

# **Employees' commitment to change in the transition from start-up to scale-up**

A single case study of enabling factors in a high-tech energy company

Marlies Rengers - S2606364

Department of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences,  
University of Twente

Master Thesis Business Administration

First supervisor: Dr. J.R. Wijnmaalen

Second supervisor: Dr. D.H. van Dun

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## Abstract

This study explored factors contributing to employees' commitment to organizational change (CC) while scaling up. Successful organizational changes increase the success rate of becoming a scale-up. Research has shown the importance of CC when it comes to successful organizational changes. Other scholars have examined factors contributing to CC in different contexts; however, this has not been examined in the context from start-up to scale-up. Factors contributing to CC while scaling up might differ from other contexts. For example, start-ups tend to have a more innovative leadership style that positively relates to employees' attitudes towards change. Therefore, the following research question was answered: *"What factors contribute to developing and keeping employees' commitment to organizational change that occurs while scaling up?"*.

A single case study was conducted using the Retrospective Team Events and Affective Mapping (R-TEAM) approach. The three-component model of Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) was used as guidance to examine CC while scaling up. First, the researcher held key informant meetings with seven managers. Second, 43 employees filled in the questionnaire distributed among 74 employees working two or more years within the case company. The questionnaire and key informant meeting were used as input for the group interviews. Third, the researcher conducted a group interview with six employees. A validation group interview with six employees was conducted to validate the results. The group interview was transcribed and coded inductively.

The analysis showed the importance of leadership in CC. Individualized consideration related to all components of CC. Leaders' communication is positively associated with affective and normative CC. Moreover, the analysis showed a change to a more bureaucratic culture in the transition phase. The formalization and hierarchical distance negatively contributed to employees' affective CC. Furthermore, employees' involvement during change, perceived changed results, and new products and services contributed positively to employees' affective CC. Lastly, remuneration contributed positively to normative CC.

The findings were discussed while comparing the findings with CC studies in other contexts (e.g., M&A). The researcher proposed the effects of transformational leadership, bureaucratic culture, communication, and perceived change results on CC displayed in a conceptual framework. Moreover, the discussion showed the importance of characteristics regarding the transition phase and the high-tech energy nature of this study: the company's growing size, new products and services, the changing culture, and the formalization of the company. Hence, this single case study will provide future researchers and practitioners with insights into CC factors while scaling up.

**Keywords:** organizational change, start-up, scale-up, commitment to change, employee behavior

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## 1. Introduction

Despite a large number of start-ups, only a few start-ups have become a successful scale-up (Acs and Armington, 2006; Blank, 2013). A scale-up company is a “high growth firm whose accelerated cycle of growth and wealth creation is fundamentally based on the scalability of its business model.” (Monteiro, 2019, p. 103). Founding teams establish start-ups. Founding teams are “teams engaged in entrepreneurship, in which members own some equity, have some autonomy in making strategic decisions, and possess some entitativity” (Knight et al., 2020, p.259). Founding teams go through several phases in the organizational lifecycles. These phases are a start-up, transition, scaling, maturity, revival, and exit (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018; Picken, 2017; Fisher et al., 2016). The transition phase from start-up to scale-up is the most crucial (Picken, 2017). The transition from start-up to scale-up seems to depend on the company's scalability. Since the topic "successful transition from start-up to scale-up" has only recently gained interest, little research has so far been done in this area (Knight et al., 2020). Yet, this is an important topic since a successful transition to scale-up determines the success of start-ups.

Successful organizational changes increase a start-up's success rate becoming a scale-up. Many organizational changes occur in the transition phase. For example, start-ups are likely to grow, which changes a company's culture due to the limited interaction between the founder and employees (Flamholtz & Randle, 2012). Additionally, the organizational structure needs to be developed, and roles and responsibilities must be defined (Bhidé, 2003). Moreover, start-ups tend to need people with different competencies in the transition phase compared to those in the start-up phase (Moore, 2014). The role of the CEO and other leaders also tends to change when a start-up scales. CEOs and other leaders need to adapt their leadership style to the nature of tasks and people (Flamholtz & Randle, 2012). Last, long-term thinking becomes more and more critical in the transition phase (Sutton & Rao, 2016; Flamholtz & Randle, 2012; Bhidé, 2003). A start-up needs to implement a well-defined strategy to survive organizational growth (Flamholtz & Randle, 2012). Hence, organizational changes occurring in the transition phase seem to have a low probability of success since most organizational changes in general fail (Etschmaier, 2010; Burnes & Jackson, 2011; Smollan & Morrison, 2019; Demerouti et al., 2021).

One of the most critical factors in the success of organizational change is employees' commitment to change (CC) (Herscovitch and Meyer, 2002; Raukko, 2009; Cho et al., 2017; Bakari et al., 2020; Erkutlu, 2016; Narine & Persaud, 2003; Neves et al., 2018; Chaudhry & Joshi, 2017; Conway & Monks, 2008; Shum et al., 2008). CC is defined as “a force (mind-set) that binds an employee to a course of action deemed necessary for the successful implementation of a change initiative” (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002, p. 475). CC increases employees' support for change and successful

implementation (Herscovitch and Meyer, 2002; Baraldi et al., 2010; Shum et al., 2008). Yet, there seems to be no research on CC in transition from start-up to scale-up, even though the transition phase is the most critical phase of the entrepreneurial process (Picken, 2017).

Antecedents of CC while scaling up might differ from antecedents in other contexts. For example, a startup structure enables managers to interact with employees and actively communicate changes (Slevin & Covin, 1990; Men et al., 2021). Interacting with employees and communicating change might result in a higher CC among startup employees (Shum et al., 2008). However, the start-up structure changes when the company grows, affecting a leader's communication (Picken, 2017). Moreover, an entrepreneurial leader tends to be more visionary and inspires people to go along with new business opportunities (Renko et al., 2015), which positively relates to CC (Van der Voet et al., 2016). Hence, understanding the antecedents of CC is essential for start-ups to transform into successful scale-up.

To conclude, many organizational changes occur while scaling up. However, many organizational changes in general fail (Etschmaier, 2010; Burnes & Jackson, 2011; Smollan & Morrison, 2019; Demerouti et al., 2021). CC increases the success of changes in organizations (Herscovitch and Meyer, 2002; Shum et al., 2007; Baraldi et al., 2010). To successfully transform from start-up to scale up, it is essential to study CC in this context. Therefore, this study aims to explore CC while transitioning from start-up to scale-up. This results in the following research question: *“What factors contribute to developing and keeping employees' commitment to organizational change that occurs while scaling up?”*.

To answer the research question, an explorative single case study was performed. The advantage of focusing on one case is the “greater opportunity to delve into things in more detail and discover things that might not have become apparent through more superficial research” (Denscombe, 2014, p.36). Hence, single cases can enable a researcher to create more complex data than multiple cases because of more in-depth details of one case (Gustafsson, 2017; Rashid et al., 2019).

This paper is structured as follows. First, the theory regarding organizations' life cycles, organizational change, and commitment to change is discussed. Second, the research methodology of this research is provided. Retrospective Team Events and Affect Mapping (R-TEAM) approach is discussed, which was used to collect data, select participants, and analyze data. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, a qualitative questionnaire, and a group interview. Third, the results of this study are presented by describing the organizational changes and CC. Fourth, the conclusion is followed by a discussion comparing the findings with the literature. Fifth, the limitations and future research possibilities are presented, followed by this study's theoretical and practical implications.

## 2. Theory

### 2.1 Life cycles of organizations

Founding teams of start-ups go through several phases during the organizations' life cycle. Picken (2017) has examined the essential steps in the transition from start-up to an organization with sustainable and profitable growth. The phases are (1) start-up, (2) transition, (3) scaling, and (4) exit. In addition, Jirásek and Bilek (2018) have conducted a literature review comparing 24 studies describing organizational lifecycles. They concluded that there are five phases in an organizational lifecycle: (1) founding, (2) growth, (3) maturity, (4) revival, and (5) decline. Furthermore, Fisher et al. (2016) have examined organizational life phases specified on technology firms (e.g., Quinn & Cameron, 1983; Miller & Friesen, 1984). Technology enterprises distinguish from mainstream enterprises by their technology-driven innovation as the basis of entrepreneurial opportunity (Fisher et al., 2016). Fisher et al. (2016) have concluded that the organizational life cycle consists of four phases: (1) conception, (2) commercialization, (3) growth, and (4) stability. Hence, several scholars identify different phases in the organizational life cycle. This section combines different literature regarding organizational life cycles to shape the scope of this study (see Figure 1). This section also explains why the researcher chose this vivid amalgamation of different theories.



**Figure 1.** Phases in the lifecycle of organizations (based on Picken, 2017; Jirásek and Bilek, 2018; Fisher et al., 2016)

#### 2.1.1 Start-up phase

The first phase in the lifecycle model of this research is the start-up phase. The start-up phase can be compatible with terms like conception, founding, and birth (Picken, 2017; Fisher et al., 2016; Jirásek & Bilek, 2018). The start-up phase in which founding teams seem to struggle is described by several researchers (Jirásek & Bilek, 2018; Quinn & Cameron, 1983; Miller & Friesen, 1984; Picken, 2017; Fisher et al., 2016). Quinn and Cameron (1983) describe this period as the "entrepreneurial phase" whereas Miller and Friesen (1984) describe this as the "birth phase". Quinn and Cameron (1983) characterize the entrepreneurial phase as innovative and creative. The start-up phase is where organizations investigate the market opportunities and develop a suitable product (product-market fit) (Miller & Friesen, 1984). There seem to be similarities and differences between the organizational life cycle described by different scholars (Jirásek & Bilek, 2018; Picken, 2017; Fisher et al., 2016). The start-up phase is critical in the entrepreneurial process (Fisher et al., 2016). Opportunities for new



products and services are invented and developed in the start-up phase (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018; Fisher et al., 2016). In addition, technology enterprises focus on niche markets in the start-up phase (Fisher, 2016). The entrepreneur ensures that the product concept works as designed and refines the product to meet market expectations. When the product is purified, the entrepreneur expands the market and provides a product-market fit (Fisher et al., 2016). Hence, the start-up phase is an innovative and creative process where new products and services are developed to meet market expectations.

### **2.1.2 Transition phase**

Picken (2017) was the first to include the transition phase in the lifecycle model of an organization. The transition phase is the most critical phase for establishing a mature company and for the company's success (Picken, 2017). Because this paper is focusing on the transition phase, an in-depth analysis of the characteristics of this phase was necessary. Table 1 (Picken, 2017, p. 590) contains characteristics of the transition phase. The founding teams need to shape a credible and legitimate company. In the transition from start-up to scale-up, the company goes from an informal, liquid structure to a more formal organizational structure required for rapid growth. An obstacle in the transition phase is defining a company's direction (Picken 2017). Other challenges in the transition phase are maintaining market focus, setting up the company, developing appropriate and well-functioning processes, financial capability, a sustenance culture, and dealing with risk (Picken 2017). To determine a strategic direction, challenges such as continuously creating value, complex issues of the industry and its stakeholder, and a continuous competitive environment are involved (Picken, 2017). To conclude, the founding team deals with complex issues in the transition phase.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of the transition phase (based on Picken et al., 2017)

Characteristic	Definition
Define strategic direction	To keep the organization focused on its goals, the founding team must develop and communicate a clear strategic direction (e.g., target customers and develop a business model and key milestones).
Positioning products/services in an expanded market	Customer relationships and channels and new products and services must be developed to meet the needs of an expanded market.
Maintaining customer/market responsiveness	In the start-up phase, decisions are made quickly. However, the company's growing size needs new processes to maintain customer and market responsiveness.

Building an organization and management team	The development of the management team is critical when the company grows. The organization requires careful planning to ensure alignment with strategy and business goals.
Develop effective processes and infrastructures	Developing an effective decision process is essential to support the company's growing size. New processes and infrastructures must be developed to ensure customer value, adapt to a changing environment, and support growth.
Developing an appropriate culture	The culture is shaped and molded that reflects values, beliefs, and norms that support the company's strategy. Failure in shaping organizational culture can precipitate the failure of the firm.
Dealing with risk	Growing companies are vulnerable to risks, for example, a small revenue base, inexperienced employees, key employee turnover, inadequate structures and processes, and a tendency to take corporate risks. The company needs to deal with those risks.

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### **2.1.3 Scale-up phase**

The scale-up phase can be seen as the growth phase of companies. This study adopts the scale-up phase because this phase refers to not only the growth of companies but also to innovative business models which allow companies to scale (Monteiro, 2019). A successful transition phase results in an organization's ability to scale. A fundamental business concept and a sustainable business model ensure sustainable growth and market leadership (Picken, 2017). A successful product-market fit is established, and technology challenges are overcome. The company is growing rapidly with sales and additional resources to continue this growth (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018; Miller & Friesen, 1984). Where the company was still structuring the company in the transition phase, in the scale phase, the company no longer has informal decision-making, structure, and communication. Informal decision-making has been exchanged for clear policies and processes (Picken, 2017; Hofer & Charan). The scale-up phase lasts until the company reaches growth rates equal to the market growth resulting in maturity (Fisher et al., 2016).

### **2.1.4 Maturity**

The ending growth of a company can be characterized by maturity and stability. Fisher et al. (2016) identify the stability phase as the ending of an organizational life cycle. However, Jirásek and Bílek (2018) state that a company can renew its focus and create new possibilities (revival). Therefore, the researcher has chosen to identify this phase as maturity (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018). The company achieves

stability in the maturity phase. The company builds on past successes (Dufour et al., 2018), and the company's innovativeness decreases (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018). The company seems to be formalized in the scaling phase, whereas the formalization turns into a bureaucracy in the maturity phase (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018). The maturity phase can result in either revival or exit phases (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018).

### **2.1.5 Revival phase**

The revival is characterized by the company's renewed focus (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018). New possibilities are explored to reinvent new businesses (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018). Moreover, organizations bring in new resources, such as employees skilled in developing new products and services (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018). Companies that successfully undergo the revival phase experience further growth and reach maturity in a later stage once more (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018).

### **2.1.6 Exit phase**

Jirásek and Bílek (2018) identify the last phase of the organizational life cycle as the decline phase. The decline phase refers more to a survival phase with decreasing business results. However, Picken (2017) states that an organization can also experience a successful exit due to, for example, a merger or acquisition. Therefore, the researcher chose to identify the last phase as the exit phase. After growth has stabilized and the organization is established, the organization provides stable returns for investors (Picken, 2017). The exit phase is characterized by growth stagnation due to a declining market, a low level of innovation, and a homogeneous and competitive environment (Picken, 2017). Due to growing adversity from external factors (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018; Miller & Friesen, 1984), the company's focus is turned into survival again (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018; Picken, 2017). Furthermore, decreasing competitive advantage turns into decreasing sales and declining market (Jirásek & Bílek, 2018). As mentioned, a company can also experience a more successful exit (Picken, 2017). For example, a merger or acquisition can accumulate benefits for the entrepreneur or investors (Picken, 2017). Hence, this is where the company ceases to exit.

