Abstract

Agile is an idea that has spread far within the corporate world and was originally designed for use in small, single-team project within IT. To this, limited is known about agile in larger settings and the purpose of this thesis is to explore the translation of agile in a large organization. Conducting an ethnographic study at SEB Pension & Försäkring we illustrate that the translation of agile imply adaption. We identify three processes of translation; (1) adaption through unifying the understanding of agile, (2) adaption through testing of agile elements, and (3) adaption through negotiations. The ethnography indicates that translation of agile in large organizations is challenging and individuals struggle to convey the essence of the idea, ending up in discussions through various interventions. Due to the popularity of agile the contributions is of value for organizations that attempts to become agile. The thesis is limited by the restricted time of conducting ethnographic studies. Further research is needed to explore the translation of agile in larger settings and to provide validity for the three processes of translation.

Keywords: Management ideas, Agile, Translation, Adaption, Interpretability, Ethnography
Acknowledgments

Uppsala
29th of May 2018

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1. Introduction – From IT to agile organizations

1.1 Background

“It is one thing if a small organization with 20 employees work agile. Then you may have one manager and you work in three different teams, how hard could that be? But we have around eleven managers, we may have 15 Product Owners, we have several divisional managers, it is clearly more challenging in this kind of organization.” (Respondent 15, interview)

This was said by a manager in a large and traditional organization. And he has a point. The statement indicates that it could be challenging to adopt management ideas (MIs) in larger organizational settings. This is interesting since MIs often are seen as the solutions for better ways of managing organizations (Sahlin and Wedlin, 2008). Some MIs become remarkably popular, resulting in adoption across geographical, industrial and organizational boundaries (Abrahamsson, 1996). One MI with its roots in software development that has spread far within the corporate world is agile or agile management. Agile has primarily been successful within software development. We know quite a lot about this already as research is predominantly concerned with the implementation of agile within IT (Dybå and Dingsøyr, 2008; Dingsøyr et al., 2012). However, as agile is characterized by adaptability, flexibility and quickness, Francke and Nilsson claim that agile is just as relevant in organizations’ daily operations.

Today agile is applied to all kinds of work but needs to be well-aligned with organizations’ specific contexts (Azanha et al. 2017; Denning, 2015). This means that organizations attempt to create a better ‘fit’ between agile and the organization (Ansari, Fiss and Zajac, 2010, p. 68). Translation theory assumes that ideas no not remain unchanged as they travel from one context to another (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996). This means that contexts govern the translation of agile (Ansari, Reinecke and Spaan, 2014; Sahlin-Andersson, 1996). Consequently, each translation of agile is unique. While it doesn’t exist any standard or best-practice for adopting agile (Rohunen et al., 2010), it becomes relevant for practitioners and organizational theorists to know more

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This thesis is a study of SEB Pension & Försäkring, a subsidiary to SEB one of the four major banks in Sweden. With around 600 employees we define SEB Pensions & Försäkring as a large and traditional organization while being a part of The SEB Group.
about how agile is translated in large organizations. Previous research on the translation of agile has shown that agile is adapted through constant articulation and re-articulation to suite the local setting (Pries-Heje and Baskerville, 2017). Moreover, Aydin et al. (2005) showed how a financial firm translated agile into practice by the dynamic and static adaption forms of translation. Still, few large organizations have succeeded in their adoption of agile, even though the attempts are numerous (Francke and Nilsson, 2017, p. 285). This indicates that the translation of agile in large organizations tends to be problematic, and there is limited knowledge within this field. Since agile was originally designed for use in small, single- team projects (Dikert, Paasivaara and Lassenius, 2016, pp.88), limited is known about agile in larger settings. This is both interesting and relevant as Francke and Nilsson (2017) indicate that agile organizations are the winners in the long run.

1.2 Purpose and research question
Given what is presented in the background there seems to be a need to further explore and expand existing literature on the translation of agile when adopted by whole organizations. The aim of this thesis is to contribute to this gap. Thereby the purpose of this thesis is to explore the translation of agile in a large organization. More precisely the study intends to provide an ethnographic illustration of SEB Pension & Försäkring and their translation of agile. This is relevant as the modernity of agile have implied that the idea has received a mainstream status and spread far among organizations. In the realm of what has been presented the following research question has been developed so to achieve the purpose of this thesis:

How is agile translated in a large organizational setting?

