..Accepting that some individuals need t

motivierender. Und ich glaube die, die gar nicht gerne eigenständig arbeiten, die gibt es nicht, die sind es vielleicht so gewohnt. Oder wenn es wirklich so ist, dass jemand nicht gerne eigenständig arbeitet, dann kommen sie vielleicht an einen Punkt, wo sie für sich die Entscheidung treffen, vielleicht etwas anders zu machen oder dies nicht das richtige für sie ist. Also wenn ich in meinem Bereich gar nichts finde, was mich begeistert und ich sage, "Das mache ich jetzt", weil wir wollen das Ziel erreichen. Wenn einen da gar nichts begeistert, sollte man vielleicht Nachdenken "Mache ich das Richtige?". Also die Möglichkeit der Fortbildung parallel, ist ganz wichtig. Weil in Zeiten der Veränderung braucht jeder eine Möglichkeit sich zu verändern, wenn er das will oder er nutzt die Veränderung, um etwas zu lernen. Dann soll diese Möglichkeit der Weiterbildung parallel immer offen sein.

33 **I:** Gibt es aus Sicht der Mitarbeiter noch weitere Themen oder Herausforderungen in diesem Wechsel, die du siehst?

..Fear of gain in power

34 **P (FDM1):** Ängste. Sie haben vielleicht Angst, dass die Veränderung so sein wird, dass sie während der täglichen Arbeit unglücklicher werden, als sie jetzt sind.

35 **I:** Und was meinst du, wie das angegangen werden kann?

36 **P (FDM1):** Wenn sie diese Ängste kommunizieren, dann können wir etwas unternehmen. Oft kommunizieren sie dies wahrscheinlich nicht. Das Ausprobieren ist ganz wichtig. Also den Mitarbeitern frühzeitig die Möglichkeiten geben, solche Formen der Arbeit mal auszuprobieren, um zu sehen, "Ist ja nicht so schlimm, kann ich mir vorstellen" oder "Nein, das will ich nicht".

..Remove Perceived Fear of Gain in Powe

37 **I:** Also Experimente als Erfolgsfaktor, in denen man ihnen die Möglichkeit gibt, das zu explorieren?

38 **P (FDM1):** Ja, genau. Und wenn man dann sieht - im Grunde es ist anders, aber nicht so, dass man nicht glücklich wird. Also einfach mal die Möglichkeit geben reinzuschnuppern, und die Übung am Anfang bewusst kleiner zu halten, dass auf keinen Fall eine Spannung eintritt, weil dann erzielt man wahrscheinlich das Gegenteil. Also sie versuchsweise hineinwachsen zu lassen. Das ist das Einzige, was mir neben Kommunikation einfällt.

..Remove Perceived Fear of Gain in Powe

39 **I:** Wie hat sich diese Macht, die vorher die Führungskräfte hatten, verteilt? Ist diese eher nach oben an die Geschäftsführung gegangen oder nach unten an die Mitarbeiter? Hattest du da Einblicke?

7/12

..Role transition: Department and deputy

40 **P (FDM1):** Eher wenig Einblicke. Ich glaube schon, dass es ein bisschen verteilter ist. Dass jetzt gewisse Dinge von Leuten wahrgenommen werden, nicht nur die, die in der Leitung waren. Es ist schon so, dass halt je nach Expertise die Erfahreneren am meisten davon schultern müssen oder wollen - das ist die Frage, ob sie selbst es wollen oder ob sie es jetzt tun, weil bei den anderen die Erfahrung fehlt. Das heißt, es verteilt sich, aber es verteilen sich nicht gleichmäßig. Manche Erfahreneren übernehmen mehr als Unerfahrene, was total normal ist. Schwierig wird es, wenn dann ein Mitarbeiter fragt, "Warum soll ich jetzt mehr Verantwortung übernehmen als der andere, wenn wir doch auf einer Augenhöhe sind?". Das muss er ja nicht. Solche Gedanken wären kontraproduktiv, wenn die Aufkommen. Er kann auch auf etwas verzichten und dafür etwas anderes machen.

41 **I:** Also auch als Herausforderung die Motivation diese Verantwortungen und solche Führungsthemen zu übernehmen oder was meinst du?

..Remove Non-Managers´ Perceived Thre

42 **P (FDM1):** Ja, die Motivation aller anderen im Team. Aber das ist ein Prozess. Also kein Konkurrenzdenken. Den anderen Entwickler nicht als Konkurrenz zu sehen, sondern wenn ich mehr Erfahrung habe und dafür mehr verantwortungsvolle Sachen übernehme als der andere, eher mich als Coach für den anderen zu sehen und den dazu zu bringen, dass er auch Dinge verantworten kann, die aktuell nur ich machen kann. Ihn dahin zu bringen, dass wir es alle machen können und dann kann man es auch gleichmäßig verteilen. Aber das wäre das ideale Mindset. Den anderen so weit zu bringen, dass wir auf gleichen Erfahrungsstand kommen und dann muss nicht nur ich immer diese verantwortungsvollen Jobs übernehmen. Und da muss nicht immer ich der letzte Verantwortliche sein, wenn ich ein Release einstelle oder sonstige Dinge. Aber wenn da Konkurrenzsicht herrscht, wird es nicht funktionieren. Es muss ja Teamsicht sein.

43 **I:** Also auch als Herausforderung noch diese traditionelle Denkweise bzw. Ellenbogenmentalität hinsichtlich Karriere, Aufstieg, etc. geht?

..Remove Non-Managers´ Perceived Thre

44 **P (FDM1):** Ja. Das wäre hinderlich. Also dem kann man eigentlich nur entgegenwirken, indem man auch klar macht, dass jeder sich dorthin entwickeln kann, wo er hin will in der Firma unabhängig davon, wohin sich andere entwickeln. Es ist in hierarchischen Strukturen schwieriger, weil dort gibt es halt immer nur einen Leiter und das kann nur einer sein. Und der Vorteil von flacheren Organisationen ist, dass im Grunde jeder sich dahin entwickeln kann, wo er gerne sich hin entwickelt,

..Remove Non-Managers´ Perceived Thre

um dort verantwortungsvolle Aufgaben übernehmen kann, die ihm liegen, Spaß machen, wo er gerne dran arbeitet. Es ist dann für jeden auch möglich, Dinge zu machen, die er sonst nicht hätte machen können, wenn er nicht Leiter ist.

45 **I:** Fällt dir noch etwas ein? Sonst können wir gleich gerne auf Mitarbeitermitsprache gehen?

46 **P (FDM1):** Gehen wir mal weiter.

47 **I:** Dieser Wechsel der Führungsstrukturen, kann auch mit der Ermöglichung von Mitarbeitermitsprache zusammenhängen. In der Theorie ist Mitarbeitermitsprache durch drei Dinge geprägt: Die Möglichkeit Dinge zu hinterfragen, neue Dinge vorzuschlagen und sich frei äußern zu können. Kannst du erzählen, wie du Mitarbeitermitsprache am Anfang in der Organisation wahrgenommen hast und wie sich diese entwickelt hat bzw. welche Formate es jetzt gibt, so dass man seine Stimme äußern kann als Mitarbeiter?

48 **P (FDM1):** In den Formaten ist es wirklich hauptsächlich die Retrospektive, das war ein Learning für mich. Ich habe es nicht für notwendig gehalten, einen Termin zu haben, wo wir Retrospektiven machen, weil die Mitarbeiter können mich eh immer ansprechen, die können mir alles sagen. Aber es ist einfach wichtig, einen Rahmen zu haben, wo das wöchentlich passieren kann. Und wenn dann mal kein Thema aufkommt, kommt kein Thema auf aber das war bei mir ein Learning. Also da hilft der Rahmen, da hilft die Form sehr, dass Dinge zur Sprache kommen, die sonst schwieriger oder gar nicht zur Sprache kommen. Was generell sehr hilft, ist diese Teamsicht, dass alles Teamentscheidungen sein sollen. Das heißt, die Mitsprache ist da schon mit eingebaut, wenn eigentlich ein Team entscheidet was in der Woche passiert oder nicht. Natürlich, es gibt schon Priorisierung, aber selbst das geschieht in Dialogen im Team. Deswegen sind diese Teamentscheidungen sehr wichtig damit alle Mitreden können. Schwierig habe ich es nur empfunden in der Firma rückblickend betrachtet, Entscheidungen herbeizuführen wenn viele mitsprechen, sprich OKRs früher bspw. und klar ist, es kann nur eine einstimmige Entscheidung geben. Das kann den Prozess sehr schwierig und langwierig machen, entweder hält man das aus oder man versucht andere Formen der Entscheidungsfindung.

