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**RESISTANCE TO RESISTANCE IN DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF AN  
INCUMBENT COMPANY**

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Abstract <p>This thesis studies resistance to resistance in the context of digital transformation. First, literature review of the most suitable resistance and digital transformation studies are covered. Second, a single case study of a Finnish incumbent financial services company is covered. Data of the empirical part of this study consists of semi-structured theme interviews. Three main themes and ten subthemes related to resistance to resistance in digital transformation were found from the data. These subthemes show what influences different responses to resistance have had on the case company's digital transformation. The main finding is that resistance to resistance seems to have been in connection to innovation capabilities of the case company. The second contribution of this thesis is that studying resistance brought up social aspects of digital transformation more visible.</p> <p>Resistance as a research area has gained newly developed interest during the previous decades. One emerging issue is resistance to resistance which refers to change agents' resistance towards change recipients' resistance. Many studies have proven that change agents' defensive response to resistance often preclude productive and positive aspects of resistance. This study shows that resistance can be used as a resource to manage change, and that resistance is not always something to be overcome. However, this study also shows that what responses change agents or managers give depends on the nature of the resistance they are responding to. In the case company it was common to try to use resistance as a developmental interactional practice. However, resistance was rarely facilitated truly or used proactively and intentionally as a source of positive change. Jobs are specializing at a fast pace and organizations are changing towards expert organizations. For example, this study presents how previously simple customer service has changed to a more demanding expert work that leverages sophisticated technologies. This change in the late capitalistic context is one major reason why it is increasingly harder to plan and implement change. Sometimes managers have little knowledge about what and how change should be done. This change in the context is also the aspect that ties resistance and digital transformation together.</p> <p>Digital transformation in turn refers to the widest form of digital change. Digital transformation includes digitization and digitalization, but what makes it different is that it includes changes in multiple processes, departments, and functions in an organization. In addition to technical and organizational changes, digital transformation is also a socio-cultural change. This study proposes a new framework to conceptualize digital transformation which includes a key addition of social dynamics. These social dynamics were proven to be the bottleneck of DT in many situations in the case company.</p>			
Keywords Change Management, Organizational Change, Change Resistance, Resistance to Resistance, Resisting Resistance, Digital Transformation, Digital Change			
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# 1 BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH GAP

## 1.1 Background

This thesis takes the theoretical lens of individuals' change resistance and applies it in the context of digital transformation. Change resistance can be seen to be a subgenre of organizational change and change management research. Digital transformation in turn can be seen to be the widest form of digital change including digitalization and digitization (Saarikko et al., 2020). For the past 10-20 years resistance had gained new interest, because of old resistance studies' inapplicability to the new context of our late capitalistic environment (Mumby et al., 2017). Digital transformation is a prime example of this kind of change and new context. In addition, focus is directed towards incumbent companies. First, relevant literature is covered from incumbent companies' perspective. Second, a big established incumbent company in the financial sector is studied empirically in a form of single case study.

Resistance itself refers to those changes and actions that are not institutionalizing in organizing (Ford et al., 2008; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). In this study resistance is seen as discursive and non-discursive practices that can be public or hidden. In other words, resistance refers to what people say and what people do, and resistance can be clearly stated or remain in some way hidden. (Mumby et al., 2017.) This conceptualization is also related to resistance as weak or strong and informal or formal which are commonly observed behavioral dimensions (Erwin and Garman, 2010; Prasad & Prasad, 2000). In addition, resistance is defined by its merits and from multiple perspectives (Thomas & Hardy, 2011). Taken merits and consequences into account is important, because otherwise the interpretative nature of resistance would be overwhelming. For example, someone coming late to a meeting could be interpreted as resistance. However, if this kind of behavior does not lead to any notable consequences, this study is not especially interested in it. Multiple perspectives on the other hand means that what people say is not taken into account as it is. In this way resistance is analytically examined rather than settling wholeheartedly on subjective interpretations.

Third and final conceptualization of resistance refers to institutionalization discussed by Tsoukas and Chia (2002) among others. According to them resistance refers to initiatives that are not institutionalizing (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). For example, if an innovation is seen as legitimate and it institutionalizes in organizing, resistance as a phenomenon is less present. Vice versa, if a new change initiative fails to institutionalize resistance is more present and the change initiative can be seen as resistance. Traditional resistance studies concentrate often on direct control which resistance can be related to, but new studies have acknowledged that resistance is more and more related to the colonization of subjectivities, i.e., organizations “forcing” employees to think, feel and speak in a specific way through discourses, narratives, and identity work (Contu, 2008; Mumby, 2005; Putnam et al., 2005; Sørensen, 2016; Thomas & Davies, 2005).

Resistance to resistance refers to change agents’ behavior that can be described as defensive, degenerative, or otherwise not being open to conceptualize the change in a new way which may lead to less innovative, synergistic, productive, lasting and/or superior solutions. When new aspects, ideas or possible challenges of a change initiative are presented to change agents, they can respond to it in various ways. Change agents can typically accept occurring resistance and facilitate claims of the change recipient or reject them (Ford et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2011). However, the variety of possible responses is vast (Courpasson et al., 2012; Fleming & Spicer, 2008; Sørensen, 2016). Dynamics of resistance and resistance to resistance can be derived to the skill and art of resisting. Often change agents and change recipients require that justifications, counterarguments, and practical demonstrations for change have to be sufficient and presented in a way that seems genuine (Folger et al., 1999; Ford et al., 2008; Whietener et al. 1998). For example, Courpasson (2012) studied resistance that change agents could not reject, because it was substantially convincing and seen as beneficial for the organization. If resistance lacks content and/or it is not seen as genuine it may increase occurring resistance in a self-enforcing loop (Ford et al., 2008). However, there are many more affecting factors such as interpersonal relationships and personal attributes (Erwin and Garman 2010; Furst and Cable, 2008).

From existing literature this study found four ways how resistance can produce change in a positive way: resistance provokes interaction which produces and diffuses information, resistance produces superior solutions to problems, resistance makes changes last (institutionalize) and resistance creates overall development by challenging the status quo (Courpasson, 2012; Ford et al., 2008; Mumby et al., 2017; Thomas et al., 2011). All these studies indicate that change agents' resistance as a response to resistance will most likely preclude majority of the positively productive aspects of resistance. Typically, resistance to resistance shows as change agent's incapability to engage in a truly open and collaborating multidisciplinary interaction (Thomas et al., 2011). Studying resistance to resistance gives voice to employees, experts, specialists, and line level workers. Because these people are often in the center of change having special expertise, management level's resisting behavior towards their resisting becomes a key issue.

In this thesis I examine the influence of resistance to resistance in digital transformation. Majority of the economic development and society at large are developing around digital technologies which makes studying DT unquestionably important. This study does not try to normatively prescribe how DT should be implemented and what it should include, but rather openly discuss about some of the most common conceptualizations. What is especially interesting is that in many cases there are enough resources, technical competences, and available technologies, but still organizations often fail (Saarikko et al., 2020). Top-down approaches and rigid hierarchies do not work very well in DT which leads to understanding the importance of collective efforts (Dremel et al., 2017; Hanelt et al., 2021; Plekhanov et al., 2022; Yoo et al., 2012; Volberda et al., 2021). Especially in DT, digital experts and specialists know about specific issues the most and hold the true power in change. But this is not true only for digital experts such as computer engineers. All kinds of duties whether it be marketing, sales or even simple assembly line work are specializing at a fast pace. This makes it very difficult or maybe even impossible for managerial level to make detailed decisions about what should be done and how. This is what makes resistance relevant in the context of DT. Also, resistance has many different roles and functions in DT which makes it especially fascinating. Resistance in DT seems to have major consequences being one of the key aspects.

This study's focus is on individuals' resistance which is taken to gain deeper insights on social aspects of DT. As discussed later in this paper compared to other types of digital changes DT also consists of many, often radical, changes in the core of the organization (Plekhanov et al., 2022). These changes in the core are related to problems that have a strong social dimension such as lack of clear vision, customer expectations, outcome ambiguity, familiarity over innovation, sociotechnical misalignment, and cultural inertia (Saarikko et al., 2020). In a sense DT ties technically oriented digital changes to socially oriented changes. However, the social nature of DT is not studied much which provides a great research gap for this study. Studying individual resistance provides possibilities to find new and novel insights unknown to current research.

The academic field of digital transformation is somewhat wide and ambiguous from many perspectives. According to a systematic literature review conducted by Kraus et al. (2021) the scientific literature about digital transformation is limited and many issues require further studies. However, it seems that few researchers are interested in human and social aspects of DT. To some extent this is not surprising, because in daily organizational activities it is easy to concentrate on technologies or surface level operative business processes and not consider what actually shifts and shapes change, the people of the organization. Indeed, according to many researchers as well as managers and other experts, digital transformation is not a technological problem (Kane et al., 2015; Frankiewicz & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2020; Tabrizi et al., 2019). However, there seems to be little evidence on peer reviewed scientific articles about this dimension. Plekhanov et al. (2022) found that power and conflict are in the core of DT, further suggesting future research about this dimension. Organizational change scholars such as Thomas et al. (2011) have suggested resistance to resistance as an important subject and DT scholars such as Plekhanov et al. (2022) have made implicit suggestions that resistance studies are needed in the DT field. Therefore, studying resistance (to resistance) in the context of DT is justified and no doubt it will be valuable for both worlds, the academic and practical managerial. Studying resistance to resistance takes into account power-relations and helps to understand social dynamics in change.



*Organizational change and resistance to change.* For the past 10-20 years resistance has gained newly developed interest among a variety of different scholars and perspectives (Mumby et al., 2017). New approaches in theory of organizational change such as organizational becoming pioneered by Tsoukas and Chia (2002) and emerging nature of change combined with processual view of organizations conceptualized by Van de Ven and Poole (2005) have changed how we see change and therefore resistance. Socially constructed reality, multi-authored change and negotiating meanings are all in the center of these new studies. From this standpoint, for example Thomas and Hardy (2011) have resulted in new conceptualizations of resistance which includes power as an integral part of resistance as a phenomenon and as a practice. According to them, the new focus on organizational resistance should be on the phenomena itself, i.e. how power and resistance together influence change, rather than who resists or why and when resisting happens (Thomas & Hardy, 2011; Thomas et al., 2011). This goes well with the above-mentioned new ontology and epistemology of change. It is appropriate time to focus on other views taking back from the black and white conceptualization that resistance either occurs or does not occur, that there are strict identities of change agents and change recipients. Mumby et al. (2017) gives a larger context on the issue and presents that indeed the rich heritage and tradition of resistance in scientific research was developed in a world that neoliberalism somewhat erased, a world that was very different contextually and where the movement of resources was extremely rigid and slow if it happened at all. This heritage of previous research about resistance does not apply well to modern digital change such as digital transformation.

*Digital transformation as a new context.* Digital transformation (DT) is a great example of a new phenomenon and context where the boundaries of possibilities for businesses have changed radically. It is one of the most societally and economically impactful phenomena. Although this research focuses on the individual level analysis, the following examples will provide sufficient evidence about this subject's importance. Alibaba and Amazon have changed how traditional retailers operate, Spotify has changed the music industry substantially and Netflix has disrupted the entertainment industry among others (Verhoef et al., 2021). A bit over ten years ago the most valuable companies of the S&P 500 Index were Exxon, GE, Microsoft, Gazprom and Citigroup whereas in 2018 the most valuable companies included

Apple, Alphabet, Microsoft, Amazon and Facebook which are all digital (Verhoef et al., 2021). These are just some of the examples that indicate not only incremental changes in digitalization, but radical changes in the whole economic landscape. It seems that for many companies to grow or at least maintain their current position in the markets, wider and more in-depth digital change is necessary. Not acting and undermining the importance of these changes can lead to bankruptcies as we have seen during the past 20 years. Classical examples include formerly big incumbents such as Blockbuster and Toys R Us. DT is especially important and relevant for incumbent companies because they face constant conflicts between the past and future while not growing at the expense of profits (Verhoef et al., 2021). Many incumbent companies are facing the difficulties of DT, but at the same time these companies are societal and economical key actors. Therefore, it is justified to look further into the issue of DT from the perspective of incumbent companies, because exactly they face the most radical changes.

## **1.2 Objectives and research questions**

Based on the previously presented perspectives and dimensions, the following research question was chosen to address the current research gap. The main research question can be further divided into two different sub-questions. First level resistance refers to change recipients' resistance whereas second level resistance refers to change agents' resistance towards the first level resistance.

RQ: How resistance to resistance influences digital transformation of an incumbent company?

Sub-question 1: How (first level) resistance occurs in incumbent company's digital transformation change programs?

Sub-question 2: What consequences and effects change agents' resistance as a response to resistance has on incumbent company's digital transformation change programs?

The research objective is to find out how resistance to resistance occurs in digital transformation and how resistance to resistance influences digital transformation in a

big established incumbent company. The research gap is twofold, it includes studying social dimensions of DT and resistance to resistance's influence on digital transformation. There are some studies about positive qualities of resistance such as Courpasson (2012), Ford et al. (2008), Mumby et al. (2017) and Thomas et al. (2011), but there is very limited empirical research on resistance to resistance.

Regarding the first sub-question, it is important to know is the occurring resistance something that can be facilitated or something that cannot be facilitated such as behavior intended to prevent changes from happening. For example, resistance that can be facilitated may show as employee's attempts to (re)negotiate how the change could be done differently which may come from genuine fear that planned change is not beneficial for the organization. Resistance that cannot be facilitated may show as preventing or destructive approaches in daily tasks or unwillingness to take part in negotiations. Simply stating that "I won't do it" and leaving the situation cannot be facilitated whereas saying that "I am not very comfortable about this decision, because we don't have enough competence in this area. If we outsource some of the tasks or have higher team budget, the probability of success would be realistic." can be facilitated and it also includes practical counteroffers. Before studying what implications resistance to resistance has, we need to be more aware of the nature of the occurring resistance itself. Not all resisting is equal. As Ford et al. (2008) presents, counteroffers, thoughtful resistance, and facilitative resistance are positive aspects that play an integral role in success. Therefore, it should be noted if for example counteroffers are being proposed.

Regarding the second sub-question, we can see it as another side of the story or second level resistance whereas the first sub-question presents more of the first level resistance/change recipient perspective. Although this study's perspective is based more on the intricacies of modern resistance, it is difficult to let go of the change agent - recipient division and dynamic completely. One reason for this is that to some extent members of an organization will probably themselves decide to stick to their predefined roles and mandated use of power. If you are nominated officially as a change agent and your job is to shift change in a specific department, it defines behavioral dynamics to some extent although it is not by all means the whole story.

The second sub-question will lead to studying how the direction of change shifts in relation to managerial responses.

### 1.3 Research methods and structure of the research

This study is done qualitatively, because the main research question is somewhat broad, explorative and tries to examine the question how. According to Wilson (2014) qualitative research is exploratory by nature which suits very well to this study's objectives and RQ. Both the theoretical lens and context are somewhat new and novel which induces the importance of exploration. Qualitative research is a suitable choice to understand *how* organizations behave (Koskinen, Alasuutari and Peltonen, 2005, pp. 30-33). *How* is this study's focus and indeed it is the appropriate question regarding the research gap rather than what, who or when. Also, as Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008, p. 4) present, qualitative business research enables studying complex business-related phenomena in their contexts. Regarding organizational change, resistance and digital transformation, context is especially important.

First part of the study's actual content consists of a literature review about organizational change on a general level from which change resistance is studied more specifically and digital transformation on a general level from which the business aspect of it is studied more specifically. References were gathered mainly from Google Scholar, Ebsco Business Source Ultimate, ProQuest, Scopus, and ScienceDirect by Elsevier. Further selection criteria of articles included peer-review process and objective assessment of quality of the journal on JuFo portal. Searched key words included "Digital transformation", "Organizational change", "Change management", "Digital Change", "Change resistance" and "Resistance to resistance". Articles referenced on the chapter 1.1 worked as seminal articles and as a starting point for further exploration. These articles define the theoretical focus and direction of this research. The function of the literature review is to work as a summary of key aspects and cover theoretical discussions that can bring insights to this study's data and research questions.

Second part of the of the study consists of an empirical single case study including five 45-75-minute semi-structured theme-centered interviews which also included

10-15-minute introductions. All interviews were held in one organization. Studying one organization enabled deeper and wider consideration ensuring better reliability and generalizability. The interviewed organization was chosen based on its relevancy to digital transformation and its incumbent status. The company is one of the financial services market leaders in Finland. More specifically the core expert organization of the whole company was studied. This core organization provides products and services also internally in the whole organization. The interviewees were chosen based on their current or past involvement in digital transformation activities. In addition, the interviewees were currently or previously from many levels of the organization such as upper-level middle management, middle management, and expert/specialist employees. Considering higher and lower-level employees in the organizational hierarchy is essential to study many sides of resistance. This also provided a higher chance to reveal how resistance and possible dominance had occurred.

## **2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS OF CHANGE RESISTANCE AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**

To this day Kurt Lewin stays as one of the most known names in change resistance literature. The term and initial notion about change resistance is usually credited to him (Dent & Goldberg, 1999). However, these views about organizational change resistance that started to develop in the 1950s-1960s hold many problems especially in today's context. Traditional views about change and resistance see resistance as something to be overcome, gives the sole privilege to change agents to define what constitutes as resistance and separates resistance from the interactions between different parties as something independent "in the change recipient" (Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Ford et al., 2008; Thomas & Hardy, 2011). In other words, conceptualization of resistance and its context have been change agent centric for long. Change agents have been seen as the reasonable party and assumed to be right in decision making while change recipients have been seen as fearful and resistant actors who so to speak "just don't get it" (Dent & Goldberg, 1999).

This chapter consists of the theoretical part. First theoretical views about organizational change and organizational change resistance are being introduced. Then, the context of this research, digital transformation, is presented from its theoretical perspective. Both sub-chapters begin by detailed definitions and clarification of the theoretical focus.

### **2.1 Organizational change and development**

There are numerous theoretical perspectives in organizational change literature which reflects significant disagreements in the ontology and epistemology of change (Van de Ven & Poole, 2005). Van de Ven and Poole (2005) state that despite of this there is a current consensus among organization science scholars that change as a topic is an important and central subject in the field. Maybe the most important dimension relates to the concept of change as continuous or episodic and organizations as processes or things. According to the continuous change perspective which this study relies on, multiple interdependencies in organizing explains the nature of how change happens. Change itself on the other hand is caused by micro-

level adjustments occurring at the same time in many places. (Weick & Quinn, 1999.) This theoretical view is supported by many other subjects covered widely in organizational studies such as theories of chaos, complexity and cybernetics which clearly depict that small changes do not necessarily stay small and that many times in these small changes lie the possibility of bigger transformations (Maruyama, 1963; Morgan, 2006, pp. 241-290; Weick and Quinn, 1999). Therefore, this approach goes well with studying individual level resistance.

More practically speaking, it is easy to understand that people are not consistent, and that every job today, even the “simplest” one, requires making multiple decisions daily. This is also one of the most important aspects in organizational becoming theory. People interact constantly with each other and with themselves (i.e., thinking or improvisation), and exactly from this microlevel standpoint new webs of beliefs and experiences are created which forms the direction of change that has emergent and planned qualities. According to the organizational becoming view change is the first level of conceptualization and organizing is just a byproduct of people’s attempts to navigate in it. (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002.) In this context, Weick (1979) was one of the pioneers to shift the discussion from organization to organizing (i.e., processuality and later strong process view). These ideas have been further developed by scholars such as Van de Ven and Poole (2005) whose typology is used to define this study’s perspective: “Process studies of organizing”. All above-mentioned approaches can be categorized under the term post-modernism although it is not something that is often explicitly used in change literature.

## **2.2 Change resistance**

### **2.2.1 Definitions**

Mumby et al. (2017) frames resistance to four kinds of practices based on two axes: individual-collective and public-hidden, and on two important questions: what counts as resistance and when does resistance count. These four practices include individual infrapolitics, insubordination, collective infrapolitics and insurrection. Because this study is interested mainly on the individual resistance, individual infrapolitics and insubordination are highlighted. Both individual infrapolitics (hidden) and

insubordination (public) consider resistance as discursive and non-discursive practices, but what makes them different is their hidden-public dimension. The former practices are in some way hidden and implicit while being ambiguous in their oppositional intent and the latter practices are unambiguously oppositional while being explicitly stated and public. (Mumby et al., 2017.) This widely accepted and applied framework shall work as a guideline to recognize resistant behavior from the data, because it suits very well to this study's conceptualization about resistance, change and DT.