1.3 A potential contribution to what?
While studying how agile is translated in an organization we wish to contribute to the understanding on translation of management ideas in general and agile in particular. Within translation theory ideas do not remain unaffected by the local context. This means that each translation could be unique. While this thesis constitutes ethnography we provide an additional example on the translation of agile. Our experiences from the
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organization studied, the time spent and the amount of collected field material enable studies of day-to-day behavior of how agile is translated. The insights provided could be useful for organization attempting to become agile on the basis of what is found.

2. A brief introduction to the idea of agile management

In this chapter, we present the fundamentals of agile. We further illustrate what characterizes agile as an MI in relation to this thesis. This background is helpful when relating agile to the theoretical perspectives presented in chapter 3, and when discussing translation through adaption of agile in chapter 7.

The appearance of agile development, with the involving methods and principles has implied noticeable change to software process thinking (Abbas et al., 2008). The idea have since the articulation of the agile manifesto (Beck et al., 2001) increasingly gained territory in the business world, primarily in the field of software development. However, agile ideas are not new as a whole; they have been around since long time ago, but it wasn’t until 1998 the work agile was used in combination with software process for the first time (Abbas, Gravell and Wills, 2008; Aoyama, 1998). People who criticized the traditional methods suggested alternative approaches which were nothing but agile ideas such as the response to change, customer involvement, and working software over documentation (Abbas, Gravell and Wills, 2008). The current mainstream status reached in software industries world-wide during the last two decades is commonly attributed to their ability to respond to rapidly changing business requirements and market conditions (Augustine, 2008; Stavru, 2014). Additionally, Maruping Venkatesh and Agarwal (2009) pointed out that agile management is most effective in business environments with high levels of uncertainty.

The ideas behind agile can be seen as a reaction to traditional methods (table 1) emphasizing a rationalized approach (Dybå, 2000; Nerur et al., 2005). Traditional methods claim that problems are fully specifiable and that optimal and predictable solutions exist for every problem. Several methods, adhering to varying degrees to the tenets of the agile manifesto, have appeared on the landscape. These include extreme programming (XP), Lean software development, feature-driven development (FDD),
crystal methodologies and scrum, to name a few (Dybå and Dingsøyr, 2008; Dingsøyr et al., 2012). The principles of the agile manifesto represented at the time a radically new approach of management (Moe et al., 2009). But some of the ideas and methods were used successfully already in the 70s and the 80s (Abbas et al., 2008). However, independently of the methods used, the underlying ideas have implied a distinctive move towards collaborative development and with people being accorded privileges over processes (Dingsøyr et al., 2012; Hoda and Murugesan, 2016).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main differences between traditional development and agile development after Dybå and Dingsøyr (2008, p. 836)</th>
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<td><strong>Traditional development</strong></td>
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Table 1 - Main differences between traditional and agile

2.1 What does it mean to be agile

In 2001, the agile manifesto (Beck et al., 2001) was written by professionals and theorists in the technology information area. The manifesto constitutes of twelve principles (table 2) and also asserts that agile development should focus on four core values (ibid.):

- Individuals and interactions over processes and tools.
- Working software over comprehensive documentation.
- Customer collaboration over contract negotiation.
- Responding to change over following a plan.

In a eWorkshop on agile methods the participants defined agile as iterative, incremental, self-organizing, and emergent. In addition they stated that all agile methods follow the four values and twelve principles of the Agile Manifesto (Abbas et al., 2008; Cohen et al., 2004). Agile explicitly suggest practices for team coordination such as frequent
planning and empowering developers to self-organize in support of coping with uncertainty (Moe et al., 2012; Maruping et al., 2009).

### The twelve principles behind the agile manifesto (Beck et al., 2001)

1. Our highest priority is to satisfy the customer through early and continuous delivery of valuable software
2. Welcome changing requirements, even late in development. Agile processes harness change for the customer's competitive advantage
3. Deliver working software frequently, from a couple of weeks to a couple of months, with a preference to the shorter timescale
4. Business people and developers must work together daily throughout the project
5. Build projects around motivated individuals. Give them the environment and support they need, and trust them to get the job done
6. The most efficient and effective method of conveying information to and within a development team is face-to-face conversation
7. Working software is the primary measure of progress
8. Agile processes promote sustainable development. The sponsors, developers, and users should be able to maintain a constant pace indefinitely
9. Continuous attention to technical excellence and good design enhances agility
10. Simplicity—the art of maximizing the amount of work not done—is essential
11. The best architectures, requirements, and designs emerge from self-organizing teams
12. At regular intervals, the team reflects on how to become more effective, then tunes and adjusts its behaviour accordingly

