

Driving Change Within Local Governments In The Netherlands: A Perspective On Administrative And Political Leadership

Master's Thesis in
Global IT Management & Information Management

Author(s):

Patrick Rondeel

Supervisor(s):

Dr. Andreas Alexiou

Prof. Hannu Salmela

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Abstract

This thesis explores the impact of political and administrative leadership on the digital transformation process within local government institutions in the Netherlands, employing a qualitative research approach through three in-depth case studies in the middle region of the country. I utilized a within-case and cross-case analysis methodology supplemented by validation interviews, conducting a total of 12 semi-structured interviews with key representatives from the selected institutions.

The research uncovers the complex dynamics and tensions between political and administrative leadership and their consequential effect on digital transformation. I scrutinized critical factors such as power dynamics, role conflict, change management, leadership transition, interpersonal conflict, and stakeholder management. I found that these elements significantly influence organizational effectiveness and the resource-based view, a fundamental concept that local governments rely on for their digital transformation.

The study's findings suggest that the interaction between political and administrative leadership significantly affects the direction, speed, and effectiveness of digital transformation initiatives in local government institutions. Furthermore, it demonstrates how intra-organizational dynamics and tensions, coupled with the existing political and administrative structure, can either facilitate or hinder digital transformation, thus offering vital insights for both theory and practice.

These conclusions contribute to the growing body of literature in the fields of digital transformation, public administration, and political science, providing practical implications for local governments considering embarking or accelerating their digital transformation journeys. Furthermore, it underlines the importance of effective leadership and collaboration, enhancing the understanding of digital transformation in the context of public sector institutions and the inherent complexities therein.

1 Introduction

The digital transformation of local government institutions constitutes a vital area of contemporary study. This multifaceted process is impacted by a wide array of factors, among which political and administrative leadership play a key role. Focusing on the context of the Netherlands, this thesis explores the role and influence of leadership on the digital transformation within local government institutions.

1.1 Background of the Study

The digital era has revolutionized organizational operations across industries, with government institutions also navigating through the transformative wave (Mergel, 2012). The incorporation of digital technology into every sector of an organization induces fundamental changes in operational practices, providing enhanced value to stakeholders (Bannister & Connolly, 2014). Local government institutions, by embracing digital transformation, can improve service delivery, efficiency, and promote transparency (Mergel et al., 2019).

Nonetheless, the procedure encompassing the digital transformation is intricate and poses numerous challenges. Effective leadership is crucial for navigating these challenges and maximizing digital opportunities (Cordella & Tempini, 2015). Political and administrative leadership can shape a vision, pace, efficacy for digital transformation procedure (Bertot et al., 2016). Despite a growing digital shift, the role of leadership in the transformation process in the Netherlands' local government institutions remains relatively unexplored.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

An existing discrepancy persists within the existing scholarly discourse pertaining to the function of leadership in digital transformation in government institutions. The objective of this research is to bridge this discrepancy through investigating how political and administrative leadership impacts the digital transformation process within local government institutions in the Netherlands.

1.3 Research Question

The inquiry under investigation guiding this research endeavor is: “How do political and administrative leadership impact the digital transformation process within local government institutions in the Netherlands?”

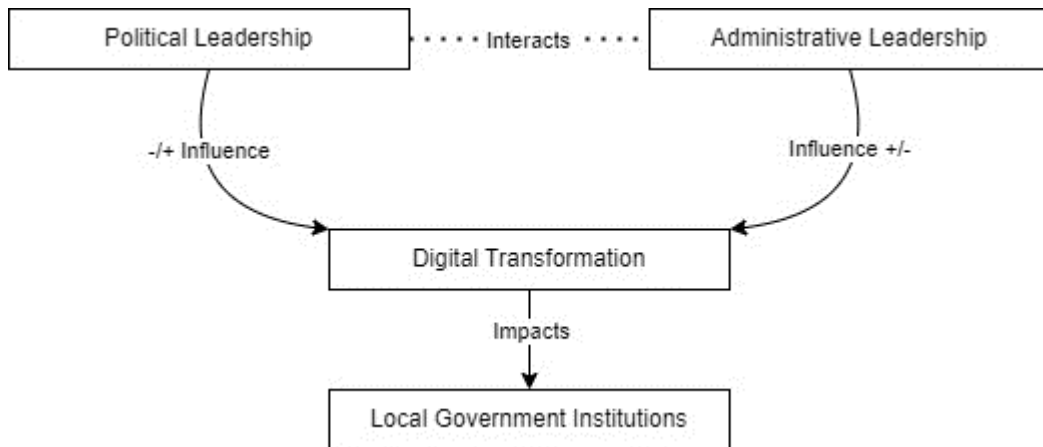


Figure 1: Research Model

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research endeavor augments a better comprehension regarding the role of leadership in the digital transformation procedure within local government institutions. The findings could inform policy and practice in the Netherlands and potentially other countries with similar governance structures.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 furnishes a review of the pertinent literature related to digital transformation and leadership. Subsequently, Chapter 3 delineates the employed research methodology. Chapter 4 brings forth the discoveries ascertained from the study. Chapter 5 offers a discourse on these findings, juxtaposing them with the research inquiry and the pre-existing scholarly literature. To conclude, Chapter 6 finalizes the thesis, concurrently proposing suggestions for prospective scholarly investigations.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Digital Transformation

The subject matter pertaining to digital transformation (DT), as consistently underscored in scholarly research, has garnered substantial attention over the previous half-decade (Hanelt et al., 2020). The increasing significance of DT, mirrored in the ever-evolving and dynamic global scenario, has been the impetus for this elevated focus (Gong & Ribiere, 2021). Despite this, there appears to be a dearth of a universally accepted interpretation of the term DT. It is regularly employed inconsistently and can be conflated with similar yet distinct concepts. Furthermore, it has been posited that the extant literature pertaining to DT does not provide a cohesive and universally acknowledged definition, as posited by (Warner & Wäger, 2019; Hanelt et al., 2020; Gong & Ribiere, 2021; Wessel et al., 2021). Consequently, within this subsection, an examination of the available literature is undertaken to derive an apt definition of DT to be utilized in this dissertation, thereby ensuring a common understanding of the term's encompassing elements.

2.1.1 Concepts

Prior to exploring the formal aspects in a comprehensive manner articulation Pertaining to the realm of Digital Transformation (DT), the scenario unfolds as such that it is indispensable to delineate the distinction amidst the dichotomy cognate theoretical constructs, namely the processes of digitalization and digitization, which are occasionally utilized interchangeably and inaccurately. Digitization is characterized as the technical procedure of transmuting analog signals into a digital configuration, thereby making them suitable for processing by computer systems (Tilson et al., 2010; Mergel et al., 2019). Subsequently, this transition facilitates greater efficiency in the discovery, processing, and management of data (Gong & Ribiere, 2021).

In contrast, digitalization transcends the mere conversion of information into digital bits. It pertains to the application of digital technologies within societal and institutional frameworks, thereby rendering it manifests as a sociotechnical procedure (Tilson et al., 2010; Legner et al., 2017). The overarching objective of digitalization is to augment or supplant business procedures to stimulate financial turnover generation (Gong & Ribiere, 2021).

The examination of the digitization process reveals which it would be erroneous to contend that an entire business can be digitized, as such a proposition would imply the unlikely conversion of all personnel into digital bits. Consequently, the terms are misused when used interchangeably in this context. Instead of digitization, a business undergoes digitalization. Each of these three concepts embodies a process of change, however, the scope of change is least in the case of digitization (Schallmo & Williams, 2018). Consequently, DT is most closely associated with the digitization process. The distinct differentiation, as delineated as per the findings of Gong and Ribiere (2021), lies in the fact that digitalization primarily concentrates on operational-level work, whereas DT underscores strategic tier outcomes. Within this perspective, they classify both digitization and digitalization as non-essential modifications, juxtaposed with Digital Transformation (DT), which they categorize as a process inducing fundamental alteration.

2.1.2 Characteristics

In scrutinizing the characteristic of Digital Transformation (DT) as a fundamental process of change, it is of paramount importance to underscore that this process is continual. (Munns, n.d.-b) indicate a tendency among firms to perceive DT as a discrete initiative. Furthermore, these organizations often respond to opportunities and threats spawned by emergent digital technologies (DTechs) in a sporadic, ad-hoc fashion. Contrary to this perspective, the literature proposes that DT should be conceptualized as an unending process, also referred to as sustained DT (Munns, n.d.-b; Warner & Wäger, 2019). According to Hanelt et al. (2020) As novel DTechs incessantly instigate disruptions in a firm's external environment, improvisational judgement rarely yield a requisite adjustment. The novel paradigm shifts towards constant adaptation, facilitated by the innovative application of DTechs (Vial, 2019). Coupled with prevalent and emerging assets and competencies, digital transformation possesses the potential to effectuate significant enhancements within a firm or local government institute (Gong & Ribiere, 2021).

In addition to that specifically, such firm or local government institute enhancement deny solely pertain to augmenting operational efficiency, but extends to facilitating profound business improvements (Horlacher & Hess, 2016). According to Fitzgerald et al. (2014) this encompasses the enhancement of customer experience and the enablement of

innovative business paradigms. Warner and Wäger (2019) propose an evolution in an organization's paradigm could result among tripartite spectrum encompassing that realm at digital transformation. Such evolution towards a digital business paradigm insinuates a shift in collaborative modalities; comprehensive modifications in collaboration constitute the second dimension. Consequently, a transformed collaborative approach engenders profound alterations in the organization's cultural ethos, representing the tertiary dimension of digital transformation. This accords in alignment with the dimensions delineated in the Framework for Digital Transformation expounded by multiple scholars like Hess et al. (2020). The only distinction in the DTF is the inclusion of the fiscal component as the quaternary dimension. Furthermore, within the Framework for Digital Transformation, dimensions of business paradigm evolution is termed as alterations in value creation. Considering that a business paradigm delineates the design or structure of value generation (Teece, 2010), these are essentially considered synonymous (Bharadwaj et al., 2013).

Despite all potential for substantial firm enhancement through the exploitation of DTechs (Horlacher & Hess, 2016), it is essential to recognize that Digital Transformation cannot be fundamentally concerning IT, instead it should rather be strategic considerations (Rogers, 2016). While Digital Transformation Technologies afford organizations possessing opportunities (or potential hazards), the guidance for Digital Transformation ought not to be rooted in these technological advancements. Instead, the strategic orientation of the firm should steer its DT (Tabrizi et al., 2019).

2.1.3 Official delineation

The officially established definitions of Digital Transformation (DT) in the literature exhibit slight variations and span differing degrees of inclusivity. For example, Bughin et al. (2019) succinct definitions constitute provided, characterise Digital Transformation for a endeavor that empower prevalent firm paradigms through the integration of advanced technologies, paralleled by some researchers that depict Digital Transformation as an employment that could novel new innovations and facilitate significant enhancements in business operations (Fitzgerald et al., 2014). Interestingly, some studies, such as those by Kane et al. (2017) coupled with Tabrizi et al. (2019), discuss DT without explicitly defining it.

Comprehensive definitions of DT are more prevalent in academic journal articles. Notably, A scholar that scrutinized multiple high standard DT concepts, aimed to contribute to the development of a unified Digital Transformation definition (Gong & Ribiere, 2021). Post review, they proposed the delineation of Digital Transformation as a foundational alteration process, facilitated the new utilization, complemented with the use of pivotal resources besides competencies, with the objective of drastically enhancing a object, in addition to that also redefining how to create an benefit that could impact everyone involved. This concept encompasses foundational, digital technologies significantly enhance value propositions, which align with the previously discussed traits of DT. Interestingly, Hanelt et al. (2020) frame Digital Transformation as an organizational metamorphosis rather than a foundational alteration procedure. Vial (2019), however, emphasizes Digital Technologies in a more explicit manner in his definition, as do Warner and Wäger (2019) who, after considering multiple definitions, eventually define DT in their paper, incorporating a list of DTechs.

Furthermore, Vial (2019) asserts that the current literature is yet to present a comprehensive understanding of DT's nature and components. Based on his extensive examination of 282 works, he develops a framework for DT, illustrating its constituent elements. His inductive approach yields a detailed understanding of DT, identifying eight core components (Vial, 2019). The pivotal element involves the utilization of Digital Technologies, most relevantly according to Hanelt et al. (2020) and Vial (2019) are as follows, first social media platforms and mobile technologies. Secondly is data analytics for analysing all the data adding to that cloud infrastructure has a lot of potential lastly they think that internet of things has a lot of potential collectively referred to as SMACIT. These technologies instigate perturbations, necessitating strategic reactions to leverage new DTechs, facilitating alterations in paths of value creation. Nevertheless, changes in these paths often result in structural modifications, such as changes in organizational culture and potential organizational barriers. The anticipated outcome of this process is improved organizational performance, although negative impacts may also ensue.