## **2.2 Organizational change**

### **2.2.1 Conceptualization of organizational change**

Organizational change is a widely used construct in business literature (e.g., Weick & Quinn, 1999; Suddaby & Foster, 2017; Del Val & Fuentes, 2003; Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010; De Wit & Meyer, 2010; Arazmjoo & Rahmanseresht, 2019). Organizational change is a complex process (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010; Chen et al., 2018). Organizations adapt to their environment and improve performance through organizational changes (Del Val & Fuentes, 2003; Luo & Jiang, 2014). Organizational change is widely defined as "actions that an organization takes to alter their characteristics for a better fit with the demands of its internal and external environment" (Luo & Jiang,

2014, p. 135). Yousef (2017) defines organizational change as “an attempt or series of attempts to modify an organization’s structure, goals, technology, or work task” (p. 79). This definition is predominantly a multi-dimensional perspective on organizational change.

Organizational change can be divided into first-order and second-order changes (Del Val & Fuentes, 2003; Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010; De Wit & Meyer, 2010; Arazmjoo & Rahmanseresht, 2019; Greenwood & Hinnings, 1996). First-order changes are incremental changes (Del Val & Fuentes, 2003; Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010; Greenwood & Hinnings, 1996) and operational changes (De Wit & Meyer, 2010), which change minor aspects of organizations but keep the general framework of organizations (Del Val & Fuentes, 2003). For example, implementing a new system increases the efficiency of a specific department. Second-order changes are strategic and revolutionary changes that radically transform organizations (Del Val & Fuentes, 2003; Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010; De Wit & Meyer, 2010; Greenwood & Hinnings, 1996). An example of a second-order change is an adjustment in a company’s strategy, resulting in a new business model. First and second-order changes create new organizational opportunities through, for example, technical changes and administrative changes (Luo & Jiang, 2014; De Wit & Meyer, 2010). Technical changes refer to basic work activities as new products, services, and strategies (De Wit & Meyer, 2010). Administrative changes refer to organizational structure, administrative processes, and management systems (De Wit & Meyer, 2010; Chen et al., 2018). Moreover, first- and second-order change can also refer to changes mainly related to people within the organization. For example, changes in leadership, strategy, human resources, and culture (Luo & Jiang, 2014). Hence, changes are not a pure type of first-order or second-order but a mixture of both changes (Del Val & Fuentes, 2003).

### **2.2.2 *Organizational changes in the transition phase***

Now that organizational change is defined, a closer look at organizational changes in the transition phase is made. After all, organizational changes in the transition phase are central to this research. Several researchers have defined organizational changes for scaling companies (e.g., Picken, 2017; Framholtz & Randle, 2012; Davila et al., 2010; Shelton, 2005; Bhidé, 2003). The organizational changes in the transition phase were clustered into five concepts: administrative changes, human resources changes, culture changes, leadership changes, and strategy changes (see Table 2; Luo & Jiang, 2014; De Wit & Meyer, 2010; Chen et al., 2018).

**Table 2.** Organizational changes in the transition phase (based on Luo & Jiang, 2014; De Wit & Meyer, 2010; Chen et al., 2018)

Concept	Organizational change	Description
Administrative changes	Organizational structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set an organizational structure</li> <li>• Develop policies, processes, and systems</li> <li>• Awareness of structure vs. freedom</li> </ul>
	Roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define roles and responsibilities</li> </ul>
Human resources changes	Growth in people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth in the number of employees</li> <li>• Recruiting more people</li> </ul>
	Competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for different competencies</li> <li>• Recruiting different people with different competencies</li> <li>• Adjusting to new roles and responsibilities</li> </ul>
Culture changes	Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in culture</li> </ul>
Leadership changes	Leadership style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect people and increase workflow</li> <li>• Adoption leadership style</li> </ul>
	Role of CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing role of CEO</li> <li>• Carefully select the role of CEO</li> </ul>
Strategy changes	Short- and long-term strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long-term thinking instead of short-term thinking</li> <li>• Defining strategy</li> <li>• Prioritize time and effort</li> </ul>
	Communication of strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication strategy</li> <li>• Clear direction of strategy</li> <li>• Develop routines</li> </ul>

**Administrative changes.** Companies in the transition phase need to redefine the company's processes and structure. This means that organizations need to adopt a more structured way of organizing and defining roles and responsibilities (Picken, 2017; Framholtz & Randle, 2012; Davila et al., 2010; Shelton, 2005; Bhidé, 2003). First, processes, policies, and systems need to be developed in

a structured way to deal with organizational issues (Bhidé, 2003). For example, customer processes ensure standardized outcomes regarding customer value (Bhidé, 2003). However, Sutton & Rao (2016) state that there must be a balance between structure and freedom. Implementing organizational structure creates difficulties for employees to understand the changes due to decreased freedom. Work efficiency can be harmed if employees are retained in the early phases of structure changes (Sutton & Rao, 2016). Therefore, employees need to be involved in the whole changing process of organizational structure (Sutton & Rao, 2016). Yet, too much complexity in the changing process of organizational structure results in a lack of focus on the employees' work (Malmgren & Videbert, 2018; Flamholtz & Randle, 2012). Concluding, organizations need to select changes in organizational structure carefully.

**Human resources changes.** People within companies seem to be the critical factor in sustainable growth (Davila et al., 2010). Companies in the transition phase need employees to grow the company. When companies grow, the workload increases (Sutton and Rao, 2016). More employees are required to perform tasks for which there is currently no capacity. Additionally, an excessive workload might increase stress among employees. Stress increases physical illness, absenteeism, and employee turnover (Flamholtz & Randle, 2012). Therefore, more employees must perform tasks to increase capacity and reduce stress.

Moreover, companies need to define roles and responsibilities due to the growing size of the workforce (Flamholtz & Randle, 2012; Harnish, 2014; Shelton, 2005). People within the company need to adjust to their new roles and responsibilities. People need to be aware of their roles and responsibilities (Flamholtz & Randle, 2012; Shelton, 2005). A lack of well-defined roles and responsibilities leads to managerial and organizational failures (Shelton, 2005). Thus, clear roles and responsibilities lead to better organizational functioning. People can relate their roles and responsibilities to what others do, which prevents tasks from being done twice (Flamholtz & Randle, 2012). Furthermore, well-defined roles and responsibilities give people insight into what tasks are suitable for the whole organization (Flamholtz & Randle, 2012). Hence, well-defined roles prevent organizational failures and stimulate growth (Shelton, 2005).

Moore (2014) added that companies often do not have all competencies to fulfill new roles and responsibilities. Therefore, people with different competencies need to be recruited (Moore, 2014). People with more experience and knowledge are required to grow the company. For example, whereas companies in the start-up phase need competencies like product development (Moore, 2014), companies in the transition phase need product managers to attract and maintain customers

(Moore, 2014). Thus, people need to adjust to their new roles and responsibilities, and people with different competencies are required.

**Culture changes.** Organizational culture changes when a company grows (Flamholtz & Randle, 2012). Organizational culture is “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein 1991, p. 313). In growing companies, the authentic culture is often different from the written culture (Sutton & Roa, 2016). Founders in start-up companies seem to have a dominant role in spreading culture (Sutton & Roa, 2016). Due to the growing size, the founders cannot deeply interact with every person in the company. Hence, culture seems to change because founders cannot spread the culture as in the start-up phase.

**Leadership changes.** Effective leadership is required to grow organizations in the transition phase (Flamholtz & Randle, 2012). However, challenges regarding leadership increase when a company grows (Harnish, 2014). For instance, good leadership becomes more challenging because the distance between managers and employees increases (Harnish, 2014). To overcome these challenges, organizations need to change their leadership. First, leaders must connect people and increase efficiency in workflows (Sutton & Rao, 2016). Second, leaders should apply a different leadership style in different situations (Flamholtz & Randle, 2012; Davila et al., 2010). A leader should adapt their leadership style to the nature of tasks and people. Third, the role of the CEO seems to change when organizations grow. For example, the CEO focuses on the long-term strategy instead of the daily operations (Flamholtz & Randle, 2012). Furthermore, some CEOs decide to sell the company, and others hire a professional manager to lead the organization. Hence, companies need to consider changes in leadership in the transition from start-up to scale-up.

**Strategy changes.** Organizational strategy is different in the transition phase compared to the start-up phase. The corporate process in the start-up phase follows a more improvised approach focused on day-to-day issues. However, this does not seem to work in the transition phase. A long-term perspective is needed in the transition phase (Sutton & Rao, 2016; Flamholtz & Randle, 2012; Bhidé, 2003). Formal strategic planning is necessary to implement a strategy that anticipates the future (Flamholtz & Randle, 2012). A well-implemented approach is required to survive as a growing company (Flamholtz & Randle, 2012). However, a challenge in implementing a new strategy is time and effort. Managers often have a lack of time to deal with strategic issues. Hence, a long-term perspective of managers is needed to survive in the transition phase.

### 2.3 Commitment to change (CC)

Attitudes towards changes vary from person to person. Lau and Woodman (1995) have described CC as a “specific attitude towards change”. Other scholars delve deeper into this specific attitude towards changes. Conner (1992) describes CC as “the glue that provides the vital bond between people and changes goals” (p. 147). This definition of CC is purely based on human psychological factors, such as acceptance of the need for change (Conner, 1992; Jaros, 2010). Armenakis and colleagues (Armenakis et al., 1993; Armenakis & Harris, 2009) have based their definition of CC on the willingness to support changes based on five fundamental change beliefs: (a) the belief that the change is needed (*discrepancy*), (b) the specific change is the correct one for the specific situation (*appropriateness*), (c) the change can successfully be implemented in the organization (*efficacy*), (d) formal leaders are committed to the success of the change (*principal support*), and (e) there is a benefit for employees in the change (*valence*). Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) have conceptualized CC as “a force (mind-set) that binds an employee to a course of action deemed necessary for the successful implementation of a change initiative” (p. 475). Unlike other researchers, they see CC as a multidimensional concept that allows researchers to have a more person-centered approach than a variable-centered one. For this research, the definition of Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) will be used. This person-centered approach reflects how combinations of different CC are related to people’s reactions towards changes (Bouckenooghe et al., 2015).

By explaining the concept of CC, employees’ motivations to be committed can vary (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). These motivations are divided into affective CC, continuance CC, and normative CC. These three components are based on the framework of organizational commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1991). However, the three-component model of Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) focuses on organizational changes because “commitment is arguably one of the most important factors involved in employees’ support for change initiatives” (Hercovitch & Meyer, 2002, p. 474). Moreover, Parish et al. (2008) stated that “employee commitment to a change is a better predictor of behavioral support for a change than organizational commitment” (p. 33). The three components measure CC through 18 items (see Appendix A). The three-component model is relevant to this research because the model is a guideline in the analysis of CC.

**Affective CC.** Affective CC can be described as the desire to change based on beliefs (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Affective CC is “change based on a belief in its inherent benefits” (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002, p. 475). Employees who desire to change are more likely to attend work frequently (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Employees want to outperform themselves and do tasks the best they can. Thus, affective committed employees take an extra step in their work (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002).



**Continuance CC.** Continuance CC reflects “a recognition that costs are associated with failure to support the change” (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002, p. 475). Continuance CC is related to the perceived cost for employees. Employees consider the costs of leaving the organization and avoid these costs (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Employees with continuance CC perform a bit better in the context of change than is required to maintain employment (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002).

**Normative CC.** Normative CC is the perceived obligation towards organizational change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Employees who have a sense of duty seem to attend work if it is part of the employee’s task or role (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Furthermore, if employees with a normative CC receive rewards, employees are more likely to do their job (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Thus, normative committed employees support changes when they feel obligated.

The three components of CC are still used in recent research (e.g., Cinite & Duxbury, 2018; Bakari et al., 2020; Jung et al., 2020; Ahmed & Cheng, 2018; Adil, 2016). However, Bouckenooghe et al. (2015) has criticized using the three-component model. There is an increasing number of studies that habitually adopt the three components. Yet, scholars use the model without critically considering relations between the components and employees’ behavior support towards change. Behavioral support of employees is “central to determining change initiatives will succeed or fail” (Bouckenooghe et al., 2015, p. 581). Behavioral support can be distinguished in three different forms of behavior: compliance behavior, cooperation behavior, and championing behavior (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Compliance behavior is a passive form of support for change (Bouckenooghe et al., 2015). An individual makes minimal effort to support the change (Gellatly et al. 2006) and is bound towards an action (Bouckenooghe et al., 2015) to prevent failure to comply with changes (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Cooperation and champignon behaviors are more active forms of support and depend on an individual's mindset (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Bouckenooghe et al., 2015). Cooperation behavior implies that an individual goes along with the change's spirit. However, the changes require little sacrifices of the individual (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Championing behavior refers to the considerable personal sacrifice of the individual (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). An individual promotes the value of the change to others inside and outside the organization (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Bouckenooghe et al. (2015) conclude that all three CC components correlate to behavioral support. However, affective CC and normative CC are strongly positively related to all behavioral support measures (compliance, cooperation, and championing behaviors). Yet, they found a negative correlation between continuance CC and cooperation and championing behaviors.

### 3. Research methodology

#### 3.1 Research design

An inductive single case study was conducted to understand factors impacting CC while scaling up. Yin (2003) defines a case study as an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not evident” (p.13). The case study approach best fits the explorative nature of this study (Denscombe, 2014). Case study research focuses on a few cases to provide an in-depth meaning of a complex problem (Denscombe, 2014; Rashid et al., 2019). The advantage of focusing on one case is the “greater opportunity to delve into things in more detail and discover things that might not have become apparent through more superficial research” (Denscombe, 2014, p.36). Moreover, a case study is often used in exploring subjects through inductive logic (Denscombe, 2014). The inductive nature of this study allowed the researcher to search for patterns in data to develop a theory. The researcher chose a single case study because of two reasons. A single case study allowed the researcher to create more complex data with more in-depth details than multiple case studies (Gustafsson, 2017). Second, a single case study creates high-quality data since a single case study gives researchers more time to produce a different and rich view (Dyer & Wilkins, 1991; Gustafsson, 2017). Thus, an inductive single case study provided a more in-depth meaning in exploring complex phenomena.

#### 3.2 Case characteristics

The case in this study is a high-tech energy company based in the Netherlands. The company focuses on supplying solar panels to customers (B2C) and businesses (B2B). Moreover, as of November 2021, the company has become an energy supplier to its customers. Three founders started the company in 2012. All three founders are still working in the company and own 100% of the company's shares. The company has 175 employees working in seven departments: marketing, sales, development, operations, customer service, finance, and human resources (see Appendix B).

Additionally, Appendix C includes the personal characteristics of all employees in the case. These personal characteristics were included in this research for two reasons. First, to check the representativeness of the sample and the group interview participants compared to the whole company. Second, to check for the effect of demographic variables in this research.

Several demographic variables were taken into account, which might influence employees' CC: gender diversity, age, and tenure. Several scholars found a positive relationship between CC and tenure (Van der Voet et al., 2016, Wright et al., 2012; Herscovitch and Meyer, 2002). Employees with longer tenure are more likely to have a higher CC. Employees with a shorter tenure may experience

more difficulties responding to changes due to little comparison of other changes. Moreover, prior research showed an association between age and employees' reaction to change (e.g., Caldwell et al., 2009; Devos et al., 2007). Mangundjaya (2015) expected that younger persons are more likely to have a higher CC since younger people are more adaptable to changes or more open to new ideas. Despite expectations, the findings showed that older people had a higher commitment score. Lastly, gender might also relate to employees' CC. Some scholars did not find a significant association between gender and CC (e.g., Bouckenooghe et al., 2014; Chen & Wang, 2007). However, other scholars found an association between gender and organizational commitment, a construct related to CC (Nohe et al., 2013). Therefore, gender is also included in this study.