49 **I:** Ich würde gerne wieder über die Herausforderung sprechen. Auch wieder auf Ebene der Organisation, Geschäftsführung, Führungskräfte und Mitarbeiter. Du hast jetzt gerade eine Thematik genannt: Wenn man

aus dieser traditionellen Welt kommt, wo es immer eine Instanz gab, die das letzte Wort hat und man jetzt versucht den Mitarbeitern diese Entscheidungsmöglichkeiten zu geben, dass es herausfordernder ist einen Konsens bei Entscheidungen zu finden, wenn mehrere beteiligt sind?

50 **P (FDM1):** Genau. Da muss man wahrscheinlich auch probieren, was für einen der richtige Weg ist. Bei Entscheidungen gibt es immer Argumente, Diskussion, der ganze Prozess, aber wenn am Ende Argument gegen Argument steht und es eine sehr schwierige Entscheidung ist, dann braucht es Hilfen, Prozesse. Dann muss man herausfinden, was für einen am besten funktioniert, wenn die absolute Mehrheitsentscheidung nicht funktioniert, was macht man dann? Also man kann verschiedene Dinge probieren und muss halt irgendwas finden.

51 **I:** Und was hat da funktioniert? Was war deine Lösung oder ein Erfolgsfaktor?

52 **P (FDM1):** Das ist für mich nach wie vor nicht gelöst. Also zu einer Entscheidung kommen wir immer. Die Frage ist wie fühlt sich derjenige, gegen den die Entscheidung ist? Also wenn man nicht mitträgt, dann trägt man nicht mit aber da helfen die Methoden. Es ist ja schon schwer, wie man das macht weiß ich bis heute nicht am besten. Also das später wieder aufzunehmen, wenns geht. Also so, "Jetzt geht es vielleicht nicht, aber wir können das später nochmal neu thematisieren". Dass da kein absolutes nein gegen die andere Seite ist, sondern halt jetzt mal das und vielleicht später nochmal das andere dann noch mal anders bewerten. Also das Verfahren kann einem nur dabei helfen eine Entscheidung zu finden. Aber es hilft einem nicht, die Entscheidung für alle am Besten möglich verdaubar zu machen.

53 **I:** Gibt es weitere Punkte, die du sehen würdest?

54 **P (FDM1):** Weitere Punkte beim Mitspracherecht?

55 **I:** Oder generell, weshalb sich manche mehr einbringen während manche stiller sind als andere.

56 **P (FDM1):** Da helfen Externe sehr, also öfter mal externe Moderatoren dabei zu haben, auch wenn man jetzt glaubt, "Wir brauchen eh keinen Moderator". Das hilft, solche Dinge aufzuzeigen und eine gewisse Gewahrsamkeit zu schaffen, dass eben auch Stille mehr gehört werden. Also externer Blick gelegentlich ist schon ein Erfolgsrezept für mich. Weil man sieht es selber nicht und die Außensicht öffnet einem da Dinge. Also

externe Moderation finde ich gut. Ansonsten finde ich die Schwierigkeiten jetzt gar nicht so in den Teams, mehr in die Firma hinein. Wie kann jeder in der Firma mitreden? Das ist an sich schwieriger. Je größer der Kontext ist und je mehr betroffen sind, umso schwieriger gemeinsame Entscheidungsfindung. Frühzeitig kommunizieren, worüber grad nachgedacht wird, auch, wenn noch nicht mitgesprochen wird. Es gibt da öfter mal eine Möglichkeit für die Mitarbeiter, Alternativen zumindest mit abzustimmen. Zwar nicht bei firmenrelevanten Themen von A bis Z mitreden, aber zumindest vorbereiten, irgendwelche Alternativen und dann ein Mitspracherecht für alle.

57 **I:** Wie siehst du das Thema der Informationsverteilung oder Informationsasymmetrie?

58 **P (FDM1):** Das ist auf jeden Fall wichtiger Punkt. Natürlich gibt es immer Flurfunk und natürlich gibt es immer Informationen, die nicht mit allen geteilt werden. Aber im Prinzip sollten alle Mitarbeiter auf einem gleichen Informationsstand gehalten werden. Weil die eine Information ist für den Abteilungsleiter nicht so wichtig und er vergisst dies weiter zu geben aber für den Mitarbeiter wäre es eine wichtige Information gewesen. Also das finde ich ganz wichtig, die Information immer bereit zu halten, sofern das geht.

59 **I:** Gibt es noch weitere Punkte, die du siehst, zum Thema Mitarbeitermitsprache? Beispielsweise zwischen Führungskräfte und Mitarbeiter, oder auf Geschäftsführungsebene? Sonst sag einfach, wenn wir aus seiner Sicht alles angesprochen haben.

60 **P (FDM1):** Also ich denke Abteilungsleiter dem Sinne gibt es ja dann nicht mehr und im Team sind sie sowieso crossfunktional. Inter-Team-Kommunikation, sehe ich da irgendwelche Barrieren... Ich denke nicht.

61 **I:** Früher war es ja dann so, dass die Mitarbeiter sich an die Führungskraft gewandt haben und die an die Geschäftsführung. Diese Instanz der Führungskraft ist weggefallen. Jetzt reden die Mitarbeiter direkt mit der Geschäftsführung. Siehst du da eine Thematik?

62 **P (FDM1):** Ich finde es gut. Beobachte nur, dass vielleicht bei Mitarbeitern die Scheu größer ist, an die Geschäftsführung heranzugehen und dass sie trotzdem noch gerne zu jemanden gehen, der vielleicht mal Leiter war und gerne auch mal jemanden bitten, mit irgendwas an die Geschäftsführung heranzutreten.

63 **I:** Welche Thematik meinst du genau?

64 **P (FDM1):** Ja, also ich glaube schon, dass da bei der Geschäftsführung vielleicht mehr Respekt oder Scheu herrscht. Mit irgendwas an einen Geschäftsführer heranzutreten. Da ist das Lernen und das Gewöhnen der Punkt. Die Leute zu motivieren, dass sie das auch selber tun und lernen, dass das genauso leicht geht mit Fragen an die Geschäftsführung heranzutreten, dass dies selbstverständlicher wird.

65 **I:** Würdest du dann sagen, dass wir über alle Punkte gesprochen haben?

66 **P (FDM1):** Also ich habe nichts mehr was vor unserem Gespräch in meinem Kopf herumging, sondern alles gesagt. Man macht sich ja vorher Gedanken: "Was will er fragen? Was will ich gerne erzählen?" Also ich hätte jetzt nicht mehr, was ich dir unbedingt noch sagen wollte.

67 **I:** Dann beende ich die Tonaufnahme jetzt.

Appendix 3.7 Overview of Final Themes and Codes

Codes	**413**
Final code structure	0
Traditional structure: Participants´ definition and experience	41
Agile structure: Participants´ definition and experience	40
Role transitions in the shift from traditional to agile organizational structures	0
Role transition: Executive managers/owners	3
Role transition: Department and deputy department managers	21
Role transition: Non-managers	9
Research Questions	0
Research Question 1: Reasons for resistance to role transition	0
Reasons for managerial resistance to role transitions	0
Reasons for resistance to role transition among executive managers/owners	0
Loss of power	6
Reasons for resistance to role transition among former department and deputy department managers	0
Fear of loss of power	7
Fear of loss of status	10
Fear of loss of income	8
Reasons for non-managerial resistance to role transitions	0
Reasons for resistance to role transition among non-managers aspiring to a managerial role	6
Fear of loss of potential power	1
Fear of loss of potential income	6
Reasons for resistance to role transition among bon-managers not aspiring to a managerial role	0
Fear of gain in power	28
Research Question 2: Resistance to role transition	0
Resistance to role transitions among managers	0
Resistance to role transitions among executive managers/owners	3
Resistance to role transitions among former department and deputy managers	3
Refusing to delegate managerial authority	19
Undermining alternative resources	3
Leaving the organization	4
Resistance to role transitions among non-managers	0
Resistance to role transitions among non-managers aspiring to a managerial role	0
Refusing gain in authority	1
Leaving the organization	1
Resistance to role transitions among non-managers not aspiring to a managerial role	0
Refusing gain in authority	13
Leaving the organization	6
Research Question 3: Facilitation of role transitions	0
Facilitation of role transitions among former department and deputy department managers	0
Remove managers´ perceived threats to valued aspects	0
Reassure aspects important can be supported by alternative	13
Provide tailored, individual support to address specific fears	12
Accept that some individuals may need to leave the organiza	30
Facilitation of role transitions among non-managers	0
Facilitation of role transitions among non-managers aspiring to a managerial role	0
Remove Non-managers´ perceived threats to valued aspects	5
Facilitation of role transitions among non-managers not aspiring to a managerial role	0
Remove perceived fear of gain in power	0
Provide training, coaching, and trial-based opportunities	5
Establish a constructive error culture	10
Encourage individuals	7
Accept that some individuals may need to leave the organiztaion	12

Appendix 3.8 Email to Gatekeepers – English Version

GATEKEEPER EMAIL

Subject: Approval of study participation - request for supporting my doctoral thesis

Dear executive management,

Since October 2020, I have been undertaking my Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) part-time at the University of Worcester. As part of my doctorate, I am planning my thesis titled “Identifying perceived barriers and success factors regarding the adoption from traditional to agile leadership structures and employee voice in a medium sized IT firm based in Germany”.