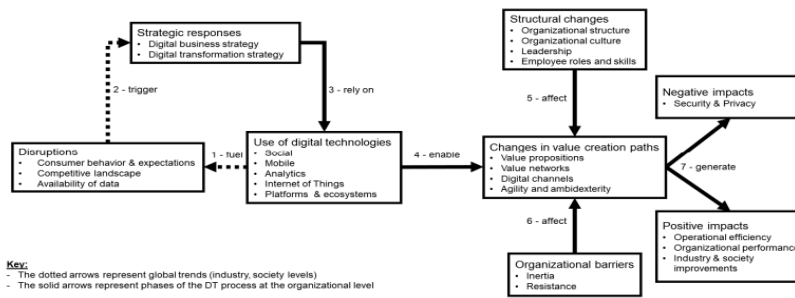


Figure 2: DT Process (Vial, 2019)

Notably, even with strategic responses to DTechs according to the DT framework, a firm may not achieve the desired results. The evolving nature of DT's definition reflects an increasing convergence in scholarly views. However, the absence of the term 'continuous' in these definitions is noteworthy. While the literature underscores the continuous, rather than discrete nature of DT. A critical part is often omitted in the definitions. For the validity of this thesis, Gong and Ribiere's (2021) definition is adopted, conceiving Digital Transformation is characterized as: A foundational alteration process, facilitated by the inventive utilization of digital technologies. This transformation is allied with the strategic employment of vital resources and competencies, with an aim to drastically enhance a object that reinvent the benefit for the people involved.

The rationale for selecting this definition is threefold. Firstly, the scholars critically scrutinized 134 reputable definitions of Digital Transformation in order to formulate the aforementioned comprehensive definition. Secondly, the currency of the definition (2021) acknowledges the rapidly changing landscape of DTechs and their impact on DT, making older definitions potentially obsolete. Lastly, Gong and Ribiere (2021) highlight that important materials and utilities in their definition, encompassing human, financial, and knowledge resources.

2.1.4 Change from Information Technology using organizations

Following the articulation of Digital Transformation (DT), this subsection expounds on the distinctions among Digital Transformation and Information Technology using organisational transformation. Given that DT ultimately brings about organisational improvement through the use of Digital Technologies (DTechs), an overlap between the two concepts is evident. Notably, literature on IT-enabled organisational transformation is occasionally employed to elucidate the characteristics of DT (Vial, 2019). However, it remains crucial to distinguish between the two constructs to prevent misinterpretation.

At its core, DT is distinguished by its more radical outcomes as opposed to the incremental changes typical of IT-enabled organisational transformation. Moreover, DT appears to be associated with organisational change in a more intricate manner, necessitating unique literary comparison (Hanelt et al., 2020). Digital Transformation is further perceived as a progression of the notion of Information Technology (IT)-enabled transformation (Vial, 2019). A study conducted by Wessel et al. (2021) amalgamated scholarly work from a variety of disciplines to elucidate the demarcation between the two constructs, identifying aforementioned pair of distinguishing attributes.

Firstly, according to Warner and Wager (2019) DT leads often to a reinvention that redesigns the business paradigms, indicating a transformation in the *modus operandi* through which an organization offers value to its customers, consequent to Digital Transformation (Teece, 2010; Vial, 2019). This aligns with the views proposed by Wessel et al. (2021) and the discussions held previously. In contrast, IT-enabled organisational transformation does not necessitate such changes. More precisely, IT-enabled organisational transformation primarily exploits DTechs to support the existing value proposition, according to Wessel et al. (2021).

Secondly, DT catalyses profound changes, thus establishing an improved organisational object. If anything, Information Technology capable organisational improvements tends to fortify mostly existing organisational persona (Wessel et al., 2021). The aforementioned distinguishing features underscore the fact that Digital Transformation involves radical and comprehensive change, whereas IT-enabled organisational transformation mainly incorporates more incremental changes of a limited scale

2.1.5 Difference from Business Process Reengineering

Business Process Reengineering (BPR) is another research domain that bears close resemblance to Digital Transformation (DT). Intriguingly, BPR is characterized as a profound alteration in the methodology an organization employs to carry out its business functions (Besson & Rowe, 2012). This characterization implies a focus on radical change, a central theme in DT as well, suggesting a profound correlation between the two concepts. Indeed, BPR seeks to automate rule-based procedures using technology (Schallmo & Williams, 2018), a goal shared by DT.

Despite these similarities, key distinctions between DT and BPR exist, particularly in their respective approaches. BPR emphasizes the automation of processes through technology, whereas DT adopts a more data-centric approach, potentially yielding greater knowledge within an organization. Such understanding, consequently, promotes the revitalization that firm frameworks and capabilities can have. However, critical elements for DT is the manner in which employees manage and benefits that lead of potential new capabilities accrued (Schallmo & Williams, 2018).

This process that firm frameworks besides operational renewal echoes Warner and Wäger's (2019) characterization of Digital Transformation. Interestingly, while Warner and Wäger (2019) do not overtly recognize the data-centric approach inherent in Digital Transformation, Schallmo and Williams (2018) attribute this methodology as the primary driver of business model and operational renewal. Moreover, while DT seeks to overhaul processes and decisions, BPR is largely focused on improving or "rethinking" existing processes (Schallmo & Williams, 2018), a characteristic shared by IT-enabled organizational transformation.

Notwithstanding, BPR is typically perceived as a relatively oversimplified approach in comparison to Information Technology enabled organizational transformation. According to Baiyere et al. (2020) The differentiation becomes clear at the echelon at which the transformation transpires. Business Process Reengineering is primarily focused on reevaluating processes at a subordinate level, in contrast to Information Technology enabled organizational transformation, involves alterations at a superior, organizational echelon, albeit through gradual alterations (Schallmo & Williams, 2018). That transformations at the organizations echelon frequently denoted as in-depth and unexplored structures alterations. Transformation at the organizational level is only applicable when a profound architecture for the organization is modified (Besson & Rowe, 2012), a criterion that BPR does not meet.

2.1.6 Resource-based view

According to Ambrosini and Bowman (2009) securing an potential edge could be an initial phase; however, ephemeral, especially in highly competitive environments. To maintain this potential edge it needs additional efforts. A theoretical approach that expands upon sustained competitive advantage is the resource-based view (RBV), which has gained substantial recognition (Rose et al., 2010) since Barney's (1991) establishment

of this perspective. Barney (1991) proposed that an organization attains sustained competitive edge when it implements a strategy that creates value, which isn't concurrently executed by any competitor and cannot be replicated to yield similar benefits. In comparing this definition to that of competitive advantage the non-duplicability for generating an edge renders competitive advantage manageable (Rose et al., 2010). Therefore, managing pertains separate from a specific timeframe or environmental preservation, but to the feasibility of replication. According to Nadarajah and Kadir (2014) and (Andersén et al. (2015) It is only when CA persists, despite competitors' failed attempts to emulate a profit-generating model, that would be regarded as. That attribute distinguishes between both notions. Examining a profit-generating model further reveals a criticality from organizational capabilities, as these are what enable the achievement of the strategy. Although the precise interpretation of a firm resource has been debated (Wade & Hulland, 2004), Daft (1983) characterized it as the characteristics, competencies, and understanding that enable devising and executing strategies leading to greater success. But, besides that organizational assets add meaning by a profit-generating model. According to Nevo and Wade (2010) An asset can only be contributive by being satisfies multiple conditions. Firstly, an asset should add value, implying that helps the organization by formulating an successful model. Secondly, it must be scarce or unique when compared to competitors. Thirdly, it must be non-replicable, suggesting a high degree of challenge in duplication. Fourthly, it cannot be exchangeable or fungible. An asset could have multiple possibilities of generating Competitive Advantage but only when the initial two requirements are met. According to Barney (1991) for Sustainability, An asset must additionally satisfy the final two conditions. The conditions function as empirical measures of the degree of to what extend an asset is not moveable and diverse. Heterogeneity in organisational resources indicates that assets are not concurrently held or produced by rivals. According to Mata et al. (1995), the fact that something is not moveable refers to a lack of financial resources competitors encounter in their attempts of creating, buying, or using an asset. The theoretical framework by Barney (1991), detailing most components from the Sustainable Competitive Advantages, are encapsulated within the framework depicted in Figure 3. That positions organizational assets in mechanisms that an organisation could generate Sustainable Competitive Advantage with, hence titling the theory as RBV.

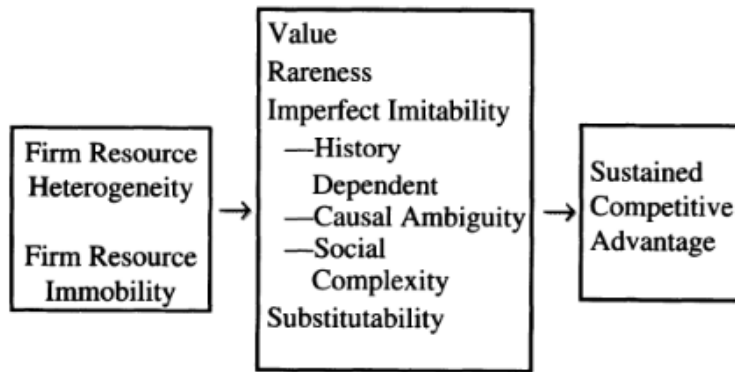


Figure 3: RBV (Barney, 1991)

In spite of its maturation into an robust theory, the RBV possesses been critiqued by multiple scholars because it could be to fixed in representation. According to Nevo and Wade (2011) rather than acknowledging that resources are ensconced within a multitude of external environmental factors, the RBV significantly overlooks this dynamic interplay. Moreover, the Resource Based View inadequately explore most foundational interactions detailing on an organization ability to derive advantages from vital resources that augment efficacy and efficiency (Wade & Hulland, 2004). Owing to its minimal emphasis on aspects that an organisation's outsides world could be, the academic realm has introduced the concept of dynamic capabilities to address the shortcomings inherent within the RBV.

2.2 Digital Transformation in Local Government

2.2.1 The Concept of Digital Transformation in Local Government

Digital transformation generally alludes to the incorporation and incorporation of digital technologies into every facet of an entity, fundamentally altering how it operates and delivers value to its stakeholders (Bharadwaj et al., 2013). In the context of local government, digital transformation is a multifaceted process that affects public administration, citizen services, and governance systems (Anthopoulos, 2015).

The importance of digital transformation in local government cannot be understated. It enables governments to deliver enhanced and more efficient services to the populace, improve transparency, encourage citizen participation, and optimize internal processes (Meijer & Bolívar, 2015). The shift to digital processes also aligns with the global trend towards urbanization, with information and communication technologies (ICTs) serving as crucial tools for managing the complexities of modern cities (Kitchin, 2013).

2.2.2 Opportunities and Challenges

The digitization of public services comes with a myriad of opportunities. Local governments can leverage technology to improve efficiency, responsiveness, and transparency (Bannister & Connolly, 2015). Technologies such as mobile apps and online portals provide citizens with better access to public services, while data analytics allows governments to make evidence-based decisions (Gil-Garcia et al., 2014).

However, these opportunities come with challenges. The transition to digital processes requires significant investment in infrastructure, training, and systems integration. Cybersecurity is also a concern, as governments must protect sensitive data and ensure the integrity of digital systems (Anthopoulos, 2015). Further, governments must address the digital divide, ensuring that all citizens, regardless of socioeconomic status, have access to digital services (Koehler, 2004).

Moreover, there are cultural and organizational hurdles to digital transformation. Public administration traditions and bureaucratic structures may resist change, making it difficult to implement digital initiatives (Dunleavy et al., 2007). Lastly, the legal and regulatory framework needs to keep pace with technological advancements to avoid policy vacuum (Bertot et al., 2010).

2.2.3 Digital Transformation in the Netherlands

The government of the Netherlands has been progressive in the digital transformation of its local administrations. The Netherlands has implemented various digital services, such as DigiD, a system providing citizens with digital identification for access to government services. The Dutch have embraced open data initiatives, with cities like Amsterdam leading in data-driven decision making.

However, the Netherlands also faces unique challenges. One of these is the balance between privacy and openness, particularly given the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of the European Union. Also, the extensive use of public-private partnerships in Dutch digital initiatives necessitates careful management to ensure that public interest is preserved.

2.3 Leadership and Digital Transformation

2.3.1 The Influence of Leadership in the Context of Digital Transformation

Leadership plays a pivotal role in the successful implementation of digital transformation. As technology permeates all aspects of operations, a strong and committed leadership is necessary to guide the organization towards digital maturity (Hess et al., 2020).

The digitization process is a complex endeavor that requires a clear vision and strategy. Leaders need to steer the organization towards that vision, while simultaneously managing the intricacies of digital innovation (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2015). They are tasked with creating a culture that fosters innovation and embracing disruptive technologies, which are essential for the digital transformation journey (Vial, 2019).

Research has shown that successful digital transformation in both public and private sectors hinges on effective leadership. In the private sector, firms with effective leadership are more likely to seize the opportunities of digitalization, becoming more competitive and innovative (Hess et al., 2020). Similarly, in the public sector, leaders are instrumental in driving the digitization of services and enhancing the caliber of public service delivery (Mergel et al., 2019).

2.3.2 Leadership Impact on Digital Transformation Aspects

Leadership impacts various facets of digital transformation, such as the development of digital strategy, the management of change, and the realization of digital transformation outcomes.

Digital Strategy Development: The development of a digital strategy requires leaders who understand the organization's current capabilities and future potential (Kane, 2015). These leaders should be reliable to create a plan that aligns with the broader organizational goals. They need to navigate the complex landscape of digital technologies and prioritize initiatives that offer the most value to the organization (Matt et al., 2015).