Table 3 shows characteristics that indicate the transition phase of the company. In January 2020, the company's transition phase started by developing a new business model. By doing so, the company is defining a strategic direction. Defining strategic direction is the first characteristic indicating that the company is scaling. Therefore, the timeframe of this research was the past two years.

**Table 3.** Characteristics of the transition phase of the company (based on Picken et al., 2017; website of the case company)

Characteristic of the transition phase	Characteristics applied to the company
Define strategic direction and Positioning products/services in an expanded market	From January 2020 until November 2021, the company has developed the strategic direction towards Smart Energy. Smart Energy is a reformed business model to supply energy at hourly instead of monthly prices. On November 15, 2021, the company had launched Smart Energy and actively communicated its new direction to customers. This indicates an expansion of product and services offerings to meet the needs of the company's customers, which refers to the transition phase.
Maintaining customer/market responsiveness	The company has stability in their way of working. For example, sales and customer service departments have standardized processes to respond to customers. Moreover, the feedback loop from customer service and sales to product development is direct. Employees can give feedback instantaneously to product development. This has been established in the internal feedback process of the company. Thus, the maintaining of

	customers and the market responsiveness of the company indicate the transition phase.
Building an organization and management team	The vacancies of management functions indicate the development of the management team, which refers to the transition phase. The company has multiple management vacancies for the finance and customer support department.
Develop effective processes and infrastructures	The company has developed customer-facing activities such as financial processes and sales processes. However, the company is developing communication processes to communicate more formally. Moreover, on December 2, 2020, The company started setting up a recruitment process. Thus, the company is developing effective processes which indicate the transition phase.
	The infrastructure of the organization seems to be established. The organization has a well-defined structure with clear departments (see Appendix B). This indicates that the company is in the transition phase.
Developing an appropriate culture	On February 4, 2021, the company started to develop core values that reflect the organization's culture. The core values are: Simple, Innovative, Personal, Cheerful, and a Step Extra. This indicates the development of an appropriate culture which refers to the transition phase.
Dealing with risk	The company deals with risks by hiring experienced employees and setting up its infrastructure to respond to environmental change. Moreover, the development department employees have developed information and management systems themselves. This allows the company to respond to the changing environment better. This indicates the transition phase.

### 3.3 Data collection

The Retrospective Team Events and Affect Mapping (R-TEAM) approach is suitable in a case study for finding the effect of an event and exploring events and their impact over time (Van Dun et al., 2020). The R-TEAM approach “captures a team’s views on key events or arresting moments what happens in between, and the relationship with the team’s affective states” (Van Dun et al., 2020, p. 3). The R-TEAM approach allowed the researcher to look back at organizational changes occurring while scaling up. The R-TEAM approach revolves around a group interview (Van Dun et al., 2020).

Whereas single participants may have forgotten events or details, several team members bring back memories more precisely (Van Dun et al., 2020). The R-TEAM approach helped participants answer the more difficult question of visualizing CC while scaling up. Participants had drawn a line representing the development of CC over time.

Moreover, this approach allowed the researcher to ask more specific questions about factors impacting the development of CC. Four steps were followed in this research: (1) key informant meeting, (2) questionnaire, (3) group interview, and (4) validation of the mapped events and affective team states (Van Dun et al., 2020). The R-TEAM approach guides the research design, participant selection, data collection, and data analysis.

### **3.3.1. Phase 1 – Key informant meeting**

Semi-structured interviews with key informants were held to explore organizational changes and CC. Semi-structured interviews are flexible interviews where the interviewer has predetermined questions or topics (Denscombe, 2014). In addition to answering the questions, there is room for elaborating issues that the participant is interested in (Denscombe, 2014). Participants were asked which important organizational changes greatly impacted the organization today. Moreover, key informants were asked questions to indicate the development of CC and factors impacting the development of CC while scaling up.

The semi-structured interviews were held in the participants' mother tongue (Dutch) and audio recorded. The interview consisted of four parts and took about one hour (see Appendix D). Part 1 was the interview introduction in which the researcher, the research subject, and the discussion were introduced. Furthermore, the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were mentioned. In addition, permission was requested to record the interview. Part 2 was about the participant's demographics based on demographic variables that significantly impact CC (Van der Voet et al., 2016, Wright et al., 2012; Herscovitch and Meyer, 2002). Part 3 included questions regarding organizational changes. Questions were asked about organizational changes and their influence on the organization. An example of an interview question was: *“Which important organizational changes did the company experience?”*. Part 4 included questions about the development of CC and factors impacting CC while scaling up. An example of an interview question was: *“What changes did you find valuable?”*. Part 5 included the closure of the interview.

### **3.3.2. Phase 2 – Questionnaire**

After the key informant meeting, a questionnaire (see Appendix E) was distributed among employees working two years within the organization. The questionnaire was targeted at collecting information on critical organizational changes in the team's past (Van Dun et al., 2020) and

demographics/biographical data (Van Dun et al., 2020; Van der Voet et al., 2016, Wright et al., 2012; Herscovitch and Meyer, 2002). Furthermore, the questionnaire collected data about factors impacting CC while scaling up. Additionally, the goal of the questionnaire was to obtain data from employees from all different levels within the organization. An anonymity claim was provided to ensure the anonymity and privacy of the employees through the following statement: *“This survey is anonymous. Your answers will be anonymized. In addition, data from this survey will only be used for this research.”*. The questionnaire was used as support to establish the group interview.

The questionnaire was based on Van Dun et al. (2020). First, demographic questions were asked in the questionnaire. These demographic questions were used later to check whether the proposed participants matched the characteristics of the case company (Van Dun et al., 2020). Second, organizational changes were defined to ensure that all participants correctly understood the variable. Third, the questionnaire included questions about important organizational changes while scaling up. The following question was asked: *“What major organizational changes have occurred within the organization in the past two years? Describe this organizational change”*. Fourth, six questions regarding CC were asked. For example, *“Do you believe this has been a valuable change?”* and *“What factors caused you to believe in this change?”*. Fifth and last, the participants were asked which organizational members have the best overview of organizational changes. For this purpose, the following questions were asked: *“Which employees in non-leadership positions have the best overview of organizational changes during the last two years?”* and *“Can you explain why?”*. The questionnaire ended with a word of thanks.

### **3.3.3. Phase 3 – Group interview**

In the group interview, the researcher further examined organizational changes and CC while scaling up. The group interview was semi-structured and took about two hours (Van Dun et al., 2020). The proper atmosphere was created through a large meeting room with non-transparent walls, chairs in a half-moon, and a wide poster on the wall (Van Dun et al., 2020). Moreover, the researcher was already familiar with the participants, making it easier to make participants feel comfortable through small talk. Additionally, sticky notes were provided to easily patch and replace notes during the interview (Van Dun et al., 2020). The interview guide is described in Appendix F.

The group interview existed of five phases: (1) introduction, (2) brainstorming session of organizational changes, (3) drawing the development line of CC, (4) discussing factors that contribute to CC, and (5) the closing phase. The introduction phase included an explanation of the group interview and an anonymity and confidentiality claim. Moreover, participants wrote interview rules on sticky notes and pasted these sticky notes on the wallpaper. An example of an interview rule was: *“We*

*respect each other*". Third, the participants had reviewed the rules with each other. The brainstorming phase was aimed to find organizational changes in the past two years. An example of an interview question was: *"Which important organizational changes did the company experience in the past two years?"*. The participants wrote the organizational changes on sticky notes and placed these notes on the timeline. The participants discussed where the sticky note should be placed on the timeline. After a short break, the researcher asked the participants to draw a line of CC together. The researcher then asked why the timeline had this development line and what contributed to the participants' CC over the past two years. An example of a question was: *"If we were to draw a line on the poster visualizing your CC, how would that line run?"* and *"Can you explain why?"* to get a deeper understanding (Van Dun et al., 2020). Moreover, the researcher asked the participants' affective, normative, and continuance CC: *"What changes did you find valuable? Can you explain why"*, *"Which changes made you feel obligated to go along with the change?, Can you explain why "* and *"What change made you doubt whether you wanted to continue working at the company? Can you explain why?".* In the closing phase, the researcher asked how the participant had experienced the group interview (Van Dun et al., 2020). Moreover, the researcher asked which participants wanted to participate in the validation group interview and presented the timeline to other colleagues. The researcher closed the discussion with a word of thanks for the time and effort of the group.

#### **3.3.4. Phase 4 – Validation of the mapped events and affective team states**

The output of the group interview was the timeline with organizational changes, the development of CC, factors impacting the development of CC, and a transcription of the group interview. The R-TEAM prescribes sharing the timeline with the other team members to validate the results (Van Dun et al., 2020). However, since this research did not investigate a team to itself but a whole organization, the researcher chose to validate the results in another group interview. Two participants of the first interview presented the timeline to six other colleagues. The researcher selected only two participants to minimize the group size. The two participants of the first group interview invited their colleagues to share their reaction by asking questions like: *"Is this an accurate picture of organizational change over the past two years?"* (Van Dun et al., 2020).

### **3.4 Participant selection**

#### **3.4.1 Key informant meeting**

All five managers and two interim managers of the departments were interviewed in the first phase of this study. The managers were interviewed because they have an overarching view of organizational changes within the department. Moreover, these managers also work across departments which allowed the managers to address organizational-wide changes. Additionally, interviews with managers allowed the researcher to examine managers' views on factors impacting

CC. As mentioned, the company is developing a management team. The customer service and finance department do not have a manager. Currently, two interim managers are taking over the work of the managers. These interim managers are former team leaders who have worked for at least two years. The interim managers have been working as managers for five and seven months. Their experience as both team leader and interim manager ensured that they understood organizational changes within the department and organization-wide changes. Employees had not yet participated in this study phase because they do not have an overarching view as managers have. However, employees provided input regarding critical organizational changes and factors impacting CC in other phases. This allowed the researcher to gather feedback from employees and managers to answer the research question.

The participants were approached via the internal communication channel Slack. The researcher first briefly explained the purpose of the study. Then the researcher explained why the participants were asked to participate in this study. Finally, the researcher scheduled a meeting with the participants.

### **3.4.2 Questionnaire**

In the second phase, a questionnaire was distributed among employees working within the case company for two or more years. The stratified sampling method was used to determine the sample of this research (Marshall, 1996). The researcher identified all 175 employees of the case company (see Appendix C). However, the transition phase started in January 2020. Therefore, the researcher identified all employees who had been working within the company for at least two years. A total of 74 employees were approached to participate in the questionnaire (see Appendix C). Eventually, 43 of the employees participated in the questionnaire and were determined as the sample of this study (see Appendix C)

A disadvantage of a questionnaire is a poor response rate (Denscombe, 2014). The researcher informed and enthused participants to fill in the questionnaire by attending one weekly kick-off meeting. In this kick-off meeting, the researcher clarified the subject and importance of this research. The participants were also approached through the internal communication channel Slack. The questionnaire had a response rate of 58,1 percent. Some employees did not respond to the questionnaire. This might be due to the reluctance of employees (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). Reluctance among employees may arise from over-surveying, meaning that employees are flooded with questionnaires (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). Remarkably, Empl\_4 indicated during the group interview: *“Usually, I do not participate in this kind of studies and questionnaires since we get so many. But I thought this was an interesting topic”*. Thus, reluctance among employees might explain that not all employees filled out the questionnaire.



### **3.4.3 Group interview**

The participants for the group interview were selected based on the nominations of employees in the questionnaire. The questionnaire included the question: *“Which of your colleagues in a non-managerial position has the best perspective on the changes of the past two years?”*. Participants were allowed to nominate colleagues they considered suitable for the group interview. Eventually, six employees were selected to participate in the first group interview (see Table 4). These participants were mentioned most often in the questionnaire. The researcher did not consider personal characteristics in the first group interview. However, the first group interview participants indicated that it would be good to invite participants with different personal characteristics in the validation interview because this might reflect the organization better. Therefore, the researcher included these demographics in the validation group interview. The founders and managers were not invited to the group interview to ensure that employees could speak freely. However, the key informant meetings included input from the founders and managers.

### **3.4.4 Validation of the mapped events and affective team states**

Six participants of the validation interview were selected based on the questionnaire and participants' personal characteristics (see Table 4). First, the participants of the validation group interview were nominated by employees who participated in the questionnaire. The researcher considered employees who were most often mentioned in the questionnaire. Second, the researcher took into account personal characteristics of the participants. The researcher invited employees of the departments not covered in the first group interview (customer service and operations). Moreover, the researcher invited participants with a shorter tenure to ensure that the average tenure of the group interview corresponded to the average tenure of the sample (see Table 4 and Appendix C). Additionally, more female participants were invited to correspond the gender proportion of the group interview participants with the sample. Lastly, the ages of everyone in the company are close together. Therefore, the researcher could not invite participants of completely different ages. However, the average age of the group interview participants approximately corresponded with the sample. Hence, the researcher took into account personal characteristics to correspond to the proportion of the sample.

**Table 4.** Overview of participants of the group interview and validation group interview

Participant	Department	Gender	Age (in years)	Tenure (in years)
<i>Group interview 1</i>				
Empl_1	Sales	Male	31	5,5
Empl_2	Sales	Male	29	5,5
Empl_3	Sales	Male	32	6
Empl_4	Development	Male	28	5
Empl_5	Marketing/HR	Female	27	3
Empl_6	Marketing	Male	25	5,5
<i>Validation group interview</i>				
Empl_7	HR	Female	28	3
Empl_8	Marketing	Male	35	2
Empl_9	Operations	Female	27	3
Empl_10	Development	Male	27	3
Empl_11	Sales	Male	25	2
Empl_12	Customer Service	Female	34	5
<b>Total/average</b>		<b>Total:</b> 8 male (67%) 4 female (33%)	<b>Average:</b> 29	<b>Average:</b> 4,0

### 3.5 Data analysis

#### 3.5.1 Key informant meeting

In phase 1, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews. The key informants provided information about organizational changes in the last two years and factors contributing to CC. The semi-structured were analyzed by making a list of all organizational changes and factors contributing to CC mentioned by the (interim) managers. This list of organizational changes and factors impacting CC was used as preparation and support for the group interview.

#### 3.5.2 Questionnaire

The data analysis of the questionnaire was similar to the data analysis of the key informant meeting. The researcher made a list of all organizational changes in the last two years and factors contributing to CC. This data was used as preparation for the group interview. Moreover, during the group interview, the researcher referred to organizational changes mentioned in the questionnaire.

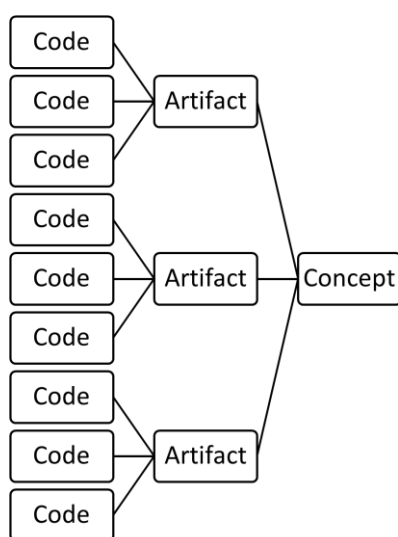
#### 3.5.3 Group interview

Both group interviews were automatically transcribed through transcribing software. The researcher examined the automatic transcripts for mistakes. Moreover, the transcripts were coded into a coding scheme. The coding software program Atlas.TI was used in the coding process. Coding helps interviewers analyze and interpret unstructured data from a transcript (Locke et al., 2020). Since

this study was inductive, the researcher did not predetermine codes. However, the researcher coded inductively.