As Mumby et al. (2017) states, this framework enables moving away from the all or nothing, either/or perspective in a way that also enables emergent and socially constructed qualities. In addition to oppositional intent and hidden-public dimensions, to answer the research questions we cannot leave out what consequences resisting behavior has had and what various views about resistance there are. Therefore, resistance is also defined by its merits and from multiple perspectives (Thomas & Hardy, 2011). Third used definition relates to institutionalization. According to Tsoukas and Chia (2002) resistance refers to locally or centrally taken initiatives that remain as plans or improvisations without becoming institutionalized. Although in their definition the focus is on organizations rather than on individuals, the same idea applies to this study.

The view of institutionalization discussed by Ford et al. (2008) and Tsoukas and Chia (2002) refers also to the following definitions indirectly. Resistance can be something positive (i.e., facilitative or productive), something negative (i.e., preventing, degenerative, destructive) and/or everything between. Resistance is therefore acting and doing something, it is a verb and a practice. It is important to consider what is being considered as resistance among individuals and who are seen as resistant actors. However, in order to provide value for the current research gap, considering only one-sided views about resistance such as change agents' views is not possible. The intention of this research is not to blindly take the view of celebrating or demonizing resistance although the basic presupposition is more on the former based on the taken extensive literature review and empirical findings. For example, Dent & Goldberg (1999) have found little evidence of instances where employees resist change. In the following chapters is explained that resistance can be



everything from a resource to a source of hindrance and increasing chaos if used as one.

Resistance to resistance, or in some studies resisting resistance, refers to change agents' and managers' practices that try to force imposed change rigidly from top to down and usually without being open to widen the initial concept of the change.

Resistance to resistance is also defined as change agent defensiveness by Ford et al. (2008), and according to Thomas et al. (2011) as follows:

*One issue that invites further investigation is “resistance to resistance” by senior managers; i.e., resistance by subordinates is integral to the transformation of knowledge, and yet dominant actors may well respond to it in ways that preclude such an outcome. Such reactions may help to account for the failure of change programs, but these processes have not yet been fully investigated. (p. 15)*

In other words, dominant actors i.e., managerial level can preclude transformation of knowledge or the creation of knowledge which in turn can lead to failures or less innovative and synergistic changes. The basic argument, based on the extensive evidence covered in the theoretical parts of this study, is that new knowledge enables organizing in synergistic, innovative, productive, institutionalizing, and superior ways and resistance is exactly the interactional practice from which new knowledge is being created and diffused (Courpasson, 2012; Ford et al., 2008; Mumby et al., 2017; Thomas et al., 2011). Therefore, Thomas et al. (2011) recognizes the productive and developmental dimension of resistance and speculates that if change agents' response to resistance is another layer of resistance, it may lead to less beneficial outcomes for the organization, because it prevents the creation of new knowledge.

### 2.2.2 Resistance to change

**Table 1. Summary of change resistance findings**

<b>Power and resistance: Fundamental view</b>	Resistance is inherent in organizing and produced by the dominant system it challenges.	Courpasson et al. (2012) Mumby (2005) Prasad & Prasad (2000) Fleming and Spicer (2008)
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	People resist expected negative outcomes rather than change itself.	Dent and Goldberg (1999) Almost all studies indirectly
<b>Managerial view</b>	Resistance forms in change agents' interpretations of what constitutes as resistance.	Dent and Goldberg (1999) Ford et al. (2008) Thomas & Hardy (2011)
	Resistance is an explanation by change agents who try to reduce accountability and shift attention away from them.	Ford et al. (2008) Ford & Ford (2010) Salancik & Meindl (1984) Silvia (2005)
	Broken agreements, violations of trust, communication breakdowns and resisting resistance causes resistance.	Ford et al. (2008)
	Understanding of the change, communication, and trust influences resistance.	Erwin and Garman (2010)
	Strong and weak resistance. Informal and formal resistance. Anti-change behavior often linked to weak forms of resistance.	Erwin and Garman (2010) Prasad & Prasad (2000)
	Routine resistance (mundane, unplanned, spontaneous, and indirect yet being often persistent) as informal resistance is constituted in three ways: Owning resistance, naming resistance and indirect resistance.	Prasad and Prasad (2000)
	Resistance is not only situation-dependent and context-dependent, but it is also directed towards multiple audiences and very often has unintended consequences.	Courpasson et al. (2012) Ford et al. (2008) Putnam et al. (2005) Prasad & Prasad (2000)
	<b>Post-modern view</b>	Humor, gossip, cynicism, joking, and bitching are commonly observed discursive practices in resistance.
Resistance comes from colonizing the subjectivities of employees through discourses, narratives, and identity work.		Alvesson and Willmott (2002) Contu (2008) Mumby (2005) Putnam et al. (2005) Sørensen (2016) Thomas & Davies (2005)
Direct control mechanisms are not gone, but rather changed a lot during the recent decades.		Gabriel (2008)
Resistant practices without shaking the status quo, decaf resistance, are often "enjoyed".		Contu (2008)

According to Courpasson and Vallas (2016) there are three types of resistance studies: ones that celebrate change and demonize resistance, ones that celebrate change and resistance, and ones that demonize change and celebrate resistance. Also, Thomas & Hardy (2011) takes a similar, maybe a slightly more dialectical approach of celebrating-demonizing. However, this may be too straightforward categorization. For example, regarding the celebrating dimension, Dent & Goldberg (1999), Ford et al. (2008), Courpasson et al. (2012) and many other scholars do not deny the existence of negative dimensions in resistance such as degenerative or preventing behavior, but rather prove that indeed there is also a positive dimension in resistance. To some extent it is overemphasized to say that these studies are “celebrating resistance” just because they are trying to widen our understanding about resistance and recognize that resistance sometimes plays an important role in success and in directing change.

On the other hand, Thomas et al. (2011) and Thomas & Hardy (2011) play an important part in the literature by bringing the dimension of power and power-relationships to the discussion and show that resistance is not a simple matter of occurring or not occurring. Other scholars such as Fleming and Spicer (2008) have tried to combine power and resistance in a term of struggle. From this standpoint we can reason that there are different depths and strengths of resistant practices among individuals. This notion increases the level of complexity even further. To put it blatantly, there is no resistance without power (Foucault, 1980, p. 142). And without any resistance there would not be lasting changes, because all messages received even those that are harmful for the organization would be accepted without question (Ford et al., 2008). Power as an element is an important one to keep in mind, but for the sake of simplicity and focus, in this study it is taken for granted.

These aspects lead us to the question how is resistance born? How is resistance formed? In the traditional resistance research, there is an underlying assumption that there is something wrong with the change recipient and nearly no one studied what actions on the side of change agents, usually middle managers, or senior managers, causes resistance (Courpasson et al. 2012; Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Ford et al. 2008; Thomas et al., 2011). As indicated earlier, one of the classical explanations is that resistance forms in change agents' interpretations of what constitutes as resistance

(Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Ford et al., 2008; Thomas & Hardy, 2011). In other words, resistance is what change agent interprets and decides it to be. Also, there are much evidence about behavioral tendencies where change agents are more willing to accept and take credit from successful changes, and blame others for failures (Ford et al., 2008; Ford & Ford, 2010; Salancik & Meindl, 1984; Silvia, 2005). Ford et al. (2008) presents this from a sensemaking perspective as a self-justifying explanation and self-serving account when expected outcomes do not meet the reality.

There are also more fundamental views about resistance. One explanation is that resistance is inherent to organizational life, and therefore cannot be eliminated completely (Courpasson et al., 2012, Mumby 2005, Prasad & Prasad, 2000). According to another view resistance is produced by the dominant system that it challenges (Fleming and Spicer 2007). Both of these more fundamental views refer implicitly to the phenomenon of power-resistance struggles. When we move from the idea of who and why resisting happens to studying how resistant practices occur it is easy to notice that the level, depth, and width of resistance differs, and that resisting practices otherwise differ a lot. Often it is very hard to analytically conclude what even constitutes as resistance. Lastly, there is the classical argument that people resist expected negative outcomes rather than the change itself (Dent & Goldberg, 1999). Without going into details Dent and Goldberg (1999) show that these negative outcomes are related to aspects such as lack of trust, threat to job security and misunderstandings. These kinds of aspects are also supported by many newer studies (Erwin & Garman, 2010).

Studying practices enables to produce insights that are vital for practical managerial activities. For example, Ford et al. (2008) discusses about change agents' contributions to resistance and recognizes three main areas: broken agreements and violations of trust, communication breakdowns and resisting resistance. The first one indicates that repairing damaged relationships and gaining trust are prerequisites for decreasing resistance. The second one indicates that change should be legitimized and justified sufficiently to win people over, misinterpretations minimized, because when the truth eventually comes out, misinterpretations may lead to feelings of deception, and finally desired actions should be explicitly stated out loud. Resisting resistance, also the core of this study just in other words, refers to change agent

defensiveness that might occur because of new emerging issues raised by change recipients or just interpretation that the change recipient is not genuine in his/her intentions. (Ford et al., 2008.)

In addition to the formerly discussed dimensions of hidden and public, and discursive and non-discursive practices Erwin and Garman (2010) found that there are also strong and weak behaviors in resistance. Strong behaviors were usually notable and visible whereas weak behaviors were not. What is especially interesting is that “anti-change” behaviors were often considered as weak resistance such as doing the bare minimum or delaying the change slightly. (Erwin & Garman, 2010.) There are also many alternatives to strong and weak resistance such as formal and informal resistance (Prasad & Prasad, 2000). In their study Prasad and Prasad (2000) use the term informal resistance almost as a synonym for routine resistance which is characterized by being mundane, unplanned, spontaneous, and indirect yet being often persistent.

The weak or indirect form of resistance seems to align somewhere between the managerial approach and new interpretative post-modern approaches. The study by Erwin and Garman (2010) is quite well in line with other resistance studies: understanding change influences resistance, communication in change is key to success, participation in change influences resistance, confidence and trust in management activities influences resistance and fear that change causes negativities is often present. However, what makes their study different is the inclusion of personal attributes and the lack of co-produced change. According to them some people are just predisposed to resist and act in rigid, shortsighted, and all-around difficult ways (Erwin & Garman, 2010). This indicates the benefit of personal approach in practical management activities. Also, the lack of co-produced change is interesting, because they address the importance of participation, but concentrate only on what is wrong in change recipients’ perception.

Prasad and Prasad (2000) on the other hand found three different ways how resistance was constituted: owning resistance, naming resistance and indirect resistance. They take the term routine resistance initiated by Scott (1985) and analyze it in their study which focused on interviewing and observing new computer

technology implementation. Owning resistance refers to oneself identifying as a resistant actor in a situation for example through discursive practices concentrating on asking many questions and naming resistance refers to attributing others to resistance such as speculatively blaming others. Indirect resistance was especially complex, because managers themselves constituted resistance by their reactions to employees' interpretations of managerial constructions. For example, it was noticed that managers used discursive practices to humanize computers calling them "smart" which led employees to overly rely on computers, for example by using less of their own judgement, which finally lead to some mistakes and employees stating that if the computers are not so smart after all why are they needed. Overall, managers as change agents were forced to make some concessions for example regarding the workload or schedules, because employees were angry that they were not included in the change process and many "careful carelessness" incidents happened which was seen as intentional negligence from managers point of view. (Prasad & Prasad, 2000.)

The late 1990s and beginning of 2000s was the initial start of post-modern resistance studies. According to Fleming and Spicer (2008) Thompson and Ackroyd (1995) were one of the first ones to move away from the Fordist and managerialist views towards more intricate conceptualization about resistance including elements such as the colonization of subjectivities.

According to Putnam et al. (2005) control is no longer direct and organizing is concentrated on affective approaches in social negotiations. They use also the hidden-public dimension, but in terms of covert and overt (Putnam et al., 2005). What makes their study different is the sole discursive approach. Them among others have found out that humor, gossip, cynicism, joking, and bitching are commonly noticeable discursive practices in resistance (Contu, 2008; Mumby, 2005, Putnam et al., 2005). In their study resistance was also noticed to have primary and secondary audiences, and intended and unintended consequences (Putnam et al., 2005). This brings insights about the dynamics of the chaotic nature of resistance discussed for example by Ford et al. (2008). In sum, resistance is not only situation-dependent and context-dependent, but it is also directed towards multiple audiences and very often has unintended consequences (Courpasson et al., 2012, Ford et al., 2008, Putnam et

al., 2005, Prasad & Prasad, 2000). Regarding multiple audiences, resistance as a discursive practice can also have theater-like qualities which can be used as a sort of a weapon to influence customers, co-workers, media, and managers (Putnam et al., 2005). It is easy to imagine for example a micro-politics scenario where using humor with a customer is used as a tool to affect the customer's perception and eventually behavior which in turn affects how the organization works.

Thomas and Davies (2005) also argue that resistance as it was once perceived during the industrial and technological revolution does not exist anymore. Based on the work of Alvesson and Willmott (2002) they argue that new form of resistance, the post-modern era resistance, concentrates on feelings of insecurity and vulnerability (Thomas & Davies, 2005). This new type of resistance can be seen to come from post-modern management practices. These post-modern management activities refer to shaping meanings and identities rather than traditional practices of direct control as discussed in this section. In sum, the post-modern era resistance is caused by a form of subjugation which indeed comes from managerial activities that colonize the subjectivities of employees through discourses, narratives, and identity work (Contu, 2008; Mumby, 2005; Putnam et al., 2005; Sørensen, 2016; Thomas & Davies, 2005). Thomas and Davies (2005) gives a more sophisticated take on resistance showing its intricacies by studying resistance as politics of meaning which insightfully shows how processes of micro-level resistance unfolds in practice. Alvesson and Willmott (2002) on the other hand present practical cases where for example one employee angrily declined to use the word "business" instead of "product" when the company's managers tried to change perceptions from product orientation to market orientation.

However, direct control mechanisms are not gone. Gabriel (2008) mentions four types of common control mechanisms today from which only one is not related to direct control. These include cultural and ideological controls such as emphasizing the importance of certain aspects for example in the core of the company's image, structural controls such as continuous measurement, technological control such as surveillance and spatial control such as open offices (Gabriel, 2008).

Contu (2008) continues the discussion supporting the evidence that resistance has gone underground especially in the late capitalistic context of liberal workplaces. She argues that real resistance has always costly consequences which comes from shaking the status quo and power-resistance relations, and that in contrast resistance nowadays is often something that is enjoyed without consequences. According to her there are much of “decaf” resistance that is not aimed at disturbing the status quo, but to enhance perceptions of us as free and liberal beings through resistant practices which for example bring out aspects that one has the right to disagree. (Contu, 2008.) Decaf resistance is the kind of resistance that this study is not necessarily interested in analyzing further, but still, it is important to notice and mention.

There are more traditional views on resistance and new kinds of post-modern micro-level views on resistance which both work as a great starting point to study empirical data in this research.

### 2.2.3 Resistance to resistance and productive qualities of resistance

**Table 2. Summary of resistance to resistance and productive qualities of resistance**

Resisters were able to produce solutions that were substantially convincing and beneficial for the organization.	Courpasson (2012)
Change agents can either accept and facilitate/accommodate claims of the recipient or reject them.	Ford et al. (2008) Thomas et al. (2011)
Change recipients are encouraged to act in resistant ways.	Fleming & Spicer (2008)
Managerial responses to resistance are various. Change recipients engage in parallel efforts to do something better.	Sørensen (2016)
Justifications, counterarguments, and practical demonstrations must be sufficient and presented in a way that seems genuine.	Folger et al. (1999) Ford et al. (2008) Whietener et al. (1998)
Good interpersonal relationships result in less resistance although some people are inherently more prone to resist.	Erwin and Garman (2010) Furst and Cable (2008)
The process leading to a possible breakthrough includes: 1. Relational approach in communicative practices: welcoming and	Thomas et al. (2011)



inviting 2. Generative approach in dialogue: collaborative work 3. Facilitating power-relationships: being open to reconceptualize change	
All found positive aspects of resistance: 1. Creation and diffusion of new knowledge 2. Superior solutions to problems 3. Resistance makes changes last (institutionalize) 4. Overall development	Courpasson (2012) Fleming & Spicer (2008) Ford et al. (2008) Mumby et al. (2017) Sørensen (2016) Thomas and Hardy (2011) Thomas et al. (2011)

Next, let's get a deeper look at the resistance-to-resistance literature and literature that sees the overall positive dimension in resistance. Courpasson et al. (2012) discusses about productive resistance, Ford et al. (2008) discusses about resistance as a resource, Thomas et al. (2011) have found evidence on resistance leading to a breakthrough, Sørensen (2016) discusses about parallel efforts and Mumby et al. (2017) conceptualizes resistance as constructive and necessary. All these studies refer to the newly found dimension that resistance can also have developmental and productive qualities, that it is not purely negative. In practice what does this positive dimension mean? Based on the taken literature review positive dimensions in resistance can be categorized into themes of knowledge, superior solutions, making changes last and challenging the status quo creating intrinsic developmental value. One aspect is that resistance may lead to the creation of new knowledge which in turn leads to synergistic and innovative solutions (Thomas et al., 2011). Another practical implication is that resistance produces superior solutions to problems (Courpasson et al. 2012). Resistance may also make changes last (institutionalization through perception of legitimacy), in other words strengthen changes seen as beneficial for the organization. As discussed previously, without resistance no changes would last. (Ford et al., 2008.) Finally, resistance creates overall development by challenging the context of power and domination (Mumby et al., 2017; Sørensen, 2016).

Although Mumby et al. (2017) provides somewhat loose arguments such as that economic inequality and capitalism are fundamental reasons for resistance, they

provide good insights on the wider context around resistance. First, historically speaking workplace was a site of disciplinary practice while today work is evermore omnipresent in our modern life blurring the distinction of work and life outside of it. Second, it is important to notice that the autonomy of employees has increased a lot and much of the controlling work has shifted from traditional tools towards shaping meanings and identities. Third, the movement of resources is easier than ever considering how extreme the boundaries once used to be. (Mumby et al., 2017.) The movement of capital and labor has increased significantly from the previous decades when huge factory buildings, heavy machinery and massive labor forces was the norm (Bauman, 2000, p. 57; Mumby et al., 2017). Especially in the digital domain these boundaries are nearly non-existent because people can work anywhere from the world and infrastructures are digital.

There are also interesting arguments about the connection between resistance and what companies offer today. According to Gabriel (2008) companies have moved from simple production work to offering images, desires, dreams, and fantasies which has led to a “society of spectacle”. One mentionable practical implication is that some companies have changed to sites in which to pursue heroic achievements (Gabriel, 2008). Yet, it may be a long shot to say that capitalism is the fundamental reason for resistance. However, the late capitalistic context no doubt defines some elements of resistance today. At a fundamental level all these elements have led to the expansion of theoretical perspectives and discussions that we have today in change resistance. It would be very interesting to know how much of the development of resistance studies can be credited to the change in the context/environment and how much to the development of the science itself.

Fleming and Spicer (2008) raise an interesting point saying that the academic world seems to be constantly lagging behind managerial work. For example, discursive practice such as cynicism or doing things differently and independently are seen as resistance from the post-modern resistance perspective. However, according to some scholars, current liberal workplaces and management gurus invite people to be uncompromisingly themselves. (Fleming & Spicer, 2008.) Fleming and Spicer (2008) conceptualize power and resistance as a single term struggle, because according to them it fits better to the new context where employees as well as

managers are encouraged to break the rules, challenge existing thinking, and do things differently. These aspects highlight the importance of resistance to resistance's role in producing change. In a way Fleming and Spicer (2008) argue that managers today advocate resistant behaviors, because managers understand the value that can come from resistance. They also indirectly indicate that change agent response could be conceptualized as open. To speculate further, change agent or manager may have little knowledge on how to do a certain thing which makes it first almost impossible to resist change recipients' resistance and second when manager understands his/her lack of understanding the response could be simply "Do your thing". We can also speculate that the value of resistance may increase alongside with the organization's dependency on specific aspects such as high level of innovation, creative doing and understanding of the intricacies of certain trends.