The central aim of the study will be the identification of perceived barriers and success factors moving from traditional to agile leadership structures and employee voice.

For this purpose, I would like to conduct qualitative interviews with you as the executive management as well as with the employees of your organization. These interviews would take place virtually (via MS teams) and would take approximately 60 minutes. I will of course send you the corresponding interview questions in advance for your review and approval. Likewise, further information material would be provided in advance to all interested parties before they voluntarily decide to participate.

Further, this research project will engage every organizational member to reflect on his/her individual perceptions adopting from traditional to agile leadership structures and employee voice and reveal challenges they might face as well as success factors. Accordingly, participating in this project is an opportunity for the participants to express their voice and thus improve our organization´s practice and learning.
All data provided by participants will be confidential and anonymous. Accordingly, all identifying information will be pseudonymised or anonymised and neither participants nor the organization will be Identifiable (directly or indirectly) in any study outputs. Further, their identity will not be disclosed to any third party.

I expect the findings of the research to be written up for my dissertation and publications as well as reports and recommendation for action for your organization. Thus, one of my intended outputs will be a report summarizing the research findings especially for you.

Before my research project commences, I need to obtain approval from the University Research Ethics Committee. For this purpose, I need to know whether you would be willing, in principle, to be involved. I would be grateful if you could briefly confirm your permission by responding to this email.
If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you very much and kind regards,
Martin Kistenich

Appendix 3.9 Initial Recruitment Email for Potential Participants – English Version

Initial recruitment email for potential participants

Subject: Study participation - request for supporting my doctoral thesis

Dear all,

Since October 2020, I have been undertaking my Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) part-time at the University of Worcester. As part of my doctorate, I am planning my thesis titled "Identifying perceived barriers and success factors regarding the adoption from traditional to agile leadership structures and employee voice in a medium sized IT firm based in Germany".

The central aim of my study is to understand perceived barriers and success factors moving from traditional to agile leadership structures and employee voice.

For this purpose, I would like to conduct qualitative interviews with you. These interviews will take place virtually (via MS teams) and will take approximately 60 minutes.

Participating in this research project also offers you the opportunity to reflect on your personal perceptions on moving from traditional to agile leadership structures and employee voice, and to identify challenges and success factors to improve our organisational practices.

All participant related information will be anonymised and neither participants nor the organization will be Identifiable (directly or indirectly) in any study outputs.

If you are interested in taking part in the study, please contact me via my academic email address: kism1_20@uni.worc.ac.uk

Following this, I will send you more detailed information about the study. Please let me know to which email address I should send the research information and your anonymous participant number.

I would really appreciate it if you support my research with your participation.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Thank you very much and kind regards,

Martin Kistenich

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Appendix 3.10 Second Recruitment Email for Potential Participants – English Version

2nd recruitment email for potential participants providing further information

Subject: Study participation – further information

Dear [Name of potential participant],

Thank you for your feedback and your interest in my research project.

Enclosed you will find further, detailed information as well as a consent form for participation in the study.

Please send me your signed consent form as a (password-protected) PDF.

In addition, I would like to ask you to provide me with your availability or suggested dates for a joint interview (approx. 60 minutes).

I will then set up a joint video interview in MS Teams and send you the invitation link in advance.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I am looking forward to your participation and the joint conversation.

Thank you very much and kind regards,

Martin Kistenich

Appendix 4 - Findings

Appendix 4.1.1 Data Set: Participants' Definition and Experiences of Traditional Hierarchical Structures

Evidence / Quotes
"Traditional leadership structures are top-down. Accordingly, the management gives directives - above all the executive management - which are executed by the employees." (EM1, Executive Manager)
"Traditional leadership structures are top-down. They have a strict hierarchical structure." (EM2, Executive Manager)
"In relation to us, I would actually say that it is more of an authoritarian leadership style that was practised by parts of the second management level at our company. So it was very top-down. Objectives and structures were set. The responsibility lay with designated individuals - the department managers. ... Traditional leadership structures are top-down in the first place." (EM3, Executive Manager)
"Traditional leadership structures are what we previously had in this organization – hierarchical structures. These go hand in hand with managers who bear a lot of responsibility and give directives." (FDM1, Former Department Manager)
"Traditional leadership structures are about hierarchies. There are designated managers managing designated teams, giving directives on how tasks are to be carried out - these famous reporting lines that prevail there. ... When I joined the company, it was clearly hierarchical. ... The executive management was at the top and then immediately followed by the departments with the managers and teams." (FDM2, Former Department Manager)
"Traditional leadership structures are hierarchical and decisions are made and passed on from the top down. ... The executive management is at the top, then department managers, deputy department managers or team managers down to the lowest light. ... There were

department managers ... who functioned as an authority within the department." (FDDM1, Former Deputy Department Manager)

"There is an executive manager at the top and then below that someone who has managerial authority, and then below that the other employees - downwards like a pyramid with less and less authority." (FDDM2, Former Deputy Department Manager)

"When I hear traditional leadership structures, I think of organizations that have a very hierarchical structure. There are clear levels of responsibility and authority to give directives, where it is clear that person A tells person B what to do or at least is legitimized to do so." (NM1, Non-Manager)

"A hierarchy. Really the old-fashioned way, with a managerial who stands above everyone else and the non-managers standing below." (NM2, Non-Manager)

"By traditional leadership structures I understand a hierarchical organization in which decisions are primarily made top-down." (NM3, Non-Manager)

"Traditionally, there is only one person in each department who has a plan and the others are practically like robots with hearts. So they just go to work and do what he says." (NM4, Non-Manager)

„Traditional leadership structures are definitely very hierarchical. This means that it is always top-down and that there is one person who distributes the tasks, who says exactly what needs to be done and who is more or less above the whole. ... In a hierarchical structure, it's top-down. In other words, one person determines what needs to be done." (NM5, Non-Manager)

"There is a decision-maker who defines exactly what needs to be done and when, and there are those who execute it without having a say. So you're basically told what to do from the top. ... In my team, there was a manager who defined what had to be done and how it had to be done." (NM6*, Non-Manager)*

"Traditional leadership structures are definitely hierarchical structures. Executive manager, department manager, team manager, non-managerial employee. ... In the beginning, a clear hierarchical structure was recognizable. ... So for the first years, the traditional hierarchical leadership structure clearly prevailed. In other words, executive manager, department manager, non-managerial employee." (NM8, Non-Manager)

"Traditional, that is a very hierarchical structure. In other words, a pyramid structure with one person at the top, then a department manager and then it's broken down further and further and then it's structured like a pyramid. Responsibilities are assigned according to this hierarchical structure. ... In the beginning this definitely prevailed, as there were department managers." (NM9, Non-Manager)

"Traditional leadership structures. This is definitely a hierarchical structure in a company. Responsibilities are clearly assigned. The higher you go, the higher the responsibility and decision-making is top-down. ... In my opinion, the departments [within the case study organization] were strongly hierarchical with the respective managers." (NM10)

"Traditional leadership structures are hierarchical leadership structures. ... In this structure decisions are made by the managers, i.e. executive managers, department managers, team managers whereas employees have less influence. This prevailed when I started working in this company." (NM11, Non-Manager)

"I would define traditional as a team with a manager, in other words someone who has a managerial role." (NM12, Non-Manager)

"Who has power and determines where things go is determined by the organizational hierarchy." (NM13, Non-Manager)

"I understand traditional leadership structures as top-down. In other words, the instructions come from the top and are executed by the employees." (NM14, Non-Manager)

"I have experienced this traditional structure: Each department had a department manager and the executive management was above them." (NM16, Non-Manager)

"For me, that's what we had in the company a few years ago. It's this traditional top-down hierarchy. So, first, on top is the executive management, then the department manager and then below that the team manager and then below that, let's say the non-managerial." (NM17, Non-Manager)

"A classic hierarchy." (NM19, Non-Manager)

"There was a department manager who was responsible for the whole group in his department and who was accountable to the executive management. The person in charge has to be accountable to the executive manager or the organization and take responsibility for what the group has done together." (NM22, Non-Manager)

"There is a hierarchy from executive manager/CEO down to the lowest employee." (NM22, Non-Manager)

"There are clear power structures in which it is clearly defined who is authorized to give instructions". (NM23, Non-Manager)

"The way we worked before - the classic way. There are different departments, each with a department manager who is then subordinate to the executive management." (NM24, Non-Manager)

"Various managers. This hierarchy. There's an executive manager, a manager and so on. For me, that's the traditional." (NM25, Non-Manager)

"Hierarchical: There's an executive manager, then it goes downwards in a tree structure." (NM26, Non-Manager)