The coding process was divided into three steps (see Figure 2): (1) making *codes*, (2) generating *artifacts*, and (3) searching for patterns (*concepts*) (Locke et al., 2020). In step 1, the transcript was labeled and organized into characteristics groups based on ideas, answers, and comments that seem to belong together (Locke et al., 2020). Codes labels were attached to comparable data from the transcript (Locke et al., 2020). In step 2, the codes were organized in artifacts. These artifacts gave more structure to the data and ensured that patterns could easily be recognized (Locke et al., 2020). Artifacts are comparable labels organized in buckets (Locke et al., 2020). In step 3, patterns were merged into concepts. These concepts helped explain patterns and are central to theory formation (Locke et al., 2020). Concepts are patterns in the artifacts which put together across labels (Locke et al., 2020). An example of the coding process is included in Appendix G. Moreover, a timeline was created by participants of the first group interview and checked by participants of the validation interview. This timeline is presented in the result section to provide an overview of organizational changes while scaling up and the development line of commitment.

Participants in the group interview used post-its to chart organizational changes over the last two years. Moreover, participants drew a line of commitment to change. The timeline of the group interview was digitalized, and organizational changes were clustered into groups. The organizational changes' clustering was based on a summarization of employees during the group interviews. Empl\_2 said: "If you sum it up, most organizational changes are changes in structure and processes, leadership, products and culture." The other participants confirmed this statement. Therefore, the organizational changes were clustered into five groups: culture (1), processes and structure (2), leadership (3), new products and services (4), and other (5).



**Figure 2.** Coding process (based on Locke et al., 2020)

### **3.6 Reliability and validity**

#### **3.6.1 Reliability**

The reliability of this study was assessed in several ways. The interviewer might impact the consistency and objectivity during a (group) interview (Denscombe, 2014). First, the researcher ensured consistency in the key informant meeting and group interviews by following a predefined interview guide (see Appendix D and F). Second, a pilot key informant meeting was held to check the interview quality and the planned procedures (Chenail, 2011). The researcher interviewed someone outside the case company to improve the data collection method. The researcher did not hold a pilot group interview due to the size of participants within the group interview. However, several times, the group interview guide was checked with people inside and outside the case company. Third, the researcher improved the interview skills by practicing the interview (Chenail, 2011). Hence, the consistency of the interview was ensured by following and controlling an interview guide and practicing interviews.

Moreover, the researcher improved the interviewer's objectivity during the key informant meetings and group interviews. First, the R-TEAM approach decreased researcher bias because the team participants reconstructed their history (Van Dun et al., 2020). Second, relying on the human memory of the researcher to remember the discussions which took place during the interview might cause bias (Denscombe, 2014). The key informant meetings were audio-recorded to reduce this bias. One participant indicated that he did not want the key informant meeting to be recorded. In this case, the researcher took field notes during the key informant meeting and soon after the key informant meeting (Denscombe, 2014). Usually, the R-TEAM approach requires the presence of two researchers for the group interview. Since this was individual research, two researchers could not attend the group interview. However, the group interview was also video recorded to observe behaviors that may not have been observed at first. The researcher included this behavior in the analysis of the group interview. Hence, several actions were taken into account to improve the objectivity of this study.

Additionally, the place of the interview increased the quality of both the key informant meetings and the group interviews. Participants should feel comfortable and convenient about the interview location (Herzog, 2012). The interviews took place in a meeting room with non-transparent walls. A meeting room within the company with non-transparent walls minimizes distractions and interruptions (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Lastly, it is essential to build trust because the participants need to be comfortable answering questions honestly (Doody & Noonan, 2013). The researcher showed empathy and listened actively (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Eye contact is also essential to build trust; however, it feels uncomfortable to have forced eye contact (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Therefore, the researcher and the participants sat diagonally next to each other during the key informant

meetings (Doody & Noonan, 2013). In this way, the participant could choose moments to make eye contact or not. Moreover, an appropriate interview guide increases a more comfortable interview with the participant (Doody & Noonan, 2013). The researcher built trust by mentioning the confidentiality and anonymity of the interview (Doody & Noonan, 2013).

### **3.6.2 Validity**

“The idea of validity hinges around the extent to which research data and the methods for obtaining the data are deemed accurate, honest and on target” (Denscombe, 2014, p. 335). The researcher took several actions to verify the data accuracy from the group interviews. First, bias in the key group interview was limited by asking open questions and asking for other data sources as a check. For example, the researcher asked for events noted in the questionnaire and key informant meetings (Van Dun et al., 2020). Second, the group interview was validated by conducting another group interview. Participants within the validation group interview added two organizational changes. These participants also agreed on the line of commitment to change. Hence, the validity of the group interview was ensured by using other data sources and a validation group interview.

Moreover, the representativeness of the sample was ensured in several ways. The personal characteristic corresponded more or less with the case company. The gender proposition and average of the sample were approximately equal to the case company characteristics. However, the average tenure of the sample is higher than the average tenure of the case company. This is explained by the fact that this study focused on employees who have been employed for at least two years. Hence, the sample proposition corresponded with the case company (see Appendix C).

Additionally, the representativeness of the participants during the group interviews was ensured (see Table 4 and Appendix C). A total of twelve employees participated in the group interviews of this research. First, the number of participants in every department was approximately compared to the department size. Notably, no finance employees participated in this research due to the lack of time of this department. Second, the participants' average was approximately equal to the average age of all employees within the sample. Third, mostly employees with a tenure of above five years participated in the first group interview. Therefore, participants with a tenure of two to three years participated in the validation interview. This brought the tenure of the participants more in proportion to the average tenure of the sample. Fourth, more female employees had participated in a validation group interview to correspond to the proportion of the sample. Hence, the proposition of the group interviews corresponds with the sample.

Additionally, this study took also into account demographic variables in the analysis. Empl\_4 imagined that employees with longer tenure (five years or more) are more likely to be committed than

employees with a shorter (zero to two years). Empl\_4 said: *“ I am wondering how employees with a two-years tenure look at these changes. I can imagine they are less committed because they did not experience the start-up phase. As a result, they may have less of a sense of duty to go along with changes change.”*. Empl\_2 continued: *“This group interview mainly consists of employees with a tenure of five or more years. It might be interesting to include employees with a two-year tenure in the second group interview”*. Five out of six employees had two to three years of tenure in the validation interview. More female employees participated in the validation interview to examine the effect of gender on CC. Surprisingly, the group interview showed other effects of demographic variables than mentioned in the literature (Van der Voet et al., 2016, Wright et al., 2012; Herscovitch and Meyer, 2002; Mangundjaya, 2015). Employees’ tenure and gender did not play a role in employees’ CC. Employees confirmed the line of CC and factors contributing to CC. The researcher could not examine the effect of age on CC due to the lack of variation in employees’ ages within the group interview.

Finally, the validation group interview showed that the participants of the first interview drew a decent timeline of the past two years. Two organizational changes were added during the validation session. Participants in the validation session also indicated that the line of CC was an accurate view of the development of CC. Thus, the group interview generated a reliable timeline of CC while scaling up.

## 4. Results

Within the two-hour group interview, the researcher was able to reconstruct the transition phase and link organizational changes with CC during this period of two years (see Figure 3). The timeline shows three periods of CC while scaling up. The first year is identified as a period of *disturbance* of CC. During this period, the CC decreased due to several organizational changes. Yet, the CC rose at the beginning of 2021. This period is identified as a time of *revitalization*. After a time of revitalization, employees’ CC was reduced. The last period is determined as a period of *reduction*. Several factors contributing to CC development were determined during the group interview. Hence, The analysis showed factors contributing to affective CC, normative CC, and continuance CC.

### 4.1 Disturbance

The transition phase began in January 2020. Employees’ CC was relatively high; however, the **relocation** (see Figure 3) was the first organizational change that reduced employees’ CC. First, participants indicated the relocation caused a **reduction of personal attention** (see Figure 3) from their leaders. Empl\_5 explained: *“In the old building, we were a start-up. The old building was tiny, and I had a lot of contact with my managers. But when we moved, we started to grow, and the personal attention of my manager became less”*. Empl\_5 added: *“I think personal attention is important. After the relocation, I noticed that the personal attention became less. As a result, my commitment went down.”*

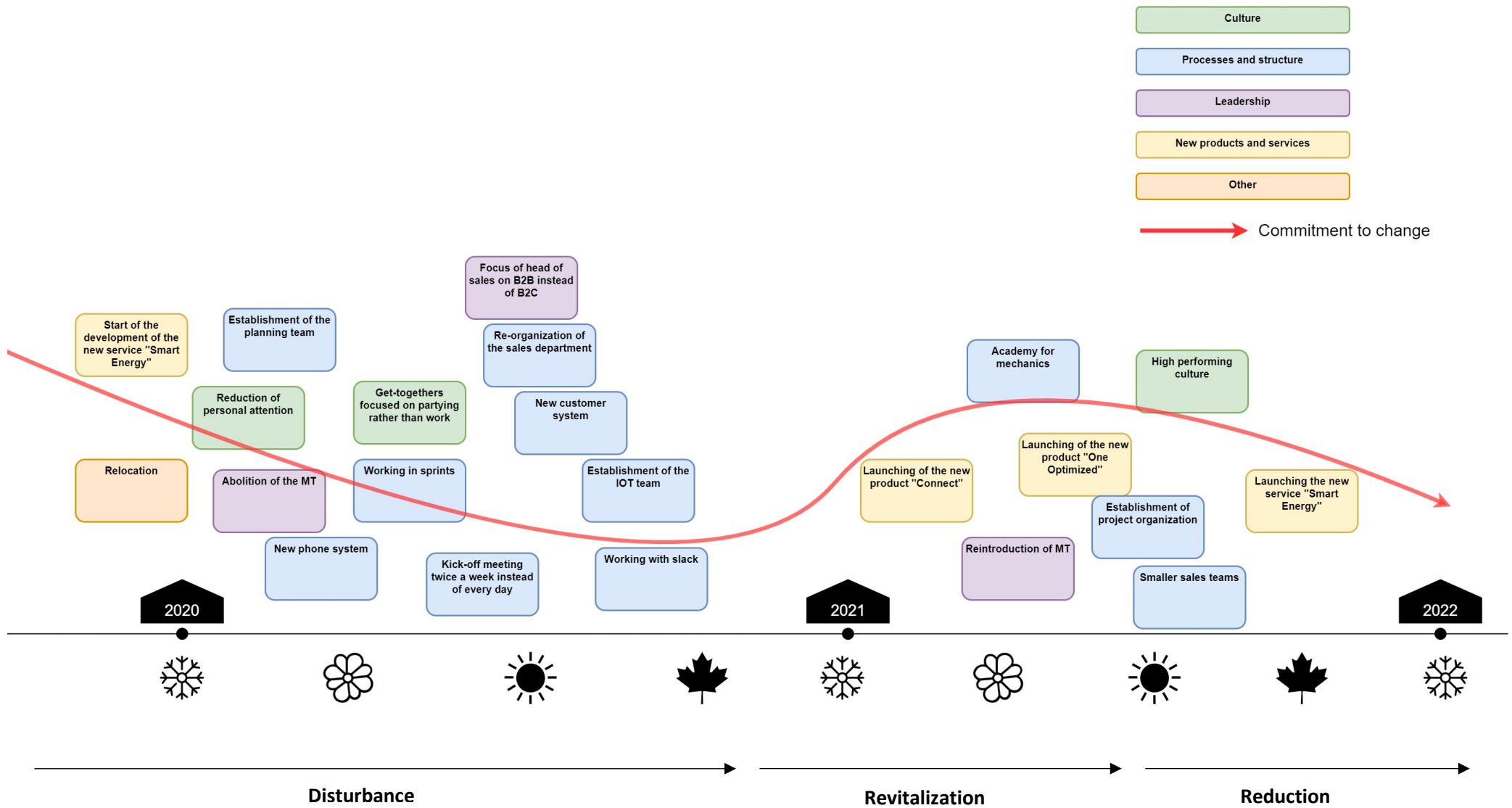


Figure 3. Timeline of the group interview

Participants indicated that they no longer felt the duty to go along with changes (normative CC). Participants mentioned that reducing personal attention was very important to their CC and should be placed on the timeline. Second, participants felt less connected with colleagues of other departments since the relocation. Empl\_4 explained: *“Our new building is larger and has many floors. I used to have a lot of contact with people from other departments because we were on the same floor.”*. Empl\_9 indicated during the validation interview that the lack of connection was due to the relocation and change in leadership. Empl\_9 referred to the **abolition of the Management Team (MT)** (see Figure 3): *“Due to this [abolition of the MT], departments started to cooperate much less with each other [...]”*. Therefore, the group added this organizational change to the timeline. Third and last, participants also wanted to be involved during change processes. The relocation caused a reduction of involvement during change. Participants indicated that this involvement contributed to their belief in the value of organizational changes (affective CC). Empl\_3 explained: *“ [...] we were more involved in changes in the old building. We could come up with ideas for changes, and we were kept informed of changes. We could also contribute to changes while working. I felt very involved, which gave me a much better understanding of the value of change.”*. Hence, the relocation and the abolition of the MT caused a disturbance in employees’ CC.

Another essential organizational change at the beginning of the transition phase was **developing the new service Smart Energy** (see Figure 3). Smart Energy is a reformed business model to supply energy at hourly instead of monthly prices. Empl\_4 noticed: *“Smart Energy ensures that we can better respond to the changing market.”*. However, Empl\_3 indicated that the lack of communication caused a decrease in CC: *“There was no communication. [...] we missed the updates about our new business model. This really made me feel less committed. This could be done much better. Maybe that's because we have gotten bigger.”*. Empl\_1 added: *“Managers must communicate the organizational change.”*. Thus, employees find communication by leaders essential to understand the value of organizational changes (affective CC).

Moreover, participants noticed **informal get-togethers** (see Figure 3) as an essential indicator of the changing working environment. The informal get-togethers focused more on partying than work-related topics. Empl\_4 explained: *“I think the informal events have become much more superficial. Many partying [...] however these events were also meant for work-related topics.”*. This made participants feel less involved in organizational changes. Empl\_2 said: *“I used to show up at a get-together with an idea for a change. If this was a good idea, I was allowed to work on it. Now I first have to write six pages about the change, and it can take up to six months before the change is actually implemented due to the management's decision-making process. This really makes me feel less committed to changes.”*. Participants linked the informal get-togethers to an increase of a formal



organization. The company increasingly ensured a common way of working through structures and procedures. This also applies when it comes to initiating organizational changes. If employees want to initiate organizational changes, they must describe the change in six pages. The management will evaluate this document more formally. The group interview pointed out that participants did not feel the need to initiate change. Hence, the formalization decreased employees' affective CC.