### 2.2 Agile as a management idea

Management ideas or MIs are a collective term used to describe ideas, concepts and frameworks that relate to elements of an organization. MIs often take the shape of techniques and practices, rules of procedures, structures or principles targeting a managerial audience (Rauth, 2015, p.23). Several views of what a management idea is, seems to co-exist. Researchers have been studying MIs from the perspectives of; rhetoric’s (Barley and Kunda, 1992), management innovations (Birkinshaw, Hamel and Mol, 2008), administrative technologies (Abrahamson, 1991), and management fads or fashions (Abrahamson, 1996; Gibson and Tesone, 2001). In relation to the description in section 2.1, we attempt to describe what characterizes agile as a management idea in relation to this thesis.

The twelve principles and four core values behind the agile manifesto are certainly apparent in written text or when articulated. Although texts are formulated in universal
terms the promise of success is largely attributed to the ability to cope with uncertainty, respond to rapidly changing requirements and market conditions (Augustine, 2008; Stavru, 2014). These characteristics of agile exposes a rhetorical dimension, consisting of appealing labels, stories of success and technical prescriptions (Røvik 1996; Sahlin-Andersson and Engwall, 2002). Previous research has highlighted the vagueness of MIs being interpreted and presented as rational solutions to specific problems in organizational contexts (Giroux, 2006; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2005). Several methods, adhering to the tenets of the agile manifesto are viewed as flexible means of serving customer needs more efficiently (Maruping et al., 2009). To this, agile might be understood as taking the process of turning inputs into output closer to the external environment by increasing the flow of input in terms of customer insights as well as the flow of outputs by reducing time to market. These attributes of agile also seems to follow the rationales of efficiency and progression, important norms in the corporate community (Abrahamson, 1996). While these norms can be hard for organizations to ignore the vagueness of agile indicate some generalizability of the idea (Keiser 1997; Nerur, Mahapatra and Mangalaraj, 2005). In sum, these characteristics mean that it is possible to translate agile in various organizational settings.

3. Using translation theory to explain how MIs are adapted

In this chapter we introduce the theoretical concept of translation based on previous research. We proceed by clarifying the assumptions of translation theory in relation to the perspective of diffusion in order to show why translation theory is appropriate in this thesis. Accordingly, we present studies on the understanding of MIs (section 3.2), on the translation of MIs (section 3.2.1) and four earlier studies on the translation of agile (section 3.2.2). Finally we summarize this in section 3.2.3.

3.1 The concept of translation

The concept of translation was introduced by Callon (1986) and Latour (1987) within actor network theory, sometimes referred to as the sociology of translation. The process of translation was shown as a negotiation process under which meanings and interests modified over time (Waeraas and Nielsen, 2016). Callon and Latour’s view on translation overlapped in many respects but were set apart regarding the outcome of the
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translation process. Whereas Callon (1980, p. 211) assumed that translation had an end result, Latour (1986, p. 268) rather assumed ‘endless transformation’ distinct to the unique attributes of context. Based on this theoretical foundation, Czarniawska and Sevón (1996) transferred the concept of translation into Scandinavian institutionalism (Waeraas and Nielsen, 2016). This version of translation assumes that ideas change when traveling across contexts (Czarniawska and Sevón, 1996; Røvik, 2007; Sahlin-Andersson 1996; Sahlin and Wedlin, 2008). The Scandinavian way of conceptualizing translation has been seen as a critique to the rather static models of diffusion and decoupling which understand organizations as passive recipients of ideas (Sahlin and Wedlin, 2008). How ideas change is further described through the perspectives of translation and diffusion.

3.1.1 Translation theory vs Diffusion theory
Creed, Scully and Austin (2002) present two common views to distinguish between how organizations embrace ideas from one context to another: the diffusion perspective and translation theory. The underlying assumption in the diffusion perspective is that ideas remain unchanged as they are received by organizations and unaffected by the context of the organization. This means that any methodology or idea is “ready to wear” by its new context (Creed, Scully and Austin, 2002, p. 475). In contrast, translation theory offers a different explanation as it does not recognize any existence of universal ideas unconnected from local ideas. Translation theory assumes that ideas must be translated from its previous local context into a new local context (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996; Czarniawska and Sevón, 1996). This means that translation theory recognizes the uniqueness of organizational settings. Furthermore, the meaning of an idea changes as it travels from one context to another. As ideas travel the translation of their structures and processes not only modifies the idea, but also the individuals who may use the idea (ibid.). By clarifying the basic assumption held by diffusion perspective and translation theory, the latter offers the opportunity to not simply view organizations as passive receivers of ideas. To investigate agile in a large organization it is necessary to understand how this organizational setting and the actors involved have implications for the translation. Following this, we understand translation in accordance to Latour and Callon (1991, p. 279) as:
“all the negotiations, intrigues, calculations, acts of persuasion and violence, thanks to which an actor or force takes or causes to be conferred on itself, authority to speak or act on behalf of another actor or force”.