Management of Change: Digital transformation is inherently a change process, and managing this change is one of the most challenging tasks for leaders. They must overcome resistance to change, foster a culture of learning and adaptability, and ensure that employees have the necessary skills to work in a digital environment (O'Flynn,

2007). The ability to manage change effectively has been found to be a key determinant of digital transformation success.

Realization of Digital Transformation Outcomes: The ultimate aim of digital transformation is to improve the organization's performance and create value. Leaders play a critical role in realizing these outcomes by driving the adoption of digital technologies, monitoring progress, and making necessary adjustments along the way (Mithas et al., 2013).

2.4 Political Leadership in Local Government

2.4.1 Political Leadership in Local Government

Political leadership in local government refers to the roles and responsibilities of elected officials, including mayors, councilors, and others, in guiding the governance of a local area. These leaders have the task of making decisions that shape the direction of local policy, resource allocation, and service provision. Their roles typically involve the development of strategic vision, the building of community and stakeholder consensus, and the representation of citizen interests (Crosby & Bryson, 2010).

The literature on public administration and political science has identified different styles of political leadership in local government, including transformative, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership (Riggio & Bass, 2006). The effectiveness of these styles can depend on a range of elements, inclusive of the local political context, the degree of political stability, the characteristics of the local community, and the nature of the challenges facing the area.

2.4.2 Digital Transformation within the Context of Local Government

Digital Transformation within the context of local government is a strategic process that entails significant changes in service delivery, resource allocation, and administrative processes. As such, political leadership assumes a crucial role in determining the trajectory and velocity of digital transformation.

Political leaders can influence digital transformation in several ways. Firstly, they can help shape the digital strategy and vision for the local government. This involves

identifying the objectives of digital transformation, the key initiatives needed, and the resources required (Anthopoulos, 2015).

Secondly, political leaders can mobilize support for digital transformation among stakeholders, including local government employees, citizens, and other actors. This involves advocating for the benefits of digital transformation, overcoming resistance to change, and fostering a culture that supports digital innovation (Bryson et al., 2014).

Thirdly, political leaders can help manage the implementation of digital transformation. This can involve oversight of projects, managing risks, resolving conflicts, and ensuring that the transformation delivers the expected benefits (Mergel, 2019).

The impact of political leadership on digital transformation in local government has been the subject of several empirical studies. For instance, Reddick and Turner (2012) found that political leadership was a critical factor in successful e-government implementation in US cities. Similarly, Criado et al. (2013) found that political commitment was a key enabler of digital transformation in local governments in Spain.

2.5 Administrative Leadership in Local Government

2.5.1 Administrative Leadership in Local Government

Administrative leadership in local government refers to the function and responsibilities of public administrators, such as city managers, department heads, and other officials, in steering the operations and services of a local government (Tummers & Knies, 2015). Unlike political leaders, administrative leaders are usually career professionals who are responsible for the day-to-day management of the local government, including budgeting, personnel management, and service delivery.

Administrative leaders also play a key role in translating political decisions into operational policies and in advising political leaders on technical and administrative matters (Tummers & Knies, 2015). They are often tasked with managing complex networks of stakeholders, balancing competing demands, and ensuring the accountability and efficiency of local government operations (Lynn, 2006).

The literature on public administration and organizational behavior has identified different styles of administrative leadership, including transactional, transformational,

and servant leadership, each with their strengths and limitations depending on the specific organizational and environmental context (Bass & Bass, 2008).

2.5.2 Digital Transformation in Local Government

Administrative leadership can significantly influence the course and outcomes of digital transformation in local government. They are often the ones who operationalize the digital strategy, manage digital projects, and oversee the utilization of digital technologies in their respective departments or units.

Administrative leaders can shape digital transformation in several ways. Firstly, they can champion the adoption of digital technologies, and drive change by promoting the benefits of digital transformation among employees and other stakeholders (Bannister & Connolly, 2015).

Secondly, administrative leaders can shape the organizational structures and processes that support digital transformation. This could involve creating new roles or teams to manage digital initiatives, changing workflows to incorporate digital tools, or introducing new procedures to ensure the safeguarding and confidentiality of digital data.

Thirdly, administrative leaders can contribute to the development of a digital culture within the local government. This entails encouraging open communication, promoting learning and innovation, and fostering an environment where employees feel comfortable using digital technologies (Mergel, 2019).

Empirical studies have shown the impact of administrative leadership on digital transformation in local government. For example, Groeneveld (2014) found that transformational leadership was associated with more positive attitudes towards digital transformation among local government employees. Similarly, Linders (2012) found that administrative leaders played a crucial role in promoting the use of social media in local government.

2.6 Interaction between Political and Administrative Leadership

2.6.1 Interaction Between Political and Administrative Leadership

In the context of local government, political and administrative leadership often interact and influence each other in significant ways. Political leaders, such as mayors or council

members, are typically responsible for setting strategic priorities, making policy decisions, and representing the interests of citizens (Healey et al., 2017). Administrative leaders, such as city managers or department heads, conversely, are primarily responsible for the quotidian operation of local government, including the implementation of policies, management of resources, and delivery of public services.

The literature indicates that successful local governance often hinges on the effective interaction between political and administrative leaders. For instance, political leaders depend on the expertise and advice of administrative leaders to make informed policy decisions, while administrative leaders rely on the support and guidance of political leaders to implement these policies effectively (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003).

The interaction between political and administrative leaders is also shaped by various factors, such as the formal institutional arrangements, the local political culture, and the personal relationships between individual leaders (Healey et al., 2017). These interactions can have a profound impact on the performance of local government and its ability to respond to various challenges, including the task of digital transformation.

Joensuu and Niiranen (2016) ground their study in Archer's theoretical framework on structure and agency. They explore interaction patterns among political leaders and public administrators in local government, identifying three distinct patterns: trustful, middle-of-the-road, and critical. These patterns, derived from factors such as trust and information process, highlight the importance of personal qualities in decision-making interactions. The authors also note the influence of an administrator's institutional position on their perception of decision-making processes. Their findings, visually represented in Figure 4, suggest that decision-making in local government is influenced not only by political views but also by these interaction patterns. They propose that fostering good personal relations can enhance interaction and information exchange, thereby influencing decision-making processes.

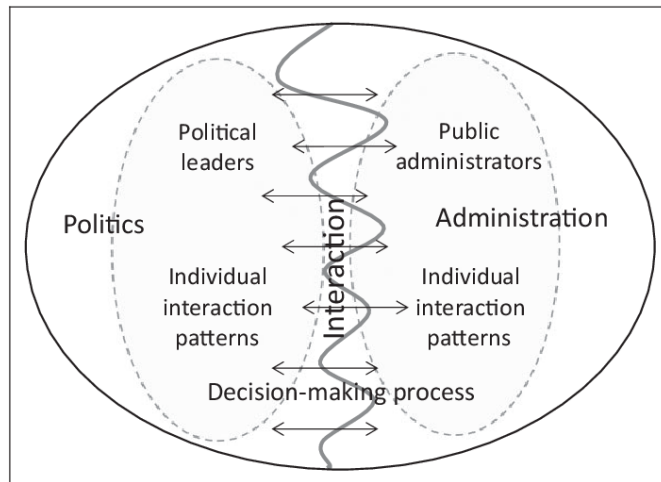


Figure 4: Interplay of structure and agency in local government (Joensuu & Niiranen, 2016)

2.6.2 Interaction Between Digital Transformation

Digital transformation in local government involves significant changes in policy, operations, and culture, all of which require the engagement and collaboration of both political and administrative leaders. Political leaders play a crucial role in articulating a vision for digital transformation, mobilizing support among stakeholders, and ensuring that the transformation aligns with the broader strategic goals of the local government. Administrative leaders, meanwhile, are typically responsible for operationalizing this vision, managing the implementation of digital initiatives, and fostering an organizational culture that supports digital innovation (Bannister & Connolly, 2015).

The interaction between political and administrative leadership can significantly influence the success of digital transformation. For example, a strong alignment between the political and administrative leaders' visions of digital transformation can help generate momentum and overcome resistance to change. Conversely, a lack of collaboration or disagreements between these leaders can lead to confusion, delays, or even failure of digital initiatives (Mergel, 2019).

Empirical studies have provided some insights into how political and administrative leadership interact within the framework of digital transformation. For example, Meijer (2015) discovered that effective coordination between political and administrative leaders was crucial for the successful implementation of smart city initiatives in the Netherlands. Similarly, Axelsson et al. (2010) found that the engagement of both political and administrative leaders was a key success factor in the digital transformation of Swedish municipalities.

3 Method of research

Kuipers et al. (2013), among other sources, centers their attention explicitly on the aspect of leading change within the context of the public sector. It seems that the development and validation of theories specific to the public sector, concerning the influence of leadership in the execution of organizational change, have been somewhat lacking. Particularly, the interaction between administrative leadership and more externally-oriented political leadership requires further examination. The research methodology employed in this thesis aims to elucidate the effects of political and administrative leadership on the digital transformation processes of local government institutions in the Netherlands.

In this context, the first Figure shows empirically the realm for the research. The foundational papers was utilized to observe that the relationship between these two forms of leadership requires more extensive investigation, especially regarding their potential impact on digital transformation. Hence, a deductive methodology was employed to structure this thesis. The subsequent aim was to investigate the contributions of political and administrative leadership to the digital transformation processes within local government institutions in the Netherlands. Therefore, an inductive approach was utilized in the empirical section of this thesis. Additionally, an effort was made to draw connections between the recently examined leadership forms and prior studies. This strategy allowed the inductive empirical section to be augmented by a deductive approach, linking the new leadership findings to pre-existing literature. In essence, the combined application of inductive and deductive methods throughout the thesis enriched the understanding of the concepts under investigation. Initially, the theory of leadership and digital transformation was already established and used as a theoretical lens. The researcher's openness facilitated the integration of the findings with previous research and the discovery of novel concepts.

The research methodology delineates how answers to the research question are sought. Firstly, the research design elucidates the qualitative approach, the reasons behind the preference for a multiple case study the methodology, as well as the case boundaries, are discussed in the first section. Additionally, that entity for examination will be elaborated upon. Besides that following part delves deeper into information gathering procedure that offers depictions for all case studies in addition to the interviewees. Thirdly

concluding the apart in the method explores techniques employed for the information investigation. Lastly the section underscores the two categories of interviews conducted, along with the transcription, encoding procedure, case lastly cross-case analyses. Rationales will be furnished by all decisions chosen in relation to the investigation method.

3.1 Research design

3.1.1 Qualitative approach

The research design offers a structured plan for data gathering and examination that facilitates the resolution of the research question, as articulated by Maxwell (2013). The design implemented in this thesis adheres to a qualitative approach. Given the intent of the thesis to investigate the influence of political and administrative leadership on the digital transformation process within local government institutions in the Netherlands, thereby fostering the evolution of leadership theory, a qualitative approach, which is inherently exploratory, proved to be a suitable fit. In essence, it uncovers underlying phenomena, produces fresh insights, and stimulates ideas for subsequent research (Robson, 2011). Within the context of this thesis, 'underlying phenomena' and 'fresh insights' pertain to the interactions between political and administrative leadership. Furthermore, the exploration of these novel interactions instigated the development of ideas for future research. Initially, the effect of leadership on digital transformation was not clearly understood. Hence, employing quantitative methods, such as surveys, would not have yielded the data necessary to address the research question. Quantitative methods often impose limitations on the acquisition of fresh perspectives that enhance pre-existing research. According to Kaplan and Maxwell (2006), a qualitative research approach should be better. Furthermore, there are advantages inherent to this kind of data: A salient characteristic that meticulously gathered interview information is their emphasis transpiring, commonplace occurrences within their natural contexts, thereby providing a robust understanding of the realities of 'everyday life' (Miles et al., 2018). With a focus on individuals' lived experiences, qualitative data are intrinsically equipped to uncover the interpretations individuals assign to the occurrences, procedures, and building blocks that constitute to experience, to link the interpretations and broader milieu in which they exist. An additional attribute of qualitative data is their depth and holistic nature, which

holds significant potential for elucidating the inherent complexity of the phenomena under study.

Qualitative data is characteristically adept at capturing an individual's experiences, a trait that rendered this form of data particularly suitable for this thesis. Leadership is inherently manifested in individual actions, hence understanding their perspectives, experiences, and motivations for their conduct was essential in completing this thesis. Qualitative approaches provide myriad possibilities, including but not limited to watching, insight teams, and various sorts of cross-examine. According to Brett and Wheeler (2021) interviews become the method of choice when the intent is to comprehend how an individual has experienced or engaged in an activity. Thus, specific discussions yielded a lot of useful information. Apart from experiential insights, the interviews were also designed to glean information about the participants' emotions, thoughts, recollections, interpretations, and knowledge. Brett and Wheeler (2021) have detailed the contexts in which these comprehensive discussions prove beneficial: Should the objective be to comprehend how individuals perceive their world and their existence, engaging in dialogue presents a viable approach. Conversation is a fundamental mechanism of human interaction. Humans communicate with one another; they interact, pose queries, and provide responses. It is through these conversational exchanges that we gain insights into others' experiences, emotions, attitudes, and their lived environment. In the context of an interview, the researcher solicits and attentively listens to the narratives individuals share related to the work they do.