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Furthermore, participants mentioned that the organizational culture had become more bureaucratic at the beginning of the transition phase. Empl\_3 said: *"This [culture change] should certainly not be underestimated."* Empl\_6 mentioned a growing distance between employees and the management during the past two years. Empl\_6 said: *"It [distance between employees and the management] has the opposite effect on us. Because of that distance, I am less comfortable with the*

*changes, and I do not feel the need to change*". Therefore, an increase in bureaucratic culture negatively impacted participants' perception of change (affective CC).

Moreover, due to the growing bureaucratic culture, the distance between colleagues and a lack of team spirit increased. Participants indicated these changes in culture make them less committed to organizational changes. Empl\_4 explained: *"You have to know someone's name first, then it's easier to have a conversation with each other. [...] I do not know everyone by name. Therefore, I am not so quick to have a chat with them. This results in the distance between employees."* Empl\_3 added: *"There is loss of team spirit. I used to enjoy working on a goal together. Now I feel that everyone is a separate individual, and we are no longer a team. As a result, we do not have a common goal, and I am much less committed."* Concluding, a bureaucratic culture is negatively related to normative CC.

After these culture changes, there have been changes in the organization's processes and structure. The company has developed **new methods and systems** (see Figure 3), **reorganized the sales department** (see Figure 3), and **established new teams** (see Figure 3). Empl\_6 explained: *"We need the new structure and processes to respond to new changes in the future. We can easier launch new products with better processes and structure"*. The timeline especially shows structure and process changes in the first year of the transition phase. Participants mentioned that their CC declined even more around this time. The decline in CC was not due to the nature of the changes but rather due to the way changes were communicated. For example, employees were more likely to resist organizational changes when managers did not communicate the organizational change (normative CC). Empl\_3 said: *"When we launched the new customer system, there was absolutely no explanation of this system. I did not want to go along with this change and use the new customer system."* Hence, communication by leaders contributes to employees' normative CC.

Participants mentioned a decrease in commitment when they did not experience motivational and inspiring leadership. For example, the **reorganization of the sales department** resulted in a lack of motivational and inspiring leadership. Empl\_6 explains: *"I think the head of sales in that sense was the motivator and inspirator of the whole department in the years before. Now we no longer have that. That's a stupid move."* Empl\_4 confirmed this: *"But I think it is an incomprehensible choice the company made. [...] you're not going to let a head of the biggest department do something else."* Inspiring and motivational leadership can be linked to individualized consideration by leaders. Empl\_2 added: *"[...] there is much less focus on the individual employee"*. This made Empl\_2 feel no longer obligated to go along with change (normative CC): *"I used to have a real sense of duty to go along with new things. But because of this, I do not have that anymore."* Empl\_3 said: *"As of January 1, I have*

*another job. This is one of the reasons I chose to leave.*" (continuance CC). Hence, individualized consideration is positively related to normative and continuance CC.

Inspiring and motivational leadership can also be linked to vision sharing. Participants mentioned that leaders should ensure an understanding of the vision behind the change. Empl\_1 said: *"Vision sharing is important to understand the value of this change [the reorganization of the sales department]."* Empl\_5 reacted: *"[...] my manager creates a distance between the changes and myself. Because I do not know what the change means."* However, Empl\_2 said: *"Manager X communicates very differently. Manager X takes me up on the change and asks me for input. This makes me feel the value of the change much more."* All participants confirmed the importance of vision sharing. Thus, sharing vision positively contributed to participants' affective CC.

Moreover, participants also believed in the value of the changing processes and procedures when they expect positive results (affective CC). Participants want information about the change at the beginning of the change process. Participants find it is essential that the changes contribute positively to organizational performance, team performance, and customer experience. Empl\_4 explained: *"The effects of the changes should ensure better team performance"* and *"changes should lead to better organizational results"*. Empl\_6 continued: *"For example, the establishment of the planning team. Manager Y told us that this led to customers' frustration decline. After a while, I noticed a better customer experience."* However, when participants perceived the negative results of the change, participants did not believe in the value of the change. Empl\_6 explained: *"I don't see any effects [the new customer system]. It only makes my work more complicated. I did not find this change valuable"*.

Last, participants indicate that rewards increase their CC. Both tangible and intangible rewards are essential to participants. Both ensure that participants are more willing to change and have a more positive view of organizational changes. Employees also feel that they are not resisting change because they are rewarded (normative CC). Empl\_1 said: *"You can express appreciation in money, but also in things like compliments [...] I think both are very important"*. Empl\_5 noticed: *"We had had a good year, so we went skiing together. After this, I felt much more committed. I went along with changes because we just had had some fun."* However, participants did not receive an increase in salary at the end of 2020. Empl\_2 noticed: *"Despite the growth, we did not receive a salary raise. This was demotivating"*. This demotivated employees to go along with organizational changes. Concluding, rewards increased participants' normative CC.

## 4.2 Revitalization

Figure 3 shows that CC increased at the beginning of 2021. Eml\_3 said: *“It may not be an organizational change. But I just want to say that as an organization, we can be proud of our success despite Covid-19”*. Eml\_6: *“That is indeed a very good point. This was also mentioned during the end-of-year presentation. This has ensured that I made me feel much more positive regarding organizational changes.”*. Thus, during the Covid-19 crisis, organizational success positively contributed to employees’ attitude towards change.

Moreover, participants mentioned that **the launch of the new products Connect and One Optimized** (see Figure 3) positively influenced their CC. The participants indicated that they were changing to own-brand products. Whereas the company first used software and hardware from its suppliers, it has become completely independent of suppliers with these products. Customers reacted positively to this, as the company had built a trustworthy name. Participants believed that these product changes were valuable (affective CC). Eml\_1 explained: *“[...] We started to offer something beautiful. Customers were very enthusiastic about our own products. This was great for sales because we sold more.”*. Eml\_6 said: *“These new products I thought were awesome. I felt committed to these changes because selling new products to customers was fun. These products were also for added value for the customer”*. Eml\_12 added in the validation group interview that she wanted to know which organizational changes the organization had planned. Eml\_12 noticed that communication by leaders and involvement are important factors: *“[...] I think it is important to what extent you are already aware of what changes are coming.”*. Thus, the new products and services and change communication contribute to affective CC.

Furthermore, participants in the validation group interview added that their CC also increased due to **the reintroduction of the MT** (see Figure 3). Eml\_9 noticed that departments started to collaborate more when the MT was reintroduced: *“We had not MT for six months. When this was re-introduced, we started working together more.”*. However, the re-introduction of the MT did not only have positive results. Participants indicated that the re-introduction of the MT caused other organizational changes, which negatively contributed to their CC. Eml\_7 said: *the re-introduction of the MT resulted in the project organization, the launch of Smart Energy, and the introduction of a high-performance culture”*. Eml\_4 added: *“With those first two products, my commitment increased. However, this decreased when Smart Energy launched.”*. Hence, this resulted in the end of revitalization and the start of the reduction period.

### 4.3 Reduction

In the last period, participants' CC decreased due to the lack of communication by leaders during several changes. First, participants indicated that their CC went down due to **the establishment of the project organization** (see Figure 3). The project organization refers to cross-departmental collaboration. Employees work in teams on projects, for example, projects regarding developing new products and services. Other teams engage in projects regarding the development of policies and procedures. The project teams exist of employees of different layers and departments of the organization. Empl\_5 explained: *"It is harder to speak to each other and collaborate due to the company's growing size. Therefore, the MT initiated the project organization."* Empl\_2 reacted to this with: *"This is totally new for me"*. This reaction indicated that he was not aware of this organizational change. Other participants agreed with Empl\_2. Second, the company initiated **a culture change towards a high-performing organization** (see Figure 3). This change was not communicated to all employees as well. Empl\_2 said: *[...] this is another change I do not know about"*. Third, participants indicated the **launch of Smart Energy** (see Figure 3) came out of nowhere for most participants. Empl\_4 mentioned that employees were not kept informed during the development of Smart Energy: *"Sometimes my manager does tell me that changes are coming. For example, Smart Energy. But when the organization was developing this new product, I heard nothing about it."* Empl\_1 continued: *"I had the same experience. When Smart Energy was launched, I felt like the change was being forced upon me, which demotivates me to go along with this change"*. Thus, employees are more likely to oppose organizational changes when their manager does not communicate (normative CC).

Moreover, Empl\_5 mentioned that the extent to which employees were involved in this change depended on the department employees were working. Empl\_5 said: *[...] I work partly in the HR team. Therefore, I am more involved in this [project organization] change. However, I do not think this is communicated within, for example, the sales department."* Empl\_4 said: *"It is actually quite unfortunate that most of this group did not know about this organizational change [the project organization]. Yet, this affects our whole way of working."* Empl\_1 mentioned once again the negative impact of the lack of change communication: *"Because this [the project organization] is not communicated, I have no idea what it means. Because of this, I also do not believe in the value of the change."* Thus, communication by leaders appears to be an important factor contributing to affective CC.

Lastly, the second validation interview showed **the sales department was divided into smaller teams** (see Figure 3) due to the organization's growth. Empl\_12 explained: *"We started working in smaller teams [...] this made us work much better together."* Empl\_12 indicated to be committed to this change due to the positive effects. However, Empl\_12 mentioned having a decreased CC in general

due to the lack of change communication. Hence, participants have added another organizational change in the validation group interview, yet, they agreed with the line of CC.

## 5. Conclusion and discussion

### 5.1 Conclusion

This single case study was conducted to explore factors that contribute to the development of CC while scaling up by asking the following research question: “*What factors contribute to developing and keeping employees’ commitment to organizational change that occurs while scaling up?*”. This study analyzed factors contributing to CC based on the three-component model of Herscovitch and Meyer (2002). The conclusion is summarized in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Factors contributing to the development of CC while scaling up

	Affective CC	Normative CC	Continuance CC
<i>Leadership</i>			
Individualized consideration of leaders	+	+	+
Vision sharing by leaders	+		
Communication by leaders	+	+	
<i>Culture</i>			
Formalization	-		
Distance between employees and managers	-		
Team spirit		+	
Employees’ involvement during change	+		
Perceived change results by employees	+		
(In)tangible remuneration		+	
New products and services	+		

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that several factors contribute to CC while scaling up. The case company grew in terms of employees during the transition phase. The company relocated to a bigger building due to the expected growing size. Due to the companies’ growing size and the relocation, the leaders’ individualized consideration towards employees decreased. This means that employees felt less able to talk about personal circumstances with managers. As the company grew and the individualized consideration went down, employees no longer felt the sense of duty towards their leader to go along with changes (normative CC). Moreover, participants only once mentioned being continuance committed to change. The sales department was reorganized due to the growing size of the company. The reorganization of the sales department resulted in a smaller extent of motivational and inspiring leadership because the sales manager was relocated to another department. Participants indicated a decrease in individualized consideration. Employees mentioned

having doubts about staying in the company; one participant mentioned leaving the organization mainly because of this. Hence, participants take into account individualized consideration in their choice to stay within the company.

Additionally, the analysis showed that participants expect leaders to be visionary. Understanding the vision behind the change was important to understand the value of the change. However, participants indicated that the results of change should be positive to understand the change. Hence, sharing vision through emphasizing the positive results of change contributed positively to affective CC.

Understanding the vision of organizational change was closely related to communication by leaders. For example, the analysis showed that the organization formalizes during the transition phase. Participants indicated several changes regarding processes and structures. Not the nature of these changes decreased employees' CC but rather how these changes were communicated. Due to the lack of communication, employees had a hard time understanding the vision behind the change (affective CC) and were more likely to resist organizational changes (normative CC). In contrast, employees indicated to support changes when leaders communicated organizational changes. For example, participants noticed that the management accurately communicated the launch of several new products. Hence, communication strengthened employees' affective and normative CC.

The launch of new products and services was also an essential factor in employees' willingness to change. Employees found that new products and services were important for customer experience and the company's performance. It can be concluded that employees need to perceive the positive results of the change to understand its value. Hence, employees were more willing to change when they perceived positive change results.

Moreover, the company's growing size caused a decrease in employees' involvement during the change process. Before the relocation, participants could initiate organizational changes. However, this became less when the company moved to another building. Moreover, participants had to initiate changes more formally, which slowed down the initiating process, decreasing participants' CC. Participants mentioned the importance of involvement during change. When participants felt involved during the change process, they believed more in the value of the organizational changes. Hence, employees' involvement during the change process contributes to affective CC. However, the change initiating processes and structures decreases employees' affective CC. Thus, it can be concluded that the nature of changes in processes and structures contributed to CC.

Furthermore, employees indicated that the organizational culture of the case company changed during the transition phase. The culture went from a flexible culture to a more bureaucratic

culture. This changing culture decreased employees' CC in two ways. First, employees felt less comfortable towards change because their relationship with their manager became less personal. Employees had less need for change due to hierarchical distance between the management and employees (affective CC). Second, in the former building, employees felt a sense of duty to go along with organizational changes due to the team spirit and the common goal. However, the changing culture resulted in a loss of team spirit and less connection between colleagues. Employees no longer felt their colleagues' duty to go along with changes.

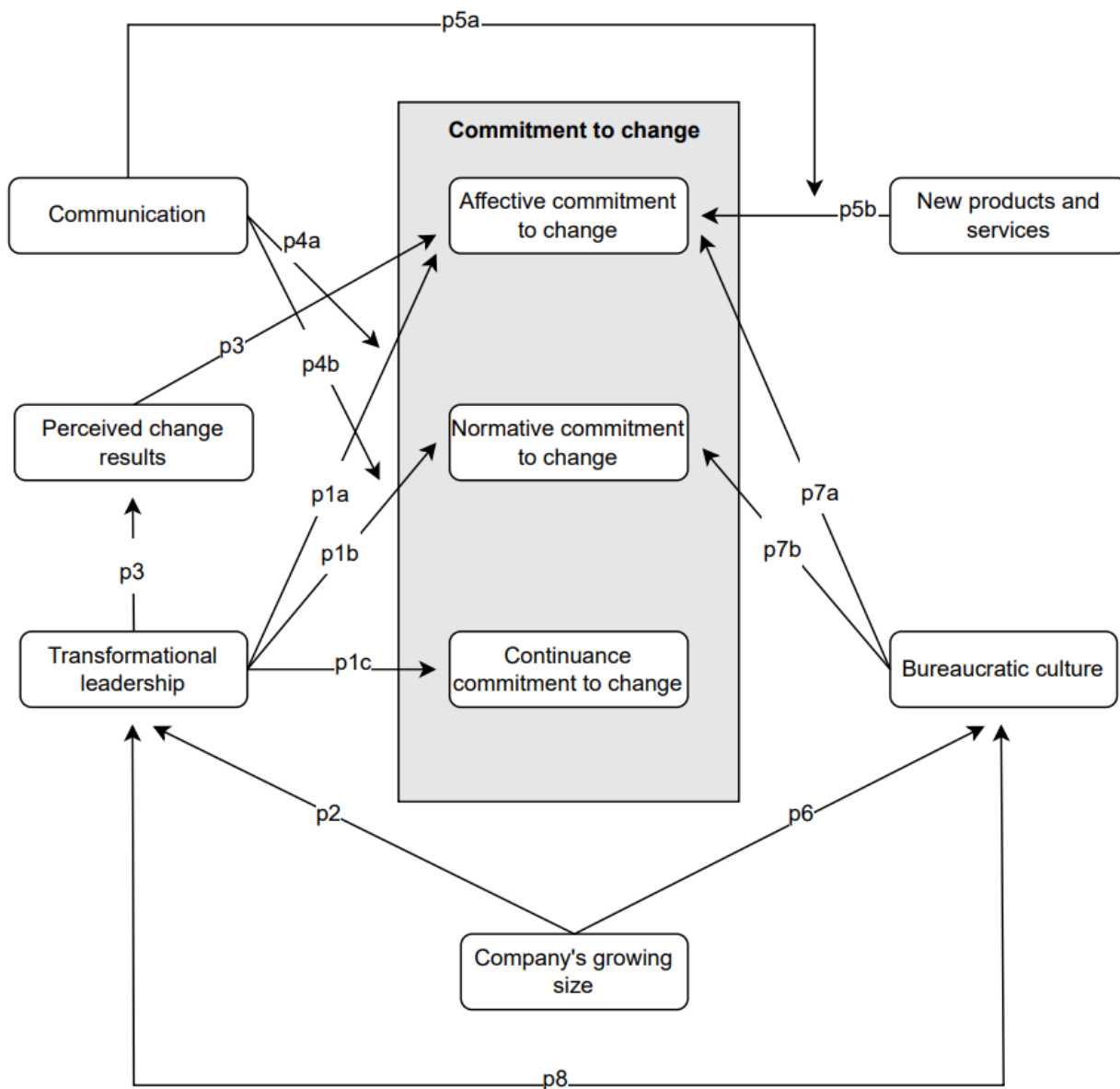
Finally, the analysis showed that (in)tangible rewards positively affected motivation to go along with change. Especially, employees find their managers' appreciation important to go along with changes. Employees felt the duty to change when their leader shows appreciation. However, participants were also more likely to go along with organizational changes when they went on a trip with colleagues. Thus, rewards positively increased participants' normative CC.