Similar to Mumby et al. (2017) Sørensen (2016) argues that resistance can be constructive. She conceptualizes resistance as parallel efforts which build something better (from the individual's point of view) independently from the status quo. However, according to her only those actions that challenge the dominant system and are located outside of the structures of the status quo can be regarded as constructive resistance. First, she categorizes real life resistant situations into responses of authorities: tolerated, ignored, disrupted, repressed and size of the construction: small, medium, and large. Second, she categorizes the same situations into visibility: secret/hidden, discrete, open/loud and consequence (construction) of the resistance: alternative/inspiration, supplement, partial replacement, and collapse of previous status quo. (Sørensen, 2016.) These categorizations are no doubt also valuable for the analysis of this study's data. Whereas other studies conclude that change agents' responses may be accepting and facilitating or rejecting, Sørensen (2016) proposes also other possibilities. Especially regarding this study's research question, how resistance to resistance influences DT, the consequences of resistance in Sørensen's (2016) study provides insights on it.

The idea of multi-authored change begins with the use of language which in turn is followed by meanings it shapes. According to Thomas et al. (2011) organization and organizing are contingent upon language which means that language is the actual glue that holds structures and processes together. On the other hand, patterns of

organizing changes when new meanings are created through language that is formed in communicative interactions (Thomas et al., 2011). For example, Ford and Ford (1995) presents four types of conversations in the context of implementing intentional change: initiative conversations, conversations for understanding, conversations for performance and conversations for closure. Although this framework is quite old, it describes well the basic dynamics of how planned change forms through different kinds of conversations. In addition to conversations, other types of language studies such as narrative and discourse studies show the importance of language in change (Thomas et al., 2011). However, for this study it is enough to conclude that language influences change and because language itself is constructive, change too is constructive and fundamentally multi-authored (Prasad & Prasad, 2000; Putnam et al., 2005; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Thomas et al., 2011; Tsoukas, 2009).

The celebrating resistance literature relies heavily on the concepts of multi-authored and co-constructive change which in turn rely heavily on discourse studies that explicitly state that shared meanings do not necessarily result in innovative and more synergistic results in practice (Hardy et al., 2005; Thomas et al., 2011). Therefore, if resistance provokes communication and interaction which produces shared meanings, it does not always lead to positive outcomes. Indirect resistance studied by Prasad and Prasad (2000) is a great example of this where shared meanings, seeing computers as smart, produced not confrontational, but passive “dumb” resistance. Another perspective supporting the idea of multi-authored change is that resistance is inherently productive and constructive.

In the study by Courpasson et al. (2012) resisters were able to come up with solutions that were substantially convincing and beneficial for the organization. In these cases, senior managers and official power holders did not actually have any possibilities to reject or accept claims that showed as resisting behavior, because recipients themselves were so skilled at the work of resisting. (Courpasson, 2012.) While more studies are required to support these findings’ generalizability, the initial results are promising. These findings by Courpasson et al. (2012) presents different kind of evidence discarding the managerialist perspective which presents that managers can either accept or reject claims and suggestions occurring in resistant

behavior. However, maybe resistant actors in the managerial studies have not been truly skilled in their work of resisting. Therefore, resistance is inherently productive only if the resisting itself is skilled.

Skilled resisting in turn most probably requires high level of subject expertise, in addition to the interactional practice of resisting itself. According to inoculation theory if the change agent is not convincing enough in his/her efforts to give counterarguments and demonstrate justifications for change, change recipients will most probably act in increasingly resistant ways (Ford et al., 2008). However, Furst and Cable (2008) provide evidence on attribution theory which focuses on the role of interpersonal relationships in resistance. They found out that employees who have relatively good relationships with their managers were more accepting towards strict and controlling managerial approaches, and vice versa, employees who had relatively bad relationships with their managers were more suspicious and prone to resist (Furst & Cable, 2008). While there are no attribution studies regarding resistance to resistance, interpersonal relationships are no doubt as influencing factor. This is something that Erwin and Garman (2010) did not consider while studying personal attributes and concluding that some people are just inherently more resisting.

If we take the view of Courpasson et al. (2012) as it is, the driver of change comes from the skills of the employees of the organization rather than top management level planning. There are few valid reasonings why organizations should not train their employees to become skilled resisters. Maybe the specialization of jobs is automatically leading employees to become specialists in their own job which enables them to propose superior solutions, hence being better resisters.

According to the managerialist perspective change agents, who are usually more powerful and dominant actors, can either accept and facilitate/accommodate claims of the recipient or reject them (Ford et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2011). One classical issue discussed by Powell and Posner (1978) is that when change agent rejects to facilitate resistance and hear proposed claims, which Ford et al. (2008) calls as defensiveness, the rejection may lead to a highly negative cycle where resistance to resistance (in other words resisting resistance) only increases the initial level of resistance and so on. Based on multiple references, mainly Ford et al. (2008) and

interactional justice research by Folger et al. (1999) and Whitenor et al. (1998), it seems that the content of justifications, counterarguments and practical demonstrations has to be sufficient, but also, they have to be presented in a way that seems genuine in order to reach consensus. If the counteroffer is not interpreted to be genuine or the actual content is insufficient, self-enforcing loop of the status quo will probably take place (Folger et al., 1999; Ford et al., 2008; Whitenor et al. 1998). It seems people have an inherent natural need to reach a sense of status quo or some sort of feeling of continuum quickly. Also, Thomas and Hardy (2011) conclude that this is exactly what makes using resistance as a resource hard: especially managers' job is to make sense of business situations quickly and elements that might create increasing complexity or chaos such as new insights are not actively sought.

Thomas et al. (2011) have on the other hand found evidence in their study of a big telecommunications company that different responses to resistance may lead either to a breakthrough, where innovative and synergistic changes are based on new knowledge, or to a standoff where existing knowledge keeps circulating and imposed change takes place. In their study knowledge and its diffusion is seen to be the key to manage change, because it is precisely the core that actually directs change. The process leading to a possible breakthrough includes relational approach in communicative practices: welcoming and inviting, generative approach in dialogue: collaborative work and facilitating power-relationships: being open to reconceptualize change. (Thomas et al., 2011.) If positive qualities of resistance are to be maximized, some level of saturation in the creation/transformation and diffusion of new knowledge should be reached. It seems that the old wisdom still holds true to some extent: people do not resist change per se, but they resist those negative aspects that are expected to emerge from the change (Dent & Goldberg, 1999). There are very limited number of studies covering specifically resistance to resistance. For the most part resistance to resistance is widely uncovered research area which is exactly the reason why this study concentrates on it. However, there is an abundance of resistance studies from which the most appropriate ones were covered in this literature review part.

## 2.3 Digital Transformation

### 2.3.1 Definitions

Digital transformation as a research area is somewhat fragmented and little consensus exists on many issues. However, during the past few years big leaps have been taken to clarify the theoretical domain. Scholars such as Hanelt et al. (2021), Kraus et al. (2021), Plekhanov et al. (2022) and Verhoef et al. (2021) have taken extensive literature reviews to figure out the dimensions of DT to build common ground on these issues. As a result of these studies DT is seen as a multidisciplinary discussion and as an interdisciplinary research field that has contributions from IT, strategic management, operations management, innovation management, marketing, organization science and entrepreneurship (Verhoef et al., 2021; Plekhanov et al., 2022).

Some views of DT concentrate on the level of new technologies such as AI, IoT, process automation, mobile technology, social media, and data analytics. Other views take the medium depth approach of organizational structures, competences, business models, operational processes, digital innovations, and new ways of value creation. The third and deepest level of conceptualization is that DT changes fundamentally all aspects of human society and that DT is a sociocultural process in which the social dimension of digital change can be seen to be the bottleneck rather than technological limitations (Saarikko et al., 2020; Stolterman et al., 2004, pp. 687–693). Precisely this third view, DT as a sociocultural process, directs attention to issues in the core of organizational change and change management such as resistance. In sum, DT is not only about technological transformation, but it also constitutes business transformation and organizational transformation. The simplest principle is that DT often constitutes also significant business model changes and forces organizations to reassess themselves, i.e., their identity (Caputo et al., 2021; Loebbecke 2015; Saarikko, 2020).

**Table 3. Definitions of digital transformation (DT)**

Caputo et al. (2021)	<i>“Strategic transformations targeting organizational changes implemented through digitalization projects, with the goal of enabling major business improvements.”</i>
Hinings et al. (2018)	<i>”Digital transformation is the combined effects of several digital innovations bringing about novel actors (and actor constellations), structures, practices, values, and beliefs that change, threaten, replace, or complement existing rules of the game within organizations, ecosystems, industries, or fields.”</i>
Liu et al. (2011)	<i>“Digital transformation is an organizational transformation that integrates digital technologies and business processes in a digital economy.”</i>
Saarikko et al. (2020)	<i>“In this article, we describe digital transformation as a sociocultural process rather than as a technical feat.”</i>
Stolterman et al. (2004)	<i>“Digital transformation comprises the changes associated with the application of digital technology in all aspects of human society.”</i>
Verhoef et al. (2021)	<i>“To the best of our knowledge, there has been no multidisciplinary discussion on digital transformation, which we define as a change in how a firm employs digital technologies, to develop a new digital business model that helps to create and appropriate more value for the firm.”</i>



Westerman et al. (2011)	<i>“Digital transformation is the use of technology to radically improve the performance or reach of enterprises.”</i>
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Table adapted and modified from Kraus et al. (2021)

### 2.3.2 The need for and importance of digital transformation

As discussed in the introduction, majority of the most valuable companies in the world are now digital. In 2018 the most valuable companies included Apple, Alphabet, Microsoft, Amazon, and Facebook which all are digital whereas previously the most valuable were Exxon, GE, Microsoft, Gazprom, and Citigroup (Verhoef et al., 2021). DT does not by all means cover and concern all companies, but still many. One of the biggest misconceptions is that everyone should digitally transform. Even if most companies could, there are still fields of businesses and situations where building a potential business case around DT may prove to be difficult. (Andriole, 2017.) As discussed in the introduction it is interesting that in many cases there are enough resources, technical competences, and available technologies, but still organizations face severe difficulties/fail (Saarikko et al., 2020). This emphasizes the value of organizational change studies and practical change management capabilities.

Verhoef et al. (2021) identifies three external factors that drive the need for digital transformation. First, they propose that the emergence of new digital technologies such as different web technologies, mobile technologies, AI, IoT, robotics and blockchain poses a clear need to transform, but they also may affect to organization's cost structure in a significant way (Verhoef et al., 2021). The argument that you should digitally transform just because there are new technologies seems to be somewhat loose argument. In fact, digital transformation is rarely based on new disrupting technologies and more often on known and established technologies such as ERPs, CRMs, cloud computing solutions, web development, digital marketing tools, manufacturing and design software and analytics tools (Andriole, 2017). However, trying to benefit from first mover and fast-mover advantages using new technologies

is still a viable strategy although it is not as effective as previously (Grover & Kohli, 2013).

Second, they describe how competition has become wider and more intensive (Verhoef et al., 2021). One of the core phenomena regarding competition is that the widescale use of digital technologies has decreased information asymmetries which in turn has led to higher level of transparency (Hinings et al., 2018). For current incumbents companies this is often negative because it encourages new entrants to markets. However, according to Langley et al. (2021), Li (2020) and Plekhanov et al. (2022) DT can lead to winner-take-all dynamics and other similar dynamics where single independent actors increase their competitive advantage significantly in relation to others.

There are many studies that refer to this new landscape of competition which derives from technological and economic disruption, and the emergence of ecosystems. For example, according to Parviainen et al. (2017) disruptive changes in the environment and organization may lead to a situation where the current business is becoming obsolete. It is easy to reflect these findings in real life scenarios. Amazon and Alibaba have changed the whole business of retailing, Netflix and other streaming pioneers have changed how the entertainment industry works and Spotify has changed many aspects of the music industry (Verhoef et al., 2021). These are just some of the examples how external disruption challenges especially incumbent companies to reform and digitally transform. Of course, these are examples from the extreme end, but very often companies have to analyze what is their competitive edge and what should they fundamentally be. A technology company, manufacturer, marketing and sales platform, simple orchestrator of operations or something else? Ecosystems refer mainly to digital ecosystems which are constantly evolving, and to developing networks formed by individual actors that are in connection through digital technologies (Kolloch & Dellerman, 2018).

Plekhanov et al. (2022) found a connection that disruptions and the emergence of digital ecosystems are leading to flattening hierarchies in organizations. The emergence of ecosystems forces organizations to consider new managerial approaches which are based on self-governance, fostering relationships, and creating sufficient

incentives (Baraldi & Nadin, 2006; Das & Dey, 2021). These new managerial approaches are needed, because direct control and other internally used approaches cannot be applied to external stakeholders in the same way. To some extent these new managerial approaches also influences organizations' internal affairs and management approaches. Findings presented in this chapter indicate that power is shifting towards specialists and experts who hold the true keys to change and action. However, the idea and phenomenon of solving problems as near of the actual problem as possible in the grassroots is by no means new or novel.

Third, Verhoef et al. (2021) explains how consumer behavior is the final external factor driving the need for digital transformation. The digital revolution has led consumers to use new digital technologies which is considered as the new norm. If companies are not able leverage these technologies, it is highly probable that competition will replace them. (Verhoef, 2021.) It would be interesting to study consumer-based changes and business driven changes, and how they compare. Also, it seems that consumer demand is not anymore about the core product or service, but rather about the whole array of how everything is delivered. Current customer demand is changing, but also completely new demand is being created (Lucas et al., 2013).

Changing customer behavior forms an excellent environment for new entrants. Opportunities for new entrants consists of three elements: leveraging new distribution channels, serving, and creating new customer demand and new forms of customer engagement such as new types of customer relationships (Lucas et al., 2013). From the point of view of incumbents these aspects must be considered in order to stay competitive. You could think that "defending" is easier than "attacking", which in a sense is true. However, despite of this we have seen massive companies failing such as Blockbuster, Toys R Us and Nokia. Failing in a sense of near or complete bankruptcy. Lucas et al. (2013) gives many more examples of traditional products and even whole industries being replaced by their new digitally enabled forms.

Many DT studies indeed recognize that external environment is the driving force and core of DT whether it be ecosystems, networks, competition, or customer behavior (Verhoef et al, 2021; Plekhanov et al., 2022). As a conclusion and contextual connection to organizational change studies, the presented DT research goes well with

the theory of organizational becoming where organizing is the second imperative to change. DT research is also in line with the post-modern view on change that highlights the importance of now and action over the culture of overplanning.

### 2.3.3 Multidisciplinary view on digital transformation

Since this study takes a very specific theoretical lens of organizational change and resistance to resistance and applies it to a very specific single case study of an incumbent company, taking a multidisciplinary view on digital transformation as a context suits to this study's focus and research questions. Even though this study takes the view of organizational science, the whole concept of DT is multidisciplinary by nature. DT has contributions from IT, strategic management, marketing, organizational science, and entrepreneurship to name a few (Plekhanov et al., 2022).

The digital domain consists of digitization, digitalization, and digital transformation (Saarikko et al., 2020). This is a widely accepted framework that is used explicitly or implicitly in almost every DT study. Digitization refers to the technical process from analogue signals to digital signals (Tilson et al, 2010). Without going into too technical language, basic examples include taking information from paper to computer or music from traditional forms such as vinyl to digital forms. Digitalization on the other hand refers to why a specific technology is important for a process or organization and indicates that they are all tightly interconnected (Saarikko et al., 2020). Digitalization can for example include implementing CRM or ERP system, refer to a single function/department such as digital marketing or include processes such as sales or manufacturing.

Lastly, digital transformation is defined as previously presented, but to describe it in comparison, it penetrates the whole organization including changes in multiple processes, departments and functions usually changing business models and actual logics of value creation. In sum, DT is the widest conceptualization of the digital domain, and it includes all subcategories of digital change. Digitization, digitalization, and digital transformation as terms of the digital domain are often used as synonyms or completely randomly in public discussion. But in reality, these terms refer to quite distinct characteristics of digital change as a phenomenon.

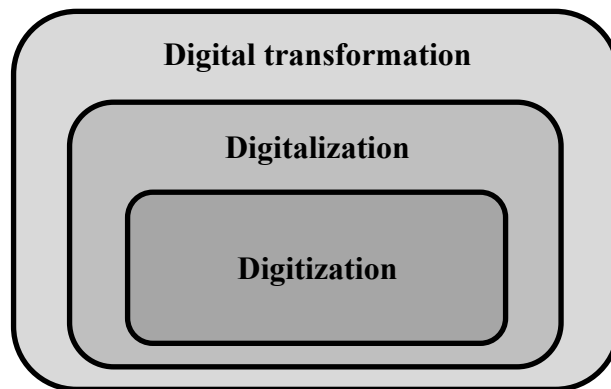


Figure 1. Domain of digital change

Adapted from Saarikko et al. (2020)

To find answers to the research question, how resistance to resistance influences digital transformation, we need to establish an organizational wide multidisciplinary framework of DT. Hanelt et al. (2021) have already done this based on their extensive literature review. Their research is one of the very few DT studies that have taken an organizational change perspective. They divide the DT framework into contextual conditions that trigger and shape DT, mechanisms that link contextual conditions to outcomes and outcomes that describe the consequences of DT (Hanelt et al., 2021). However, this framework has two shortcomings. It does not count the social dynamics of DT that this study is especially interested in, and it is rigidly linear which is not in line with this study's conceptualization of change. Therefore, necessary modifications to the framework were made.

First, the framework was realigned from linear process to a continuous loop which represents newer views about change better and highlights the ongoing nature of change. Second, based on the work of Fischer et al. (2020), Kane et al. (2015), Kraus et al. (2021), Plekhanov et al. (2022), Saarikko et al. (2020), Yoo et al. (2012), Verhoef et al. (2021), Volberda et al. (2021), Westerman et al. (2011) among others, the social dimension of DT (lightest grey) was added as a completely new dimension before the surface level organizational elements. The following text is structured in a way that the original content of an element of the framework (e.g., contextual conditions) is covered first and then its modifications. Comparing and analyzing the

old model and the new model as a whole would not enable as easy in-depth review. Therefore, the three parts of the framework are covered separately in order.

This multi-dimensional framework of digital transformation works as a great foundation to study resistance to resistance. Using this framework in the empirical part, we can identify to what the occurring resistance is related to. Also, noticing any obvious bottlenecks should be straightforward. Finally, we can follow what consequences resistance to resistance has regarding the specific elements of the model.

The function of this section of the study is to work as a broad context highlighting the unique aspects of digital transformation as a change. From this contextual lens the dynamics of individual level resistance to resistance can be further studied. This study acknowledges very well that social dynamics in DT is largely unresearched area. Because current research about social dynamics of DT is very limited, it poses a great research gap for this study. There are multiple examples of how DT and resistance research are connected. For example, agile methodology is often a key part of DT, because it enables flexibility (Hanelt et al., 2021). However, agile methodology is hard to apply if interaction and collaboration are not enabled.

In addition to the added social dimensions and dynamics, the DT framework creates also clarity around causal connections. For example, resistance as a response to resistance regarding creating innovation trajectories in elements that innovate of the mechanisms part can affect changes in economics of the outcomes part. There is no doubt a largely unresearched but existing connection between DT and resistance (to resistance) to which this research tries to find answers.