Additionally, the prevalence of the in-depth interview as a qualitative research method, owing to its ability to yield valuable and complex information (Brett & Wheeler, 2021). This approach permits the interviewer a record profound particulars, which seem essential in elucidating the effects of leadership with great precision. In its quest for distinction from other studies, this thesis endeavoured to provide detailed, rather than abstract, insights into the role of leadership in digital transformation. It is recognized that in-depth interviews may elicit inaccurate information from participants. As a preventive measure, the interviews were carefully crafted with a commitment to precision. Moreover, by interviewing three participants for each case study, the spectrum of perspectives within a single case was broadened, thereby mitigating potential inaccuracies. Interviewer and interviewee bias were conscientiously avoided to ensure higher research validity (Brett & Wheeler, 2021). Measures were taken to avoid interviewer bias, including the careful

formulation of unbiased questions and the objective framing of inquiries. Furthermore, every discussion was documented in addition to meticulously converted into written form to avert discernment. Given that post-discussion analysis depends on the interviewer's recollection, transcribing verbatim helps ensure no valuable information is overlooked due to momentary distractions during the interview. Interviewee bias was likewise mitigated. The interviews were initiated with an introduction, some general remarks, and permission-seeking statements to establish a comfortable and non-authoritative atmosphere. For instance, it was reiterated at each interview that all responses were valid, thereby reducing any anxiety about insufficient knowledge. The thesis employed a semi-structured interview approach, allowing flexibility in response to participants' answers and deviation from the prepared questions to garner deeper insights. While there was a general direction concerning the data to be collated, by a structured design provided valuable insight in managerial behaviours and performances. Preliminary questions, typically starting with 'how' and 'why', were used to obtain broad information about the local government institute and the participant (Myers, 2019). All interviews, inclusive of the validation interviews are in Dutch, allowing participants to express themselves most effectively. Whenever possible, face-to-face meetings were preferred, allowing the capture of nonverbal communication cues which add another dimension to data interpretation. However, due to accessibility constraints, some interviews were conducted online using Zoom or MS Teams. For all interviews, consent was sought for recording and subsequent data processing. Although observations and focus groups are other common qualitative methods, in-depth interviews were deemed the most effective given the complex nature of the topic and limited resources. The research intended to correlate different leadership styles with the digital transformation process, necessitating the understanding of the reasons behind certain behaviours. Because of that, an in-depth approach emerged as an viable method under the given limitations (Brett & Wheeler, 2021).

3.1.2 Multi-case study

The dissertation embraced an case-study architecture from Myers (2019), a method commonly employed in business research to derive empirical evidence from one or more instances in order to understand an instance within the environment. This kind of methodology should be typically favored if inquiries are exploratory and are central to the investigation, particularly when the researcher is examining a contemporary

phenomenon within a real-world context (Yin, 2017). Given that such inquiries were essential to explore the contemporary concepts of 'political and administrative leadership' within their real-world environment, a semi-structured interview surfaced as one good approach. Specifically, when the dissertation utilized a design comprising more local government institutes as an alternative to a single case study design

The utilization of multi-cases offers several advantages over single case studies, such as yielding unbiased outcomes, providing information concerning moments instead of interpretations of them (Langley & Abdallah, 2011), facilitating broader exploration of research questions, and delivering more convincing theoretical insights, given that they are based on multiple case contexts. Consequently according to Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007), the findings have greater generalizability. Furthermore, multi-design approach allows a scholar in conducting with in-case but also cross-case analyses, thereby revealing contrasts and similarities and averting hasty conclusions (Yin, 2017).

A single object approach could offer a more in depth understanding as the investigation can delve thoroughly into one instance (Baxter & Jack, 2015). However, in the context of this thesis, the exploration of the influence of political and administrative leadership necessitated the use of multiple cases. Most local government institutes do not have several managers capable of influencing the leadership of the institute, therefore, examining several cases enabled the selection of managers that were more suitable for the research. According to Baxter and Jack (2015) one potential limitation of multiple case studies is the resource cost, which might result in reduced observation duration each instance. Because of that, a middle ground is decided that could capitalize on advantages that multi instanced approach have averting very specific analysis. A trio of instances was chosen, and three semi-structured discourses conducted for each instance

3.1.3 Boundaries of the cases

Each instance was guided by a few main criteria. Firstly, the case had to focus on leadership and digital transformation. Prior to contacting the local government institutes, all readily available information was scrutinized to gauge how well each institute aligned with the case requirements—for instance, the three selected government institutes were similar in terms of regional population size. Additionally, during the interviews, specific concepts were validated through a series of questions. The definition of digital transformation as adopted by this thesis was utilized to confirm whether the institutes

were genuinely engaged in digital transformation activities. This was discerned through the responses to questions such as 'What does digital transformation mean for your local government institute?', wherein the emphasis was on identifying changes or tensions between political and administrative leadership, such as alterations in internal collaboration or processes. All participants acknowledged that both leadership and digital transformation influenced their respective local government institutes. Further in-depth exploration was achieved by posing the open-ended question, 'In what way does digital transformation impact the local government institute?' This facilitated a more detailed understanding of how digital transformation had led or would lead to significant business improvements and the role of leadership in these improvements.

While the size of the institute (in terms of the number of employees) was not a primary consideration, it was essential to have a manager available for an interview who could discuss the influence of leadership on digital transformation. As a result, the thesis primarily incorporated medium-sized government institutes. For exploratory purposes and to enhance the generalizability of results, institutes of similar sizes were selected. A quantity of instances for a multi instance analysis was established as a trio, harmonizing advantages of multi instance analysis and the necessity for thorough analysis. This aligns with the convenience sampling method, in which the institutes were selected based on their accessibility and relevance to the research objectives.

3.1.4 Unit of analysis

Delineated in part 3.1.1, the subject of scrutiny for this study is established at the individual level. This aspect is crucial as it constitutes one of the distinguishing features of this thesis. Undertaking interviews inherently situates the subject for analysis at a user scope, a strategy was adopted in research efforts such as the one carried out by Warner & Wäger (2019). This methodological approach allows the study to delve into individual experiences and perspectives, thus distinguishing this work from other studies.

3.2 Data collection

The information amassed from all distinct groups, with specifics regarding all investigations represented in Table 1. Nine interviews (refer to Table 2) were conducted with individuals occupying roles such as IT manager, project leader, and information advisor. For each case, the manager overseeing IT and digital transformation within the

institution was chosen, alongside a manager who, while playing a significant role in the digital transformation, had a more operational focus relative to their counterpart within the same case study. This approach facilitated the collection of two unique perspectives, thereby fostering a more comprehensive and critical analysis.

Despite the semi-structured nature of the interviews, a pre-determined structure was adhered to, dictating the duration allocated to each subject. A template is outlined see Appendix 1: Interview template. All themes identified had no overtly elucidated on participants beforehand, enabling an exploratory approach and mitigating potential bias during the interview. This method promotes a more objective examination of the critical interactions between political and administrative leadership in relation to digital transformation. However, in instances where a participant struggled with comprehending a concept, it was thoroughly explained to ensure the understanding of the questions.

Subsequently, three validation interviews were carried out to bolster dependability of this dissertation (refer to Table 3). In these interviews, interviewees are chosen predicated based of the level of experience,, as it was assumed that more experienced participants would more readily recognize the interaction between political and administrative leadership. Thus, a purposive approach is employed by the second interview type.

Table 1: Case overview

	Case A	Case B	Case C
Location	Central	Central	Central
Employees(~)	550	500	500
Residents(~)	63.000	64.000	60.000

Table 2: In-depth overview

Participant	Case	Role	Current Experience (Years)	Duration (Min.)
ID1	A	Manager	4	52
ID2	A	Project Manager	8	55
ID3	A	Project Leader	6	58
ID4	B	Manager	2	61
ID5	B	Project Manager	6	50
ID6	B	IT Project Leader	5	53

Participant	Case	Role	Current Experience (Years)	Duration (Min.)
ID7	C	Information Advisor	6	67
ID8	C	ICT Project Manager	5	54
ID9	C	Manager	7	59

Table 3: Validation overview

Participant	Case	Role	Current Experience (Years)	Duration (Min.)
V1	A	Administrative Team Leader	6	56
V2	B	Information Advisor	9	62
V3	C	Project Leader	8	60

3.3 Data analysis

3.3.1 Encoding technique

In-depth interviews were transcribed using the Amberscript software. Within case study research, there exists a vast array of techniques for qualitative data analysis. Ultimately, the inductive methodology of the empirical section necessitates the discovery of patterns leading to themes or categories. To achieve this, an encoding technique was considered most appropriate by all the comprehensive data. The ATLAS.ti software was used to analyse the interviews.

A systematic encoding method detailed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) was selected to guide the process. Strauss and Corbin's method introduces three levels of codes. The first stage, open coding, involves an analytical process that identifies primary concepts and discerns their properties and dimensions. This is succeeded by axial coding, which associates the uncovered concepts with categories. The term 'axial' signifies a central point, around which the category is constructed, thus encompassing notions of analogous attributes and facets. Upon completion of all encoding, a strong pattern and potential models begin to solidify. The final stage, selective coding, encompasses the integration and refinement of these patterns and theories. The distinctions among these three types of coding as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) are as follows: Strauss and Corbin (1998) posit that the analyst's primary focus is on the generation of categories and their

properties, and subsequently determining the dimensional variations within these categories. Throughout the process of axial coding, a meticulous development and linkage of categories to their corresponding subcategories are undertaken. Nevertheless, the evolution of research findings into a more theory-like form only transpires when these principal categories are amalgamated to form a comprehensive theoretical framework. Strauss and Corbin (1998) view selective coding as a procedural approach to meticulously refine and fuse subjects, thereby originating new topics. This methodological strategy acts as a conduit for transforming empirical evidence into theoretical constructs, bolstering the analytical depth of the research findings.

Analysis procedure is conducted in this order: subsequent to transcription, the data from all the discussions are placed into the ATLAS.ti website. keys are subsequently applied to text explicitly expressing an interaction. On rare occasions, the absence of interaction was noted; in such instances, an open code was applied provided that the significance of the interaction was emphasized (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). This approach facilitated a legitimate analysis. The research examines the interaction with a leadership scope, two principal forms—political and administrative leadership—were utilized as second-order categories. However, a subset of data could not be assigned to a specific type of leadership, but rather was found to pertain to both. As a result, a secondary data structure was formulated, representing these fundamentals as second-order categories.

Moreover, given the exploratory nature of this thesis, interview participants identified effects and attributes of leadership. To depict these distinct factors, another data structure was established. Attributes linked exclusively to one of the two primary leadership forms are outlined in Appendix 2: Effects on organizational effectiveness. In contrast, attributes not restricted to a specific type of leadership, but applicable to both, are denoted as fundamental and illustrated in Appendix 3: Attributes of Leadership. Lastly there are the effects that they have on the Resource Based View, seen in Appendix 4.

In tandem with the three data architectures, an analytic approach involving pattern identification was utilized, as suggested by Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008). The potential of ATLAS.ti software was fully leveraged during this process. For instance, diagrams available through functions on the ATLAS website (refer to Appendix 6) are instrumental in recognizing developing patterns. Simultaneously, the table connecting coded sections to the original document, accessible through the 'reports' function, served a crucial role in

analyses both within individual case studies and across multiple cases. These resources facilitated an organized and comprehensive evaluation of the interview-derived data.

3.3.2 Within-case analysis

The analysis recognized as an linchpin of conceptual framework generation, yet it is concurrently regarded as the most challenging aspect (Eisenhardt, 1989). Therefore, rather than simply immersing oneself in the analysis to identify disparities and similarities, a more sophisticated technique was employed. Specifically, following the encoding process, this dissertation adopted the two different methodologies for analysing the interviews namely: within and cross-case.

During their notable research, Langley and Abdallah (2011) undertook a comparative analysis examining two distinct methodologies for conducting case studies. They juxtaposed the single case study approach advanced by Gioia with the multi-case study method promoted by Eisenhardt, with a particular focus on the latter's incorporation of both within-case and cross-case analytical techniques. This comparative analysis aimed to highlight the unique strengths and potential limitations of each method, providing valuable insights for researchers seeking to employ these methodologies in their investigations. They posited that Eisenhardt's approach primarily focuses on identifying associations and establishing causal relationships among preselected concepts. In the context of this thesis, where leadership is employed as a conceptual lens, attributes were identified and subsequently associated with the two types of leadership.

Moreover, Eisenhardt (1989) asserts that within-case analysis allows researchers to familiarize themselves with the data prior to embarking on the more complex cross-case analysis, thereby aiding the gradual shaping of theory. Another advantage of within-case analysis is its systematic approach to handling the copious amounts of data amassed. Nonetheless, the central purpose of within-case analysis lies in gaining a deep familiarity with each individual case. A consequential benefit is that researchers incrementally familiarize themselves with the collected data. This facilitates a more thorough pattern analysis of each individual case, thereby averting hasty generalizations without conducting a meticulous examination of each case independently. In their study, Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) highlight the importance of within-case analysis as a vital first step in multiple case study research. This approach provides an in-depth understanding of each case individually before the initiation of cross-case analysis. Such

a method ensures an accurate understanding of the unique intricacies of each case, which is essential when subsequently synthesizing the data across multiple cases.