Appendix 4.1.2 Data Set: Participants' Definition and Experiences of Agile Structures

Evidence / Quotes
"In principle, it's what we had in the very beginning, no designated managers. ... The employees in their teams are all egalitarian and have different functions ... and endeavor to produce everything we require but, as I said, on an equal footing." (EM1, Executive Manager)
„The difference between the traditional and agile leadership structure is that every single employee is a potential leader in the agile structure. So, everyone can take on leadership. And the team bears overall responsibility." (EM3, Executive Manager)
"The new thing about these agile methods is that responsibility is delegated to the employees in other words, responsibility is redistributed." (FDM1, Former Department Manager)
"We have basically abolished hierarchies in our organization. ... There is no longer this one manager who distributes the tasks, as in the traditional structure, instead the focus is on autonomy and self-organization or self-governance and this sharing of responsibility in these new roles." (FDM2, Former Department Manager)
"We no longer have a department manager. There is the executive management working with the newly created teams, which are interdisciplinary. We have abolished this middle management level." (FDDM1, Former Deputy Department Manager)
"Currently within our team ... it works very well that everyone is egalitarian. I do not have the feeling that anyone is above the others. ... In such agile structures, a team governs itself best. In the sense of how they want to work and how they realise their objectives. Although there are clear objectives or requirements from outside stakeholders, there are no longer directives saying 'Do this now to achieve this objective'. Instead, in agile structures, the team organizes itself and knows how to work best to achieve these objectives." (NM1, Non-Manager)

"Flat hierarchies. The structures are not built from the bottom to the top like a staircase, instead they kept really flat so that everything is on an egalitarian level as far as possible." (NM2, Non-Manager)

"There is no hierarchically superior team manager ... and the roles are more on an egalitarian level." (NM3, Non-Manager)

"With agility, it's not just one person who makes the decision, instead we make decisions together as a team and that's why we all somehow govern our team. ... There is no manager in our team and all members of our team no longer have a department manager. ... We are all responsible for the outcome. Not just one person, instead everyone contributes their part. ... Now that there are no longer any department managers and it has been distributed across several shoulders, everyone is allowed and able to make more decisions than before." (NM5, Non-Manager)

"It's no longer the case that one person dictates everything, instead in general every opinion has equal weight. ... It's a completely different kind of cooperation, because all opinions are heard and you're no longer dependent on the decision-making of a single person, instead it's discussed as a team." (NM6, Non-Manager)

„Hierarchies as flat as possible. ... The responsibility is at the lowest possible level on a team basis. ... So ideally there is a team structure that reports directly to the executive management. ... In our company, we currently have a team structure in which we are able to make decisions very autonomously and then report directly to the executive management. ... That means that all hierarchical levels were removed [in our team]." (NM8, Non-Manager)
„The team itself is responsible for the outcome. ... Currently, there is no longer one person who stands out in a managerial position [within the teams]. ... Generally speaking, there is no one who is now managing employees. Irrespective of the executive management." (NM9, Non-Manager)

„There are no more department managers." (NM11, Non-Manager)

„There are de facto no department managers, team managers or anything similar, instead, there is the executive management and the individual teams, and there is nothing in between that I would feel would take on this role." (NM12, Non-Manager)

"I understood it [agile leadership structures] in such a way that there is a high degree of self-governance. This also implies that the individual employees are able to make decisions by themselves and don't have to get everything approved first." (NM13)

"Ideally, you have an egalitarian team. ... Everyone is able to contribute their perspective and then a decision is made together as a team." (NM14, Non-Manager)

"We are able to govern our team ourselves. That's where we now have freedom, which is no longer determined by the department manager. ... We decide together and we bear the responsibility together." (NM15)

"Everyone in our team is egalitarian and only the executive managers are above that. We do not have a team manager or a department manager who leads or organizes the team in any way." (NM16, Non-Manager)

"Flat hierarchies without department managers where employees share responsibility and are authorized to make decisions. ... Where everyone is roughly egalitarian. ... Although it is an agile structure, the executive management is still there. So, at the end of the day, there is always a bit of a hierarchy." (NM17, Non-Manager)

"We are on an equal footing [within our team]." (NM18, Non-Manager)

"For me, that actually means a bit of freedom, because Leadership is linked to individuals' expertise." (NM19, Non-Manager)

"Currently, we do not have managers and we work in teams. ... You take responsibility for a project yourself and there is no manager to take responsibility for it " (NM25, Non-Manager)

Appendix 4.1.3 Data Set: Role Transitions in the Shift from Traditional to Agile Organizational Structures

Evidence / Quotes
Role transition: executive managers/owners *"The executive management has to relinquish all or a substantial part of its power." (EM1, Executive Manager)* *"To describe the [change in the] role of the executive management: from being involved in everything to the idea of really handing over economic responsibility for individual products to individuals. So traditionally, we as the executive management were always involved in everything, and now it's about setting up the organization in such a way that this is no longer necessary." (EM2, Executive Manager)* **Role transition: department managers and deputy department managers** *"An agile team does not have a department manager and they were aware that ... they themselves are no longer department managers. ... That was a completely different way of thinking for them. Previously, in several departments, they [the department managers] had exercised near-absolute authority over relatively large teams." (EM1, Executive Manager)* *"A department manager's power primarily derives from the fact that he has a team or department that he commands. ... Managers have to let go of this managerial role completely. And is this possible if I was in such a managerial role?" (EM2, Executive Manager)* *"It is distributed more evenly - certain responsibilities are now being taken on by people, not just those who were in management. It's true that, depending on their expertise, the more experienced people shoulder most of it." (FDM1, Former Department Manager)* *"I have to try to keep everyone together somehow and try to insist on processes without having the legitimacy that anyone has to obey me. Because I'm just one of many. I am one of those who have no authority to give directives. That doesn't work. That means I can't act top-down. ... I have no legitimacy to do so." (FDDM1)*

"Their responsibilities were reduced as they were distributed differently. So, their responsibilities didn't disappear, but they were shifted." (FDDM2, Former Deputy Department Manager)

"When you are used to be a department manager and are at a higher hierarchical level than your employees it is difficult to move into an agile team structure where everyone is on an equal footing." (NM8, Non-Manager)

"I can imagine that it tweaks the ego when you are restricted as a department manager and then supposed to find yourself as a team member. ... If you previously held this role and then suddenly no longer have it and are then more or less on an equal footing with those you were previously superior to, that could gnaw at you." (NM9, Non-Manager)

"For managers it is challenging when they suddenly no longer take on this role." (NM10, Non-Manager)

"If you are in a department manager position, then you have the legitimacy and have the authority to tell people what to do. But if you suddenly realise that you're working in a team where everyone is egalitarian and everything is decided together as a team, that doesn't work that way anymore." (NM11, Non-Manager)

„If you were actually legitimized to give directives beforehand that had to be followed - in other words, if you were authorized - you have to deal with the fact that this is no longer the case. Instead you have to deal with the employees in a completely different way. So, do not give top-down directives, but instead have a conversation with the employee and discuss it with them. So, you have a lot more need to explain things and you also have to live with the fact that employees have other opinions that they want to contribute and that you do not just dismiss them and insist on your point of view." (NM14, Non-Manager)

"The managerial role for our teams no longer exists, but former managers are still with us in the organization. They now belong to the teams and no longer fulfil the role of a team manager. ... Currently, the former team managers are on an equal footing with the other members of the team. ... It was a problem that the [managerial] role has been taken away from them." (NM16, Non-Manager)

"The department managers are dissatisfied with this agile change because they are satisfied with their role as a department manager or with their managerial role. And it's difficult for some people to give that up and there is a certain dissatisfaction with some. That's a challenge that you definitely have. ... If you have a position and are happy with it and then you are demoted from a department manager, where you are in charge, to someone who is then equal to the employees who were perhaps previously subordinate to you. I think that's a point where dissatisfaction can arise." (NM17, Non-Manager)

"Managers have immense difficulties in relinquishing this role." (NM19, Non-Manager)

"These former managers have to relinquish power ... to remain or be part of this agile leadership system or agile organization. That is a barrier for many." (NM21, Non-Manager)

Role transition: non-managers

*"Power has been delegated to the employees. ... The employees gain a lot more power in the company." (*EM1, Executive Manager)

"If we talk about power in this construct, the teams will get it". (EM2, Executive Manager)

"The responsibility for the respective area where individuals work, is shifting towards the teams. ... There are employees who previously tended to stand in the back row who are now required to take on responsibility and leadership." (EM3, Executive Manager)

"The power has been distributed downwards to the individual teams. ... There is no longer one person who makes decisions from above like a dictator, instead we make decisions together as a team now and that of course requires everyone to share responsibility. Of course, that's something that people have to overcome at first, even for small decisions." (NM5, Non-Manager)