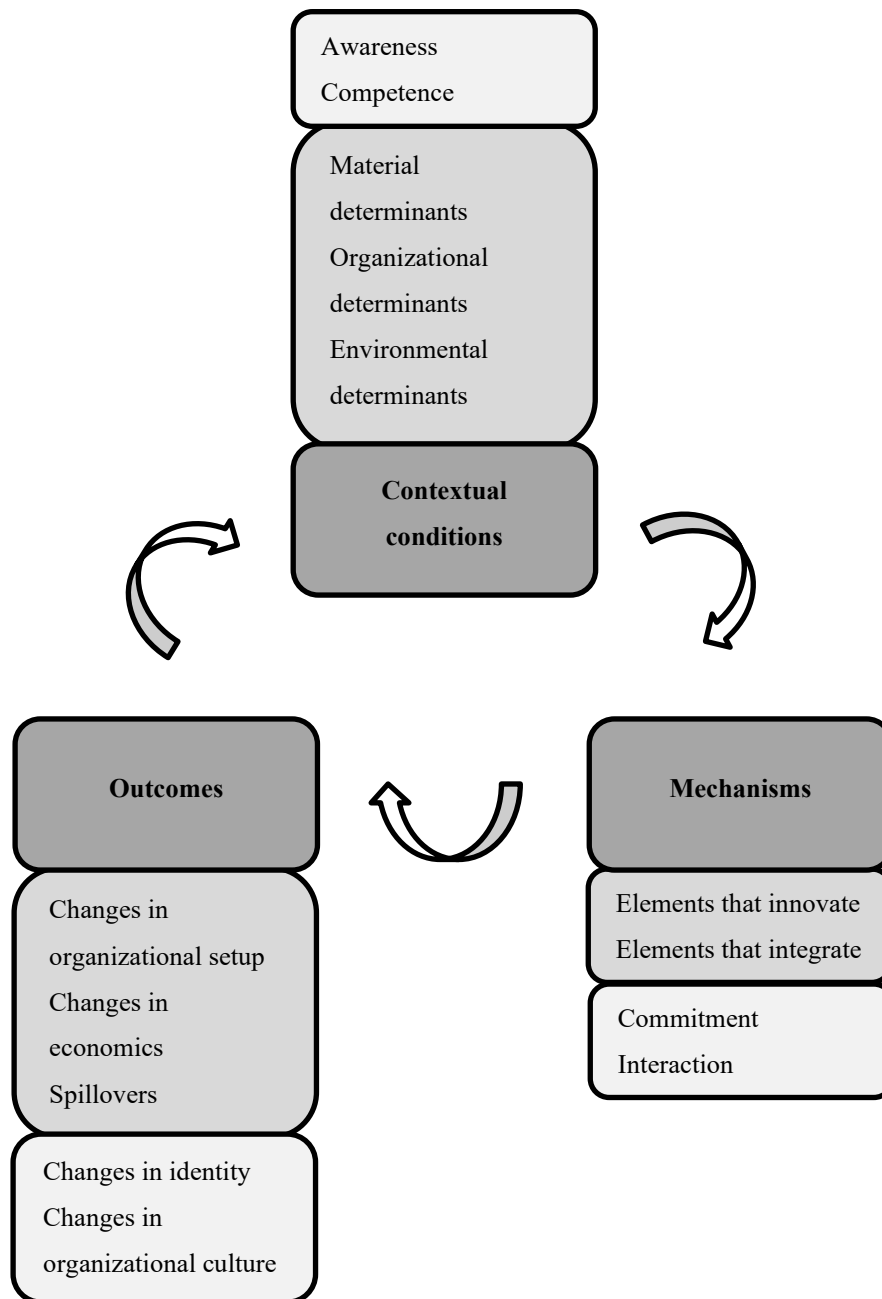


Figure 2. Multi-dimensional framework of digital transformation

Revisited and updated from Hanelt et al. (2021)

Contextual conditions link tightly to the former discussion about environmental aspects and drivers of digital transformation. However, contextual conditions describe different views from the perspective of the DT framework. Material determinants refers to, as it indicates, material aspects such as diffusion and usage of different technologies (Hanelt et al., 2021). These different technologies may include

traditional enterprise software, marketing technology, social, mobile, robotics, AI, cloud, analytics, IoT, network technologies or practically anything. Organizational determinants on the other hand refers to different kinds of organizational attributes such as company's strategy and top management team's awareness of DT (Hanelt et al., 2021). Organizational determinants can for example be related to path-dependency and organization's current resources, processes, values, and culture (Dewan et al., 2003; Hanelt et al., 2021). Path-dependency more specifically describes sustained persistency and lock-in although it is often used as a synonym for everything historical (Sydow et al., 2009). Path-dependency ties DT studies and organizational change research very well together because they both concentrate on emerging qualities of change and challenge rationality in decision making. According to Sydow et al. (2009) history can be one the most important factors that explain strategic choices and organizational failures. Finally, the third part of contextual conditions, environmental determinants, refers to exactly similar aspects such as consumer demand and competition that were presented in the previous chapter. Therefore, these elements will not be covered any further.

As an additional level awareness and competence are highlighted. The original model consists of only top management team's awareness, but since DT is above all collective effort, awareness of the whole organization deserves to be mentioned. Although many consultants such as Westerman et al. (2011) proposes that DT should be led top-down, for example by hiring a chief digital officer (CDO) or otherwise pointing specific DT tasks, the academic literature does not suggest top-down led change, because collective efforts are over and over again proven to be the decisive factor (Dremel et al., 2017; Hanelt et al., 2021; Plekhanov et al., 2022; Yoo et al., 2012; Volberda et al., 2021). The second attribute in the social dimension of contextual conditions is competence which refers to organizational capabilities and skills. Studies are full of examples where organizations invest in technologies, but not on capabilities. Very often human competence is the true bottleneck of DT rather than technologies themselves. (Kane et al., 2015.) For example, 77% of the firms in the study by Westerman et al. (2011) reported missing skills being an organizational gap in digital transformation.



Contextual conditions and outcomes are linked together through mechanisms that Hanelt et al. (2021) divides into innovative and integrating elements. Innovative elements refers to activities such as digital innovation and digital business strategizing (Hanelt et al., 2021). However, few DT studies concentrate on what enables and facilitates positive mechanisms such as innovation. Regarding incumbent companies, institutional entrepreneurship is very important driver of innovation (Henfridsson & Yoo, 2014). Therefore, it is also one of the decisive factors of DT. According to Henfridsson and Yoo (2014) institutional entrepreneurs are individuals who create successful innovation trajectories. Other scholars such as Battilana et al. (2009) have studied how this change happens: through creating a vision, influencing, and inspiring others and having persistence in achieving the vision.

From incumbent's DT perspective it is especially interesting to notice that there are many studies where successful innovation trajectories have been created from ideas that are not anywhere near the organization's current capabilities and core competences. Above all, these innovative changes in organizing can get institutionalized even though these ideas are far away from the organization's current core. (Henfridsson & Yoo, 2014.) Henfridsson and Yoo (2014) divide the process of a trajectory shift into 1. Beliefs that include aspects such as what is cognitively known and what is expected to happen 2. Artifacts which depict reality (i.e., possible successes) and can be observed and 3. Evaluation routines from which innovations get legitimacy (i.e., if an innovation is perceived to have high value or not). These viewpoints no doubt have value in analyzing this study's empirical results. Integrating elements on the other hand means, as it indicates, integrating processes, structures, and breaking silos in a way that more agile and flexible work is enabled (Hanelt et al., 2021). Digital transformation is not about creating a new organization, it is about leveraging existing organization's competences and resources in a new way (Westerman et al., 2011). Integrations, whether it be technical or business-centered, are very common subject in DT studies.

The social dimension of mechanisms that this study adds consists of commitment and interaction. Studies proposing that DT should be led top-down base their arguments on the issue of commitment. Indeed, without top management's

commitment DT may prove to be impossible and commitment in general stays as an important theme in DT (Kazim, 2019). However, it is not completely logical to state that top management commitment means automatically strict control and top-down led approach. The whole organization's commitment has proven to be important part of DT (Dremel et al., 2017; Fischer et al., 2020; Kazim, 2019). Gaining commitment to a wide and deep change as DT takes significant amount of time which makes commitment an important subject. Many case studies provide evidence that there are differences between formal and informal commitment (Dremel et al., 2017). While formal commitment can be a document signed by change agents, informal daily commitment is often the real issue. For example, Dremel et al. (2017) studied Audi AG's big data analytics development in the company's digital transformation and found that gaining informal commitment was especially hard.

Interaction is another important social mechanism through which DT happens. Interaction refers to all types of interaction. In the context of DT, interaction with oneself, interaction with others and interaction with technologies are considered. For example, according to Saarikko et al. (2020) and Verhoef et al. (2021) highest benefits from DT can only be achieved through interdisciplinary work which practically means breaking functional silos and moving towards differently organized work such as team working. Verhoef et al. (2021) discusses about missing "cross-fertilization opportunities" and not seeing potential opportunities in the context of functional silos.

There is also the already legendary "Tale of the tables" which happened when Humanyze, a people-analytics company spinoff from MIT Media Lab, analyzed a travel company's activities and found that people were sharing productivity increasing information during lunch. In this case productivity was in direct correlation with the number of people on the table which led the company to plan also informal interactions and change the dining settings. (Kane et al, 2015.) Of course, not much can be said based on one study, but it clearly indicates the power of interaction. Interaction is not something that is often explicitly stated in DT studies. It is often framed as collaboration, cooperation, cross-fertilization, breaking silos, sharing information or something similar. However, all these aspects are clearly based on the dimension of interaction.

Interaction with technologies is also relevant in the context of DT. Technologies form the boundaries and reality in DT if organizations are passive. This means that technologies will start to define what the organization does rather than the organization defining how technologies are being used (Hess et al., 2016). Westerman et al. (2011) insightfully covers how interaction with technologies is not as straightforward as commonly thought. For example, it is common that people use technologies differently from their original purpose (Westerman et al., 2011). According to another study interaction, collaboration and sharing through digital technologies were in the top six of competencies required by DT (Fonseca and Picoto, 2020). DT is based on vertical and horizontal business and technological integrations which leads to increased demand for collaboration (Müller and Hopf, 2017). Also, Cennamo et al. (2020) discusses about many different integrations such as knowledge, production, and system integrations, and say that business changes in DT require technological integrations which are leading to integrations in work. For example, implementing very basic CRM or ERP system may pose demand for increased cooperation and interaction. In sum, as Hess et al. (2016) states the change is always twofold: how technologies define organizations and how organizations define how technologies are being used.

Finally, the third way of interaction, interaction with oneself, refers to the aspect that individuals themselves can create new knowledge and interact with their own thoughts which in a best-case scenario may lead to innovative ad hoc improvisation (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). This final form of interaction is not mentioned in any current DT studies, but since current DT studies advocates agile, flexible, and low hierarchy organizing in a way that emphasizes collective effort rather than top-down led approach, micro-level decision making by corresponding specialists is highlighted which in turn emphasizes the importance of improvisation and therefore interaction with oneself. Interaction is indeed the cause and consequence of DT and deserves its own place in the mechanisms part of the digital transformation framework.

Finally, outcomes of DT consist of changes in organizational setup, changes in economics and spillovers. The first part, organizational setup, refers to everything from how the organization engages with stakeholders to how its internal processes

are structured to what its core products and services are. In a sense this element concludes the objective aspects or in other words how has the organization changed visibly from the surface level. Most often this element includes aspects related to organizational structure such as agile or teamwork, business model such as new ways of monetization through digital customer experience and activities resulted from implementing new technologies such data driven decision making. The next part, changes in economics refers simply to organization's economic performance which in the context of DT usually refers to increased performance through better products and services and/or cost reductions. The final part in the original element of outcomes is spillovers. Spillovers refers to external changes in the environment and to changes that the organization has no control in. (Hanelt et al., 2021.) According to Hanelt et al. (2021) spillovers may include many aspects from paradigms such as customer-centricity to contextual issues such as high involvement in ecosystems and certain markets all the way to single changes such as being exposed to new cyber threats.

As an addition to the original model, this study emphasizes also changes in identity and changes in organizational culture. Problems in DT can be usually traced to these two aspects if no major development opportunities can be found from the rest of the elements of the framework (Kane et al., 2015; Saarikko et al., 2020; Tabrizi et al., 2019; Westerman et al., 2011). Therefore, digital transformation cannot be conceptualized fully if we do not also give attention to these decisive factors of DT. Especially business model transformation, which is essential part of DT, requires changes in collective mindset, identity, and culture (Volberda et al., 2021). Identity and organizational culture as subjects cannot be covered in detail, because they are massive research areas. Also, this study's focus does not benefit from covering these subjects in depth. However, from the DT perspective we can cover them shortly.

As previously described many scholars such as Verhoef et al. (2021) discusses about the role of business models in DT. Business model development indeed is a key element in digital transformation. As Verhoef et al. (2021) shows, also the core of business model may be subject to change in DT. Especially in cases where the core of the business model is subject to change, the change is de facto also an identity crisis at the same time. Also, there is evidence that attitude is one of the decisive

factors in DT (Kane et al., 2015; Saarikko et al., 2020; Tabrizi et al., 2019). In turn attitudes may be in connection to identity and culture. More known to common public, the internet is full of news articles, podcasts, and debates is and should a company be for example a technology-oriented company, traditional retailer, or manufacturer. Especially regarding incumbent companies, employees may have very different conceptualization of what is the company's identity. Without solving the crisis of identity, DT becomes practically impossible. Netflix is one of the classical examples of companies who have overcome identity related struggles somewhat successfully (Reisinger, 2012).

The main focus of the model is on the organizational identity, because it is discussed almost explicitly in the articles on the above paragraph. However, to answer the research question studying individual aspects of identity is also important. To bring one more step of depth to this subject, let's borrow some ideas from sociology and change management. Identity from theoretical perspective can be categorized into social identities of groups and identities of individuals (Lawrence, 2015). Therefore, these are the sub-elements of the changes in identity element. This conceptualization also brings value to practical management and leadership of DT, because it explains what should be considered. Regarding change of identity in change management and leadership, Lawrence (2015) explains that there are no magical solutions. People need two things to overcome identity issues: time and possibilities to make sense of the change (Lawrence, 2015).

Absolutely final element in the DT framework is changes in organizational culture. Organizational culture is naturally visible everywhere, but as a theoretical conceptualization it is placed on the outcomes. However, organizational culture no doubt has a dual nature of cause and consequence. Many organizational culture studies have described successfully how culture shapes the organization and how organizations shape the culture. (Hatch, 1993.) Compared to identity, organizational culture is much more studied subject area in the context of DT. Some scholars such as Saarikko et al. (2020) and Kraus et al. (2021) even define DT as a sociocultural process. For these reasons, culture should be an integral part of the DT framework. It simply cannot be left out. Kane et al. (2015) did a survey about digital transformation including roughly 4800 business executives. From this survey was found out that

culture and attitude should be the real indicators of digital maturity rather than access to technologies. In sum, enabling and conducive culture is a hallmark of digitally maturing organizations. (Kane et al., 2015.) Organizational culture is also especially important regarding legitimacy. Institutionalization of new innovations and new ways of organizing requires legitimacy. Institutionalizing in this context refers to changes that last and stick. Legitimacy in turn is a socio-cultural issue and especially culture defines what is being considered as legitimate, and therefore what changes will be institutionalized. (Kraus et al., 2021.)

Based on an extensive review of DT literature, changes in the original framework by Hanelt et al. (2021) were made accordingly and a completely new layer consisting of the social side of DT was added. There are clear linkages between resistance to resistance and the framework of digital transformation. For example, competence is found to be the bottleneck in many DT studies (Hanelt et al., 2021; Kane et al., 2015; Westerman et al., 2011). In turn, the lack of competence or fear of not having competence is one of the common dynamics behind resistance (Dent and Goldberg, 1999; Erwin & Garman, 2010). Also, innovation management and how new innovations institutionalize are discussed in DT studies (Hanelt et al., 2021; Verhoef et al., 2021; Plekhanov et al., 2022). In turn, institutionalization and legitimization are discussed heavily in resistance studies (Ford et al., 2008; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Collaboration and collective efforts are studied in DT studies (Dremel et al., 2017; Hanelt et al., 2021; Plekhanov et al., 2022; Yoo et al., 2012; Volberda et al., 2021). In turn, collaboration and collective efforts are in the center of positive aspects of resistance and resistance to resistance studies (Courpasson, 2012; Fleming & Spicer, 2008; Ford et al., 2008; Mumby et al., 2017; Sørensen, 2016; Thomas and Hardy, 2011; Thomas et al., 2011).

### 3 METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

#### 3.1 Methodology and data

##### 3.1.1 Research methods

The chosen research method is a single case study based on semi-structured theme interviews. Semi-structured interviews enable interviewees to express their experiences freely, they consider interpreted meanings that have been created through interaction and enable some variation in interviewing (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2011, p. 48). Because context and experiences differ in different organizations and with different people, the freedom of semi-structured interviews allows to focus broadly on predefined issues while considering these differences. Total number of five 45-75min interviews were conducted. The number and length of the interviews provides a sufficient depth of data and is enough for a master's level thesis. Also, a level of saturation can be seen from the data.

Case study is more suited to explanatory research such as questions how and why. Case study is also very flexible because it enables the researcher "teasing out" factors and situations. Maybe the most important aspect of case study is that it provides holistic understanding through iterative process by studying relatively small number of social entities and situations. (Easton, 2010.) Case study can indeed produce detailed holistic knowledge based on multiple empirical sources (Tellis, 1997). This approach suits to this study because change resistance and digital transformation are quite holistic by nature. Also describing how resistance occurs requires very detail-oriented approach and context related approach. Even slight micro-level aspects can have huge effects.

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, p. 116) explain that case studies are appealing, because they can present hard to grasp theoretical concepts in down-to-earth format. Some of the theoretical concepts in organizational change, change resistance and digital transformation are quite hard to grasp which makes it well argued to analyze and synthesize theoretical frameworks and interviewees' practical viewpoints in a form of a single case study. The used form of case study is intensive case study

which goes well with single case study approach. According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, p. 118) intensive case study aims at understanding a unique case and providing thick holistic conceptualization rather than testing theories. One downside of intensive case study is that it lacks generalizability (Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, p. 118). However, generalizing empirical evidence about resistance is always very difficult and limited.

### 3.1.2 Data collection

Five 45-75min semi-structured interviews were conducted with five different people in one case company which are the primary and sole data of this study. Data collection procedures in case study research should support in-depth insights and context of the research problem (Farquhar, 2012, p. 69). From the five interviewees four had over 10-year careers in the company which made it possible to study what happened during the DT efforts roughly between 2010 and 2020. The interviewees were at the time of the interview or had been previously upper-level middle management, middle management, and specialist/expert level employees. Therefore, the interviews were conducted roughly between three organizational layers in the hierarchy of the company. All interviewees work or worked in the core organization of the company which focuses on developing business and technological capabilities of the whole company. Some interviewees were business-oriented personnel, some were technologically oriented personnel, and some were a bit of both. More details cannot be revealed, because anonymity was guaranteed and even job title descriptions could lead to easy identifications. All these above aspects made it possible to collect quality data to study DT, resistance, and resistance to resistance.

However, attempts to interview more people were made. Some lower-level employees were wary to discuss about highly classified issues and some higher-level employees such as top management were not either interested or too busy to be interviewed. Because the company was not officially participating in this study, contacting people was difficult. On the other hand, the people who participated in the interviews were very open and cooperating which resulted in rich data.



Before every interview I gave a short 10-15min introduction about terminology, themes, and focus of the interview. This was necessary because it was important to have a common understanding of DT and resistance. Despite of this, there were some occasions where an interviewee saw resistance only as a big conflict or as something very negative. However, in these occasions I was able to redirect the discussion by asking clarifying questions. All interviews were based on the structure presented in the appendices one and two. This structure worked as a loose starting point in the interviews. To ensure that the data is unbiased and that leading questions are not asked, the interviewees were free to speak about issues they saw as important and express freely their own experiences. Most of the follow-up questions asked from the interviewees were questions such as “Can you give me some details?” or “What happened then?”. Interview questions should be related to research questions, but in a way that research questions can be answered through rigorous analysis rather than interviewees directly answering research questions (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, p. 80). Although the interviewees had freedom to speak about issues they regarded as important, follow-up questions proved to be a valuable source of insights.

All interviews were held in Finnish and recorded as audio. Every interviewee gave explicit permission to record the interviews. Majority of the interviews were held face to face although online meeting tools were used in one interview. Anonymity of the interviewees was guaranteed and all possibilities for identification were removed in the analysis part. In addition to the recordings, some notes were written.

### 3.1.3 Data analysis

Analysis, initial notes, and transcribing started as soon as possible after the interviews as recommended by many scholars such as Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008, p. 135). In addition, the preliminary analysis consisted of initial reflection of the interviews and identifying the most important emerging themes. It is typical for qualitative data analysis that the researcher starts to reflect the content of the interviews immediately after conducting them rather than before the official analysis part of the research starts (Farquhar, 2012, p. 90). During the preliminary analysis the interviews were transcribed into text through Google Word’s transcribe functionality. For the most part this approach worked well, but it did not work as good as necessary. Therefore, I went

through all audio and text at the same time, corrected mistakes of the software and made other necessary modifications. After transcriptions the data was imported into NVivo software for further qualitative data analysis.