Eisenhardt (1989) further underscores the importance of this technique in enhancing the precision of the cross-case analysis, asserting that a comprehensive understanding of each case independently can lead to more accurate collective examination.

The notion of replication logic, emphasized by Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007), is pivotal in theory construction from multiple case studies. They argue that each case should be treated as a separate experiment that stands on its own for analysis. This perspective aligns with the view of each case as a unique component in a chain of interconnected empirical investigations. In this arrangement, each case serves as an independent 'experiment,' contributing to the validation, differentiation, and refinement of the emerging theory, akin to a series of linked laboratory experiments.

3.3.3 Cross-case analysis

Building on the foundation of a comprehensive previous analysis, employing an different analysis here in this case the cross-case approach finalizes a process of data investigation. This process facilitates the identification of recurring patterns that traverse the multiple cases under examination. As Langley and Abdallah (2011) observe, these patterns may manifest as either commonalities or discrepancies across the different cases.

The inherent features related to this approach necessitate a scholar in stretching their investigation more than the first findings produced by the other analysis. Such an extension is advantageous, according to Khan and VanWynsberghe (2008), as it prevents the researcher from jumping to hasty conclusions based on individual cases. Instead, it encourages a thorough comparison and contrast across multiple cases, which enhances the validity and robustness of the study's findings and theoretical contributions.

In relation to the three strategies delineated by Eisenhardt (1989) for cross-case analysis, this investigation adopted an approach similar to the initial strategy. This involved the use of categories to identify congruities and divergences within and across potential clusters. However, due to the scope of this study, which only encompassed three case studies and two discrete roles, an exclusive reliance on the first strategy might have rendered the analysis unduly complex and less likely to yield further enlightening insights. Consequently, no specific groupings were constituted.

By adopting this approach, the analysis was made more manageable and yet remained robust. It allowed for an in-depth examination of each individual case, while still providing the opportunity to draw meaningful and insightful comparisons across the different cases, thereby enriching the overall quality of the investigation and its resultant findings.

Aside from this, Eisenhardt (1989) posits that combining within-case and cross-case analyses enables the data to be examined through multiple perspectives or "divergent ways". She suggests that this method is instrumental in achieving high-quality analysis: Eisenhardt (1989) posits that the strategies employed in case study analysis are influenced by the fact that individuals are often inadequate processors of information. This reality presents a risk that researchers may arrive at hasty or even erroneous conclusions due to these information-processing biases. Therefore, Eisenhardt (1989) suggests that the essence of effective cross-case comparison lies in mitigating these tendencies by examining the data from a multitude of disparate perspectives.

3.3.4 Validation interviews

Subsequent to the in-depth interviews, a series of three validation interviews were conducted to provide an additional layer of scrutiny. These interviews were designed with the intent of ensuring the veracity and accuracy of the information presented by the initial nine participants. Given its time-consuming nature, no coding process was undertaken as the benefits did not justify the commitment of resources.

Selection for the validation interviews prioritized participants with substantial experience, as their expertise ensured an enhanced capacity to recognize and conceptualize the scenarios in which these tensions may have arisen. The validation interviews followed a distinct protocol from the in-depth interviews, mainly focusing on the established 2nd order categories. Throughout the explanation, efforts were made to draw connections with the identified attributes underpinning each specific 2nd order category.

This supplementary layer of control enhances the measures already employed to secure validity, and primarily, reliability. Validation interviews confirming the initial findings bolstered validity by demonstrating that the appropriate constructs were indeed measured. Additionally, reliability was significantly improved as the findings exhibited consistency with the validation interviews.

It is worth mentioning that, at times, the validation interviews required the deployment of leading questions to ensure an exhaustive exploration of the findings. For example, it was of significant importance to confirm whether V1, V2, or V3 identified a particular characteristic or tension. However, cautious steps were undertaken to reduce any implicit assumptions and undue pressure to the greatest extent possible. Specifically, the crafting of the questions consciously avoided the use of potentially suggestive words such as "important". This approach maintained the integrity of the research process, while allowing for the necessary depth and precision in the analysis of responses.

4 Interview analysis

This chapter provides a comprehensive exploration of the insights gleaned from the two distinct categories of interviews conducted for this study. The preliminary section probes into the outcomes from the in-depth interviews, which are further divided into within-case analysis and cross-case analysis. A segment of the section offers a granular understanding of each individual case before moving on to explore the patterns that emerge across multiple cases. Subsequently, the chapter concludes with a second segment dedicated to illuminating the findings and invaluable contributions derived from the validation process that should add extra control over the data.

Furthermore, the effort should be expended in identify linkages among primary concepts. This was achieved by employing a pattern matching technique, which perfectly aligns with the inductive methodology underpinning this thesis. This approach allowed for a more holistic understanding of the themes emerging from the data, providing a robust framework for the interpretation of the results.

Given the inherent connection of leadership to managerial capabilities and the prevalent concern for digital transformation among roles inclined towards the IT side of an institution, the IT manager typically embodies the identified administrative leadership attributes.

Throughout this chapter, the term "manager" is predominantly used for ease of reference. However, it should be noted that the individual possessing these attributes may occupy different roles within an institution or there might exist several managerial roles that encapsulate these attributes. This usage aims to ensure consistency and clarity in communication, despite the potential variability in actual organizational structures.

4.1 In-depth interviews

The chapter delves into the analyses, detailed both in a distinct subsections in line with results from applying code to the interviews. Coding process, undertaken concurrently with and subsequent to the in-depth interviews, embodied an iterative approach, culminating in the construction of three data structures.

The initial data structure represents attributes associated with the main forms of leadership—either political or administrative—as evidenced in Appendix 2: Effects on

Organizational Effectiveness. Conversely, the secondary data structure encompasses attributes that could not be ascribed to either of the primary leadership styles exclusively, instead serving as fundamental capabilities that support both forms of leadership. These attributes are detailed in Appendix 3: Attributes of leadership.

In addition to the primary attributes delineating the essence and fundamentals of leadership, participants provided insights into methods for augmentation. As a result, another data structure was conceived that sketches out the factors fortifying these three pivotal attributes. This structure thus presents an enriched perspective on the leadership dynamics, extending beyond the foundational elements to encompass the strategies aimed at honing human capital, nurturing social connections, and fostering cognitive abilities. The exploration of this third data structure allows us to delve deeper into the nuanced strategies deployed by leaders to maximize their leadership potential.

In addition to identified attributes, the gathered facts were utilized in the analysis to unearth potential reasons for the differential frequencies of mentioned attributes or factors. Finally, the linkages drawn between the first order concepts as delineated by Joensuu and Niiranen (2016) and the identified attributes underpinning the primary leadership styles resulted in a preliminary association structure, this structure also includes three proposed modifications related to some degree to concepts posited from Joensuu and Niiranen (2016).

4.1.1 Within-case analysis

The segment zeroes in on the singular analysis of every case, pivoting around the quintet of the most recurrently mentioned first-order concepts intrinsic to each scenario. These concepts function as beacons, spotlighting the most critical attributes and constituents inherent to each instance. Although only one factor surfaced within the repertoire of the top five most regularly quoted first-order concepts, its inclusion was necessary to uphold a balanced representation of each notion. This approach allows us to extract maximum insights by recognizing the salient features and unique intricacies that define each case, thus enriching our overall understanding of the phenomenon under study.

In the course of analyzing these leading first order concepts, interconnected attributes and factors are examined to provide a comprehensive dissection, while simultaneously underscoring the intricate interweaving of these attributes and factors. Consequently, it

might be beneficial to have Appendices 2, 3, 4 and 5 visible on a secondary screen for a seamless understanding of the analysis.

Every instance begins with a concise preface, followed by the showcase of the most recurrent first-order topics. Then moving forward with meticulous examination of each of these five notions individually, unravelling their respective details and implications. The closure of each case study is marked by a summarizing paragraph that delivers concluding remarks, synthesizing the key findings and illuminating the overall significance of the case within the broader study. This organization not only allows for a systematic approach to data interpretation, but also ensures a cohesive and comprehensive understanding of each individual case.

4.1.1.1 Case A

Case A pertains to a local government institution located centrally in the Netherlands, serving a region populated by approximately 63,000 residents. The institution itself employs a workforce of around 550 individuals. Preliminary examination of their website indicates their engagement with modest digital transformation initiatives. For this case, I conducted interviews with individuals occupying roles such as Manager (ID1), Project Manager (ID2), Project Leader (ID3), and an Administrative Team Leader (V1). The Information Advisor was a participant in the validation interview, while the others were part of the in-depth interviews. All interviewees held some level of experience with digital transformation, and had exposure to both administrative and political leadership dimensions to varying degrees.

Table 4: Most mentioned concepts case A

Data Structure	Frequency	Attribute
Power Dynamics	50	“Authority” “Coercion” “Control”
Role Conflict	42	“Role Strain” “Role Incompatibility”
Change Management	38	“Resistance to Change” “Leadership Alignment”
Leadership Transition	29	“Role Adjustment” Knowledge Transfer”

Data Structure	Frequency	Attribute
Interpersonal Conflict	27	“Communication Style” “Conflict Resolution”

The evaluation of the interview data from Case A illuminates several pivotal frictions and dynamics between political and administrative leadership within the milieu of digital transformation. The interaction between these leadership forms becomes notably clear when examining the five major themes extrapolated from the interview, namely, Power Dynamics, Role Conflict, Change Management, Leadership Transition, and Interpersonal Conflict.

The theme of Power Dynamics appeared most frequently, underscoring the pivotal role that both political and administrative leadership have in spearheading digital transformation. An interviewee's statement elucidates this:

"Both political and administrative leadership fundamentally contribute to fostering a conducive environment for digital transformation. Collaboratively, they assure that the organization is not merely technologically primed for digital transformation but also culturally inclined towards embracing it."

The power dynamics between these two leadership types can considerably sway the trajectory and accomplishment of digital transformation endeavors. A harmonious interplay can ease the transformation process, whereas a fraught relationship may create hurdles.

Role Conflict emerges as a common theme, signifying potential discord between the different roles and responsibilities held by political and administrative leaders. The disparity in roles may result in divergent perspectives on the strategy and execution of digital transformation, as observed in the quote concerning the smart city initiative. The shift in focus towards implementing specific features to directly enhance public services illustrates the influence of political leadership in setting priorities.

The theme of Change Management was central, emphasizing the importance of effectively supervising changes during digital transformation. The scaled-back smart city initiative exemplifies the necessity of adaptability in managing change. As noted in the quote:

"As a result, the smart city project was significantly scaled back. Instead of a comprehensive solution, we shifted focus to implement a few select features that would directly improve public services, like smart parking and waste management systems. The change was significant, but it was essential to align with the new political leadership's priorities and the perceived immediate needs of the community."

which epitomizes the pragmatic approach needed in change management, often dictated by political and administrative realities.

The theme of Leadership Transition highlights the challenges and opportunities accompanying changes in leadership. The interviewee mentioned that shifts in political leadership resulted in substantial adjustments in their digital transformation efforts. Leadership transitions can engender changes in priorities and strategies, demanding flexibility and adaptability from all stakeholders.

Interpersonal Conflict, the final theme, underscores the tensions that can surface in the interpersonal dynamics between political and administrative leaders. As noted in the interview, the local government institution has "experienced both the facilitating and hindering aspects of political leadership in our digital transformation journey." This statement indicates that the dynamics between political and administrative leadership can be a double-edged sword, both aiding and obstructing digital transformation, depending on the circumstance and management of these interpersonal conflicts.

In conclusion, the tensions and dynamics between political and administrative leadership significantly influence the direction, procedure, and success of digital transformation initiatives in local government institutions. Effectively managing these dynamics, employing strategies such as open communication, mutual respect, and flexibility, can help navigate these tensions and facilitate a successful digital transformation.

4.1.1.2 Case B

Case B denotes another local government institution situated in central Netherlands, administering a region with an approximate population of 64,000. This institution is staffed by roughly 500 employees. For this case, I engaged in interviews with individuals occupying diverse roles such as Manager in charge of Digital Strategy (ID4), Project Manager (ID5), IT Project Leader (ID6), and an Information Advisor (V2). The latter was a participant in the validation interview, while the rest took part in the in-depth interviews.

Similar to Case A, all the interviewees had prior experience with digital transformation and had encountered both administrative and political leadership paradigms in varying degrees.

Table 5: Most mentioned concepts case B

Data Structure	Frequency	Attribute
Power Dynamics	45	“Dependency” “Coercion” “Influence”
Role Conflict	37	“Role Strain” “Role Ambiguity”
Change Management	31	“Leadership Alignment” “Communication”
Interpersonal Conflict	25	“Conflict Resolution” “Personal Values”
Leadership Transition	22	“Role Adjustment” “Change Management”

The scrutiny of the interview data from Case B offers invaluable understandings into the interplay of political and administrative leadership within the sphere of digital transformation. The five dominant themes derived from the interview, namely, Power Dynamics, Role Conflict, Change Management, Interpersonal Conflict, and Leadership Transition, serve as insightful prisms to discern these dynamics.

Power Dynamics emerged as the most frequently referenced theme, emphasizing the interplay between political and administrative leadership. As elucidated in the interview:

"Overall, while political leadership is crucial for setting the direction and securing support for digital transformation, administrative leadership is equally vital for turning these strategies into reality and ensuring their success."