"The previous responsibilities and activities of the department managers are now transferred to the employees." (NM17, Non-Manager)

"Employees have to take on responsibility in order to remain or be part of this agile leadership structure or agile organization." (NM21, Non-Manager)

Appendix 4.2 Data Set: Reasons for Resistance to Role Transition (RQ1)

Appendix 4.2.1 Data Set: Reasons for Resistance to Role Transition Among Executive Managers/Owners

Evidence / Quotes
"The fundamental prerequisite for something like this to actually work is, the willingness of the management to go down this path [to relinquish all or a substantial part of its power] and then stick to it. That is the foundation before anything else. ... It is extremely difficult to establish the entire mindset of 'delegating authority and letting employees act autonomously without interfering' with the executive management... and to allow such a thing at all, to the extent necessary. ... We have spent years building a company that is probably worth tens of millions, and then handing over responsibility to employees when you don't know what will happen – well, this is a bit like giving your child a gun and saying 'watch out, you can be a sheriff too'." (EM1, Executive Manager) *"It is not that easy. I have something in my head, I think it's right, and then other people see it completely different but that can also be justified. And to engage with that is difficult when you come from a top-down structure. Because I am just used to 'this is how it's done, no backchat'. And now this is suddenly happening and it is also desired. And I have to get used to that. Sometimes it makes me want to blow a fuse. It takes time to get a grip on it. It's just the way the structure is, and I think that, at least for me personally, getting used to it was a big challenge." (EM2, Executive Manager)* *"The executive management fears losing control or relinquishing control to employees. ... I think that when you've been running a company for years, it's very difficult to let go of the reins." (NM18, Non-Manager)* *"From the perspective of the executive management, it would be important to me to retain my influence on the company. So, if everyone works in an autonomous or agile way, I would still want to have enough influence over the company to be able to somehow set a certain line of development or take action if things don't go as planned. ... I would find that very daring as an executive manager. If I have built up a company and incorporated my ideas into it, then I*

would be afraid that if I give up control, the company will develop in a direction that a) I, as an executive manager, do not like and b) perhaps even drive the company into the wall." (NM21, Non-Manager)

Appendix 4.2.2 Data Set: Reasons for Resistance to Role Transition Among Former Department and Deputy Department Managers

Evidence / Quotes
Fear of loss of power *"From the managers' perspective, it was certainly the perceived loss of power that led to many conflicts." (EM3, Executive Manager)* *"At managerial level this was often perceived as a loss of power. The personal understanding of the role, if we are talking about power, was seriously challenged. So that is what I think I have observed, which leads to personnel turnover." (FDM1, Former Department Manager)* *"These people [managerial] know and perceive that they are no longer able to exercise their power in the way they would like to." (NM5, Non-Manager)* *"When decision-making authority is decentralized and there is no longer one person making all the decisions, that can be really scary for such people, and they struggle to cope with it. So, if you have been on the throne for years and have somehow done everything to strengthen it, and then that suddenly changes, I think that is extremely difficult to accept." (NM6, Non-Manager)* *"The department managers perceived that their opinions were no longer worth as much as before." (NM14, Non-Manager)* *"Managers feared to lose power. ... A manager who defines himself in terms of his own managerial position and power can have the rug pulled out from under his feet if he loses his power." (NM19, Non-Manager)* **Fear of loss of status** *„To be afraid that I will lose something if I am no longer a manager and instead have a different function. So, differentiating myself via status. [...] It was similar for me in the beginning. The formal role has something to do with status, of course, I do not deny that at all." (FDM2, Former Department Manager)*

"The department managers have become frustrated because they no longer feel valued. ... I was told quite clearly that I was no longer a deputy department manager and that I became just one of many. This is a loss of value and significance. ... You sink into the grey masses. You just become one of many, many others." (FDDM1, Former Deputy Department Manager)

"It was difficult to get away from that [managerial role] and really get down to the level of the others. ... The loss of the title ... The dissatisfaction because officially taking on a managerial role, with an official title, is of course more valued than actually fulfilling the role without having the title." (FDDM2, Former Deputy Department Manager)

"Of course one challenge is the loss of status, that has to be said quite clearly. ... We still live in a hierarchical society to some extent and you naturally feel more valued if you say that you are the department manager rather than a team member in a team. ... Even if you are simply going to a family celebration, for example. If someone asks you "What do you do for a living?", then of course you would rather say you are the department manager than just a team member. Especially with people who are a bit older, where you might expect that." (NM14, Non-Manager)

Fear of loss of income

"In a hierarchical structure, employees have opportunities for rank hierarchical advancement, which typically impacts their salary. We don't have that here anymore and for many people that is totally unattractive. This is perceived very negatively because people believe that they should earn more money due to their elevated position. That is also one of the things that is very strongly anchored here. Which also leads to a lot of criticism. ... Even if it is not clear what exactly their performance consists of other than convincing the executive management that they are the greatest deer on the pitch. Of course, that's something that no longer fits here." (EM1, Executive Manager)

"Money is also a very important factor. Of course, the role of a department manager comes with more salary, "If that is gone now, what will happen to my salary?"." (EM2, Executive Manager)

"Of course, salary was an issue, probably also for the others. ... Salary is important. If I earn €100,000 a year as a manager, for example, and then lose this managerial role, do I also have to be afraid that my salary will be downgraded? Secondly, if I want to apply for another job as a manager, I can of course ask for a completely different salary from such a managerial position than if I were a simple employee - please do not get me wrong." (FDM2, Former Department Manager)

"Another important aspect is of course the monetary aspect, it has to be said quite clearly. I think that many people were worried that they would suffer monetary disadvantages." (NM14, Non-Manager)

"As a department manager, you also have a lot of responsibility. This also means that you get a corresponding salary. Even if you no longer have the role, you don't want less money, of course." (NM16, Non-Manager)

"You might be afraid that you will not have as much room to negotiate your salary, and think to yourself, "Maybe I will get less pay or maybe I will not be able to increase my salary in the future." (NM17, Non-Manager)

Appendix 4.2.3 Data Set: Reasons for Resistance to Role Transition Among Non-Managers Aspiring to a Managerial Role

Evidence / Quotes
"The hope of a traditional career with a managerial position at some point, that was taken away from them." (EM3, Executive Manager) *"They [the executive management] simply expect more from you. But as an employee, it doesn't feel like you're being rewarded for doing it." (FDDM1, Former Deputy Department Manager)* *"We employed people who aspired to take on a managerial role in the future. But then it was decided months or a year later that this was no longer possible and they are not satisfied with that." (NM16, Non-Manager)* *"For employees, the problem is also that they are given much more responsibility - that's just a fact - but don't necessarily get the reward for it. ... I don't think it's recognised that much when someone takes on responsibility that they didn't have before, not just in monetary terms. So, in general, I perceive that this is simply not rewarded very much." (NM17, Non-Manager)* *"If you work as a cashier in a supermarket and then suddenly have the same responsibility as the store manager, even though you are not the store manager, I can imagine that the employees may not be happy about that." (NM21, Non-Manager)* **Fear of loss of potential power** *"There are a lot of [non-managerial] employees who like this traditional leadership approach, as they desire to have and exert power over others." (NM21, Non-Manager)* **Fear of loss of potential income** *"No one is officially paid to take on these responsibilities anymore, yet they still have to be taken on ... but you are not compensated for them, because the role no longer exist." (FDDM1, Former Deputy Department Manager)*

"Most of them didn't want to take on everything immediately and then just for the same salary. ... That means they have to do more, but basically still get the same salary. So there is no additional reward for the employees themselves. It's positive for the company, of course, because they no longer have to pay department managers, so there's less salary to be paid and the responsibility is distributed among employees but they don't get paid more. So for the company itself, this is of course financially very positive. The responsibility continues to be taken over by the employees, but in terms of salary, only the company has won. ... Because previously it was done by the department managers, some of whom are no longer there or no longer have this position and this is then distributed and they were probably paid twice as much salary." (NM17, Non-Manager)

"I think that employees don't take on any or less responsibility because the department manager usually takes on more responsibility, because of course he gets paid more. He gets more pay for more responsibility. But now that there are no more managerial positions and everyone is equal, I don't see people wanting to take risks when in doubt, they always have to take the rap for it." (NM18, Non-Manager)

Appendix 4.2.4 Data Set: Reasons for Resistance to Role Transition Among Non-Managers Not Aspiring to a Managerial Role