Translation theory acknowledges the unique contexts, various objects and meanings involved when shaping the course of translation (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996). Central to this process are the actors involved. Nevertheless, the way MIs is construed and understood have shown that a number of translations could emerge (Benders and van Veen, 2001; Giroux, 2006). The understanding of MIs will be discussed further in the following section.

3.2 Understanding management ideas

From the perspective of translation theory, ideas do not remain unchanged as they spread and are adopted by organizations. Adoption is not simply about copying, but also about changing and adapting an idea to the unique context in which they are adopted (Birkinshaw, Hamel and Mol, 2008; Ansari, Reinecke and Spaan, 2014). Such adaption refers to the process by which an adopter tries to create a better ‘fit’ between a practice and the adopters’ particular needs, structure and objectives (Ansari, Fiss and Zajac, 2010, p. 68). To this, we thereby make our distinction between the adoption and adaption of MIs. While adoption means that an organization embrace, accept and take in an idea, adaption refers to how the organization make sense of the idea. How it is construed and understood, how the idea is shaped and changed, and how it is applied to the daily practices.

Adopting MIs might be valuable to motivate and direct organizational change (Birkingshaw, Hamel and Mol, 2008). Still, several authors have come to discuss the interpretability of MIs (Ansari, Reinecke and Spaan, 2014; Benders and van Veen, 2001; Giroux, 2006). Studies have revealed that organizations due to this, can see a diverse number of adaptions emerge (e.g. Benders and van Veen, 2001; Giroux, 2006). This leads to adoptions with no direct effect on the organization or an adoption with undesirable outcomes.
Benders and van Veen (2001) describe interpretability to be triggered by conceptual ambiguity inherent in popular management ideas. This gives potential adopters an opportunity to recognize their own circumstances in relation to MIs. Interpretability gives actors the opportunity to recognize their own situation when relating to MIs. This means that potential adopters can select elements of an MI that is advantageous for their role and work in an organization (Giroux, 2006). Following this Giroux (2006) argues that this is due to the ambiguity of MIs. While clarity brings differences to the surface, it also triggers open conflict (ibid.). This means that the interpretability of MIs reduce friction of different perspectives, hence facilitating collective action.

3.2.1 Previous studies on the translation of MIs
Previous research on translation theory has shown that MIs are being circulated by rendering vague concepts to solve organizational problems (Suddaby and Greenwood 2005; Morris and Lancaster, 2005). Sahlin-Andersson (1996) demonstrated how the organizational context governs translation by the actor’s descriptions and retelling ideas. To make an MI suitable for a specific context, actors need to re-contextualize the idea from its native context. She argued that relabeling MIs as new but familiar, accomplished through rhetoric’s that convey the idea as a successful solution to a problem. Based on Sahlin-Andersson (1996) Morris and Lancaster (2005) demonstrated how the principles of lean management translated into the context of work practices via ideal discourses and a set of hybrid strategies. Ideal discourse imply that the interests of actors were gathered by inventing problems that framed the way of work as old-fashioned and as a possible source of conflict in the supply chain. Hybrid strategies were used to reinforce lean as a solution for better partnerships in the supply chain. The strategies in terms of socializing were applied to adapt new behaviors, while teaching was used to generate suitable attitude and values in the organizations. Where lean failed to translate into work challenges was insufficiently problematized and the solutions (lean) were not articulated convincingly.

As been shown by Latour and Callon (1991) the process of translation consists of a political dimension. Waeras and Nielsen (2016) illustrate this dimension through the various actors using tactics and maneuvers to align interests in accordance with their own purposes. MIs can be viewed as powerful constructs that reflects and suggests
certain ways of thinking and acting, yet concealing others (Sturdy 2004, p.162). Waeras and Nielsen (2016) shown how negotiations underpin transformation of organizations, often required when adapting MIs. Furthermore, van de Veen and Poole (1995) have described drivers of adaption. For instance the authors presented the teleological view of change referred to as a planned and targeted process undertaken by actors to adapt ideas, structures and processes. In contrast to this a dialectic process is stated as driven by colliding interests of actors that strive to establish their point of views and meanings as relevant. In sum, this leads to complex negotiations and power battles (ibid.). Based on van de Veen and Pool’s (1995) contribution Jian’s (2007) study displayed negotiations of meaning amongst management and employees in a large organization. It was found that management act as initiators presenting new rules and processes in written texts. While employees translate documents into practise they reflect on what it meant for them, negotiating the meaning to realise change. When involving interests of actors they may collide or align. Giroux (2006) argues interests are translated as they are rephrased in ‘language’. This means that conflicting interests among individuals are masked simultaneously as shared collective interests are created (ibid.).