This indicates the inherent power dynamics within the process of digital transformation, wherein both political and administrative leadership exercise substantial influence.

Role Conflict surfaces as a potential source of discord. The demarcation between the strategic role of political leadership and the operational role of administrative leadership can occasionally precipitate conflicts. For instance, political leaders may have lofty

aspirations for digital transformation but lack an intricate understanding of the pragmatic challenges, leading to the following interview quote:

"However, there can be instances where political leadership may unintentionally hinder the digital transformation process. This generally happens when there is a lack of understanding about the potential of digital technologies, leading to insufficient support or resources being allocated to these initiatives."

The theme of Change Management is critical, reflecting the significance of effectively managing changes associated with digital transformation. Political and administrative leaders play integral roles in this process, with political leaders typically instigating the change and administrative leaders implementing it.

Interpersonal Conflict emerges as another theme, underscoring the potential for tensions and misunderstandings between political and administrative leaders. Proficient communication and collaboration between these two forms of leadership are essential to minimize such conflicts and ensure the success of digital transformation initiatives.

Leadership Transition alludes to the impact of leadership changes on digital transformation. As noted in the interview:

"Moreover, short-term political cycles can sometimes hinder long-term digital initiatives. Since the benefits of digital transformation often become visible over time, these projects may not receive as much priority in environments focused on immediate results."

Leadership transitions, especially in the political domain, can result in shifts in priorities, potentially disrupting ongoing digital transformation endeavors.

In conclusion, the analysis of Case B exposes the intricate dynamics and potential frictions between political and administrative leadership in driving digital transformation. Both forms of leadership are critical, yet they also introduce unique challenges. Navigating these challenges effectively — through lucid communication, mutual comprehension, and strategic change management — is fundamental to the successful execution of digital transformation initiatives.

4.1.1.3 Case C

Case C refers to the final local government institution under study, also located in the heart of the Netherlands. This institution serves a region of approximately 60,000

inhabitants, with a staffing structure of around 500 employees. For this case, interviews were conducted with individuals occupying the following roles: Information Advisor (ID7), ICT Project Manager (ID8), Manager (ID9), and Project Leader (V3). The Project Leader was interviewed as part of the validation process, while the others participated in the in-depth interviews. Similar to Cases A and B, all interviewees in this case had prior exposure to digital transformation and had experienced the dynamics of both administrative and political leadership.

Table 6: Most mentioned concepts case C

Data Structure	Frequency	Attribute
Power Dynamics	56	“Coercion” “Authority” “Dependency”
Change Management	36	“Resistance to Change” “Leadership Alignment”
Stakeholder Management	34	“Stakeholder Communication” “Stakeholder Engagement”
Role Conflict	27	“Role Ambiguity” “Role Incompatibility”
Interpersonal Conflict	27	“Communication Style” “Conflict Resolution”

The evaluation of interview data from Case C offers essential comprehension into the interplay and potential discord between political and administrative leadership in the sphere of digital transformation. The five principal themes derived from the interview, namely, Power Dynamics, Change Management, Stakeholder Management, Role Conflict, and Interpersonal Conflict, serve as effective prisms for understanding these dynamics.

Power Dynamics arises as a prominent theme. This is evidenced in the assertion, "the success or failure of digital transformation within our local government institution is significantly swayed by political leadership." This highlights the critical role of political leadership in charting the path of digital transformation. Nonetheless, the power dynamics

between administrative and political leadership can substantially impact the execution and resultant outcomes of these initiatives.

Change Management is another focal theme. The statement "when leadership is invested in digital transformation and actively endorses it, these initiatives have a much higher probability of success, resulting in tangible improvements in our services and operations," underscores the essential role leadership plays in managing change during the transformation journey, including promoting a lucid vision and fostering an environment conducive to change.

Stakeholder Management emerged as a significant theme, emphasizing the necessity for efficient communication and collaboration among a variety of stakeholders involved in the digital transformation process. The onus falls on both political and administrative leaders to ensure all stakeholders align toward a common objective.

Role Conflict and Interpersonal Conflict also emerged as dominant themes, emphasizing potential tensions that can arise due to disparities in understanding, priorities, timelines, or resource allocation. As noted in the interview:

"Indeed, in the complex and dynamic environment of a local government institution, it's not uncommon for conflicts to arise, even with shared goals. In the context of digital transformation, such conflicts were due to differences in understanding, priorities, timelines, or resource allocation. I can recall one such instance."

In conclusion, the analysis of Case C underscores the complex dynamics of power, change management, stakeholder management, role conflict, and interpersonal conflict in shaping the trajectory of digital transformation within a local government institution. The insights gained highlight the significance of resilient, committed leadership and effective conflict management in navigating these challenges and steering successful digital transformation.

4.1.2 Cross-case analysis

The dynamics and tensions within political and administrative leadership play a pivotal role in shaping digital transformation initiatives. Through a cross-case analysis of three distinct cases – A, B, and C – it becomes apparent that several recurrent themes underscore the complexities involved in such transformations. These themes include

power dynamics, change management, role conflict, interpersonal conflict, stakeholder management, and leadership transition.

Power Dynamics

In all three cases, power dynamics emerge as a predominant theme. The juxtaposition of political and administrative leadership in creating a supportive culture for digital transformation is prominently highlighted in Case A. Case B underscores the integral roles political and administrative leadership play in delineating the direction and securing the success of digital transformation initiatives. Case C echoes similar sentiments, indicating the substantial influence wielded by political leadership on the success or failure of such endeavors. The analysis, therefore, underscores the significance of a balanced power dynamic between political and administrative leadership in facilitating successful digital transformation.

Change Management

Change management consistently emerges as a critical theme across all cases. Each case underscores the importance of committed leadership in orchestrating the changes associated with digital transformation effectively. The commitment to adapt in the face of evolving digital technologies is a recurrent thread that underscores the imperative of change management in these cases.

Role Conflict and Interpersonal Conflict

The themes of role conflict and interpersonal conflict are omnipresent across all three cases, suggesting these are universal challenges in the digital transformation process. Such conflicts often emanate from divergent perspectives, understanding, and priorities between political and administrative leaders. Thus, the effective management of these conflicts becomes a cornerstone for the success of digital transformation initiatives.

Stakeholder Management

Stakeholder management is a significant theme that surfaces in Case A and Case C. The cases illuminate the crucial role of effective communication and collaboration among diverse stakeholders in digital transformation initiatives. Ensuring alignment between different stakeholders becomes a *sine qua non* for the successful fruition of digital transformation goals.

Leadership Transition

Leadership transition emerges as a salient theme in Case A and Case B. Transitions in leadership, particularly within the political domain, can precipitate shifts in priorities, thereby potentially disrupting ongoing digital transformation efforts. Therefore, the continuity of leadership and robust transition planning become pivotal considerations in digital transformation initiatives.

In conclusion, this cross-case analysis elucidates the intricacies of the dynamics and tensions of political and administrative leadership in digital transformation. While each case presents its unique context, there are discernible commonalities revolving around the balance of power dynamics, effective change management, resolution of role and interpersonal conflicts, stakeholder engagement, and planning for leadership transitions. These insights coalesce to form an overarching understanding of the factors integral to the successful implementation of digital transformation initiatives. Future research could further explore these themes in other contexts or delve deeper into each theme to uncover more nuanced insights.

4.2 Validation Interviews

To delve into the intricate dynamics and tensions between political and administrative leadership in the context of digital transformation, this study encompassed three case studies, labelled A, B, and C. Each of these cases presented distinct perspectives and narratives, with insights gleaned from three supplementary validation interviews and an initial series of nine in-depth interviews.

Case A is a local government institution in the Netherlands, catering to a region populated by approximately 63,000 residents with a workforce of about 550 individuals. From the initial examination of their website, it was observed that the institution is engaged in modest digital transformation initiatives. V1, the Administrative Team Leader in this case, illustrated the potential complexity when disagreements or alignment gaps occur between political and administrative leaders. He emphasized, "Diverging viewpoints between the two can lead to strategic uncertainty, resource constraints, operational inefficiencies, or resistance to change. Therefore, it's vital to maintain open communication, mutual understanding, and robust collaboration between these two levels of leadership."

Expanding on this point, V1 might have added: "The power dynamics that ensue can often disrupt the pace and direction of our digital transformation initiatives. It is crucial to manage this dynamic effectively to ensure successful implementation of our digital strategies." This perspective aligns closely with the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, emphasizing that efficient management and strategic deployment of resources, including leadership, are key to implementing digital transformation strategies.

Case B represents another local government institution, serving a region of around 64,000 inhabitants and employing nearly 500 individuals. Within this context, V2, the Information Advisor, underscored the potential impact when political and administrative leadership are not only aligned but effectively collaborate. They observed, "The synergy between political and administrative leadership can significantly enhance the success of digital transformation initiatives. It ensures alignment with strategic objectives, ensures resources are well-managed, and delivers value to our community."

Reflecting on the in-depth interviews, V2 could have further noted, "Often, role conflict and leadership transitions add to the complexity of executing digital transformation strategies. Successfully navigating these transitions is pivotal in shaping the trajectory of our digital transformation efforts."

The final case, Case C, serves a region of about 60,000 inhabitants with a staffing structure of about 500 employees. In this case, the Project Leader, V3, emphasized the multifaceted nature of leadership, which goes beyond decision-making and strategizing to inspiring, motivating, and guiding others. They stated, "By embodying a commitment to digital transformation, both political and administrative leaders can help cultivate a culture that embraces digital change."

V3 might have elaborated on the nuances of change management, "Managing change, particularly during digital transformation, requires a careful balance between maintaining operational continuity and implementing new strategies. The ability to manage this balance is a testament to effective leadership."

The narratives that emerged from these cases underscore the interplay between political and administrative leadership and its implications for digital transformation initiatives. It is clear that the shared decision-making, ongoing communication, and collaboration between these leadership levels are critical in aligning digital transformation initiatives

with strategic objectives, meeting operational requirements, and delivering value to the community. Moreover, the insights derived from the interviews provide a comprehensive understanding of leadership dynamics in digital transformation and align closely with the principles of the RBV theory.

In conclusion, the validation interviews presented in the three case studies illuminate the complex and often challenging interplay between political and administrative leadership during digital transformation initiatives. While each leadership level brings distinct perspectives and strengths, their collaboration and alignment are pivotal for digital transformation's successful execution.

Taking a deeper dive into the case studies, the findings also underscored the myriad challenges that can surface during this process. These include power dynamics, role conflicts, leadership transitions, and change management issues, which are often exacerbated during the transformative journey. For instance, in Case A, as the Administrative Team Leader, V1 could have asserted, "Leadership transitions, particularly in the midst of digital transformation initiatives, often stir anxieties and uncertainties within the organization. These transitional periods require a deliberate and empathetic leadership approach, facilitating a smooth evolution from the old to the new."

In Case B, the Information Advisor V2 may have noted the critical importance of conflict resolution in leadership roles, stating, "Role conflict often emerges as the organization aligns itself to new digital strategies. Clear role delineation and effective conflict management are thus vital in averting potential derailments in our digital transformation journey."

In Case C, the Project Leader, V3, could have emphasized the importance of change management in the context of digital transformation, stating, "Change management is crucial to the success of our digital transformation initiatives. It involves not only the successful implementation of new digital strategies but also the management of the impacts these changes may have on our people and processes."

The study's findings resonate with the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, which argues for the efficient management and deployment of resources, including leadership, to achieve strategic goals. The interplay of political and administrative leadership, especially during digital transformation initiatives, illustrates the RBV theory's applicability. The

research contributes to a broader understanding of leadership dynamics within the ambit of digital transformation, highlighting how efficiently leveraging institutional resources and effective leadership collaboration can pave the way for successful digital transformation initiatives. Ultimately, this study forms a solid foundation for a comprehensive theoretical framework that could guide future explorations in this important field.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

This research provides valuable insights into the dynamics between political and administrative leadership and their significant impact on digital transformation within local government institutions. Across three cases, the themes of power dynamics, change management strategies, role conflict, interpersonal conflict, stakeholder management, and leadership transition emerged as critical elements influencing the digital transformation process.

Power dynamics, a central theme across all cases, showcases the delicate balance required between political and administrative leadership. Political leadership often delineates the strategic direction of digital transformation initiatives, while administrative leadership is integral to the actualization of these strategies. The balance of power is thus pivotal for organizational effectiveness, ensuring a harmonious blend of strategic formulation and execution. This observation reflects the principles of the RBV theory, which stresses the strategic deployment of both tangible and intangible resources for value creation.

Change management was identified as an integral part of the digital transformation process. This theme emphasized the ability of leadership to maintain operational continuity while integrating new digital strategies. In essence, the capacity to manage change effectively is a testament to leadership efficiency, and it significantly impacts organizational effectiveness. This idea aligns with the RBV theory's perspective on the efficient management of resources during periods of change.

The emergence of role conflict and interpersonal conflict across all cases signifies the complexities arising as organizations align with new digital strategies. The capability of leadership to manage these conflicts effectively not only prevents potential derailments in the transformation process but also contributes significantly to organizational effectiveness. Conflict resolution skills thus emerge as key leadership attributes in this context.