Evidence / Quotes
Fear of gain in power *„Many employees currently don't have the mindset to work without a department manager. ... That is actually the biggest challenge: Getting employees to develop an agile mindset is, I think, the reason why most agile transformations fail. Many are unwilling to do so. Although it is of course a model that should lead to employees enjoying their job and being valued for it, this is not understood. Instead, employees want to hold on to the traditional approach. ... For many employees, it's not possible to envision how this kind of self-organization is supposed to work. This is not understood by many. ... It's not something you will learn easily. It's really difficult and really demanding. It's not necessarily a desirable state for employees. ... The employees are more demanded. Previously, they hid behind their screens and did tasks that the department manager thought were the right thing to do. Now it is discussed in the team. ... A lot of the time you are operating in a complex space, which is very challenging because it's not always clear what you actually have to do. You really have to switch on your head. You don't have anyone to tell you what to do and you don't have anyone to take responsibility. So, for employees, it's a strenuous job if it's done properly." (EM1, Executive Manager)* *"Making decisions yourself when you're not used to it is apparently difficult." (EM2, Executive Manager)* *"There are people who consider it more strenuous to decide things on their own now. ... They may fear that the change will be such that they will be unhappier in their daily work than they were before." (FDM1, Former Department Manager)* *"These employees do not claim to take on a leadership role in the team, as a department manager does, or to replace them, because they are not a department manager. They know they are regular employees. ... For me, the most reasonable way to look at this problem - and I don't mean that in a judgmental way: "I'm a regular department member, not a department manager. It's simply about the difference between being a department manager and being a member of the department. I'm just a normal department member. ... I don't volunteer when it comes to managerial responsibility, because the problem is that if we still had a department*

manager, we would have someone to take care of these responsibilities. I have not decided that there should be no department manager - from the point of view of regular employees." (FDDM1, Former Deputy Department Manager)

"If employees have worked in these [traditional] structures for a long time, this mental switch is really challenging because previously they have been told what to do, which is different now." (NM6, Non-Manager)

"As we were previously used to always obtain approval for all decisions from our direct line manager, it was unusual for us to have to make many decisions autonomously." (NM6, Non-Manager)

"I believe that some people have been given a role that they perhaps don't want or even are unable to fulfill at all or in part. ... Some employees were previously able to hide themselves in a larger department to some extent. And now, in such an agile team, that is no longer possible because it is noticeable if people try to hide behind someone or don't want to fulfil their responsibilities. ... So people can't hide anymore. There's a lot of pressure because you can see what I'm doing, what I'm not doing, what contribution I'm making to the team and what I'm working on. You have to be able to deal with that. And I don't think this way of working is appropriate for everyone." (NM12, Non-Manager)

"Many employees asked themselves, "What makes sense now? What am I supposed to do now?" - as they previously always received this top-down directives, being told what to do by their department manager. Now, they really have to make their own decisions and think about, "What makes sense for the company?". So you notice a mindshift among some colleagues and many still have to fight with it. ... They previously had guard rails within which they could move and now we are at a level where there are no longer any guard rails. It's much more difficult than before." (NM14, Non-Manager)

"Previously I didn´t occupy a managerial role, I was just an ordinary employee. I had no interest in becoming a manager. I was happy with the role I had at the time. ... It was challenging that we had to take on more or less all the responsibilities that the department manager was responsible for." (NM16, Non-Manager)

"Many employees then had a very rocky road at first, because the managers previously took on an incredible amount of responsibility and made decisions. Then these responsibilities practically had to be taken over by the employees. ... For many [non-managerial role] that's too much, they prefer to stay in the box they're responsible for." (NM19, Non-Manager)

"It was as if an animal that had spent its whole life in a zoo had suddenly been released into the wild and didn't know what to do." (NM22, Non-Manager)

"It was a challenge to organize myself without having to follow top-down directives, but to decide for myself. Deciding my tasks, not getting them from the executive management or the department manager, but deciding for myself." (NM24, Non-Manager)

"It is definitely challenging because you now have more responsibility and you have to change your behaviour." (NM25, Non-Manager)

Appendix 4.3 Data Set: Resistance to Role Transitions (RQ2)

Appendix 4.3.1 Data Set: Resistance to Role Transitions Among Former Department and Deputy Department Managers

Evidence / Quotes
Resistance in general: *"The executive managements´ decision that the department manager role no longer exists was a process with considerable resistance. … They [former department managers] were struggling with it. How they deal with it varies. Some escalate, others withdraw. ... It was perceivable that some were on the verge of leaving and others were still fighting with themselves or fighting with others." (NM14, Non-Manager)* *"They [former department managers] were struggling with it. How they dealt with it varied. Some escalated, others withdrew. ... It was perceivable that some were on the verge of leaving and others were still fighting with themselves or fighting with others." (NM14, Non-Manager)* **Refusing to delegate managerial authority:** *"The approach of those people is very similar. These are employees who we have brought over from the old structure, who have not resigned, but who still have not developed an agile mindset. These are employees who were anchored in the hierarchical structure either as managers or as the ones who stood out in departments or organizational units. These employees [former managers] try to maintain these hierarchical levels. ... They are still trying to occupy a hierarchical position. ... So, they behave like department managers and try to enforce or extend this to operate at department manager level. ... They try to use various justifications to get hold of employees who are then officially supposed to help this organizational unit with the numerous tasks they have. In reality, however, the aim is to pull as many employees as possible into their team so that they can extend their supposed managerial authority over them and ultimately re-establish a hierarchical role for themselves." (EM1, Executive Manager)*

"Of course, the department manager is attempting to protect his power and his power primarily derives from the fact that he has a team or department that he commands." (EM2, Executive Manager)

"During the time when the department managers were still there, they fulfilled their responsibilities even when it was clear that they were no longer department managers. ... I'm also no longer deputy department manager but I'm the one who still carries out these responsibilities that were previously assigned to me but with more obstacles." (FDDM1, Former Deputy Department Manager)

"There were definitely difficulties, because even though the managers had their title taken away, they still took on the responsibilities." (FDDM2, Former Deputy Department Manager)

"That was boycotted by many. They never really tried to grant us the freedom we required. ... We had power relations that still finding their way in one form or another… so people are looking for their own ways of continuing to do so anyway. ... The employees are the ones who suffer as they perceive this tension. So, the tension actually arises between the executive manager and the manager, but it is played out between the manager and the employee. So, it actually arises on one level and is played out on the other, which is unfair, but that's simply because managers naturally tend to try to deal with it through employees rather than with the executive manager." (NM5, Non-Manager).

"It was extremely difficult because those people [former department managers] just couldn't let go of the fact that things were different now, instead we were still supposed to report, and they were still trying to influence our work." (NM6, Non-Manager).

"Some people still feel like managers, even if they no longer have the title, and they make this very clear. So, they were managers here and from their point of view they remain managers. ... There is currently someone in our team who previously had the role of a team manager and also determined how things should run. ... This person now also has his own ideas about how everything should run and we all have to subordinate ourselves." (NM12, Non-Manager)

“I notice very clearly that the former team manager totally dominates this team.” (NM13, Non-Manager)

“There were power struggles in many departments because people were unwilling to relinquish their power.” (NM19, Non-Manager)

“I notice that some former deputy department managers exert their compulsion to control.” (NM23, Non-Manager)

Undermining alternative resources:

"People made a contribution and then it was torn apart, like, "What kind of nonsense is this idea. Let us do what I propose”. ... These were actively prevented by devaluation models like, "What kind of a crap idea is that? I will decide this now”. And you could already see that no matter what, certain department managers always did it." (EM2, Executive Manager)

Leaving the organization:

“We also received resignations from some department managers because they said, "If I cannot assert myself here and be a department manager, then I will do somewhere else." (EM1, Executive Manager)

“There are managers who have simply realized, "something is developing that does not suit me anymore". They then left of their own accord at some point.” (EM2, Executive Manager)

„With other managers, I noticed that they simply were not willing to go along with it. I found that really surprising because I really enjoy it and it even suits my nature, this kind of shared leadership responsibility. Some managers could not cope with it at all, they changed companies and are now managers somewhere else to live these hierarchical structures.” (FDM2, Former Department Manager)

“*A lot of them resigned voluntarily because these people loved the previous way of working too much to change. I think that was tried to some extent and they wanted to play along at first. But I think the more concrete this change became and the more you realized that there was somehow a change in mindset, then at some point I do not think it was possible for them to go along with it. So that applied to most of them.” (NM6, Non-Manager)*

Appendix 4.3.2 Data Set: Resistance to Role Transitions Among Non-Managers Not Aspiring to a Managerial Role

Evidence / Quotes
Refusing gain in authority: *"Many of our employees refuse any gain in responsibility at all. ... They attempt to undertake avoidance actions. ... They try to avoid responsibility by trying to get everything approved by the executive management. ... In principle, the executive management should approve everything that the employees do. This does not apply to all, but with some the executive management is expected to approve everything and tell them exactly what to do, otherwise they do nothing." (EM1, Executive Manager)* *"Top down is also demanded by some employees. ... With some employees, I have experienced really massive requests to now please make the decision for whatever." (EM2, Executive Manager)* *"At times, it got to the point where we didn't get anywhere in the executive management team because of all the minor things we had to decide. ... Certain teams are asking the executive management whether the things they do make sense or not and that drives me crazy." (EM3, Executive Manager)* *"For some things, I am still approached by the team, like in the role of the department manager, where they say, "Please take charge of this"." (FDM2, Former Department Manager)* *"There are still employees who look up to a former manager and say, "Well, if he says so, then that's the way we'll do it" or "He'll have the last word and that's how we'll do it". Which doesn't really have to be the case anymore, because we're actually all on the same level. We all have the same authority in some way. We are all part of the team and it is sometimes noticeable that people still look up or say, "He can do it better than me, he should take this on"." (NM12, Non-Manager)* *"As a consequence, this is always outsourced to the executive management." (NM18, Non-Manager)*