The main approach of this study can be characterized as abductive. The role of abductive research is to take the best of induction and deduction (Farquhar, 2012, p. 26). According to Farguhar (2012, p. 22) abductive research approach can be described as pragmatic and intersubjective in relation to the research process whereas induction can be seen as interpretive and subjective, and deduction as positivist and objective. In this study the conceptual framework used are the views and theories about resistance and the DT framework. For example, resistance was coded into resistant practices, causes of resistance, how resistance was solved and what consequences resistance had. In turn it was analyzed what kind of resistant practices had occurred, what solutions to solve resistance was applied and what were the overall dynamics of the situations. On the other hand, DT relied less on the theoretical background. DT related subjects were coded for example into DT competences, DT challenges, DT content, team working and interaction which naturally came from the data. Naturally, because the research on social dimensions of DT is limited, it showed in the data analysis.

Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008, p. 145) divides qualitative data analysis into describing, categorizing, and combining which was a good starting point for this study's analysis. This enabled also bringing completely new insights into existing theories. Although the interviewees described many specific situations, distinct separate themes were noticed and analyzed from the data. These broad themes worked as a starting point for further analysis.

#### 3.1.4 Validity and reliability

Good validity and reliability ensure study's quality: the study measures what it is supposed to measure and the measurement itself is reliable. Validity and reliability originate exactly from this aspect of measuring and quantitative studies which assume that there is an objective truth which in turn may result in problems regarding qualitative studies. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008, p. 186.) The main point of validity and

reliability is to inform how trustworthy the results of a study are (Koskinen et al. 2005, p. 253).

Reliability has been ensured by minimizing misunderstandings, forming a common view of what is this study's focus before every interview and giving time to interviewees to form their thoughts. This way it is probable that if interviewees would be interviewed again in a similar way, they would probably give similar answers and these answers could be interpreted in a similar way. Good reliability in qualitative studies indicates that there is a clear consensus about something or clear commonality in something rather than indicating that things could be reproduced completely similarly (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008, p. 186).

Whereas reliability is often seen as consistency, validity is often seen as coherence (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, p. 296). Validity has also been ensured by minimizing misunderstandings and forming a common view of things before starting the interviews. In the theoretical section validity was ensured by choosing only the most relevant articles from the perspective of the research questions and covering mostly highly valued studies.

Validity can be divided into research design validity which in turn is divided into structural validity, internal validity, and external validity (Farquhar, 2012, p. 101; Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008, p. 186). Structural validity is ensured by applying a suitable structure to the study, but also by using suitable terminology and theories. Internal validity is related to causal relationships, for example reasoning that one thing has led to another can be seen to be true (Farquhar, 2012, p. 101).

External validity on the other hand refers to generalizability (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008, p. 187). Generalizability of this study is not necessarily very good, because the context of change, overall situation, type of organization, personal relationships and many specific details have influenced resistance as a phenomenon. However, the findings of this study can be loosely generalized into incumbent expert organizations in the context of digital change. Generalizing this study's results to other organizations than incumbent expert organizations is very limited. The financial industry also has an effect to generalization, but it is less important factor.

## 3.2 Findings

### 3.2.1 Case description

The case studied is a large digital transformation effort roughly during the previous 10+ years in a big Finnish financial services provider. More specifically the case concentrates on the core expert organization, in other words the developing organization, of the incumbent company. Whereas the whole company employs over 10 000 people, the developing core expert organization employs only a few thousand people.

According to the interviews the beginning of 2010s initiated a strong sense of urgency to change digitally. Since then, the overall situation of the company has resulted in a more stabilized plateau. This study tries to understand how resistance to resistance has influenced this major effort of digital transformation. Obviously, the company's digital transformation efforts continue to this day, but from the interviews it became clear that during the 2010s-2020s happened many major changes such as restructuring of the whole company.

The case consists of changes in the company's organizational structure, working methodology, offered set of products and services, and used technologies such as mobile technology and various types of software. According to the data the biggest drivers for these changes were environmental/external issues such as competition and customer demand. Interviewees themselves explicitly divided changes into what is being offered and how is work organized. Now that some time has passed, we know what consequences specific actions have had and what has been the quality of specific decisions.

Individual resistance and resistance to resistance were noticed on three levels of the company. Between middle management and top management, between middle management and experts, and between equal co-workers. The most important themes and resistant situations in DT identified from the data were related to agile working methods, change in competence, and decisions about technologies and development. These were discussed by almost all interviewees and included many perspectives. There were also multiple other smaller themes and situations of resistance that were

recognized from the data. However, these themes were insignificant to analyze in this study, because of the lack of data. The first quotations in each following subchapter gives an overall description of the subthemes.

### 3.2.2 Agile working methods

According to the interviews agile working methods both in technical and business development plays a big role in the company's DT. There seems to be a consensus that the change from old waterfall methods to new ways of working has been somewhat successful despite of some difficulties. Practically changes included the change from functional organizational structure to agile teams and changes in working methodology. Changes in the working methodology included for example the use of different iterative methods such as minimum viable products and lean methodology in product development, and various agile methods in software development.

Agile is also well suited to the theoretical framework of DT. In the DT framework it is related to the organizational determinants of the contextual conditions, elements that integrate of the mechanisms and changes in organizational setup of the outcomes. Using agile methodology in DT has many different dimensions. Agile refers to organizational structure, specific development methods and other aspects depending on the viewpoint. Therefore, it can be seen as a context, mechanism, and outcome of DT at the same time. Transparency and certain way of working, adopting new methods, feel of insecurity and psychological safety and conflicts of interest were in the center of resistant situations. Resistance showed in many ways which in turn caused different responses to the occurring resistance.

Four different subthemes and situations were found from the main theme of agile working methods: requirements of the agile working methodology, adopting the agile methodology, issues of regulation and using MVPs. The overall description of each situation is presented first, then practices of resisting are analyzed and finally the dynamics and influences of resistance to resistance are covered. The interviewees described that there had been many resistant situations related to adopting the agile methodology.

*Subtheme 1: All this kind of transparency of doing things, people are not necessarily used to it, which is required, for example, in agile software development methods in order them to work...My understanding is that it brings more intensity to working when you are on display all the time. It is challenging for specific persons when their privacy suffers...I argue that also digital working environment requires complete transparency...This is kind of a static way of working (especially working in the digital working environment)...it does not apply to certain kind of working...*

*Subtheme 2: One issue is that when development process changes. People have to unlearn from old functional ways of working and work with agile methods...Adopting the agile methodology and starting to work with it poses challenges for many...Unlearning is maybe more challenging than learning new...If organizational culture changes, because of digitalization, for example if moved away from strictly guided development to agile methods, then the feel of security suddenly disappears...safety net is removed...It causes resistance.*

*Subtheme 3: We have tried many agile methods during the past 10 years...There were many this kind of, regulation is a big thing in the financial sector, so these owners of regulation were slowing down the actual development work. We had to go there with a hat in hand and ask a permission to continue.*

*Subtheme 4: ...when something new is built on top of digitalization or digital solutions, this kind of MVP thinking can capture thinking too much. It has its benefits...But the processes are very long to create change...Communication is very important and how to get people internalize new working methods...Launching is not the only measure for success, but also getting certain customer satisfaction, user base, efficiency or sales or something else.*

In the first and second subtheme/situation the overall dynamics are clear. Middle manager and upper-level management are working as a change agents and expert employees and lower-level managers are working as change recipients. In the third situation both parties can be seen as equals, but the regulation owners as a more powerful party. In the fourth situation middle manager is the change recipient (explicitly stated in the interview) and peers and top managers are change agents. These conceptualizations are no means strict or official, but necessary to analyze who resists (first level) and who resists resistance (second level). The interviewees were very analytical in their thinking which made it easy to conceptualize resistance. Most of the time they pondered out loud what resistance even refers to and stated how things could be seen from different perspectives. This made it easier, although not completely easy, not to give prerogative to specific actors to define resistance.

In the first subtheme transparency refers to showing most of your work visibly to everyone (in the team) most of the time. According to the data work tasks are not done independently hidden away from others (as previously), but as an ongoing group effort that leverages certain digital tools such as project management and software development tools. For example, detailed subtasks rather than broader objectives should be written on the project management tool according to one team leader. In addition, many digital tools and platforms are (almost) real-time which means that everyone can see the work happening or done most of the time and address mistakes or improvement opportunities if necessary.

Resistance caused by transparency and adopting agile methodology are most likely related to aspects of individual not being successful or perceived as not being successful. According to many managerial studies fear of bad performance or fear that one will not succeed leads to resistance (Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Erwin & Garman, 2010). Those same studies indicate that training and learning, building employees' confidence and creating trust can influence this kind of resistance (Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Erwin & Garman, 2010). One interviewee explained that some individuals feel real anxiety and demanding these kinds of things may be seen as oppressive. It is possible that if everyone can see your failures it causes anxiety. Another interviewee explained that failing and learning from failures is a core feature of the agile methodology. Failing in that sense should happen. Based on this kind of analysis employees are forced to fail in public. Third interviewee discussed about psychological safety and explained that if there is no psychological safety, people cannot speak freely, express opinions and ask for help. According to the interviewees resisters in these situations were exceptions: individuals or few individuals. Most of the employees did not engage in persistent resistant behaviors after initial/official change discussions. From this standpoint it is also possible that personal attributes or interpersonal relationships discussed by Erwin and Garman (2010) and Furst and Cable (2008) have influenced resistance. Maybe the relationship between the manager and expert could be improved or maybe the resistor was just insecure for whatever personal reason.

Verhoef et al. (2021) and Saarikko et al. (2020) discusses about multi-disciplinary approaches and cross-fertilization opportunities to which this adoption of agile

methodology is precisely trying to answer. However, implementing new types of cross-fertilization opportunities and breaking functional silos seems to be quite hard. One of the bottlenecks seems to be interaction with others, because informal interaction has decreased a lot during the past 10 years according to the interviews. Doing corrective actions such as creating trust and developing interpersonal relationships that are root influencers of resistance from managerial theoretical perspective can be hard to implement when the level of informal interaction is minimal.

In the third situation one team led by the interviewed team leader was developing a fingerprint feature to be used on the company's mobile application. This development work faced resistance and various other difficulties. The situation included some type of naming resistance studied by Prasad and Prasad (2000). The interviewee did not directly blame others for resistance but said that there were conflicts, because regulation owners were slowing down their work of developing fingerprint technology and that they were not contributing to find solutions. The situation is interesting because it did not include any bigger personal interests. The regulation owners were responsible for legal issues, cyber security, and similar aspects in which they may not have had room for compromises and counteroffers. On one hand there were requirements by legal and safety environment and on the other hand there were requirements by consumer demand and competition. There was also a conflict of competence. The manager resisting was not especially competent to fulfill the requirement of regulation owners whereas the regulation owners themselves were very competent. Even though competence is usually the bottleneck in this kind of situation, the company had sufficient competence (Hanelt et al., 2021; Kane et al., 2015; Westerman et al., 2011). The initial problem was the distribution and allocation of competence.

Another interviewee discussing about a situation of developing an economic forecast feature also faced resistance from regulation owners but was relatively satisfied with their cooperation. This situation was almost identical to the situation of the fingerprint technology, but to some extent regulation owners were involved in finding a common solution.



In the final situation of criticizing MVP thinking, the interviewee did not completely own resistance. The interviewee said that it is just one of the challenges in DT. The MVP type thinking was related to development of certain digital tools that are used by internal and external customers. However, this situation relates to legitimization, and therefore institutionalization of the change (Ford et al., 2008). The interviewee saw that change should be justified by business objectives. The interviewee also saw that change requires appropriate change management such as active cooperation with everyday operations. For example, how to get people internalize new ways of working and new solutions whether it be customers or employees (internal customers). As discussed in the literature review current research indicates that justifications for change must be sufficient which happens through communicative practices (Ford et al., 2008). The interviewee also emphasized many times the importance of dialog and collaboration. MVP type methodology is related to elements that innovative and elements that integrate of the mechanisms of the DT framework.

Analyzing the data with the work of Henfridsson and Yoo (2014) we can see that the interviewee perceived shortcomings in the legitimacy of using MVP which came from the insufficient innovation trajectory to what the MVP was related to. Therefore, beliefs and evaluation routines can be seen to be the source of resistance. The process of trajectory shift includes beliefs, artifacts, and evaluation routines (Henfridsson & Yoo, 2014). The interviewee used business objectives (i.e., what happens in the customers' life) as evaluation whereas others did not have as much emphasis on that evaluation. In addition, resistance occurred when beliefs about the future were not sufficient, clear or positive. However, another interviewee said that it is exactly the feature and strength of using MVPs that the innovation trajectory builds up gradually. Initial successes becomes visible from small scale testing from which it is possible to analyze what is the real potential of the solution.

The practice of resisting showed also in various of ways. However, it should be noted that the first quotation does not only relate to agile methods, but also to digital working environment. Although the interviewee of the first quotation discussed often about resistance related to digital working environment, it became clear in the data analysis that the agile methodology itself was a source of resistance too. Complete transparency would be required even if digital tools would not be used. In addition, it should be

noted that sometimes it was easier for interviewees to discuss in passive or in general terms about sensitive issues although we discussed about specific situations. This can be seen for example in the second quotation.

*Subtheme 1: ...for some people it is very hard to bring out the content of the work. Firstly, writing down for example five things...that "I am going to do these next"... "I do not want to write those down, I'll write one big objective"... When someone speaks about monthly level work and someone else speaks about morning and afternoon level work, it does not align together.*

*Subtheme 2: It depends on the organizational culture...The psychological safety, if you have good personal relationships and people trust the manager and the manager trusts the organization, insecurity, uncertainty, and resistance are more direct and transparent. If there is a lack of trust or fear in the organization it can show in way that people say good, but something completely different happens intentionally or unintentionally.*

*Subtheme 3: Well, we just did...In a sense we took the responsibility from the work and just did.*

*Subtheme 4: I have not resisted per se, but I might have challenged the approach. Demand clearer objectives or clearer descriptions about what kind of change is wanted...It is like challenging and desire to understand...*

From the conceptualization of Mumby et al. (2017) resistance showed as discursive and non-discursive practices, and as public and hidden in the first two situations. For example, according to one interview certain individuals often clearly stated that they did not want to write subtasks. It seems that there was a conflict between the freedom of a highly competent expert and agile methodology's requirements for collaboration. Fleming and Spicer (2008) and some other scholars argue that experts are sometimes encouraged to act in resistant ways and be uncompromisingly themselves which does not seem to hold true in any way meaningful in this situation.

According to another interview there were occasions of non-discursive practices of resistance where people did otherwise than what they said. In these situations, the oppositional intent was unclear. These resistant practices could be conceptualized as hidden/indirect or as more hidden/indirect than on average. On the other hand, the manager could (at least at some point) see that what was agreed on did not happen. This is a good example of the difficulty of applying dialectic theories when analyzing

empirical data. However, indirect resistance was very different in the study by Prasad and Prasad (2000) which should not be confused with this study. The interviewee also explained that there is a connection between interpersonal relationships and direct/visible resistance as seen from the quote. There is previous evidence that relatively bad relationships with managers increases resistant behaviors (Furst & Cable, 2008). However, few studies discuss interpersonal relationships affecting the direct/visible and indirect/not-visible dimensions of resistance.

The next situation described was a prime example of parallel efforts (Sørensen, 2016). The interviewee and few of the team members just did what they perceived as beneficial for the organization. Developing the fingerprint recognition technology of a financial service mobile application despite of demands of regulation owners. These actions were taken separate from the regulation owners, hence outside of the dominant system as Sørensen (2016) describes parallel efforts. However, another situation related to developing an economic forecast feature included higher-level of cooperation and counteroffers that regulations owners accepted. First, regulation owners said that the feature cannot be published because no predictions are certain. Then, the expert employee suggested using a disclaimer that was accepted as a counteroffer. However, based on the data the two features of fingerprint recognition and economic forecast differed a lot in complexity. The latter was much easier to solve from regulation point of view.

The final resistant situation of applying agile methodology in DT showed mainly as discursive practices. This was also a good example of routine resistance which was not named or owned or otherwise perceived as resistance in the organization. This can be however perceived as resistance from theoretical perspective. Routine resistance shows typically as mundane, unplanned, and spontaneous (Prasad & Prasad, 2000). The interviewee discussed many times about dialog and discussions, and that constant reminders about the importance of customer experience and business objectives were needed. These kinds of reminders were described as spontaneous, mundane, and persistent (although not directly in those terms) which makes them routine resistance. However, we do not have direct first-hand observations of the daily life in the company which is a limitation of the data. The interviewee also emphasized that it is important to present the act of challenging in a positive way. For example, what kind of rhetoric

is being used and showing that the reason for the act of challenging is the purpose of gaining an understanding of the change. This goes well with the research of Ford et al. (2008) and others that showing genuine attitude and practical justifications influences resistance of the other party.

Finally, there were various responses, outcomes, and dynamics of resistance to resistance. In some resistant situations at least a decent level of consensus was achieved. Some situations in turn resulted in outcomes of not achieving any bigger agreements.

*Subtheme 1: We have had to discuss and try to find solutions and support employees...And also justify why certain ways of working are wanted...It is hard to accept (resistance). For example, if you have a team of seven and two of them do not show their work, it can be so that the big picture suffers a lot. Much of the big picture is hidden from your perspective and you don't know how it (the project) is going and so on...There could be this kind of tendency where people are forced to work in a same way... There was one person who just didn't follow the same working methods...I could only guess why...How we are working right now emphasizes specific kind of behavior, competence and maybe personality.*

*Subtheme 2: There are people who do not want to change. Well, then people probably make their own conclusions and find work from somewhere else... You have to take into account that people are individuals...Everybody goes through, especially if the change is negative, they go through that first comes desperation, then irritation and then improvement. You have to give time to the organization and individuals to go through this three-step thing... You have to give time to the organization and people to resist the change and then join...give time, communicate facts, be transparent and be available for conversations, well these ensure that change happens.*

*Subtheme 3: We did not get any help other than go, fix it, and come again...In my opinion it is not the right way to go at all...Presenters are thrown to do things they are not experts at... We took the responsibility in practice and just did. Then little by little the organization started to support it and now after the big change (restructuring of the company) new roles have been emerged in the organization (supporting regulation owners).*

*Subtheme 4: I don't remember that there would have been a complete dead-end situation...When you show that you just want to understand things better, the other party usually understands... word choices and how you approach that kind of change. How you ask and approach it.*

The first situation included resistance to resistance which was very clear. However, the interviewee (middle manager) was aware that the agile methodology especially in the digital environment highlights specific kind of behavior and people. There were discussions and dialog which resulted in consensus of the majority. After these discussions and other change efforts there was persistent resistant behavior between the middle manager and at least one expert. If we analyze the data based on the work of Thomas et al. (2011), we can see that relational approach in communicative practices (welcoming and inviting) and generative approach in dialogue (collaborative work) were present. However, breakthrough did not happen, because power-relationships were not facilitative. Reconceptualization of the fundamental idea of applying agile methodology and using digital working environment did not happen. One problem found from the data is that agile methodology is not optimal in the digital working environment. The main finding is that certain behaviors were restricted which influenced capabilities for innovation work. In addition, agile working was found to be harder when heterogeneity in people and working methods increases. In other words, agile methodology especially in the digital environment leads to specific type of working and work processes that are aligned similarly among many employees. In this way some talents of some people were precluded because these talents did not fit into how organizing/work happened. However, the middle manager had valid arguments why resistance was not tolerated.

This situation seems like a paradox, because agile structures are designed for flexibility, especially technological flexibility (Hanelt et al., 2021). Increasing flexibility in technical capabilities of software development resulted in inflexibility of social aspects such as interaction. One interviewee said that people are starting to appreciate face to face working more when using agile methods. Practically resistance to resistance resulted in lower level of innovation capabilities specifically in software development. However, we cannot know how big the influence is, because only one to few individuals and the manager engaged in persistent resistance. As Courpasson (2012) shows resistance at best leads to superior solutions to problems and as Thomas et al. (2011) shows this happens through a breakthrough where new knowledge is being created and diffused. In addition to non-facilitative power-relations as a bottleneck, little new knowledge seemed to be created. It is possible to speculate that the other big issue may have been the lack of generative dialogue (Thomas et al.,

2011). We can assess the quality of dialog by noting that there were not notable counteroffers from either side (Ford et al., 2008). Either party did not give any ideas or proposals on how to make the change better and how to solve the problem that certain behavior and people are highlighted unnecessarily.