Stakeholder management, particularly in Cases A and C, underlines the need for open communication, mutual understanding, and collaboration among diverse stakeholders. The theme echoes the tenets of the RBV theory, emphasizing the importance of effective

utilization of human resources (stakeholders) for achieving strategic objectives. Successful stakeholder management enhances organizational effectiveness and is indicative of leadership competence in negotiation and relationship management.

Leadership transition, a significant theme in Cases A and B, underscores the potential disruptions that shifts in leadership can cause to ongoing digital transformation initiatives. It highlights the need for thorough transition planning and the critical role of leadership in ensuring minimal disruption during such transitions. These findings align with the RBV theory's focus on strategic resource allocation and underscore leadership attributes like foresight, planning, and adaptability.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that leadership attributes like strategic thinking (seen in balancing power dynamics and formulating digital strategies), change management, conflict resolution, negotiation (in stakeholder management), and adaptability (in leadership transition) play a pivotal role in navigating the digital transformation journey.

In conclusion, the dynamics and tensions between political and administrative leadership significantly impact the trajectory and success of digital transformation initiatives. These factors influence organizational effectiveness and the strategic deployment of resources in line with the RBV theory. Our findings underscore the necessity of effective leadership attributes for successful digital transformation. The insights gained from this research reinforce the fundamental tenets of the RBV theory, providing a refined lens to examine digital transformation in local government institutions, which holds significant implications for both academic and practical fields.

5.2 Key findings

The research revealed several key findings that provide insightful perspectives on the dynamics between political and administrative leadership and their influence on digital transformation in local government institutions.

Firstly, the study highlighted the crucial role of power dynamics, necessitating a balance between political and administrative leadership. This balance significantly steers the strategic direction and execution of digital transformation initiatives and directly impacts organizational effectiveness

Effective change management emerged as a vital theme, with successful leadership needing to maintain operational continuity whilst integrating new digital strategies. This leadership efficiency was seen to contribute substantially to organizational effectiveness.

The findings also brought forth the complexities related to role conflict and interpersonal conflict as organizations adapt to new digital strategies. Efficient conflict resolution by leadership was identified as a key attribute that can avert potential disruptions and enhance organizational effectiveness.

Furthermore, stakeholder management was identified as an essential aspect, particularly in certain cases. Successful leadership was characterized by effective communication, mutual understanding, and collaboration among stakeholders. Such competencies contribute significantly to organizational effectiveness.

Transitions in leadership, another significant theme, were seen to potentially disrupt ongoing digital transformation initiatives. The need for comprehensive transition planning became apparent, highlighting crucial leadership attributes of foresight, planning, and adaptability.

In line with these findings, the research identified key leadership attributes required for successful digital transformation, including strategic thinking, adept change management, conflict resolution skills, negotiation abilities, and adaptability.

Finally, the study's findings strongly resonate with the principles of the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory. This alignment emphasizes the strategic deployment of resources, such as political and administrative leadership, for successful digital transformation. When these resources are optimally managed, they can significantly influence the success of digital transformation initiatives and enhance organizational effectiveness.

In summary, these key findings underscore the importance of effective leadership and strategic resource deployment in successfully executing digital transformation initiatives within local government institutions.

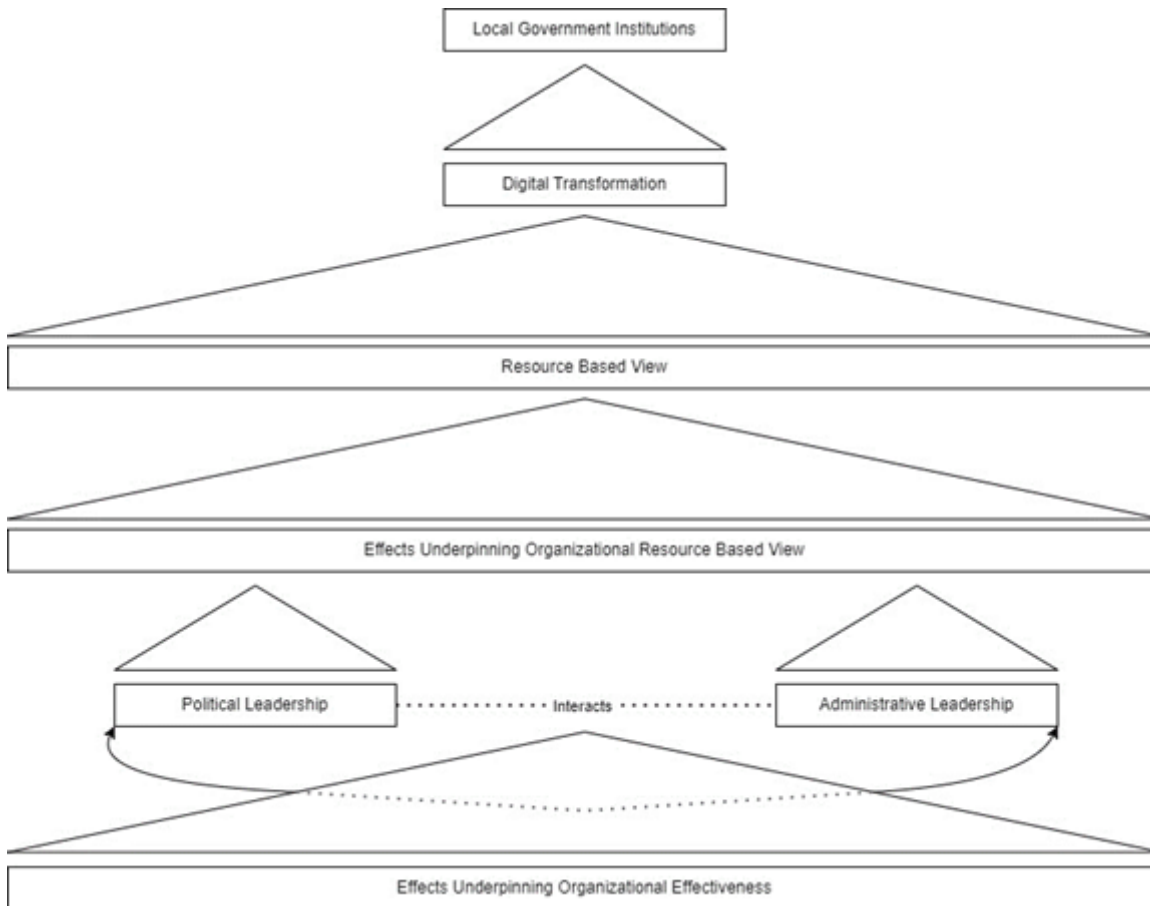


Figure 5: Framework

5.3 Conclusion

The research question at the heart of this study, "How do political and administrative leadership impact the digital transformation process within local government institutions in the Netherlands?", sought to untangle the intricacies of leadership dynamics within the context of digital transformation. The comprehensive cross-case analysis conducted across three distinct local government institutions unveiled pivotal themes and provided valuable insights to answer this question.

The examination of these cases underscored the critical role that both political and administrative leadership play in shaping digital transformation initiatives. From power dynamics to change management, from role conflict to interpersonal conflict, and from stakeholder management to leadership transition - these themes emerged as the key factors that define the influence of leadership on digital transformation.

The study found that the balance of power dynamics between political and administrative leadership significantly impacts the direction, pace, and overall success of digital

transformation. Political leadership, with its focus on strategic direction, and administrative leadership, with its emphasis on operational execution, must work harmoniously to create an environment conducive to digital transformation.

Change management was a recurrent theme across all cases. Effective management of the changes inherent to digital transformation initiatives relies heavily on strong and adaptable leadership. The findings emphasized that committed leadership could foster a culture of adaptability, a crucial attribute for institutions facing the challenges of digital transformation.

Role and interpersonal conflict also emerged as significant themes. These conflicts, often arising from divergent perspectives and priorities between political and administrative leaders, can impact the course of digital transformation initiatives. Effective conflict resolution, therefore, becomes an important leadership function, underscoring the need for clear communication and collaboration.

The role of leadership in stakeholder management and during leadership transitions was also illuminated in this study. These findings suggest that leadership plays a crucial role in aligning various stakeholders towards a common goal and managing the potential disruptions caused by leadership changes.

This study's findings align closely with the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, emphasizing the effective management and strategic deployment of leadership as a crucial resource in digital transformation initiatives. The insights gained contribute to a broader understanding of leadership dynamics within the context of digital transformation in local government institutions.

In conclusion, this research underscores that both political and administrative leadership profoundly influence the digital transformation process within local government institutions in the Netherlands. A balanced power dynamic, effective change management, efficient conflict resolution, adept stakeholder management, and thoughtful leadership transition planning all emerge as crucial elements steered by leadership. As local government institutions navigate their unique digital transformation journeys, this study underscores the importance of their leadership's adaptability, communication, collaboration, and strategic deployment of resources for achieving successful outcomes.

6 Limitations and further research

This research is not without its limitations, and it is necessary to acknowledge these potential areas of bias or constraint. Firstly, owing to time restrictions, this study did not incorporate data triangulation, instead, relying solely on qualitative data. This could potentially limit the internal validity of the research, and future studies could enrich these findings by incorporating different types of data, for instance, quantitative data.

Additionally, with the examination confined to just three case studies, each consisting of a single government institution, the results may not be broadly generalizable, thus constraining the external validity. The sampling technique employed was convenience sampling and even though certain selection criteria were established, the institutes selected may not have met stricter standards, had they been in place.

Another limitation arises from the structure of a multi case approach, which is designed with comparison in mind, focusing on government institutions from the same region and of similar size. Future research could introduce an additional dimension, such as separating cases based on size, location, or population size.

Furthermore, the decisions about how vital the second-orders were, was verified using only three validation interviews, which might not provide a comprehensive assessment. The duration of the interview or the participant's comprehension of the topics could also potentially impact the frequency of identified attributes mentioned, which could limit the drawn conclusions pertaining to the significance of second-order categories within each data configuration.

The majority of the interviewees occupied operational roles and might be more familiar or have more interaction with administrative leadership, which could result in a possible bias. With fewer time constraints, it could be beneficial to include more roles that have closer contact with political leadership.

Another potential area for future research could include the exploration of other dynamics between political and administrative leadership beyond the lens of digital transformation. Investigating other contexts beyond local government institutions could

also yield interesting insights. Furthermore, the impact of leadership on the factors underpinning the underlying attributes could also be explored in more detail.

Concerning the research methodology, future investigations might consider using another analysis focused on comparing qualitative data such as a (QCA) research method to study the relationships between the variables. Although this method was considered too complex for the current study, its potential to investigate causal research questions could be worth exploring in future research.

Finally, while the literature suggests that political and administrative leadership are not necessarily executed in a particular sequence, this research did not draw any firm conclusions on this aspect, representing a potential area for future exploration.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview template

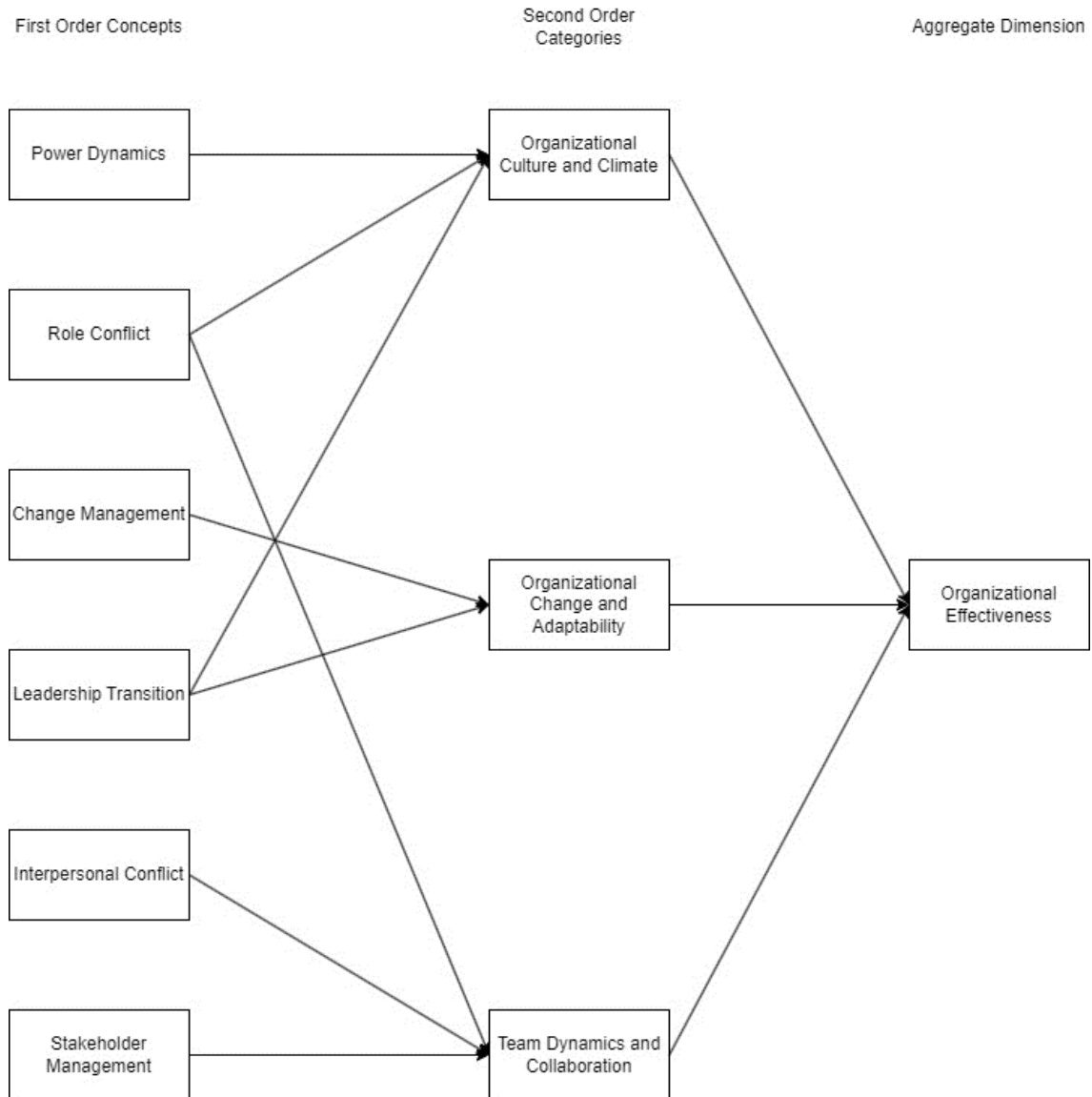
Topic	Structure of the interview
1. Interviewee Background (5 min.)	- About the interviewee: Role, Previous experience, Work experience, Experience with digital transformation.
2. Political Leadership Digital Transformation (20 min.)	- Personal meaning, PL influence on DT, Facilitate/hinder of PL on DT, PL changed DT, External factors, Overall impact, Examples
3. Administrative Leadership and Digital Transformation (20 min.)	- Personal meaning, AL influence on DT, Facilitate/hinder of AL on DT, AL changed DT, External factors, Overall impact, Examples
4. Interaction between Political and Administrative Leadership (20 min.)	- How do PL and AL interact, Successful collaboration PL and AL on DT, Conflict between PL and AL on DT, External factors, Overall impact, Examples