Concluding, leadership, culture, employees' involvement during change, new products and services, and remuneration contribute to employees' CC while scaling up (see Table 5). Taking the context of this study into account, the researcher noticed that the company has grown in the number of employees during the transition phase. The growing size had caused several factors contributing to employees' CC. The growth caused changes in culture and leadership. Moreover, the formalizing nature of the transition phase was essential for the future. However, the analysis showed that this also negatively contributed to employees' affective CC. The last notable characteristic of the transition phase is the development of new products and services. The analysis showed that new products and services positively contributed to employees' affective CC. Communication played an important role in vision sharing, initiating changes, and developing and launching new products and services. Hence, the context of this research played an essential role in employees' CC.



## 5.2 Discussion

This study showed that several factors contribute to the development of employees' CC while scaling up. The findings were discussed while comparing the findings with CC studies in other contexts. Since this is an inductive study, a conceptual framework was developed presenting the propositions of this study (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Conceptual framework of the propositions

**Transformational leadership.** Transformational is an essential factor that contributes to the development of CC. Different scholars have examined transformational leadership in the context of CC (Van der Voet et al., 2016; Abrell-Vogel & Rowold, 2014; Ahmad & Gelaidan, 2011; Yu et al., 2002). Transformational leaders emphasize organizational change (Bass 1985; Eisenbach et al., 1999). Transformational leadership focuses on “articulating a vision, fostering the acceptance of group goals,

and providing individualized support, effective leaders change the basic values, beliefs, and attitudes of followers so that they are willing to perform beyond the minimum levels specified by the organization” (Podsakoff et al., 1996, 260). Transformational leadership stimulates, inspires, and motivates employees to go along with changes (Van der Voet et al., 2016). The analysis showed several characteristics of transformational leadership: vision sharing, involvement during change, (in)tangible remuneration, and individualized consideration (see Table 5).

Transformational leaders stimulate employees to be creative and develop innovative solutions regarding the organizational change (Van der Voet et al., 2016). The analysis showed that employees want to be involved during organizational change (see Table 5). Hence, employees’ involvement contributed to employees’ belief in valuable changes.

Additionally, the analysis showed the importance of remuneration. The analysis showed that intangible and tangible rewards contributed to employees’ attitudes towards change. Especially, intangible rewards ensure that employees’ behavior complies with expectations (Ahmad & Gelaidan, 2011). Michaelis et al. (2009) also stated that employees are likely to repay their charismatic leaders for their support and encouragement. The analysis showed that employees felt a sense of duty towards their leader to go along with changes due to these rewards (normative CC; see Table 5) (Ahmad & Gelaidan, 2011). Individualized consideration is a typical example of intangible remuneration and motivation of transformational leaders (Li et al., 2019). Individualized consideration refers to “the leader being able to recognize and understand the developmental needs of followers, listen to their concerns, and treat them equally” (Li et al., 2019, p. 4). The analysis showed that individualized consideration of leaders contributed to normative and continuance CC (see Table 5). However, the extent of transformational leadership changed in the transition phase due to the company’s growing size. Due to an increasing number of employees had joined the company, leaders had less and less time for personal attention to employees (lack of individualized consideration). The lack of consideration made employees hesitate to stay with the company. The analysis also showed that employees were more likely to stay with the company when they experienced leaders that motivated and inspired them. Hence, transformational leadership is positively related to affective, normative, and continuance CC while scaling up.

*Proposition 1: Transformational leadership relates positively with (a) affective CC, (b) normative CC, and (c) continuance CC.*

*Proposition 2: The company's growing size negatively relates to transformational leadership.*

Another dimension of transformational leadership is charisma. Michaelis et al. (2009) showed a positive relation between charismatic leaders and affective CC. Charismatic leaders are role models to employees in change implementation. Charismatic leaders are “likely to be able to recognize the need for the use of a particular innovation and develop high levels of affective commitment to change” (Michaelis et al., 2009, p. 403). Particularly, charismatic leaders share a vision about the need for change, which influences employees’ perceived organizational results of change (Michaelis et al., 2009). The analysis of this case showed that employees had to perceive the need for a particular change to show supportive behavior towards change (see Table 5). Leaders need to share the importance of the change to give employees a positive perspective on the results of change. Sharing vision about the positive results of changes creates a sense of urgency among employees (Kotter, 2008). The analysis showed that transformational leadership could explain employees’ affective commitment, especially when employees perceive positive change results. Hence, it can be concluded that perceived results of changes mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and affective CC.

*Proposition 3: Perceived change results mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and affective CC.*

**Communication.** Communication is essential in vision sharing on why organizations want to implement a specific change (Shum et al., 2008). Transformational leaders inspire people to believe in the value of the change (affective CC) through vision sharing. Ouedraogo & Ouakouak (2018) showed that communication positively relates to affective CC. Sharing change-related information provides the basis for developing expectations towards change (Portoghese et al., 2012). Shum et al. (2008) agreed that communication is essential in change and stated that organizational change strengthens employees’ CC. Moreover, change communication results in a “greater opportunity to participate, developing positive expectations of the change process and showing a high level of CC” (Portoghese et al., 2012, p. 588). A study by Dolphin (2005) indicated that internal communication especially affects CC positively. Furthermore, Zainun et al. (2020) added that internal communication helps managers transfer and understand organizational changes. The analysis indicated a lack of communication by leaders resulted in a decreasing understanding of the value of the change among employees (affective CC; see Table 5). Employees were more likely to oppose specific organizational changes because their manager did not communicate the organizational change (normative CC; see Table 5). Failure to develop effective communication may lead to resistance to change, resulting in a negative attitude towards change (Elving, 2005; Zainun et al., 2020). Thus, communication moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and affective and normative CC

*Proposition 4: Communication moderates the relationship between (a) transformational leadership and affective CC and (b) between transformational leadership and normative CC.*

Communication is also an essential factor in developing and launching new products and services. The analysis showed employees' enthusiasm when it comes to new products and services. New products and services are drivers of the high-tech company, as in this case (Buenechea et al., 2018). Employees indicated to be more affective committed due to the launch of new products and services (see Table 5). The analysis showed the value of new products and services to customer experience and company performance. The analysis showed that communication plays an important role in understanding the value of new products and services. Understanding the value of new products and services depends on the degree of communication. Hence, communication moderates the relationship between new products and services and affective CC.

*Proposition 5: Communication (a) moderates the (b) relationship between new products and services and affective CC.*

**Organizational culture.** The changing organizational culture characterizes the transition phase of the case company. Organizational culture is defined as “the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.” (Schein, 1991, p. 313). Organizational culture refers to organizational members' key values, assumptions, understandings, and norms (Hofstede, 2005). Organizational culture creates a strong belief in organizational changes, increasing the ability to change.

The analysis showed several changes in the culture of the case company while scaling up (see Table 5). First, the organizational culture became more formal in terms of processes and structures. Second, the distance between employees and managers and among colleagues increased. Third, employees indicated a more holistic culture referring to a decreasing focus on individual employees. These cultural characteristics can be characterized as a bureaucratic culture (Wallach, 1983; Mohelska & Sokolova, 2018). A bureaucratic culture refers to the organizational hierarchical, procedural, and structured aspects. Cameron and Quinn (2011) would typify this culture as a hierarchical culture, referring to a more formal and structured workplace with hierarchical layers. Looking at the characteristics of the transition phase, one could discuss the foreseeability of the growing bureaucratic culture. After all, the companies in the transition phase develop new processes and structures to deal with risks and respond to customers (Picken, 2017). Moreover, the growing nature of scaling

companies requires appropriate management and decision-making structures (Picken, 2017). Hence, the analysis showed a growing bureaucratic culture.

The CC literature has shown similarities and contradictions regarding the effect of bureaucratic culture on CC. Odom et al. (1990) stated that organizations with a culture that empowers autonomy and flexibility rather than controlling and order score higher on CC. This statement is supported by several scholars (Shum et al., 2008; Harris and Ogbonna's, 2000; Marchalina et al., 2018). Contradicting, Olafsen et al. (2020) found a positive relation between stable culture (e.g., bureaucratic culture) and affective and normative CC. "The strength, rather than the type, of the organizational culture is vital for change commitment" (Olafsen et al., 2020, 191). Hill et al. (2012) have examined the influence of hierarchical distance on CC. Hierarchical distance is defined as "the number of organizational levels between an employee and top management". Senior leaders (leaders with a higher number of organizational levels between an employee and the leader) tend to have less understanding of challenges relating to implementing change than employees (Hill et al., 2012). This creates a discrepancy between senior leaders and employees. This discrepancy decreases the likelihood of successful changes (Repenning & Sterman, 2002). Furthermore, hierarchical distance negatively influences employees' perception of the need for change and its benefits (affective CC) (Hill et al., 2012). Hence, scholars found different relations between bureaucratic culture and CC.

The analysis showed several interesting points regarding organizational culture. The researcher concluded that the bureaucratic culture negatively influences employees' affective CC. Employees felt less comfortable with changes due to the distance between them and their manager (hierarchical distance). The analysis indicated that the hierarchical distance causes a negative perception towards change among employees. The analysis corresponds with Hill et al. (2012), referring to the negative effect of the distance between employees and managers on affective commitment (see Table 5).

Moreover, the analysis showed an increase in clear processes and structures. The increase of clear processes and structures increased the bureaucratic culture of the case company. The analysis showed that the organizational changes were mostly processes and procedures. A noticeable finding was that the nature of these changes impacted employees' CC differently. Employees found changes in processes and structures essential to anticipate the future. Moreover, the company's size increased bureaucratic aspects as new processes and structures. The structure and process changes resulted in a lack of freedom to conceive and implement organizational changes, decreasing employees' affective and normative CC. Hence, the case company required a more bureaucratic culture due to the growing size; however, this negatively related to employees' affective and normative CC.

*Proposition 6: The growing size of the company positively relates with the bureaucratic culture*

*Proposition 7: Bureaucratic culture negatively relates with (a) affective CC and (b) normative CC while scaling up.*

Additionally, organizational culture is closely related to leadership. Bass (1993) stated that organizational culture affects leadership and vice versa. One could discuss that the case companies' organizational culture decreased transformational leadership. Transformational leaders are more likely to work in a flexible organization than a bureaucratic organization (Massood et al., 2006). Bureaucratic organizations are more stable organizations with less degree of emphasizing organizational change. Contradicting, transformational leaders emphasize change (Michaelis et al., 2009). Moreover, hierarchical distance negatively influences employees' involvement during the change process, whereas transformational leaders involve employees during the change process (Van der Voet et al., 2016; Hill et al., 2012). The analysis showed a decrease in individualized consideration among leaders and a decrease in employees' involvement during change. On the other hand, the analysis showed that the decrease in individualized consideration increased the holistic nature of the organizational culture. Employees indicated that the change in leadership increased the bureaucratic culture. Therefore, a mutual relationship between bureaucratic culture and transformational leadership was proposed.

*Proposition 8: Bureaucratic culture mutual relates with transformational leadership.*

## **6. Limitations and future research**

### **6.1 Limitations**

This study was performed to the best abilities of the researcher. However, a few limitations and suggestions should be considered starting with the single case study method. Although a single case study has its strengths, this research method's limitations should also be considered. The value of a single case study is that the researcher could delve into CC in more detail and create rich data (Denscombe, 2014; Gustafsson, 2017; Dyer & Wilkins, 1991). However, the critique of a single case study applies to this method's external validity or generalizability. Hence, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to other companies in the transition phase.

Furthermore, the results are limited because one researcher conducted this study. It is recommended to conduct similar studies with multiple researchers for two reasons. First, the transcripts were coded by one researcher, which decreases the reliability of this study. Inter-reliability coding is broadly accepted as essential to increasing the data analysis quality in qualitative research (Sweeney et al., 2013). Data can be interpreted differently when multiple researchers have coded the

data (Barbour, 2001). For future research, multiple researchers should code the transcripts of the group interviews. Second, the R-TEAM method subscribes to facilitate the group interview by two researchers (the main moderator and an assistant) (Van Dun et al., 2020). The moderator should lead the group interview so that “everyone feels heard, difficult topics are shared, respondent bias is decreased, and the discussion remains constructive” (Van Dun et al., 2020, p. 27). More experienced qualitative moderators are advised to do this (Van Dun et al., 2020). The assistant's tasks are more focused on facilitating the moderator (Van Dun et al., 2020). Only one less experienced researcher had conducted the group interview, which decreased the researcher’s ability to consider the group dynamics. Recommended for other studies is to conduct group interviews with two experienced researchers.

Additionally, one could discuss the representativeness of the participants within the group interviews. It is debatable that twelve participants represent the case company employing 175 employees. However, the researcher compared the participants' characteristics with the characteristics of all employees within the case company. This comparison showed that the composition of the group interview is approximately in proportion to the case company. Hence, several actions were taken into account to increase the representativeness of the composition of the group interviews.

Finally, research has shown an association between age and employees’ reaction to change (e.g., Caldwell et al., 2009; Devos et al., 2007). Mangundjaya (2015) found that older people are more likely to be committed to change. The case company employs mainly people between 25 and 35 years. The group interview reflected the composition of age within the case company. Yet, the researcher could not examine the effect of age on CC due to the lack of variation in employees’ ages within the case company.