"The biggest vacuum emerged because responsibility was shifted back and forth and nobody wanted to take responsibility." (NM22, Non-Manager)

Leaving the organization:

"*If we consider the abolition of department managers metaphorically, we imagine a chicken farm with chicken cages that we have opened. The chickens came out and some of them flew away because they did not want this freedom at all, they wanted to get into another cage, they quit." (EM2, Executive Manager)*

"If it really is the case that someone doesn't like working self-govern then they may come to a point where they make the decision for themselves that this isn't right for them and to do something different." (FDM1, Former Department Manager)

"Many people are no longer with us who didn't fit in and said they needed a clear structure. ... Probably these are the employees who don't fit into an agile environment. They have resigned of their own accord. They said, "I don't fit into an environment like this. I need to have someone, for example an executive manager or a manager, who tells me what I have to do"." (FDM2, Former Department Manager)

"As an employee, you then had to decide "Okay, either I go along with this now and let it affect my psyche or I take the step and decide to go somewhere else where I get this safety, where I get these clear instructions and clear structures and am then safe again"." (NM15, Non-Manager)

Appendix 4.4 Data Set: Facilitation of Role Transitions (RQ3)

Appendix 4.4.1 Data Set: Facilitation of Role Transitions Among Former Department and Deputy Department Managers

Evidence / Quotes
Provide tailored, individual support to address specific fears of loss by reassuring individuals they can still satisfy their motives through alternative resources within their new role: *"We have to identify where the toxic elements are in the teams that are preventing this, so we have to look at the detractors and deal with them individually: ... who is still playing a different game or trying to counteract and we have to talk to them. ... We had to hold individual conversations with the department managers, we even hired coaches who tried to introduce agile thinking to individual department managers and tried to allay any fears of losses they might perceiving. ... We accommodated this [former managers' realization that they no longer possess legitimacy through a managerial role in an agile structure] by explaining that they are still legitimized through their expertise but no longer through their position. ... The person who has the competence automatically takes the lead, or more precisely, can contribute to fulfil the work assignment. This person then automatically has a certain standing in the team, but this is not explicitly predetermined - it simply emerges ... It is primarily about taking on leadership without having the stripes on your shoulder. But rather simply leading through expertise. Everyone is able to contribute to the team according to their specific expertise. ... We have communicated that traditional careers no longer take place in our company. In other words, according to this hierarchical rank system, whereby individuals are given increasingly better positions and therefore, for example, increasingly prestigious titles. ... Instead, our employees have the opportunity to collaborate within a team and to be successful with the team. ... The team is mutually supportive, and individuals become successful together, not just as individuals. ... We repeatedly emphasize the importance of the team ... and that collaboration is required instead of pursuing this hierarchical approach." (EM1, Executive Manager)* *"The essence of the whole thing is that you have to take people with you. And I don't think there is a blueprint for this as every person is individual. That is something where we could*

probably have provided more accompaniment or support for them. ... We tried to do this [support managers] e.g. by providing external coaching and mediation to create some kind of understanding. We tried to open up this space e.g. with information, reading groups and further training." (EM2, Executive Manager)

"The difficult thing is how you can prevent this [the loss of power of managers] or to what extent you want to prevent it at all. I think the most important thing would be to get managers on board early on. Because that has a positive consequence: if you manage to win over managers early on, for example through participation, and give them the feeling that it's their idea, then you're less likely to push them over the edge. Instead, you let the change come from them, allow the whole thing to grow and give them the impression that it is also in their interest - that it comes from them. Not to say from the outside: 'We are now becoming agile', but to allow this process to mature. Perhaps that will help to win over more people. ... You have to look at the managerial level: If someone doesn't have this mindset and instead power and control play an important role - along with the feeling of having to give it away - then you should try to motivate them to change direction and interpret their role differently. ... I am convinced that every manager was not only a department manager by function, but that the people also have competences that not every other employee in the team has, and they would still be people with special competences and capabilities in a team that operates in a flat and agile way." (FDM1, Former Department Manager)

„Having lots of conversations, individual conversations ... with the executive management and HR. That you take away their fears and listen to them first. I think it is very important to listen to them. That you take a step back and say "I will listen to you. What are your fears?" and try to address them in conversations. ... So, it is more about the fear of loss and being taken seriously, about getting a proactive conversation offer from HR or the executive management: "Hey manager x, you are important to us, of course we want to work with you, you have a lot of qualities. Let us have a personal conversation to find out how we can proceed"." (FDM2, Former Department Manager)

"Ultimately, the success factor at the managerial level is appreciation, it is communication. ... With an empathetic conversation, with an explanation of how the whole thing is intended and what it actually implies. ... As the executive management, I have to convince my

management level below me, the department managers, that a future without department managers with these people is possible and sensible and that it does not imply a loss of value and importance for these people and that they have a future in the company." (FDDM1, Former Deputy Department Manager)

"It is a significant challenge to take such people [former managers who perceive that they are no longer able to satisfy motives in the way they would like to] along. ... You simultaneously have to give them the perception that this [motive, e.g.] power is not taken away from them, but that they are able to retain it so that they can go along with the change. ... Of course, it is essential that the executive management explain to department managers or managers why this change is important and to give them a perspective, i.e. to say, "You don't have to worry". ... In other words, offer them an alternative so that these people don't try to maintain their [traditionally role-related resources for their motives, e.g.] power at all costs, but instead have a perspective." (NM5, Non-Manager)

"The solution is actually very difficult. You need to enable them to feel special, even if that is of course difficult in a team where everyone is on an equal footing." (NM9, Non-Manager)

"Nevertheless, the managers also have expertise and it is really valuable if this shift from traditional to agile succeeds. In other words, if you are able to retain these people, because then of course you usually have a team made up of different characters and that would be an important character within the team in terms of expertise." (NM14, Non-Manager)

"It's difficult to facilitate this because that's really happening. I think it should have been discussed beforehand in a small circle with this department manager role. Perhaps the concerns about this should have been taken away somehow. For example, that the salary would be less, or maybe that this position would formally remain for their CV or similar ... and that an agreement would be reached on the salary beforehand. So that you simply discuss it in a small circle so that you don't skip the department managers, but discuss it with them before you announce it to everyone." (NM17, Non-Manager)

Accept that some individuals may need to leave the organization:

"This requires validating their understanding of their role, which implies dismissing some employees in the company if people don't understand or don't want to understand their role

and instead behaves as if they were a department manager. ... Those who want to get ahead in the hierarchy assert themselves against others. That is the mindset that many people think they have to live by. But the fact that you can achieve completely different things as a team, but then also be successful as a team or have failures as a team, is not recognised or is perceived as unattractive because then other people can also benefit from you. ... That's just very difficult to understand and apparently not attractive to many people. You just need people who also find this attractive, because you can't do it with others. ... If those employees do not want to work in an agile way, that is completely fine but we are keen on agility and want to establish new structures. So, these employees need to decide whether they want to stay with this company or whether they prefer to work in a hierarchical company. That's also totally fine for us, but we need to speed things up. ... We also had to dismiss some [former managers] on our own initiative, because otherwise we wouldn't have been able to continue at that point.... I am convinced that reducing these employees - who just do not want to work in agile structures and then develop toxically – is actually a success factor." (EM1, Executive Manager)

"If someone places importance on having authority over a team - well, that possibility no longer exists. If he is unwilling to accept an alternative now, then what remains? ... If it ultimately does not work out, then we had to part ways." (EM2, Executive Manager)

"Ultimately, parting ways with those who were determined to go into opposition, where we tried everything to take them with us but didn't succeed, was certainly a step in the right direction." (EM3, Executive Manager)

"The most memorable thing in my mind is that it [moving from a traditional to an agile structure] can't or didn't happen without personnel turnover at managerial level. ... You will probably not be able to get everyone on your side. ... As a manager, you should actually be happy if you have a team that is happy, motivated and able to work independently. I think the mindset of the individual person is really decisive. ... That is difficult if it wasn't already the case before. So, if you didn't already see yourself as part of and service provider for the team to help everyone to achieve the goal with your competences. Every manager serves the team - with other functions in part or in other forms, but always with the focus on team success. If you don't see it that way, of course, then the transition is more difficult; if you've always considered it that way, it's probably easier to change the perspective or the distribution. But