PL= Political Leadership

AL= Administrative Leadership

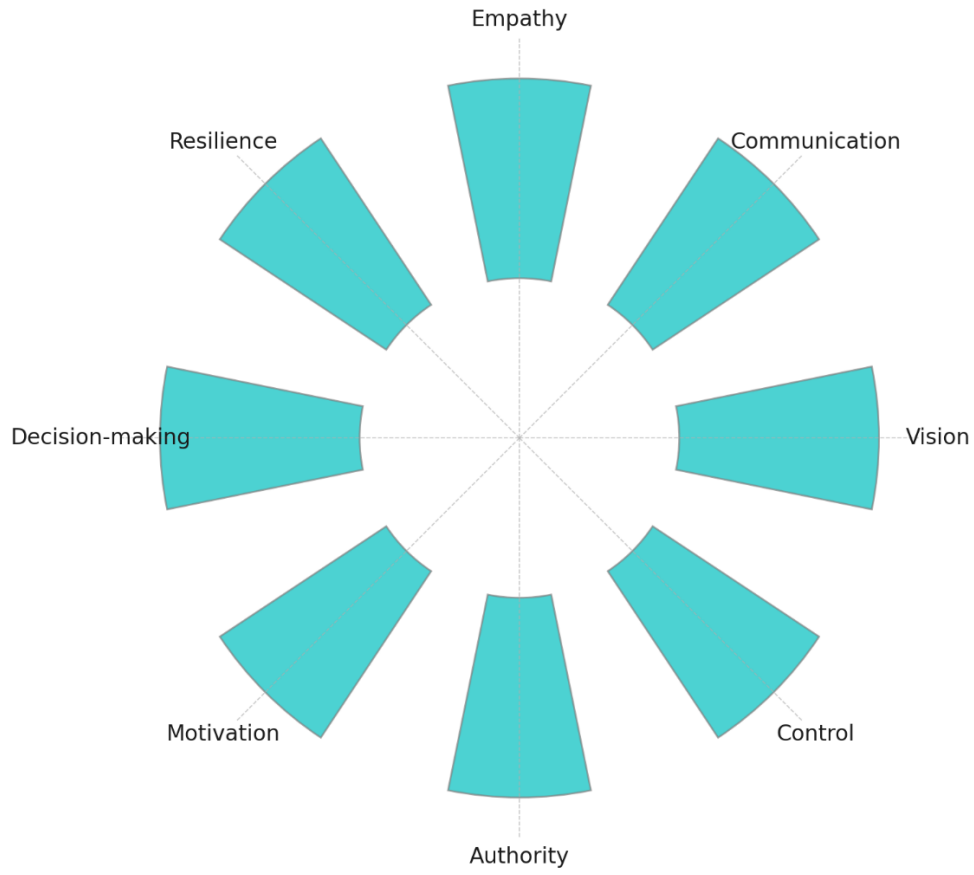
DT= Digital Transformation

Appendix 2: Effects on Organizational Effectiveness

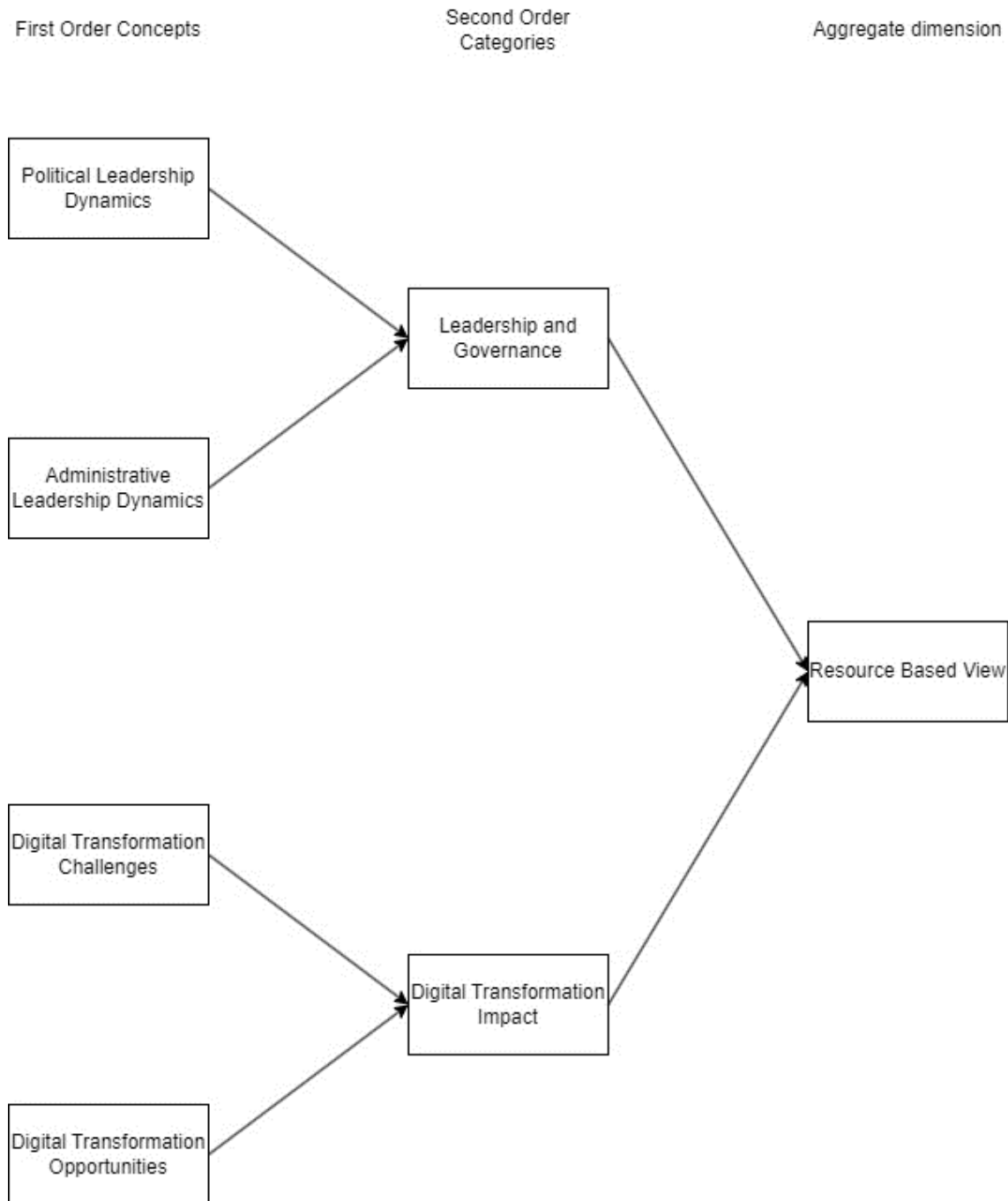


Appendix 3: Attributes of Leadership

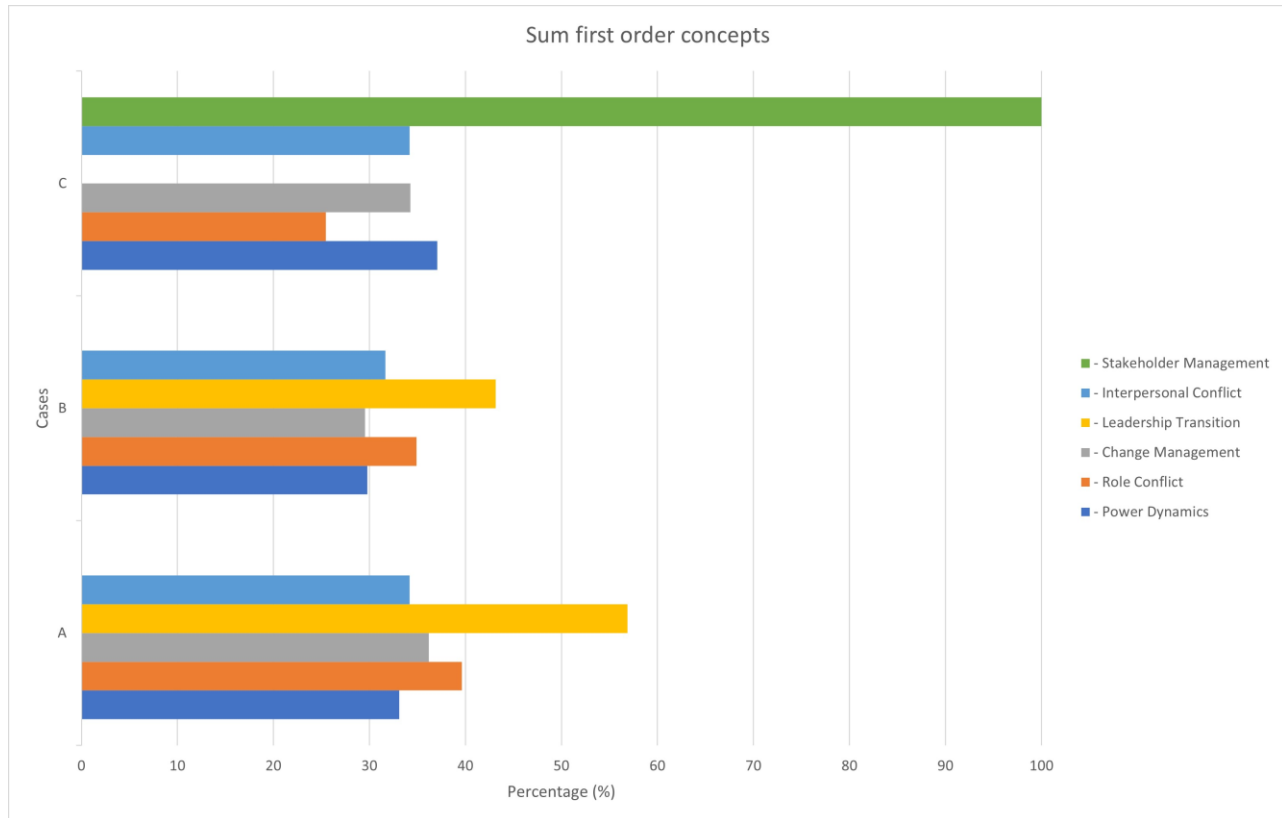
Attributes of Leadership
























Appendix 4: Effects on Resource Based View



Appendix 5: Cross-case analysis



Appendix 6: ATLAS.ti code manager

Code Manager	<input type="text" value="Search"/>
Name	Color
<input type="checkbox"/> Management	
<input type="checkbox"/> Responsibility	
<input type="checkbox"/> Efficiency	
<input type="checkbox"/> Strategic planning	
<input type="checkbox"/> Communication	
<input type="checkbox"/> Transparency	
<input type="checkbox"/> Accountability	
<input type="checkbox"/> Leadership	
<input type="checkbox"/> Financial management	
<input type="checkbox"/> Resource allocation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising	
<input type="checkbox"/> Grant Writing: Grant writing	
<input type="checkbox"/> Compliance	
<input type="checkbox"/> Coordination	
<input type="checkbox"/> Legal knowledge	
<input type="checkbox"/> Commitment	
<input type="checkbox"/> Professional experience	
<input type="checkbox"/> Performance	
<input type="checkbox"/> Work experience	
<input type="checkbox"/> Communication skills	
<input type="checkbox"/> Community needs	

Appendix 7: ATLAS.ti quotation manager (Initial)