## **6.2 Future research**

Although this case is in some aspects unique, it is also an example of a broader set of companies that are scaling up. Therefore, future researchers should conduct similar case studies within scaling companies in other contexts. For example, future researchers could consider case studies within scaling companies in other countries. National culture can influence CC and employees’ behavioral support for change (Aldulaimi, 2018). Employees in other countries might prefer another way of change communication due to countries' high context and low context nature (Hofstede, 2005). Additionally, organizational culture is largely determined by a company’s environment, such as national culture (Gerhart, 2009). Therefore, the organizational culture of companies in other contexts might differ. For example, power distance results in a bigger gap between employees and managers,

enhancing a bureaucratic culture (Knein et al., 2020). Moreover, national culture is related to leadership style (Byrne et al., 2007). Organizations in other national cultures might have another dominant leadership style. For example, masculinity tends to decrease transformational leadership (Byrne et al., 2007). Hence, different organizational contexts might impact employees' CC while scaling up. A remark is that future researchers could consider a cross-cultural analysis using a multiple case study. Researchers can analyze data in different situations and contexts and compare data across situations with a multiple case study (Yin, 2003; Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake 1995).

Furthermore, the results' generalizability and validity can be extended by finding empirical evidence. Empirical support can be gathered to test the propositions of this study. In this way, managers can better understand factors significantly impacting CC and consider these factors when implementing organizational changes.

Additionally, this research focused on employees' CC because this is one of the most important predictors of a successful change implementation (Herscovitch and Meyer, 2002; Baraldi et al., 2010; Shum et al., 2008; Bakari et al., 2020). However, other scholars have examined leaders' attitudes towards change (e.g., Farahnak et al., 2020; Bommer et al., 2005; O'Neill et al., 2009). Abrell-Vogel and Rowold (2014) made a start into examining the moderating effect of leaders' commitment to change on the relationship between transformational leadership and employees' CC. However, there seems to be no research examining the direct impact of leaders' CC on the successfulness of change implementation. Therefore, future researchers should consider examining the effects of leaders' CC and exploring factors contributing to leaders' CC.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Theoretical implications**

CC has received a lot of attention in different research contexts (Raukko, 2009; Cho et al., 2017; Bakari et al., 2020; Erkutlu, 2016; Narine & Persaud, 2003; Neves et al., 2018; Chaudhry & Joshi, 2017; Conway & Monks, 2008). However, CC in the context of start-up to scale-up remains unclear since little research has so far been done in this area (Knight et al., 2020). This paper aimed to fill the gap in the literature and is the first in examining CC while scaling up. CC helps organizations to implement organizational changes successfully in the transition phase. This is an essential contribution to the literature because it extends knowledge of how start-ups can transform into scale-ups.

This study showed that transformational leadership, bureaucratic culture, communication, perceived change results, new products and services, and the company's growing size contribute to CC while scaling up. First, this study proposed a positive relationship between transformational leadership and affective, normative, and continuance CC. A caveat to this is that leaders need to create urgency



to change by giving employees a positive perspective on change results. Therefore, the relationship between transformational leadership and affective CC is moderated by communication and mediated by perceived change results. The relationship between transformational leadership and normative CC is also moderated by communication since employees feel more a sense of duty towards leaders who communicate clearly.

Second, this study showed the importance of new products and services, especially when considering the high-tech energy nature of the case company. Employees find new products and services valuable to customer experience and organizational performance. Employees are more likely to be committed to product and service changes when they experience clear communication. Therefore, this study proposed that communication moderates the effect between new products and services and affective CC.

Third, the organizational culture changed towards a more bureaucratic culture. The analysis showed a decrease in employees' sense of duty and belief in organizational change when the culture became more bureaucratic. Hence, this study proposed a negative relationship between bureaucratic culture and affective and normative CC.

Fourth and last, the company's growing size is an important characteristic of the transition phase. The company's growing size caused a lack of time by leaders for individualized consideration. Moreover, the growing size caused another important characteristic of the transition phase: the development of new processes and structures. The development of new processes and structures typifies the bureaucratic nature of the organizational culture. Hence, the company's growing size is positively related with bureaucratic culture and negatively related with transformational leadership.

## **7.2 Practical implications**

Although this study analyzed one case and the conclusion cannot be generalized to all organizations, there are a few takeaways for managers from start-ups (that are scaling up). Moreover, change consultants could benefit from this study when implementing organizational changes. Managers and change consultants could benefit from the knowledge about the critical role of CC in change success. Change success is essential because start-ups must undergo several organizational changes before scaling up.

The researcher believes that managers must understand their crucial role in employees' CC. Awareness could help managers improve organizational changes' success. First, managers should consider developing and sharing a clear vision when initiating and implementing organizational changes. Second, employees take into account the results of organizational changes. Managers should consider this when developing a clear vision. Third, managers should involve employees during change.

Employees' involvement is essential for employees to believe in changes. Fourth, managers should develop a clear way of communication when initiating changes and during the change process. Failure in developing effective communication might lead to resistance to change and negative attitudes towards changes (Elving, 2005; Zainun et al., 2020). Fifth and last, the researcher suggests that managers should consider the needs of followers, listen to their concerns and treat them equally (individualized consideration; Li et al., 2019). Individualized consideration ensures that employees feel the duty to their leader to change and makes employees willing to stay within the organization. In this case, managers had less time for their employees to consider followers' needs and listen to employees' concerns. The researcher suggests that managers must make time for individualized consideration. Hence, managers should consider actions emphasizing the transformational leadership style since transformational leadership positively impacts affective, normative, and continuance CC.

Another factor contributing to CC is the changing culture in the transition phase. Start-up cultures are more likely to be flexible to react to business opportunities and the companies' environment (Renko et al., 2015). However, the organizational culture seems to change in the transition phase. The analysis showed that the organizational culture became more bureaucratic. The bureaucratic culture refers to a growing distance between employees and managers and formalization in processes and structures. One could discuss the foreseeability of the bureaucratic culture due to the company's growing size. For example, the transition phase is characterized by developing new processes and structures to anticipate the company's growing size. However, managers should consider preserving aspects of a more flexible culture (as in the start-up phase). Transformational leaders are more likely to fit in a culture that stimulates flexibility and autonomy (Massood et al., 2006). The analysis showed that employees were more likely to be committed to change when they experienced freedom in initiating changes and autonomy in implementing changes. Thus, managers should pay attention to the increasing bureaucratic culture and take actions to preserve start-up cultural aspects.

Moreover, the analysis showed the importance of new products and services in the context of this study: the high-tech energy industry. Employees' enthusiasm within the case company played an important role in employees' CC. Employees found the development and launch of new products valuable and essential for customer experience and the case company's performance. Managers should consider communicating new products and services at the beginning of the development process. In this way, managers could involve employees in developing new products and services, which increases employees' affective CC. Hence, communication contributes to a higher affective and normative CC when initiating new products and services.

Lastly, change consultants could learn from the R-TEAM approach used in this study. Employees indicated that especially the group interviews positively impact their CC. Employees were enthusiastic about discussing the organizational change history of the company. Employees indicated that there is much to be learned from the company's history. Moreover, employees felt heard and more committed to change due to involvement during the group interview. Especially, employees appreciated talking to someone about organizational change which was not their manager. Employees felt free to open up and share their opinion on organizational change and CC. Moreover, employees indicated that the group interviews brought departments together and found it interesting to become aware of colleagues' opinions on organizational changes and CC. Hence, the R-TEAM approach brought employees closer together and can be used as an intervention to increase employees' CC.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Commitment to change items

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**Table 6.** CC items (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002)

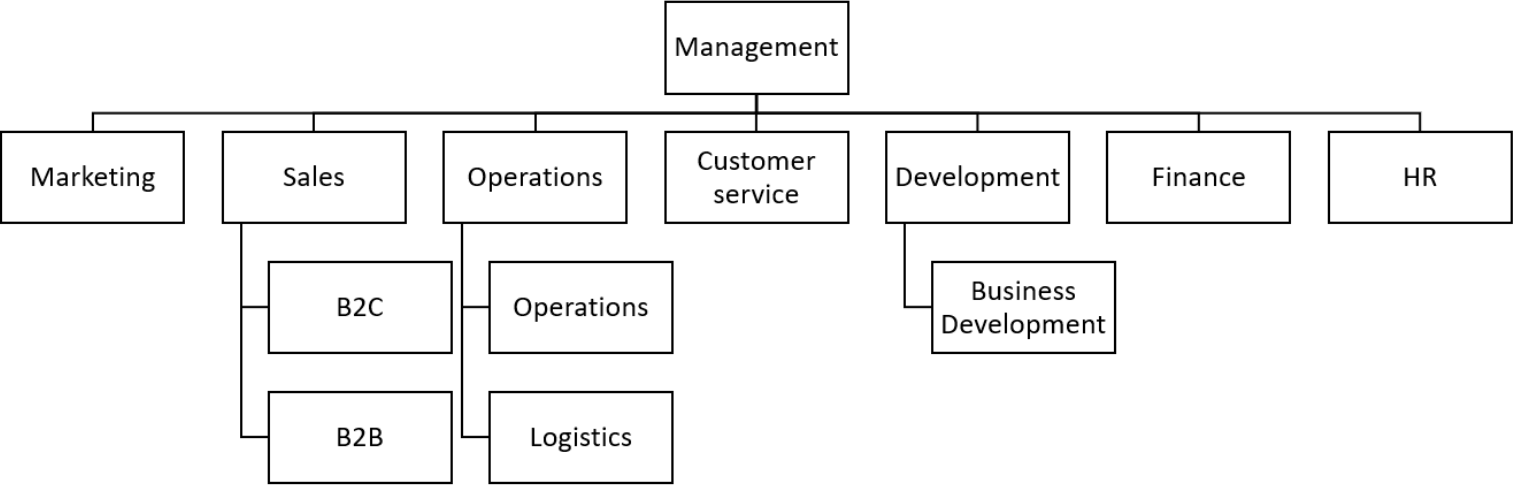
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Affective commitment items	AC1: I believe in the value of this change. AC2: This change is a good strategy for this organization. AC3: I think that management is making a mistake by introducing this change. (R) AC4: This change serves an important purpose. AC5: Things would be better without this change. (R) AC6: This change is not necessary. (R)
Continuance commitment items	CC1: I have no choice but to go along with this change. CC2: I feel pressure to go along with this change. CC3: I have too much at stake to resist this change. CC4: It would be too costly for me to resist this change. CC5: It would be risky to speak out against this change. CC6: Resisting this change is not a viable option for me.
Normative commitment items	NC1: I feel a sense of duty to work toward this change. NC2: I do not think it would be right of me to oppose this change. NC3: I would not feel bad about opposing this change. (R) NC4: It would be irresponsible of me to resist this change. NC5: I would feel guilty about opposing this change. NC6: I do not feel any obligation to support this change. (R)

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**Appendix B: Organizational Structure**



**Figure 5.** The organizational structure of the case company

### Appendix C: Personal characteristics of employees

**Table 7.** Overview of personal characteristics

		Personal characteristics of all employees within the case company				Personal characteristics of the sample			
Department	Subdepartment	Number of employees	Gender diversity	Average age (in years)	Tenure (in years)	Number of employees	Gender diversity	Average age (in years)	Tenure (in years)
Marketing		19	12 male 7 female	27,0	2,9	6	4 male 2 female	27,8	4,3
Sales	Sales B2C	69	58 male 11 female	26,7	2	16	14 male 2 female	28,6	3,8
	Sales B2B	5	4 male 1 female	29,6	3,5	1	1 male 0 female	31	5,3
Development	Development	17	16 male 1 female	33,9	3	4	4 male 0 female	29	4
	Business Development	2	2 male 0 female	30,5	5,5	0	0 male 0 female	-	-
Operations	Operations	17	14 male 3 female	31,8	2,2	4	3 male 1 female	29,8	3,2
	Logistics	8	7 male 1 female	28,6	1,8	1	1 male 0 female	26	2
Customer Service		15	5 male 10 female	28,3	3	7	2 male 5 female	32	5
Finance		5	3 male 2 female	29,2	3,8	1	1 male 0 female	40	7
HR		18	7 male 11 female	28,3	2,3	3	1 male 2 female	27	3,7
<b>Total/ average</b>		<b>Total:</b> 175	<b>Total:</b> 128 male (73%) 47 female (27%)	<b>Average:</b> 29,4	<b>Average:</b> 3	<b>Total:</b> 43	<b>Total:</b> 31 male (72%) 12 female (28%)	<b>Average:</b> 30,1	<b>Average:</b> 4,2

## **Appendix D: Key informant meeting**

(based on Van Dun et al., 2020)

### **Deel 1: Inleiding**

#### *Voorstellen*

De onderzoeker en de participant stellen zich voor.

#### *Doel van het onderzoek*

Allereerst wil ik je hartelijk bedanken voor je deelname aan dit onderzoek. Mijn naam is Marlies Rengers en ik ben bezig met mijn afstudeeronderzoek voor de Master Business Administration. Jouw bijdrage in dit afstudeeronderzoek is erg belangrijk. *Naam van het bedrijf* heeft veel veranderingen ondergaan en ondergaat nog steeds veranderingen. De afgelopen twee jaar is *naam van het bedrijf* bijvoorbeeld bezig geweest met de transitie naar Slimme Energie. 15 november was het zover, de stap naar Slimme Energie! Door jouw bijdrage worden veranderingen zoals deze nog succesvoller en kunnen we samen Nederland steeds meer verduurzamen. In dit interview blikken we terug op veranderingen van de afgelopen twee jaar.

Het doel van dit interview is het in kaart brengen van veranderingen die in deze twee jaar hebben plaatsgevonden. Veranderingen doen wat met mensen. Daarom onderzoek ik waarom jij en jouw team je verbonden voelde (of juist niet) met deze veranderingen. Het interview zal ongeveer een 5 kwartier duren en bestaat uit drie onderdelen.

Ik heb jou benaderd voor dit onderzoek omdat je een manager bent van de afdeling ... Managers hebben over het algemeen een meer overkoepelende kijk op welke veranderingen plaatsvinden binnen teams en binnen een organisatie. Daarnaast ben ik ook benieuwd welke factoren volgens jou hebben bijgedragen aan de verbondenheid van jou en je team.

#### *Anonimiteit en vertrouwelijkheid*

Dit groepsinterview is anoniem. Je antwoorden worden geanonimiseerd in dit onderzoek. Daarnaast wordt data uit deze interview enkel gebruikt voor dit onderzoek.

#### *Opbouw*

- Algemene vragen over jou
- Vragen met betrekking tot organisatieveranderingen en verbondenheid van jou en jouw team
- Afsluiting en gelegenheid om dingen te bespreken die niet aan bod zijn gekomen

### *Opname van het interview*

Zou ik dit interview mogen opnemen om er zeker van te zijn dat ik niks mis in de analyse?

### **Deel 2: Demografische gegevens**

Demografische gegevens zijn belangrijk omdat uit onderzoek blijkt dat deze invloed lijken te hebben op verbondenheid van medewerkers (Van der Voet et al., 2016, Wright et al., 2012; Herscovitch and Meyer, 2002; Mangundjaya, 2015).