Elements that innovate, elements that integrate and interaction are clearly connected if we analyze this situation in the DT framework. Resistance to resistance resulted in lower innovation capabilities which in turn may have some influences on offered products and services. But this influence on products and services is not known. However, based on the data and DT framework we can argue that lower capabilities in elements that innovate led to changes in economics, mainly regarding the company performance described by Hanelt et al. (2021).

The second situation of adopting the agile methodology resulted in complete agreements, decent agreements, and resignations. In addition to interactional and communicative practices, one interviewee emphasized the importance of gaining appreciation, respect, and trust. These in turn are elements of interpersonal relationships which are discussed in some managerial studies (Erwin and Garman 2010; Furst and Cable, 2008). In this situation there were also similar elements of communication and dialog that were studied by Thomas et al. (2011). However, facilitating power-relations seems to be again the bottleneck of breakthrough. Facilitating power-relations, being open to reconceptualize the change, seems to be more common in other types of change (presented later in this paper) whereas the agile methodology seems to be something that absolutely has to be done in a specific way. As one interviewee of the second situation describes they try to be very open about where the company is being led by the top management and why.

There was also an interesting dimension of giving time to people and letting them resist which no other interviewee discussed about. According to Thomas et al. (2011) and Ford et al. (2008) change agents can either reject or accept the claims of the resistor. However, this situation is closer to descriptions of Sørensen (2016) where responses to resistance can be somewhere in the middle such as toleration. The occurring first level resistance was moderate also, because of the lack of resistance to resistance which is commonly discussed in theories (Ford et al., 2008). Tolerant response to

resistance or low resistance to resistance led to agreements although not to any notable breakthroughs. One of the interviewees discussed most about resignations and had an opinion that there was a lack of collaborative efforts which led to resignations. The data shows that many people were unsatisfied with the change efforts because they were perceived as forcing. Some of those people were said to be technology gurus and other highly valued special experts. However, there is a grey line between individual and collective resistance. Collective aspects were also visible, because changing to an agile organization was a huge company-wide effort. In sum, responses to resistance led to various outcomes. According to the data it seems that either people achieved a decent level of consensus (although not complete agreements) or people resigned. Giving time to people seems to have led to increased well-being at work which in turn may have influenced employer image according to the data. The most significant other finding is that resistance to resistance led to resignations.

In this context agile is related to strategic decisions and changes in organizational structure which can be seen to be dimensions of organizational determinants. From the DT framework perspective resignations of people, especially resignations of “technology gurus”, influenced the company’s competence. Usually competence is one of the most difficult aspects of DT for organizations (Kane et al., 2015; Westerman et al., 2011). On the other hand, some studies state that competence may not be as big problem (Saarikko et al., 2020; Henfridsson & Yoo, 2014). In this situation resignations of highly competent people no doubt had a negative effect on DT. However, there is no evidence that these resignations would have caused any bigger crises in the short term or other consequences in the long term. Therefore, the overall conclusion is that responses to resistance led to momentary deficiency in competence. From this standpoint it is safe to say that there is some indication that competence is not as big of a challenge for this type of big incumbent company as it can be for example for SMEs or others. Eventually, the case company remained as an attractive employer and was able to hire new competent employees. In this sense tolerating resistance was a big factor in creating positive company image.

The third situation led to the development of fingerprint technology. Regulation owners’ resistance to the middle managers’ (and the teams’) resistance happened as previously described and its dynamics were presented to be somewhat simple. In

addition to described parallel efforts, the interviewee criticized somewhat heavily some of the aspects of the change and had strong opinions which leads us to speculate that there could have been visible routine resistance in daily organizing. This can be seen from the quote. Resistance to resistance showed as formality in discursive practices. Bitching, cynicism, and other types of practices are usually very common, but they are not visible in the data (Contu, 2008; Mumby, 2005; Putnam et al., 2005). Resistance to resistance as non-discursive practices were not possible because of the lack of formal control mechanisms which led to parallel efforts described by Sørensen (2016). You could interpret that not helping was resisting, but then we would have to take into account every other occasion of not doing something which would make studying resistance theoretically impossible or extremely hard.

The middle manager and team worked as institutional entrepreneurs who successfully created an innovation trajectory by doing and showing in practice that the fingerprint technology is something valuable. Typically, institutional entrepreneurs create successful innovation trajectories by creating a vision and inspiring others, but also by showing very practical demonstrations and justifications (Battilana et al., 2009; Henfridsson & Yoo, 2014). In this situation the persistent approach that something better needs to be created resulted in a successful innovation trajectory. Eventually, the organization started to support these ideas and currently the organization stands fully behind the technology.

Developing the fingerprint technology can be seen to have led to improved customer experience in the company's mobile application. This is supported by the fact that the company itself has noted its importance and stands fully behind the technology according to the data. In addition, we can speculate that relatively early development compared to the average of other financial actors may have resulted in competitive advantages and hence various other effects. Mobile technology is a big part of the company's digital transformation from which it is arguable that resistance made the DT better. From the DT framework point of view, if there would have been stronger resistance to resistance that could have limited the development of the fingerprint technology, it would have resulted in weaker elements that innovative and in turn affected changes in economics. This is arguable if we assume that lower quality service would have affected performance in the financial markets. These same arguments



apply to the second regulation-related resistant situation of development of economic forecast feature. That situation did not include resistance to resistance, because a counteroffer made by an expert of using a disclaimer was accepted. In that situation also the quality of service was improved.

One interpretation of the final situation regarding MVP thinking in agile methodology is that the manager/one of the interviewees had resisted by demanding clearer objectives and challenging status quo thinking. This resulted in change discussions and according to the data there were little resistance to resistance. The resistor was not satisfied with initial MVP launching being the only measure for success and emphasized that more efforts must be made. As presented in the previous section successful trajectory shift described by Henfridsson and Yoo (2014) was not made by change agents to which the resistor demanded clarity. This may be one of the downsides of using MVPs. It does not include always clear innovation trajectories, but rather the approach of let's see what happens and do decisions later based on what happened. In turn it influenced commitment of the interviewee and possibly others. However, as other interviewees put it MVPs show small successes along the way which also increases commitment, and the lack of initial innovation trajectory is rather a core feature. According to them it is proven in many studies that MVPs save time and money. These aspects demonstrate very well that indeed there are important human aspects of DT that are not studied enough.

As presented previously change agents can either accept/facilitate or reject claims of the resistor (Ford et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2011). The claims that change requires more time and efforts, and that business objectives should be taken into account were accepted at least discursively in this situation. Change agents were described as facilitating, they admitted the importance of certain business objectives and engaged in open discussions with the interviewee (change recipient). There is no evidence of any practice of rejecting. The influence of resistance from this perspective is that it has emphasized business objectives over technological approaches and brought up practical change efforts more visible.

If top management individuals or other change agents had resisted the resistance, customer experience as the most emphasized business objective would have not been

in the center of change which in turn probably would have resulted in slower change. Slower change meaning slowing down the process of institutionalization which is discussed by Ford et al. (2008) and others. The interviewee/manager argued that more time and efforts are required to create real changes. These “real changes” for example included the commitment of grassroots employees which is also supported by the academic field (Dremel et al., 2017; Fischer et al., 2020; Kazim, 2019). It was also identified that commitment cannot happen without making the change as easy as possible for the users. There are no indicators that business objectives such as improved customer experience would have not happened eventually. Customer satisfaction is constantly followed in the company. Also, other interviewees who were more technically oriented employees identified the importance of business aspects too. Resistance led to more active thinking of business objectives and faster implementation because they were taken into account from the beginning. The data indicates that without resistance concentrating on the technological edge would have been more dominating in the beginning which would have caused other effects also such as commitment issues.

Another interpretation of the final situation is that there was no change that could be resisted, and therefore there was no resistance that could be resisted. According to the data there was and is very high level of consensus regarding the big picture of strategies and vision of the company. In other words, people usually agree on what should be done. Most of the debates and discussions were related to how should the change be implemented. Also, four out of five interviewees emphasized many times iterative way of working and constructing details together. Agile methods in their core are based on iteration. Therefore, there is enough evidence to say that iterative working is the mode of operating in the company and that the basic supposition in iterative working is that details of the change are not conceptualized in advance. For example, one interviewee stated the following.

*...I am constantly thinking about iterative collaborative development which could decrease occurring resistance also proactively.*

Iterative working refers to development through a loop doing something, then getting feedback and making changes according to that feedback. From this standpoint we can

argue that the supposition is to figure out together how the change should be done, and therefore there is no change that could be resisted and resistance that could be resisted. Another perspective would be that people are encouraged to act in resistant ways regarding details, because resistance feeds the feedback loop. This would align very well with the work by Fleming and Spicer (2008).

Despite of the viewpoint the lack of resistance to resistance led to changes in elements that innovate, because more attention was given to customer experience and the quality of service. This also influenced outcomes of the DT framework if we assume that there is a connection between customer experience, higher quality products/services and economics of the company. Second, resisting led to clarification of the innovation trajectory which increased commitment.

### 3.2.3 Change of competence

Digital transformation has required completely new competences from the case company. The basic offering of products and services has changed, but also how organizing happens in daily operations has changed a lot. For individuals DT has meant that they have to constantly train themselves and learn new things. Three subthemes of competence were found from the data: changes in core competence, digital tools in relation to competence and outsourcing vs. own competence. The overall description of subthemes and situations are presented first, then practices of resisting are analyzed and finally the dynamics and influences of resistance to resistance are covered.

*Subtheme 1: We can bring technical solutions pretty well to internal use and to the markets. But keeping up with the technological change brings up challenges...It changes for example the competence of marketing in a way that humans do not decide anymore what customers see on our digital channels. Planning and implementing big marketing campaigns is not the core competence, but rather that we have machine learning algorithm. That machine has to be taught...Role of the individual and expectations change.*

*Subtheme 1: Now that many things can be done in digital channels it has enabled that employees can concentrate on work that may create more value in serving customers and sales type of work...Many things are automated or changed so that people can use their own time more wisely to really help customers find the*

*right solutions for their situation in life or needs. Maybe more of a demanding expert work whereas previously...*

*Subtheme 2: In my opinion the challenge relates to tools and developing your core competence...I do not know if its resistance, but the challenge is maybe exactly that how you can develop your own competence alongside with your work...Although many customer research and participation tools have come up...If some tools and methods are put into use that don't serve the purpose after all...We have this nice post-it tool that works on the internet, but it doesn't replace physical participation or observation, or even though we have webcams and teams, the teams interview doesn't replace what I can learn to increase my understanding of the context when I go next to an employee's workstation and I sit there for 2 hours watching the job.*

*Subtheme 3: In 2013 there was a big outsourcing where IT technology wanted to be outsourced...Others had tried outsourcing to India and realized that it is not a total solution...We had disagreements about outsourcing...I have seen that it is not possible to utilize products in a same way if they are outsourced for example to India. If the product is in the same team that has developed it, it can be developed further.*

The first two quotations describe how requirements for core competences have changed. Regarding core competences, the dynamics are clear. Expert employee and employees are resisting, and middle manager is the second level responding party. The same dynamics also applies in the third subtheme of digital tools in relation to competence. The final subtheme or situation of outsourcing included resistance from middle manager and resistance to resistance by upper-level manager.

Competence is one of the key points in the study by Erwin and Garman (2010) which goes well with the change in the core competence. Another perspective is that when change is seen as a threat to job security, it causes resistance (Dent & Goldberg, 1999). As many interviewees stated, not being able to engage in new work tasks required by DT is not acceptable in the company. It is arguable that, because the company is very open about the need for constant development and open about what is expected from people, these can raise concerns about job security if one feels that expectations are not met. In addition, according to one interviewee it is somewhat common that people feel their position threatened when changes related to core competencies occur in the company. The interviewee continued that even when unattractive manual work is removed and the work is in a way more pleasant, people easily feel their positions threatened.

If we look at all data in this study, there are situations where employees have resigned and moved to another organization, changed positions in the company or stayed in the same position, but just declined of doing new things required by DT. This kind of flexibility in the modern work environment is mostly enabled by the increased movement of resources and other similar aspects (Mumby et al., 2017). Change as a threat to job security and being successful in the job are both the core of resistance regarding the change in core competence.

Competence is one of the elements that this study added to the DT framework originally made by Hanelt et al. (2021). Although competence is commonly proven to be one of the biggest bottlenecks of DT, this study shows somewhat different kinds of results (Kane et al., 2015; Westerman et al., 2011). According to the data there is not a lack of competence per se. Competence in the case company can be seen to be a bottleneck in a sense that training employees and employees learning takes time. However, these employees are already professionals in their field. Therefore, there is not a fundamental lack of available competent people. On the other hand, it is somewhat contradicting that for a big incumbent company available well-trained workforce does not seem to be a problem, but the number of employees is high which requires more training efforts and therefore slows down DT.

Current resistance theories are quite hard to apply to the second subtheme of digital tools in relation to competence. However, the second situation/subtheme is mostly related to the fundamental view of seeing resistance as a response to the dominant system (Mumby, 2005). It can be also seen as a way to find superior solutions as Courpasson et al. (2012) describes. The dominant system (i.e., certain managers) was driving a digital change that was not beneficial for the organization, but the change was reconceptualized through resistance which supports also DT research indicating collective efforts as a decisive factor of DT (Dremel et al., 2017; Hanelt et al., 2021; Plekhanov et al., 2022; Yoo et al., 2012; Volberda et al., 2021). For some managers it is very hard to know what competences certain jobs require.

The overall dynamics included disagreement between a manager and an expert. According to the expert digital tools leads to quantity over quality in customer research and similar development areas. The expert also raised a problem that current digital

tools are not sophisticated enough to replace face to face observation. Based on the data analysis a few managers were starting to consider using digital tools as the competence whereas the expert indicated that digital tools are useful but using them should not be considered as the actual competence. For example, learning a specific customer research tool is not the same as learning certain methodology of customer research. This resistant situation concentrated on what should be considered as the core competence. It is situated in the contextual conditions of the DT framework (as the previous one) which seems to have affected elements that innovate of the mechanisms, because quality of customer research was not endangered.

The final situation is about outsourcing. The core issue found from the data is what should be regarded as the company's competence. Creating new digital products or creating and maintaining digital products. In 2013 consensus in the company was that IT technology should be outsourced as much as possible. One interviewee who was a manager of a team resisted this idea of outsourcing and especially demands of one upper-level manager. The team leader saw that in addition to initial development of a service or product, also further development is crucial in the business. This further development was said to be very hard if everything is outsourced. The basic argument made was that utilizing outsourced products/services did not create as much utility and value. This can be seen to be the classical case of resisting expected negative outcomes rather than change itself (Dent & Goldberg, 1999).

This situation was completely owned resistance as Prasad and Prasad (2000) describes this type of behavior. The team manager who was interviewed identified specific actions as resisting and owned them. The dynamics of resistance concentrated on specific subject matters of outsourcing. This can be seen to be the opposite of most post-modern studies that see resistance coming from personal interests or subjectivities (Putnam et al., 2005). There is very little evidence on personal interests in this situation. It is even arguable that not outsourcing was personally much harder for the team leader, because more work was required and building a team is not usually completely straightforward. According to the data most of the debates about outsourcing between the team leader and manager concentrated on cost benefits and value of the service/product.

Similarly to the previous situation, this situation also affected elements that innovate of the DT framework. The team leader did not believe the innovation trajectory built by top managers. All elements of creating change through innovation trajectory explained by Henfridsson and Yoo (2014) were absent. Mainly there were supporting evidence and practical artifacts in everyday operations that differed from the suggested innovation trajectory. Other companies had difficulties in outsourcing and current outsourcing in the company indicated lower utility of products when outsourced. The resistance also showed in many ways. Studying resisting rather than resistance itself enables studying the question how and producing insights that explain how actions transform organizations (Courpasson et al., 2012).

*Subtheme 1: It causes anxiety if you don't know why you have to change and how to be successful in the new reality. Usually when we go through things some parts of those three aspects (meaningfulness of change, having control, feelings of success) are not in place. Sometimes people come and say that I don't understand this, help... Then there is often this kind of meeting commitment that okay this is good, but something else happens when the door is closed.*

*Subtheme 2: There is not much to it. Negotiating and cooperating.*

*Subtheme 3: They tried to change us to the model (of outsourcing). But they did not stand a chance... We had the autonomy. The team's autonomy probably saved us. This culture includes team's autonomy. If we do our job well, we can choose, because full DevOps teams are also allowed.*

Resisting occurred as discursive and non-discursive practices. Resisting in changes of core competences showed mainly as discursive practices. According to the interviews people were open and direct about their resistance which was also seen as positive. On one hand people had difficulties in learning subject matters and on the other hand people had difficulties in understanding changes from bigger perspective. People were often said to have stated or interviewees themselves stated that they did not understand, and that discussions were demanded. There was also a similar aspect of non-discursive resisting to the agile methodology which was named as meeting commitment. People agreed formally, but informally and in a hidden way did something else.

The next situation of digital tools in relation to competence included both discursive and non-discursive practices. Once again it is almost impossible to study the details of

occurred discursive practices, because we do not have observational data and the interviewees were unable to provide detailed descriptions. However, the discussions were described as professional, direct, and based on facts. Based on these descriptions we can say that the resistance was formal as commonly conceptualized in research (Prasad and Prasad, 2000). Because the interviewed expert had high-level of freedom in deciding how to organize work, non-discursive resistant practices showed as doing otherwise than what was maybe generally desired by managers. Because parallel efforts are located outside of the dominant system, this situation cannot be conceptualized as one (Sørensen, 2016). In a sense the company has built a culture, formal structures and other aspects that enable resisting. Some studies say that people are encouraged to resist especially in modern expert organizations (Fleming and Spicer, 2008). It is possible to categorize the freedom provided by the company as an encouragement to resist. This analysis also applies to the next situation.

In the final situation of outsourcing resisting showed as discursive and as non-discursive practices. Both types of resisting were very direct, formal, and strong which are commonly conceptualized behaviors of resistance (Erwin & Garman, 2010; Prasad & Prasad, 2000). Most probably the resisting showed as such because it was very concentrated on the subject matter of outsourcing. However, informal and weak forms of resisting are quite hard to study. Often people make sense of their past in a way that intricacies of past situations are forgotten or simplified.

Finally, the three subthemes/situations of resistance in DT resulted in various of responses and outcomes.

*Subtheme 1: ...we try to be very open that it is not an option that we are not on the forefront of digital change...We are very transparent and we discuss it a lot that people are aware...We have trainings and then internal intranet and other things where people get information constantly...people can use 10% of their worktime to self-improvement...and we give recognition (to people who have succeeded)...we have to help that he/she finds the way to change and will to learn new...If it does not succeed or the person does not find the will, you probably have to give a second chance, but if the person just cannot keep up with the change some conclusions probably have to be made.*

*Subtheme 2: Work efficiency versus quality so in a way then it can also be like the right kind of resistance in relation to it.*



*Subtheme 3: We have been able to increase the level of own employees. At first we had 30% and now we have 70% which is a pretty good balance...The person (line manager of the team leader) wanted to move us to a different group of teams...We were in this kind of constant conflict...We were transferred to a different group of teams...It was a forced transfer.*

In the first situation there were very broad and structural responses to resistance such as training, benefits, available information and so on. But if we analyze our situation of individual resistance with the work of Thomas et al. (2011), there were relational approach in communicative practices and generative approach in dialogue. However, in dialogue there seemed to be no counteroffers that Ford et al. (2008) emphasizes. For example, discussions were described as going through what was expected from an employee. This situation has many similarities to some of the agile methodology themes since facilitative power-relationships seems to be again the bottleneck of breakthrough. One interviewee had a point of view that people have to be able to learn new skills required by DT or there will be negative consequences. Another interviewee said that it is common that if for an example older employee declines to learn something new, someone always comes and fills this gap of doing. This situation fits best to Sørensen's (2016) conceptualization of tolerant response to resistance, because there were not clear facilitating or rejecting responses to resistance. On one hand relational communicative practices, generative dialogue and trying to manage stress levels of employees made sure that anxiety and fear did not increase too much. On the other hand, not being willing to reconceptualize what core competences are required were the cause of anxiety and fear. In addition to these findings, practical influences to DT are unknown.