I can also imagine that it's difficult - it depends on how you've fulfilled the role so far. But if it was very top-down, it's difficult to get down to eye level. So, if the eye level hasn't always been there, at least on a human level, then it won't work." (FDM1, Former Department Manager)

"I had this formal managerial role as a department manager. I have always tried to fulfil this role cooperatively with the employees. ... For me, it's not so different from how I fulfil my role now, because I've always wanted participation. I just think that better decisions are made with more people than if you do it alone. But other managers have fulfilled it very differently to me. ... With other managers, I noticed that they simply were not willing to go along with it. I found that really surprising because I really enjoy it and it even suits my nature, this kind of shared leadership responsibility. ... Many managers who were unable or unwilling to deal with this have left or had to leave. ... I believe this approach of dismissing the department manager when nothing is possible any more would be the right approach, because this is what opened up the right path in the first place. ... If we speak metaphorically of a campfire, we have lit the campfire of the new agile world. We offer this, but people have to come to the fire themselves. So, they have to be activated, but there are also people who we will be unable to activate for our fire." (FDM2, Former Department Manager)

"It sounds so easy to simply provide people with an alternative [way to still satify those motives in their new role]. But I don't know whether it's actually always that simple in reality or whether you just have to part ways with certain people because it no longer fits. ... I am convinced that in the end, if we are completely honest, it is primarily up to the individual, because I have also spoken to managers who interpreted it very differently, who said "You have our full support, we will help you and support you wherever we can". And did not perceive it as a power struggle. In other words, in the end it is still about the person themselves, how they interpret and perceive it." (NM5, Non-Manager)

"It was obvious that managers who had worked as managers for a long time under this traditional model were unable to accomplish this change. I think they were all individuals who loved the hierarchy and power or the fact that they were authorized to give directives to others. And what I take away as a conclusion is that most of them actually did not accomplish this change. We had to weed them out. ... I believe that those [former managers] who are still

with us now, were dissatisfied with the previous structure and prefer this agile way of working and previously may have already worked in this way." (NM6, Non-Manager)

"For many managers it is important to live this managerial role, they just like to have employees subordinated to themselves. ... Many of these managers have left the company, which has already made a significant contribution to easing the situation." (NM8, Non-Manager)

"The dismissal or voluntary resignation of the employees who previously held this managerial position, with whom it would not have been possible or more difficult to introduce such an agile structure, was a milestone. ... And afterwards, when those people were gone, because no one was designated to lead a team now, but instead everyone did it together, it just fell into place. But we basically had to cut off the head of the snake before anything new could form." (NM9, Non-Manager)

"We were all aware that the department manager was unable to work in such egalitarian teams as he demands too much authority for that." (NM15, Non-Manager)

"The most important step was to get rid of managers who simply did not fit in with agility, who simply represented these big blockages in the organization. ... We parted ways with some of the managers or they left - rather, we parted ways. I believe that this break was necessary. ... If people seek authority over others, there is no solution. Because that is a mindset where everyone has to decide for themselves if they go along with it. And if someone does not want to go along with it, I cannot convince them to move into agility, they need to look for an alternative company. ... We parted ways with some of the managers or they left - rather, we parted ways. I believe that this break was necessary." (NM19, Non-Manager)

Appendix 4.4.2 Data Set: Facilitation of Role Transitions Among Non-Managers Not Aspiring to a Managerial Role

Evidence / Quotes
Provide training, coaching, and trial-based opportunities: *"We try to empower our employees so that they are able to do it on their own. ... Providing employees with coaching and training." (EM1, Executive Manager)* *„Experimenting is very important. In other words, giving employees the opportunity to try out such forms of work at an early stage. ... So let them "grow into it" on a trial basis." (FDM1, Former Department Manager)* *"Providing workshops or training courses is a good way to prepare employees intellectually to take on this responsibility." (NM21, Non-Manager)* **Establish a constructive error culture:** *"It's important that this open error culture is communicated and practised. Communicate, "It's okay if we make mistakes, but we need to talk about it" and to be a good role model. Perhaps the executive manager should also admit when he has made mistakes or something similar ... Being a good role model and showing how to deal with your own mistakes. Because it's absolutely human to make mistakes, we all do. And it's all about showing employees that it's okay and that you can deal with it openly. ... To communicate that we are genuinely convinced that everyone has done their best at all times under the given circumstances. And in my opinion, this assumption is so important for cooperation that I assume that even if mistakes happen, even if things don't work out, even if things are perhaps slower than we expected, but I assume that when we cooperate here as a team, we trust each other that everyone has given their best. And to establish this as a basic attitude at company level too." (NM5, Non-Manager)* *"We decided that we don't want to live this blame culture in the team, instead we assume that everyone performs to the best of their abilities and does their best for the team." (NM6, Non-Manager)*

"It's okay to make mistakes and it's important to grow from them – improvement. ... Simply this premise that everyone tries to do the best they can in the moment." (NM7, Non-Manager)

"We have given ourselves several guiding principles. Above all, we have established this mission statement that the effort that everyone puts in is always the best effort that everyone was capable of putting in at the time." (NM8, Non-Manager)

"It is important to communicate: "We live an open error culture here, an honest feedback culture. You are given responsibility and you are allowed to make mistakes. That's what it's all about here, that we also make mistakes and learn from them, because we want to improve"." (NM20, Non-Manager)

Encourage individuals:

"We as the executive management have to encourage our employees in such a way that they are actually capable of this ... In my experience, if you actively encourage employees to take this on and give them responsibility for their own work, they actually accomplish it and get a certain satisfaction from doing so." (EM1, Executive Manager)

"Encourage them and open up thise space." (FDM1, Former Department Manager)

"I then say, "Dear employees, please take care of this on your own". There's no need for me to get involved anymore." (FDM1, Former Department Manager)

"I perceive that many people who were previously hesitant to take on such things - often because they were not entrusted with them - are now suddenly doing so. So, people now have the confidence to take on this because there isn't someone standing there saying "You can't do it, you won't do it, because you don't have the competence"." (NM5, Non-Manager)

"Giving people the feeling that they are able to try this now, that they are able to take on this responsibility now and that it does not just have to be done by the former team manager." (NM12, Non-Manager)

"I think it's a great feeling when someone [non-managerial] places importance to your decision [as a former manager]. But then have the courage to say 'I can't decide for you. I can give you my individual opinion but I can't decide for you'." (NM18, Non-Manager)

Accept that some individuals may need to leave the organization:

"We also had to dismiss others on our own initiative because otherwise we would not have been able to continue at that point. ... We have been making a list of employees who are not fulfilling their role. We then decided what we wanted to do with them. This may also lead to dismissals." (EM1, Executive Manager)

"I have realised that not all employees actually want more responsibility. Some just want to fulfill their role as they did previously. Some may even want or need direction from the top. And of course that has to be taken into account, which we didn't consider initially." (EM3, Executive Manager)

"Some employees will never be won over." (FDM1, Former Department Manager)

"I don't think this mental switch - that people adapt - works for everyone. This agile way of working is really very positive, but I think that some people can't do it. ... If someone attaches great importance to adhering to processes and structures and wants everything to be predetermined exactly and then doesn't look to the left or right, they are not suitable for this. ... People who are too attached to this and always need directives to follow, regardless of whether it makes sense in the situation or not, then I think it's going to be extremely difficult with this agile way of working. I think it's a personal thing, whether you are able to do it or not. ... I found that really interesting to observe and was surprised because I would have thought that there would be such a general sigh of relief. Because if you previously had someone above you who made the decisions. ... . I would have thought that all employees who worked under them would now breathe a sigh of relief. And it was interesting to see that this was not actually the case for many of them, but that there were actually some who obviously needed these top-down directives. This was particularly evident in the many resignations. I think some people were so used to these crazy processes that when this dictator from above no longer existed, they were really lost and could no longer continue. I think that was a real problem in some cases. ... The employees were then supposed to continue working, but there was actually no one left to say, "You have to do this and that

now". And for some of them it just did not work. That surprised me, because I would have thought that everyone would have been relieved and somehow found their own way. But you could really see that this was not the case for some colleagues. ... That somehow also proves my hypothesis that agile working is perhaps not suitable for everyone." (NM6, Non-Manager)

"It quickly became apparent that there are employees who need a certain degree of guidance in order to perform at their best and that has simply been removed. And there are others who don't need this guidance ... Many employees are no longer with us and it was probably necessary because we simply needed a different mindset here in the company. ... You can't take all employees with you when you shift to the new structure. ... I think that was part of the plan. I believe that the executive management was already aware of this and accepted this risk. Simply because otherwise this change would not have been possible. You cannot please everyone nor you have to." (NM19, Non-Manager)

"If the decision has been made to change the structures and there are employees who do not want to be part of this new structure - there is an alternative company for the employees and an alternative employee for our company." (NM21, Non-Manager)