Onderwerpen:

- Leeftijd
- Hoe lang werkzaam bij *naam van het bedrijf*

### **Deel 4: organisatieveranderingen en verbondenheid van medewerkers**

#### *Organisatieveranderingen*

Organisatieveranderingen zijn veranderingen in de werkwijze van het bedrijf (Del Val & Fuentes, 2003). Deze veranderingen in de werkwijze hebben als doel dat de organisatieperformance verbetert en dat het bedrijf beter kan inspelen op haar omgeving. Er bestaan twee types organisatieveranderingen changes (Del Val & Fuentes, 2003; Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010; De Wit & Meyer, 2010 Arazmjoo & Rahmanseresht 2019; Greenwood & Hinnings, 1996). Type 1 organisatieveranderingen zijn kleine veranderingen die onderdelen van de organisatie verbeteren, maar de gehele werkwijze van het bedrijf verandert niet. Type 2 organisatieveranderingen zijn strategische en revolutionaire veranderingen. De gehele werkwijze, de concurrentiepositie en de basisvaardigheden van het bedrijf veranderen door type 2 organisatieveranderingen.

- Welke belangrijke strategische veranderingen hebben plaatsgevonden in de afgelopen twee jaar?
- Hoe hebben deze veranderingen invloed gehad op de organisatie?
- Doorvragen: Hoe bedoel je? Wat betekent dat? Kun je een voorbeeld geven? Waarom? Wat zijn andere organisatieveranderingen die hebben plaatsgevonden?

### *Verbondenheid van medewerkers*

*Affective commitment:* Wat heeft ervoor gezorgd dat jij/je team wilde veranderen? Waarom? Wat zie je dan? Kun je een voorbeeld geven?

*Continuance commitment:* Wat heeft eraan bijgedragen dat jij/je team werkzaam zijn gebleven bij naam van het bedrijf? Waarom? Wat zie je dan? Kun je een voorbeeld geven?

*Normative commitment:* Wat heeft eraan bijgedragen dat jij/je team zich verplicht voelden om te veranderen? Waarom? Wat zie je dan? Kun je een voorbeeld geven?

### **Deel 5: afsluiting**

Wil je nog iets kwijt na aanleiding van de vragen die ik heb gesteld?

Ik ga een enquête sturen naar alle medewerkers die minimaal twee jaar bij het bedrijf werkzaam zijn. Deze enquête gaat over organisatieveranderingen en factoren die de verbondenheid van medewerkers beïnvloeden. Als laatste gaat er een groepsinterview plaatsvinden waar we ingaan op organisatieveranderingen van de afgelopen twee jaar en factoren die bij hebben gedragen aan de verbondenheid van medewerkers bij deze veranderingen. Met behulp van de informatie uit dit interview, de enquête en het groepsinterview ga ik onderzoeken waarom medewerkers zijn verbonden aan organisatieveranderingen in de transitie van een start-up naar een scale-up organisatie.

Hartelijk bedankt voor je tijd. Voor vragen mag je altijd langslopen bij mijn kantoor of me mailen via: [m.e.rengers@student.utwente.nl](mailto:m.e.rengers@student.utwente.nl).

### **Appendix E: Questionnaire**

(based on Van Dun et al., 2020)

#### **Deel 1: Inleiding**

Beste ...,

\*Opening interview (zie opening key informant meeting: Appendix D)\*

Het doel van deze enquête is het in kaart brengen van veranderingen die in deze twee jaar hebben plaatsgevonden. Daarnaast onderzoek ik waarom jij je verbonden voelde (of juist niet) met deze veranderingen. Dit onderzoek ik omdat uit de literatuur blijkt dat de verbondenheid van medewerkers positief bijdraagt aan het succes van veranderingen.

Ik heb jou benaderd omdat je (meer dan) twee jaar werkzaam bent bij *naam van het bedrijf*. Hierdoor heb jij hoogstwaarschijnlijk een duidelijk beeld van de veranderingen die *naam van het bedrijf* de afgelopen twee jaar heeft ondergaan.

Deze enquête is anoniem. Je antwoorden worden geanonimiseerd. Daarnaast wordt data uit deze enquête enkel gebruikt voor dit onderzoek.

Het invullen van de enquête duurt gemiddeld een kwartier.

Voor vragen mag je me altijd slacken of mailen via: [m.e.rengers@student.utwente.nl](mailto:m.e.rengers@student.utwente.nl).

## Deel 2: Demografische gegevens

Demografische gegevens zijn belangrijk omdat uit onderzoek blijkt dat deze invloed hebben op verbondenheid van medewerkers.

1. Wat is je leeftijd?

2. Wat is je geslacht?

- Man  
 Vrouw  
 Anders

3. Hoe lang ben je werkzaam bij *naam van het bedrijf* (in jaren en/of maanden)?

4. Wat is je hoogst genoten opleiding?

- Lager dan MBO  
 MBO  
 HBO of universiteit maar geen diploma  
 (HBO of WO) Bachelor degree  
 (HBO of WO) Master degree  
 PhD  
 Anders

5. Op welke afdeling werk je?

- Marketing
- Sales B2C
- Sales B2B
- Operations
- Logistiek
- Customer Service
- Development
- Business development
- Finance
- HR

### Deel 3: Organisatieveranderingen

#### Vraag 1

\* Betekenis organisatieveranderingen (zie key informant meeting: Appendix D) \*

A. Welke belangrijke organisatie veranderingen hebben plaatsgevonden bij *naam van het bedrijf* in de afgelopen twee jaar?

*Noem eerst 1 verandering en vul daarna vraag B t/m G over deze verandering in. Daarna krijg je opties om meerdere veranderingen toe te voegen. Als het mogelijk is, geef dan een tijdsindicatie van wanneer de verandering plaatsvond. Probeer alle veranderingen te benoemen die jij belangrijk vindt.*

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B. Geloof jij dat dit een waardevolle verandering is geweest?

- Ja
- Nee

C. Welke factoren hebben ervoor gezorgd dat jij geloofde in deze verandering?

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D. Heeft deze verandering ervoor gezorgd dat je twijfelde of je werkzaam wilde blijven bij *naam van het bedrijf*?

Ja

Nee

E. Wat heeft ervoor gezorgd dat je werkzaam bent gebleven (of juist niet meer werkzaam wilde zijn) bij *naam van het bedrijf*?

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F. Voelde jij je verplicht om mee te gaan in deze verandering?

Ja

Nee

G. Wat heeft ervoor gezorgd dat jij je verplicht (of juist niet verplicht) voelde om mee te gaan in deze verandering?

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*\* Hier is de mogelijkheid gegeven om meerdere veranderingen toe te voegen \**



**Deel 4: groepsinterview**

Wie van jouw collega's in een niet-leidinggevende positie heeft het beste zicht op de veranderingen van de afgelopen twee jaar? (collega's die de (meeste) veranderingen hebben meegemaakt en daar hoogstwaarschijnlijk ook iets over kunnen vertellen)

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Waarom?

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**Deel 5: afsluiting**

Hartelijk dank voor het invullen van deze enquête! Met jouw hulp worden veranderingen bij *naam van het bedrijf* nog succesvoller en kunnen we samen Nederland steeds meer verduurzamen!

Mocht je nog vragen hebben dan mag je me altijd slacken of mailen via:  
m.e.rengers@student.utwente.nl.

**Appendix F: Group interview**

(based on Van Dun et al., 2020)

**Deel 1: Inleiding (5 minuten – minuut 0-5)**

*Doel van het onderzoek*

\*Opening interview (zie opening key informant meeting: Appendix D)\*

Jullie zijn uitgekozen door collega's als de mensen met wie ik moet praten over zulke veranderingen. Het doel van dit interview is het in kaart brengen van veranderingen die in deze twee jaar hebben plaatsgevonden. Veranderingen doen wat met mensen. Daarom onderzoek ik waarom jullie je verbonden voelde (of juist niet) met deze veranderingen. Om dit te onderzoeken maken we een tijdlijn

met de veranderingen van *naam van het bedrijf* van de afgelopen twee jaar. Deze veranderingen mogen jullie op de post-its zetten en daarna op de tijdlijn plakken. In deze tijdlijn gaan we ook weergeven hoe jullie verbondenheid is geweest. Dus eerst de events, dan de link naar jullie verbondenheid.

#### *Anonimiteit en vertrouwelijkheid*

\*Zie anonimiteit en vertrouwelijkheid key informant meeting (Appendix D)\*

#### *Onderwerpen*

Het groepsinterview bestaat uit vier fasen.

1. Introductie
2. Brainstormsessie over organisatieveranderingen
3. Verbondenheid
4. Afsluiting

Hebben jullie nog vragen?

### **Deel 2: organisatieveranderingen en verbondenheid**

#### *Introductie (5 minuten – minuut 5-10)*

Omdat ik graag wil dat iedereen zich fijn voelt tijdens dit interview en open durft te praten stel ik voor dat we een aantal afspraken op papier gaan zetten. We gaan nu samen overleggen welke afspraken we willen maken om het groepsinterview goed te laten verlopen. Bijvoorbeeld: we luisteren naar elkaar, we laten anderen uitpraten, alle opmerkingen zijn waar. Jullie mogen allemaal een afspraak (of meerdere afspraken) op een post-it zetten. Daarna lopen we de afspraken gezamenlijk door.

Daarnaast is het de bedoeling dat iedereen ongeveer evenveel spreektijd krijgt. Daarom kan het zijn dat ik je soms onderbreek om de tijd te bewaken. Ik heb dit nog nooit eerder gedaan, maar ik ga mijn best doen om dit zo beleefd mogelijk te doen.

#### *Brainstormsessie (30 minuten- minuut 10-40)*

\* Betekenis organisatieveranderingen (zie key informant meeting: Appendix D) \*

- Op jullie stoelen liggen post-its.
- Schrijf in 10 minuten zoveel mogelijk belangrijke organisatie veranderingen die hebben plaatsgevonden in de afgelopen twee jaar op. Per post-it één verandering. Plaats daarna de post-its op de tijdlijn lijn (ook binnen deze 10 minuten). Als je dezelfde verandering als een

collega op hebt geschreven mogen jullie samen overleggen waar de post-it geplakt gaat worden.

- Daarna vraagt de onderzoeker of iemand iets wil vertellen over de organisatieverandering die de participant heeft opgeschreven.
- Extra vragen voor de onderzoeker zijn: “Kan je de organisatieverandering toelichten?”, “Wat gebeurde er precies in deze organisatieverandering?”, “Hoe heeft deze verandering invloed gehad op de organisatie?”, “Hoe bedoel je?”, “Wat betekent dat?”, “Kun je een voorbeeld geven?”.
- Dit proces wordt herhaald totdat alle post-its aan bod zijn gekomen.

#### *Commitment to change*

- Als we een lijn op de poster zouden trekken om de mate van jullie verbondenheid te visualiseren, hoe zou die dan lopen? Kan je uitleggen waarom? (als er geen consensus is dan kunnen we meerdere lijnen tekenen)
- Welke veranderingen vonden jullie waardevol? Waarom?
- Bij welke verandering twijfelden jullie of je werkzaam wilde blijven bij *naam van het bedrijf*?  
Waarom?
- Bij welke veranderingen voelden jullie je verplicht om mee te gaan in de verandering?  
Waarom?

#### **Afsluiting (10 minuten – minuut 110 – 120)**

- Hoe hebben jullie dit groepsinterview ervaren? Wat viel jullie op?
- Ik ga de opname uittypen om deze verder te kunnen analyseren.
- Ik ga nog een groepsinterview inplannen van ongeveer een uurtje. Dit ga ik doen met 6 andere collega's om de tijdslijn door te nemen en te kijken of zij iets missen of dingen anders zien. Ik zou graag één of twee van jullie mee willen nemen in dit interview om de tijdslijn te presenteren en uit te leggen. Wie zou dat willen doen?
- Heel erg bedankt voor jullie tijd en inzet!

## Appendix G: Example of the coding process

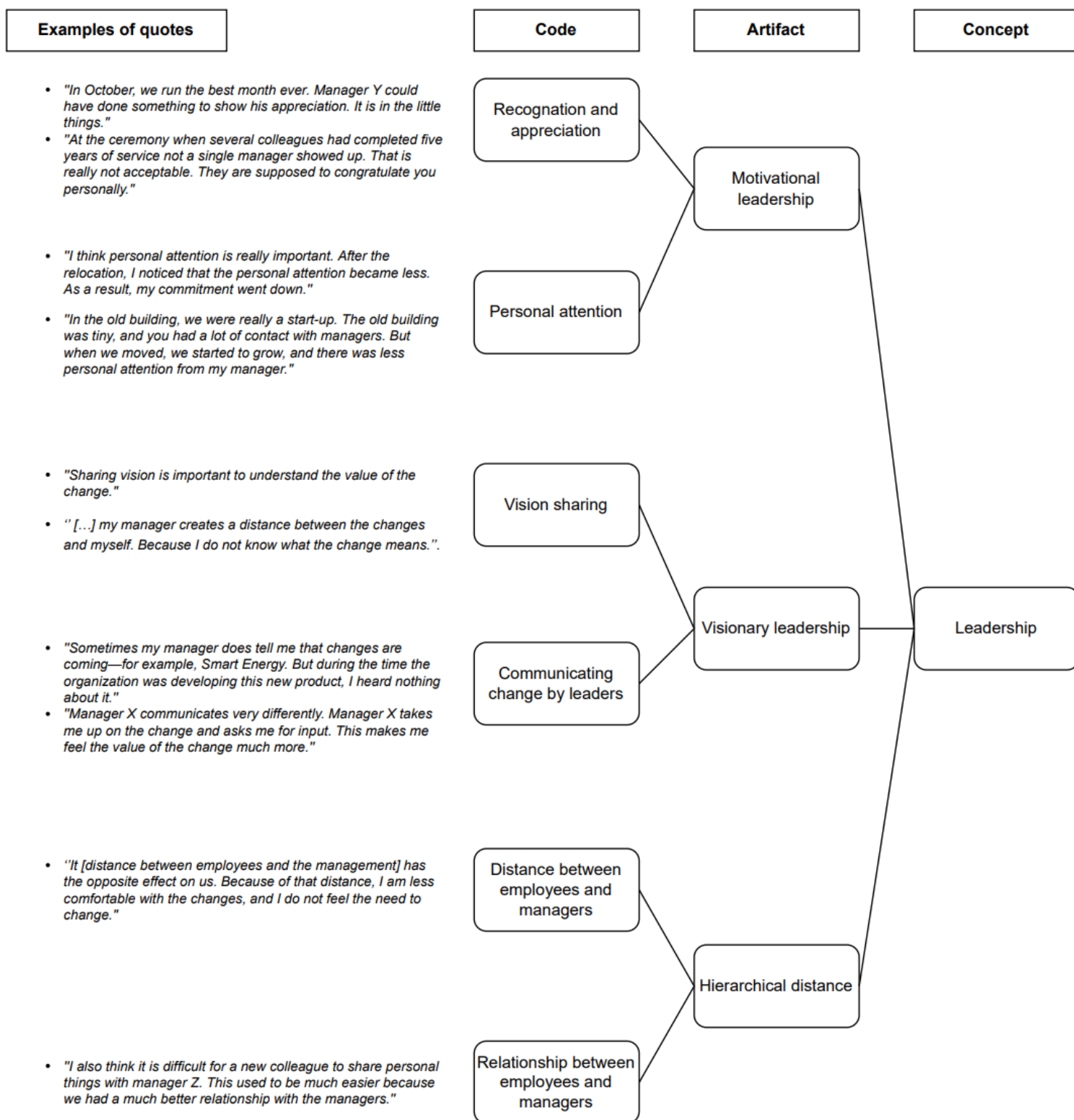


Figure 6. Example of the coding process