The second situation of digital tools in relation to competence had more practical influences on DT. One interviewed expert resisted extensive use of some digital tools and wanted to clarify what competences are actually required in DT. The manager or few managers (depending on the viewpoint) of the expert eventually accepted these claims. In a sense the process leading to a breakthrough proposed by Thomas et al. (2011) happened in this situation similarly, because the expert had power to decide details of the work to which this issue concentrated on. From DT point of view if the manager had resisted it would have led to lower level of competence in customer research and similar business-oriented areas. This would have happened because some

digital tools were directing competences to quantity over quality focus. This in turn would have led to issues in elements that innovate, mostly service and product innovation, in the mechanisms part of the DT framework. And if we assume that lower quality products/service leads to economic issues resistance to resistance would have influenced also changes in economics of the outcomes part.

The final situation of outsourcing included resistance to resistance which did not lead to any visible negative outcomes in DT. The discussions and actions around outsourcing were described as very polarized and included similar process of not achieving breakthrough that Thomas et al. (2011) describes. Resistance to resistance by the line manager occurred as discursive practices which focused on convincing that outsourcing was the best option regarding the teams IT technology and that focus should be on creating new products. There are little details about the nature of these discursive practices, but we do know that the line manager rejected the counteroffer of not outsourcing made by the team leader. However, counteroffers, justifications and demonstrations must be sufficient and genuine which we do not have insights on (Folger et al., 1999). Overall, this situation suits to Ford's et al (2008) research. According to the data there were no initial problems with interpersonal relationships which is sometimes an effecting factor of resistance (Cable & Furst, 2008). In this situation bad interpersonal relationship was the consequence, not cause, of resistance which showed as not interacting with each other.

Only non-discursive practice that was possible for the line manager was to transfer the whole team and team leader to another place in the organization which was eventually done. According to the team leader this had very little influence on the team, and at first, they did not even know about this transfer. Now after many years the percentage of own employees has increased from 30% to 70% from total workforce. This shows very practically the change in attitude and that keeping outsourcing at moderate levels has been the better choice eventually.

From DT framework perspective this is related to elements that innovate, more specifically product and service innovation/development described by Hanelt et al. (2021). If the line manager would have had concrete ways to limit the number of own employees, it would have meant lower level of own competence, more outsourcing

and finally lower utility/quality of products as we now afterwards know. As previously stated, if we assume that this influences economics of the company, which is well argued point, stronger resistance to resistance would have led to changes in economics of the outcomes part of the DT framework.

### 3.2.4 Decisions about technologies and development

The final major theme found is decisions about technologies and development. In turn three subthemes were found: basic level systems and architecture, common language, and mobile technology. First overall descriptions of these themes/situations are covered, then practices of resisting are covered and finally dynamics of resistance to resistance and its influences on DT are discussed. The interviewees discussed a lot about difficult situations during the past 10 years.

*Subtheme 1: For the past 10 years there has been three generations of commercial systems and still our system goes past them...There is a huge eagerness to change everything to a commercial system, but if the life cycle ends, oops we have to do everything from scratch...I would say that our own system is often more economic and reliable.*

*Subtheme 1: There is a huge change regarding what is the central system that is used to handle customer service in banks. Are the objectives clear from customer experience and business point of view. Is it clear what kind of change is being pursued.*

*Subtheme 1: If we think about technological choices and architecture, many people have visionary opinions. If new changes do not fit into this opinion, it can be very challenging.*

*Subtheme 2: I remember one situation where we succeeded in creating a common understanding...In meetings there may be managers, line managers, project managers, coders, and if people speak different language and use different terminology, a common understanding has to be created...We drew simple flow charts that showed what happens and where...There was resistance, because people did not understand why we had to draw these and write these.*

*Subtheme 3: We were bringing the mobile application 10 years ago...In 5-6 years it beat browser technologies...There are these kinds of small streams of digitalization and trends that causes fear...In the beginning when mobile was a small thing...It was a side responsibility of the team who handled browser*

*services and later a new department was appointed to handle the responsibility of the mobile application...*

The first subtheme (the first three quotations) is related to a set of basic systems and architecture. There were so many individuals involved that the simplest conceptualization is to conclude that there was a clear conflict between external thinking and internal thinking. Some parties thought most about customers and some people thought most about internal issues such as how the system affects development work. Resistant behavior in this first situation can be seen to have come from not understanding the change or wanting to understand the change better. As covered many times in this study, understanding is a key influencer of resistance in managerial studies (Erwin & Garman, 2010). In the DT framework this situation is related to material determinants of contextual conditions discussed by Hanelt et al. (2021).

Another big issue was awareness that this study also added to the original DT framework. From the interviews, different people had very different levels and perspectives of awareness. Eventually awareness increased which influenced decisions about material determinants. However, it was typical that people resisted in routine ways which Prasad and Prasad (2000) describes as mundane and spontaneous. The routine resistance was described to happen spontaneously and terms such as mentioning, reminding, and correcting others were used. One interviewee said that usually big changes happen, and big decisions are made when there is this kind of overall clarity. The interviewee continued to emphasize the importance of clarity throughout the interview. However, routine resistance worked sometimes as an obstacle to achieve higher-level of awareness. People were concerned that their point of view is understood. However, there is no data to conclude was this interpreted as defensive or not.

The second subtheme/situation was clearer in its oppositional dynamics. One middle manager advocated to create a common language using simple flow charts which would work as a base to make decisions about technologies and development of products. Few other individuals from many organizational hierarchies resisted this idea through constant questioning. This situation too supports previous evidence presented by Erwin and Garman (2010) that understanding influences resistance. This aspect of

not understanding is often present in this study, because people often stated out loud that they did not understand why something should be done. Another implication is that using flow charts was discussed shortly if at all previously. People require time to make sense of the change (Lawrence, 2015). This study indicates that resistance is a natural part of this sensemaking process.

In the DT framework this situation is related to elements that integrate and interaction of the mechanisms part. Using flow charts and in that way creating a common understanding is exactly a mechanism that enables cooperation. However, it should be noted that in the original model Hanelt et al. (2021) did not concentrate very much on social dimensions such as interaction. In a way, for example Hanelt et al. (2021) takes interaction for granted. They propose breaking functional silos and moving to agile working that integrates different competences (Hanelt et al., 2021). But this study shows that changing operational models, organizational structures and ways of working does not automatically lead to collaborative benefits if interaction is not enabled. This is more in line with other studies that concentrate on interdisciplinary work in DT (Saarikko et al., 2020; Verhoef et al., 2021).

The final situation covers how resistance has influenced the development of mobile technology. In this situation the oppositional dynamics are again vague. In addition, there were multiple parties included from which three middle managers provided majority of the data. There were two specific sources of resistance. First, fear and cautious attitude were discussed often which indicates on one hand many things and on the other hand nothing. The reasons for these resistant aspects could be in personal attributes, managerial practices such as communication and participation, not knowing enough about the change, defat resistance, not wanting to work with mobile technologies, routinely reacting based on current conceptions or practically anything.

The second source of resistance concentrated more on the specific features of the mobile application. One interviewee said that the best results have been achieved when there has been a high-level of collaboration between developers and users (mainly expert employees in banks). The interviewee continued that it is very hard to know every little detail in everyday operations that might make using the application more difficult. The second source of resistance was exactly this. Some theories lead to

studying what is wrong with the change recipient, but this is a great example of how other reasons influenced resistance (Ford et al., 2008). From the DT framework point of view this situation is related to the material determinants, because specific technologies are included in it. On the other hand, it also belongs to elements that innovate, because the second source of resistance was concentrated on product innovation rather than mobile technology itself.

There were various discursive and non-discursive practices of resisting. Sometimes resisting towards decisions about technologies and development was well planned and argued. Sometimes it was more spontaneous.

*Subtheme 1: From time to time some people come and question that hey wouldn't it be wiser to use a commercial system...According to them it would be easier because it is only about normal communication (the system).*

*Subtheme 2: They questioned that how is this beneficial. They asked why cannot we write a word document instead and everybody can read from there.*

*Subtheme 3: The work related to it was dissed a lot.*

*Subtheme 3: The percentage of read messages was low.*

The set of practices was relatively simple. In the first situation/subtheme of basic level systems and architecture people resisted discursively proposing alternative options of different systems and challenging specific arguments. Although bitching, cynicism and other types of discursive practices are usually common and they may have been present, no interviewee brought them up (Contu, 2008; Mumby, 2005; Putnam et al., 2005). Some discursive practices were very thought-out and conscious. For example, one interviewee emphasized customer-experience very systematically. Other types of discursive practices on the other hand could be described as routine resistance using terms by Prasad and Prasad (2000). Routine resistance showed as spontaneous yet persistent acts of questioning.

Resisting in the second situation of forming a common understanding showed also discursively. In this situation the discursive practices were described to be almost

completely routine resistance which included some hints of frustration. In a sense people were so oriented in details that forming a big picture together was questioned.

In the final situation of mobile technology there were discursive and non-discursive practices from Mumby's et al. (2017) framework. In this situation there were clear practices of dissing, mocking, and undermining the mobile application. Other occasions in this broad situation that did not concentrate on the mobile technology per se, but rather on specific features included non-discursive resisting. This showed simply as not using a specific feature such as messaging.

*Subtheme 1: The good thing about expert organizations is that people basically want to do good work and want to succeed in it. And then if they are against the change, they have some very wise idea about it. Or at least there is an idea. I believe that if smart people have the same information as a starting point, they end up with the same conclusion of what should be done. And often if the views are contradictory. Someone has a different or deficient dataset in use. Then the conversation usually starts in a way that let's sit down and put the facts on the table as to what this is all about.*

*Subtheme 1: It is not a single conversation. It is constant dialog. And you might want to have people supporting your idea from other teams that this is the right solution to do this system internally. In a sense this is premium, and it is in Finland, and you can communicate even if worldwide cloud services will shut down.*

*Subtheme 2: We had conversations until every last person understood why it was beneficial. If we need to discuss about some part of some system, we can use an image to get a common understanding... Getting a common language, everybody did not understand that... In the end it was a successful project and people realized pretty fast how it helps us to draw these...*

*Subtheme 3: If we are developing tools what experts use daily, we have engaged them in participation and listened their feedback. It is one of the drivers of development. Chances of success and overcoming problems are better. It is normal feedback when we have failed to notice something in their everyday activities.*

Choosing basic level systems and architecture was one of the situations in this study that included facilitating power-relations in addition to relational communicative practices and generative dialogue in the process described by Thomas et al. (2011). Majority of the interviewees described that open dialog was important and that best

arguments should win despite of who proposes them. This shows that indeed claims of the resistors were facilitated as Ford et al. (2008) puts it. However, the nuance in this dynamic was that according to some interviewees there are rarely right or wrong decisions, and according to other interviewees people will make same conclusions with the same information. Creating and diffusing information discussed by Thomas et al. (2011) showed also in this study's data as one important factor of breakthrough. In this situation creating and diffusing information led to higher level of awareness which led to decisions about material determinants of the DT framework. This is one of the most practical examples in this study how resistance and DT studies are intertwined. One very concrete consequence was that own internal systems were kept in use. How this in turn affected the case company's DT is unknown. However, some interviewees admitted that they as change agents had been wrong about these kinds of decisions previously. Therefore, they were themselves aware that if they had resisted resisting in this situation, they could have ended choosing the wrong system or architecture.

The second situation of creating a common understanding/language resulted in overall beneficial outcome for the company. However, it did not include a visible breakthrough and new knowledge was not created according to the data. The same existing knowledge was reproduced, because one middle manager advocated the use of flow charts and visualization over and over again. This could be interpreted as resistance to resistance, because every other proposed option was rejected. There were some similarities to the process theorized by Thomas et al. (2011), but the quality of communicative practices, dialog and facilitating power-relations are vague from the data. However, the middle manager who engaged in resistance to resistance was genuine and was interpreted as genuine when proposing demonstrations, justifications, and arguments. As previous research shows this is one of the key aspects that influence resistance (Folger et al., 1999; Ford et al., 2008).

In the end it was noticed that team working, and collaborative working is not enough, or maybe it is more precise to say that it is impossible if interaction is not enabled. Resistance to resistance defended the idea of creating a common understanding and therefore being able to interact each other when developing digital products. In this situation resistance to resistance led to higher product/service innovation capabilities in elements that innovate, because products could be developed more efficiently. And



as stated previously, if we assume that this affects economics of the company, changes in elements that innovate influenced also outcomes.

The final situation/subtheme for the most part did not include resistance to resistance. If we analyze that mocking and other discursive resistant practices presented previously were resisted by just developing the mobile application, then resistance to resistance occurred. However, there is a lack of clear power dynamics in this perspective. There were no clear change agents and change recipients which makes it impossible to analyze what was first-level resisting.

One interviewed middle manager said that feedback is a key driver in the development of the mobile application. In this occasion the interviewee also declined to interpret that resisting had happened. But as examined analytically in the previous section, there were acts of resisting from theoretical perspective. If we analyze this situation using the processual theory by Thomas et al. (2011), everything was very open and facilitating. We could also analyze it with the work of Courpasson et al. (2012) which discussed about achieving superior solutions. However, regarding the mobile application there were no bigger solutions. The development was described to happen in a more incremental way. The best theoretical conclusion of this situation is that people were encouraged to resist as Fleming & Spicer (2008) proposes. However, individuals were not encouraged to resist non-discursively, but rather discursively as described in the beginning of this paragraph. When individuals resisted by not using the application, it was interpreted more negatively. In sum, we can conclude that encouraging discursive resisting made the mobile application better. From DT framework perspective, resistance was in its essence innovation work which increased innovation capabilities in elements that innovate.

### **3.3 Summary of the results**

Resistance was either resisted, tolerated, or facilitated. The first two columns of the following table consists of identified main themes and subthemes. The final column summarizes what influences different responses have had to digital transformation. Resistance and different responses to resistance seems to have influenced innovation the most. More specifically product and service innovation capabilities. Other

influences on DT include competence, awareness, commitment, and material determinants. In one situation the influences of resistance and further responses to resistance were unknown. It seems that this study's findings supports the research on positive and productive qualities of resistance. However, there were also exceptions such as the subtheme of common language. Including first-level resistance in the following table would have been insightful, but the occurred first level resistance was analytically too complex to include in it.

**Table 4. Summary of the empirical results**

Agile working methods	Requirements of the agile methodology	<u>Resistance to resistance:</u> Decreased innovation capabilities
	Adopting the agile methodology	<u>Tolerance to resistance:</u> Momentary deficiency in competence
	Issues of regulation	<u>Resistance to resistance (only discursive):</u> Slowed innovation work <u>Resistance:</u> Innovation and development
	Using MVPs	<u>Facilitated resistance:</u> Higher commitment and innovation capabilities
Change of competence	Changes in core competence	<u>Tolerance to resistance:</u> Influences unknown
	Digital tools in relation to competence	<u>Facilitated resistance:</u> Increased competence and innovation capabilities
	Outsourcing vs. own competence	<u>Resistance to resistance (only discursive):</u> No practical influences <u>Resistance:</u> Increased competence and innovation capabilities
Decisions about technologies and development	Basic level systems and architecture	<u>Facilitated resistance:</u> Increased awareness and more informed decisions about material determinants
	Common language	<u>Resistance to resistance:</u> Increased interaction and innovation capabilities
	Mobile technology	<u>Facilitated resistance:</u> Increased innovation capabilities

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

This is the final part of the study which consists of discussion, theoretical contributions, managerial implications, research limitations and finally suggestions for future research.

### 4.1 Discussion

The main research question proposed in the introduction was: *How resistance to resistance influences digital transformation of an incumbent company?* This in turn was divided into two sub-questions: *How (first level) resistance occurs in incumbent company's digital transformation change programs?* and *What consequences and effects change agents' resistance as a response to resistance has on incumbent company's digital transformation change programs?*

These sub-questions are important, because studying resistance to resistance and responses to resistance is most insightful when there is detailed knowledge about first level resistance. Another objective of this study was to bring insights to the social dimension of DT. Empirical part of this study supported the social dimensions of DT that were discussed in the theoretical part.

Let's answer to the first sub-question. The first level resistance occurred in many ways. The main dimensions found were discursive and non-discursive practices, hidden and public practices, indirect and direct practices, formal and informal practices, and strong and weak practices. There were also multiple interpretations about what was seen as resistance in the first place. In addition, every occasion of resisting had its stylistic differences. Sometimes resisting was formal, sometimes it was emotionally charged, and sometimes it was somewhere in between. Final group of affecting factors were personal attributes and interpersonal relationships. Some analyses and notions were done based on these two theoretical areas, but they were clearly the least supported areas in this study. What people did was seen to be more important than how things are. As analyzed in the empirical part there was a connection between resistance and responses to resistance. There were differences in how well the resistance could be facilitated. Different people seem to facilitate specific kind of resisting. Some change

agents require complete directness and others require more intricate approach. However, proposing counteroffers was the common factor in almost all resistant situations that were facilitated.

Let's answer to the second sub-question. As seen from the table 3. resistance as a response to resistance had most of the time negative outcomes. However, creating a common language was the most visible subtheme in which resistance to resistance had positive consequences. It should be also noted that there were many situations where stronger resistance to resistance would have resulted in negative outcomes. Now that the case company has reached a more stabilized plateau in its DT journey, we can see what consequences specific decisions have had. Negative consequences of resistance to resistance were visible, but often not critical, decisive, or big. This can be seen for example in the very first subtheme that led to decreased innovation capabilities. The statement that resistance can be a resource if used as one, is supported quite well by this study. For example, new features to the company's mobile application were developed. However, the statement that resistance is a source of increasing chaos is somewhat contradicted with this study's empirical findings. According to the data the chaotic and even destructive nature of resistance was present most in collective resistance although it was not the focus of this study.

The answer to the main research question is that responses to resistance influenced product/service innovation capabilities the most. Resistance to resistance seems to be in connection with decreased innovation capabilities regarding product and service innovation that is enabled by technologies in the case company. The second most important finding is that resistance to resistance or the lack of resistance to resistance can be seen to have influenced social dynamics of the case company's DT which included competence, awareness, and commitment. Increased competence, awareness and commitment were more common when responses to resistance were facilitating. Finally, facilitating response to resistance led to better decisions about material determinants in one situation. There was also one situation where resistance to resistance led to positive outcomes: increased interaction and product/service innovation capabilities. It seems that in this case resistance to resistance precluded much less than what facilitated resistance produced. Therefore, the focus should be on

what can be gained from resistance when facilitated rather than what negativities resistance to resistance can cause.

Overall conclusions of this study are very hard to make because resistance depends on the context and situation, has intended and unintended consequences and is directed to multiple audiences (Courpasson et al., 2012; Ford et al. 2008; Putnam et al., 2005; Prasad & Prasad; 2000). On the other hand, descriptions, analysis, and synthesis in the empirical part was as detailed as possible.

## **4.2 Theoretical contributions**

Two most prevalent theoretical views presented in the literature review were managerial and post-modern perspectives. In addition to these used categories, there are multiple other categorizations in the rich heritage of resistance and organizational change research.

The process of breakthrough presented by Thomas (2011) and Thomas et al. (2011) suited analytically to this study. The most common bottleneck was found to be facilitating power-relations. Discussions in the case company were often facilitated and open dialog was often present. However, change agents were usually open to reconceptualize planned change only if the negotiations consisted of details or reconceptualizing was easy. Focusing only on negotiations without considering power would have led to a conclusion that there was no resistance to resistance. In addition, this study supports the idea that resisting is the interactional practice which creates and diffuses new knowledge. Breakthrough realizations happened in the case company almost exclusively when new knowledge was created and diffused. There were also other studies that discuss about positive and productive qualities resistance that this study supports. Superior solutions to problems proposed by Courpasson et al. (2012) and Sørensen (2016), and overall development proposed by Mumby et al. (2017) were all identified from the data. Few studies discuss about other responses to resistance than facilitating or rejecting which made Sørensen's (2016) insights about tolerant responses important.

Another theoretical contribution is that this study supports the managerial research by Ford et al. (2008). Without going into details many managerial practices were in line with Ford et al. (2008). For example, what consequences defensive behavior had and what were the different mechanisms that increased or decreased resistance. However, the most important finding is that counteroffers played a big role in achieving breakthrough and other benefits from resistance. Even when the counteroffers were low quality (not well argued and little supporting evidence), they contributed to finding a consensus and new perspectives when they were presented genuinely. Because resistance and resistance to resistance influenced innovation capabilities the most, it was also possible to contribute to previous research about innovation trajectories (Battilana et al., 2009; Henfridsson & Yoo, 2014). It was noticed that innovation trajectory research from DT perspective and institutionalization discussed by Ford et al. (2008) formed a tight connection to understand resistance in DT.

Resisting also showed in many ways and varied a lot which is in line with studies proposing dimensions of resistance such as directness, formality, and of course division to discursive and non-discursive practices (Erwin and Garman, 2010; Prasad & Prasad, 2000; Mumby et al., 2017). In addition to these few other possible dimensions were found. There were also various other theoretical implications. For example, change agents did not blame others for failures which challenges views by Ford et al. (2008), Ford & Ford (2010), Salancik & Meindl (1984) and Silvia (2005). Also, naming resistance, owning resistance and indirect resistance as conceptualization of the interpretative nature of resistance proved to be applicable (Prasad & Prasad, 2000).

The added social dimension of DT that was based on a variety of research such as Fischer et al. (2020), Kane et al. (2015), Kraus et al. (2021), Plekhanov et al. (2022), Saarikko et al. (2020), Yoo et al. (2012), Verhoef et al. (2021), Volberda et al. (2021), Westerman et al. (2011) among others had a clear connection to resistance. Organizational culture and identity are dimensions that require further research. These dimensions are supported the least by this study's empirical findings. Awareness, competence, interaction, and commitment were on the other hand analyzed a lot. It seems that these social dimensions are prerequisites for organizational, business, and

technological changes in DT. These social dimensions also connected current DT research and resistance research.

Post-modern resistance is least supported from all theoretical perspectives in this study. However, it is possible that studying this perspective would have required more in-depth data. Many interviewees said that employees of the company are seen and heard, and that differences are appreciated rather than minimized. Also, the case company was not seen as a site of heroic achievements. The low applicability of post-modern theories may come from case company's cultural aspects. For example, Finnish culture and the organization's culture may explain the low level of certain ideologies and self-actualization through consumerism in the case company. Also, financial industry as a sector may have influences.

### **4.3 Managerial implications**

This study provides also valuable managerial insights. Especially resistance is a prevalent theme in almost every organization. In addition, this study can help to plan and navigate in digital transformation which can be a daunting task. It is not possible to say that resistance to resistance leads always to bad decisions or negative outcomes for the organization, but we can say that facilitated resistance seems to lead to a higher chance of successful DT.

The first implication is that through resistance it is possible to find ways to digitally transform. Resistance indeed is a resource if used as one. Negative consequences of resistance to resistance may not be always big, but positive consequences of facilitated resistance are often big when implementing DT. People and negotiations around resistance requires time. From bigger perspective at least this study shows that digital transformation is not prolonged if more time to negotiate is given. Vice versa, for example the change around new agile organizational structure took longer, because resistant claims were rejected. DT happens through social dynamics, for example when people are truly committed, and these kinds of social dynamics cannot be forced. Managers have the duty and privilege to convince people to engage in digital transformation. On the other hand, employees and experts have to convince managers when proposing new changes. In addition to this dimension of institutionalization,

details of the change will usually form to be better when resisting happens. The point is not to find out who is proposing the right or wrong change. The point is that breakthrough happens when new knowledge is being created and diffused in formal meetings and ordinary informal occasions.

It seems that most of the current managerial practices concentrate on reacting and taking action afterwards something alarming has happened. In the case company it was often the situation that managers noticed that DT is not going as planned, because there was resistance. Some of the resistance was not easily notable, because it was hidden, informal and indirect. From this standpoint it is logical to propose that managers could act more proactively. Obviously proactive managerial approach would not be only a solution to hidden resisting, but also to other types of resisting. In the case company there were initial change discussions which were considered to be important. In addition, there were ongoing managerial practices of communication. However, DT negotiations and engagement in negotiations were not considered to be ongoing. A practical solution to be more proactive would be to plan non-linear change implementations. In the case company products and services are developed iteratively which is exactly one option to see change implementation too. In this way a specific part of DT (that is focused on) stays open to reconceptualization and resistance is considered in every part of the process. If we see that the iterative change implementation includes feedback loops, then resistance is purposefully facilitated in each loop. Currently, specific plans of implementing DT are quite linear in the case company which in turn include iterative methods. But the digital change implementation plan around iterative methods could be changed to be more flexible and facilitating towards resistance. Practically this would mean flexible methods inside flexible methods or iterative methods inside iterative methods.

The second implication is that positive and productive qualities of resistance are very hard to achieve without facilitating power-relations. DT is hard to implement successfully if the use of power and resisting are not in balance especially in expert organizations in sophisticated industries. In the case company it was easiest to facilitate resistance when there were planned power-structures in place. For example, teams in the case company were independent and team leaders had very much freedom to make decisions. Also some experts had specific freedoms that were in some way



decided mutually. Of course, managers can learn how to facilitate power-relations, but the other options is to plan structures and make rules that ensure that people are engaged to participate in solving problems in which they are best at.

Third implication is that managers should identify social dimensions of DT as bottlenecks: awareness, competence, commitment, interaction, identity and organizational culture. The function of independent teams and interdisciplinary work are well known and applied at least in the case company. As covered in the analysis part, the interviewees recognized that when everybody brings something to the table it makes the change better. According to the analysis one problem was for example that people did not speak in similar terms which made interacting difficult and therefore developing products/services difficult.

The final implication is that resistance and resistance to resistance seems to have the most influences on elements that innovate of the DT framework. This should make innovation capabilities as a key focus of managers from resistance and DT point of view.

#### **4.4 Research limitations**

Validity and reliability of this study were presented in the chapter three. In that chapter was also presented some relevant limitations such as aspects related to generalizability. The most important limitation presented was that this study's findings may be hard to apply to other organizations than expert organizations. In addition, as the name of this study indicates, most of the studied aspects apply only to incumbent companies. That said, there are various of other limitations.

This study concentrated on a Finnish incumbent company which poses some limitations. Majority of the case company's employees are Finnish, the company has long and rich part in Finnish history, and some specific informal Finnish institutions were present during the interviews. The influence of cultural limitations was minimized in data collection and analysis. National culture was not a focus of interest in any way, and national cultures were not essential part of used theories.

Another limitation is that the data collection was based on interviews. As argued previously semi-structured theme-centered interviews was a suitable data collection method for this study. However, people are prone to have changing understanding of the past as time passes. Some of the events discussed during the interviews happened over five or ten years ago. It is possible that the interviewees oversimplified how some events had happened or otherwise gave inadequate descriptions. The findings part critically reviewed the interviews, and compared how specific events were described by multiple interviewees. Despite of this, readers of this study should be aware of the data limitations.

Also, the amount of data used in this study is not by any means extensive. Since this study is only a Master's level thesis, collecting a relatively small number of interviews was adequate. The number of held interviews was compensated in the length of those interviews. All interviewed people were highly relevant in executing digital transformation. In addition, anonymity ensured that the data included some confidential and sensitive aspects which would have been otherwise hard to collect. However, too many conclusions should not be made based on this limited amount of data. The interviews did not include the lowest level or the highest level of the company. In other words, grassroots operational employees and highest top-level management were not interviewed. The data collection concentrated on the expert employees and various levels of middle management. Therefore, other employees of the case company may have different views of some aspects of this study.

The final limitation is the interpretative nature of this study. First, qualitative studies in general include interpretative dimensions that should be noted. Second, resistance is very interpretative as a subject. Although theories were used rigorously in the analysis part, there is always room for interpretations about what is perceived as resistance. Also, a central issue in this study was what is the first and second level resistance. If some of the first level resisting would suddenly be proven to be second level resisting, it would have the opposite effect on conclusions of this study. Third, interviewees always interpret the questions, and the interviewer interprets the answers. Therefore, misunderstandings and misconceptions are a common limitation of any study of this style.

#### 4.5 Suggestions for future research

As indicated in the conclusions part, studying collective dimensions of resistance in digital transformation could provide more insights on possible failures. This study concentrated on a somewhat successful DT efforts which made it impossible to study big failures such as bankruptcies. However, this study provided some initial evidence that there might be a connection between collective resistance and big DT failures. To my knowledge there is no research studying big DT failures or resistance in DT.

The social dynamics of DT is also a promising research area. Technical aspects of DT have been studied for about 20 years and organizational aspects of DT from broader perspective have been studied for about 10 years. Yet it seems that studying phenomena situated one step deeper in DT is required if we want to widen our understanding from theoretical and managerial perspective. The six social dimensions of DT presented in this study forms a good basis for further studies. Further research could support or discard some of these social dimensions.

Resistance to resistance in general is studied very little. Resistance to resistance and responses to resistance could be studied in different organizations, industries, and contexts. This could also provide more insights about what different consequences resistance and responses to it can have. Both ends of resistance studies, demonizing and celebrating, could study resistance to resistance from different perspectives. It is also possible that studying resistance to resistance ties both of these theoretical areas together giving a clearer conceptualization about resistance theoretically.

Finally, different managerial tools to manage resistance regarding change management could also be developed in the light of productive qualities of resistance. Iterative, agile, and lean practices are basic practices in modern organizations today. However, these are not applied in many management practices. This study indicates that more practical frameworks focusing on how to manage change in a non-linear way and how to involve resistance as a feature of development rather than something to be overcome are required. Change from bigger perspective is still often managed in a linear way. It would be interesting to study what are the possibilities to manage change in iterative, agile, and lean ways especially from incumbent companies' perspective. These

methods are currently used only in detailed development but change management itself seems to be very rigid.

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## APPENDIX 1

### SEMI-STRUCTURED THEME INTERVIEWS IN FINNISH

#### Oulun Yliopisto

#### Oulun Yliopiston Kauppakorkeakoulu

#### Kansainvälisen liiketoiminnan johtaminen (International Business Management)

Pro Gradu: ”Resistance to resistance in digital transformation of an incumbent company” /  
 “Muutosvastustuksen vastustaminen vakiintuneen yrityksen digitaalisessa transformaatioissa”  
 Haastattelija: Petrus Poikkimäki

Tässä Pro gradu -tutkielmassa tutkitaan muutosvastustuksen ja sen vastustuksen vaikutuksia vakiintuneen yrityksen digitaaliseen transformaatioon. Tutkielma tehdään maisteriopintojen lopputyönä Oulun Yliopiston Kauppakorkeakouluun. Ensimmäinen osio tutkielmassa käsittelee muutosvastustuksen ja digitaalisen transformaation teoreettiset viitekehykset kirjallisuuskatsauksen muodossa. Tutkielman toinen osio puolestaan antaa oman empiirisen näkökulmansa laadullisin menetelmin puolistrukturoitujen teemahaastattelujen pohjalta. Pääteemat ovat siten muutosvastustus ja digitaalinen transformaatio. Näiden teemojen pohjalta on muotoiltu alustavia apukysymyksiä johdonmukaisuuden vuoksi.

#### Tutkimukseen liittyvät termit

##### 1. Digitaalinen transformaatio

Digitaalinen transformaatio on digitaalisen muutoksen laajin muoto, joka sisältää myös digitoinnin sekä digitalisaation. Siinä missä digitointi keskittyy analogisen tiedon muuntamiseen digitaalseksi ja digitalisaatio yksittäisten teknologioiden merkitykseen rajatulle määrälle prosesseja, funktioita tai liiketoimintayksiköitä, digitaalinen transformaatio läpäisee koko organisaation ja sisältää usein muutoksia myös liiketoimintamalleissa, arvonluonnissa sekä sosiaalisissa ulottuvuuksissa kuten organisaatiokulttuurissa ja identiteetissä. Digitaalinen transformaatio keskittyy olemassa olevan organisaation uudelleenjärjestelyyn, tosin siihen voi liittyä myös uuden luomista. Digitaalinen transformaatio on siis 1. Teknologinen muutos 2. Organisaatiomuutos/Liiketoiminnallinen muutos (esim. liiketoimintamallin muutos, liiketoimintaprosessien muutos, muutos ydinosaamisessa) ja 3. Sosiokulttuurinen muutos (identiteetti, kulttuuri,

vuorovaikutussuhteet). Tunnetuin ja radikaalein esimerkki lienee Netflixin tarina videovuokraamoliiketoiminnasta suoratoistopalveluksi ja sen myötä tosiasiallisesti myös teknologiayritykseksi.

## 2. Muutosvastustus

Muutosvastustus voi olla positiivisiin lopputuloksiin pyrkivää haastavaa toimintaa, negatiivisesti estävää ja vahingoittavaa toimintaa tai mitä tahansa tältä väliltä.

Muutosvastustus määritellään tässä tutkimuksessa yksilötason toiminnaksi, joka voi ilmetä kielellisenä tai ei-kielellisenä käytöksenä, ja joka voi olla näkyvää tai ei näkyvää.

Muutosvastustuksen määrittelyyn vaikuttaa myös sen ”meriitit” eli mitä todellisia vaikutuksia ja seurauksia sillä on ollut. Vastustus ilmiönä ei myöskään ole dikotominen (joko sitä ilmenee tai sitä ei ilmene), vaan vastustus voi ilmetä hyvin eri tavoin.

Vastustuksesta puhuttaessa voidaan käsitellä siis hyvin pieniä erimielisyyksiä tai suuria konflikteja. Työtehtävien erikoistuminen (voiko johto usein edes määritellä mitä ja miten asioita tulisi tehdä) ja todisteet siitä, että yhdessä rakennettu muutos on monella tapaa ylivoimainen tapa johtaa organisaatioita ovat nostaneet esille muutosvastustuksen vastustamisen aiheena. Käytännössä muutosvastustuksen vastustaminen voi ilmetä muutoksesta vastaavan henkilön kyvyttömyytenä määritellä muutosta uudelleen uusien ilmenneiden näkökulmien tai asioiden vuoksi. Vastustuksen vastustaminen voi ilmetä myös johtamisena, joka ei fasilitoi vuorovaikutusta, vaan yrittää ”puskea” muutosta läpi. Nämä kaksi esimerkkiä vain havainnollistamisen vuoksi.

### **Haastattelun teemat ja puolistrukturoidut kysymykset**

#### **Digitaalinen transformaatio**

1. Miten kuvailisit digitaalista muutosta teillä oman kokemuksesi perusteella?
2. Mitä digitaalinen transformaatio pitää sisällään ja tarkoittaa teillä sinun näkökulmastasi?
3. Miten kuvailisit suurimpia haasteita liittyen digitaaliseen transformatioon?
4. Miten teillä johdetaan digitaalista muutosta ja digitaalista transformatiota? Yleisellä tasolla ja yksilötasolla.
  - a. Tekisitkö jotain eri tavalla? Miksi?

#### **Muutosvastustus sekä muutosvastustuksen vastustus**

5. Miten kuvailisit vapautta tehdä päätöksiä omassa työssä (digitaalinen muutos kontekstina)?

- a. Oletko ollut tilanteissa, joissa olisit voinut ja osannut tehdä jonkun asian paremmin, mutta et voinut sinusta riippumattomien rajoitteiden vuoksi? Mitä rajoitteita nämä ovat olleet?
  - b. Miten kuvailisit vapautta suhteessa kontrolliin yleisesti? Oletko kohdannut tähän liittyviä vastustustilanteita?
6. Oletko kohdannut yksilötason konflikteja kuten muutosvastarintaa digitaaliseen transformaatioon liittyen? Konfliktit voivat olla pieniä tai isoja sekä virallisissa tai epävirallisissa tilanteissa.
- a. Miten kuvailisit yksilötason vastustusta koetuissa tilanteissa?
    1. Mihin aiheeseen ne ovat liittyneet?
    2. Miten vastustus on näyttäytynyt käytännössä?
    3. Miten kuvailisit sitä prosessia, miten vastustus kehkeytyy ja näyttäytyy?
    4. Millaisia ratkaisuja yksilötason konflikteihin olet havainnut?
7. Miten nyt jälkeenpäin reflektoisit menneiden vastustustilanteiden vaikutusta digitaaliseen transformaation suuntaan ja toteutukseen?
- a. Millaisia seurauksia vastustuksella on ollut?
8. Koetko, että sinun ajamaasi digitaalista muutosta vastustetaan tai muutoin haastetaan yksilötasolla?
- a. Miten käytännössä? Miksi?
9. Oletko itse vastustanut jotain asiaa liittyen digitaaliseen transformaatioon?
- a. Miten käytännössä? Miksi?

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **SEMI-STRUCTURED THEME INTERVIEWS IN ENGLISH**

**University of Oulu**

**Oulu Business School**

**International Business Management**

Pro Gradu: "Resistance to resistance in digital transformation of an incumbent company"

Interviewer: Petrus Poikkimäki

This Master's thesis studies the influence of resistance and resistance to resistance in an incumbent company's digital transformation. This study is done as a final work of master's level studies in Oulu Business School. The first part of the study covers theoretical frameworks of change resistance and digital transformation in a form of literature review. The second part of the study concentrates on an empirical study based on semi-structured theme interviews. Main themes therefore are change resistance and digital transformation. The initial interview questions are based on these themes.

#### **Terminology**

##### **1. Digital Transformation**

Digital transformation is the widest form of digital change which also includes digitization and digitalization. While digitization focuses on the conversion of analog information into digital and digitalization on the importance of individual technologies for a limited number of processes, functions or business units, digital transformation penetrates the entire organization and often includes changes in business models, value creation and social dimensions such as organizational culture and identity. Digital transformation focuses on the reorganization of the existing organization, although it may also involve the creation of new. Digital transformation is therefore 1. Technological change 2. Organizational change/Business change (e.g. business model change, business process change, change in core competence) and 3. Sociocultural change (identity, culture, interaction relationships). The best-known and most radical example is probably Netflix's story from a video rental business to a streaming service and, with that, also a technology company.

## 2. Change resistance

Resistance to change can be an activity that challenges status quo, and therefore strives for positive outcomes, a negatively preventing or destructing activity, or anything in between. Resistance to change is defined in this study as an individual-level activity that can show as discursive or non-discursive practices, which in turn can be visible or invisible. The definition of resistance to change is also influenced by its "merits", i.e. what real effects and consequences it has had. Resistance as a phenomenon is not dichotomous (either it exists or it does not exist), but resistance can manifest itself in very different ways. Very small disagreements or big conflicts can be considered as resistance. The specialization of jobs and activities (can management often even define what and how things should be done) and the evidence that multi-authored/co-constructed change is in many ways better way to lead organizations have raised interest towards resistance to resistance as a topic. In practice, resistance to resistance can show as the inability of change agents to redefine the change due to new perspectives or issues that have risen. Resistance to resistance can also show as leadership and management that does not facilitate interaction but tries to "push" the change through. These two examples are for illustration only.

### **Themes and semi-structured interview questions**

#### **Digital Transformation**

1. How would you describe digital change in this company based on your own experiences?
2. What digital transformation refers to and includes in this company in your opinion?
3. How would you describe the biggest challenges related to digital transformation?
4. How is digital change and digital transformation led in this company? In general and at an individual level.
  - a. Would you do something differently? Why?

#### **Resistance and resistance to resistance**

5. How would you describe freedom to make decisions in your own work (digital change as a context)?
  - a. Have you been in situations where you could have and knew how to do something better, but you couldn't because of limitations beyond your control? What limitations have these been?
  - b. How would you describe freedom in relation to control in general? Have you faced resistance related to this?

6. Have you experienced individual level conflicts such as resistance related to digital transformation? These conflicts can be big or small and formal or informal.
  - a. How would you describe resistance in those situations?
    1. To what they have been related to?
    2. How has the resistance showed in practice?
    3. How would you describe the process how resistance emerges and shows?
    4. What kind of individual level solutions to these conflicts have you observed?
7. Now afterwards, how would you reflect the influence of past resistant situations in DT?
  - a. What consequences has the resistance had?
8. Do you feel that digital change driven by you is resisted or otherwise challenged on an individual level?
  - a. How in practice? Why?
9. Have you yourself resisted some aspect of digital transformation?
  - a. How in practice? Why?