3.2.2 Four earlier studies on the translation of agile

Research on the adoption of agile has been around since the articulation of the agile manifesto. Some authors have attempted to explain the translation of agile (Gandomani and Nafchi, 2015; 2016; Pries-Heije and Baskerville, 2017; Taylor, 2016). In 2016 Gandomani and Nafchi (2016) argued that agile is of people-centric nature. Throughout a grounded theory approach involving 49 practitioners in 13 countries the authors strived to uncover aspects of human-related challenges in the process of agile translation. Their findings suggest that people’s perceptions about agile together with other are amongst the most critical in the process of translating and adapting agile. Some of these issues are identified as; lack of knowledge, resistance to change, wrong mindset and lack of effective collaboration. The same year Taylor came to observe the day-to-day behavior in a multinational retail sales company. In the ethnographic study Taylor (2016) examined agile in relation to the project manager experiences. When embracing agile expertise was to a larger extent distributed among the group of individuals in the organization. This resulted in a shift of the traditional project manager role becoming more of a gate-keeper thereby providing insights how the translation of
agile affected the formal roles in the organization. However, there are few available frameworks for the adaption of agile. Yet these are both complex and non-flexible especially when considering agile in large organizations. This was studied by Gandomani and Nafchi (2015), recognizing the challenges for organizations when adopting agile. In the study the authors developed a framework that were argued to be useful regardless the size of the organization. Gandomani and Nafchi (2015) propose four major characteristics of an agile translation. These were presented as practice selection, adapting, assessing and adjustments, performed in iterative cycles. In 2017, Pries-Heje and Baskerville came to use translation theory to describe how agile were adapted to local contexts. By conducting a case study including six firms it was found that people translate agile by choosing fragments equivalent to their needs of time and space. Through a discourse of articulation and re-articulation they explain how the idea thereby embodies specific means in a continuous process. More specifically agile fragments were translated to better fit the organizational context. In this process fragments, participants, agile, the organization and problems were articulated through discourse. Based on the experiences of testing agile fragments in the daily work, re-articulation led to further exploration of agile fragments in continuous cycles. Pries-Heje and Baskerville (2017) argued that while agility changes its own environment, it at the same time changes itself. Although the results offer explanations for how agile is translated and adapted through a discourse of articulations the study is limited to concern simply one agile methodology, namely scrum.

4. Research setting
We have spent four months located at the organizations' major office, observing managers and employees in their work of adopting agile. This has enabled us to understand and describe the context in which the idea have been translated and adapted. Our approach has consisted of observing the group's behaviour during meetings and activities linked to headings such as efficient working methods, agile and leadership. We have asked questions and listened to conversations between the individuals within the group, and between us field workers and individuals. In addition to this we have observed a workshop and simultaneously been able to collect data, which all will be

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2 SEB Pension & Försäkring, the same major office as The SEB Group.
presented in the upcoming sections. This thesis recognizes the existence of several interpretations of reality co-exists. Following this we take the subjective views of actors into account when attempting to explore the translation of agile. Thereby taking an interpretative view of how knowledge is created (Hatch, 2013).

4.1 An ethnographic study
This thesis is an ethnographic study, aiming to explore how agile is translated in a large traditional organization. Ethnography has traditionally been used within anthropological research, which Bryman and Bell (2011) associate with a researcher who goes out to a foreign place, creates access and follows a group of people during a period of time. Ethnography necessitate observers to engage and spend a longer time within local communities or in this case an organization (ibid.), and by doing so learn about what takes place, what is said and in what circumstances (Shagrir, 2017). In that way, the choice for ethnography provides rich and wide-ranging insights into actual reality, social interactions and people’s perceptions in the surroundings in which they live (Shagrir, 2012, p. 9).

Before the 1970s anthropologists neglected the study of organizations and organizational scholars neglected ethnography as a method for organizational studies (Schwartzman, 1993). However, organizational ethnographers have since then come to study several aspects of organizations, such as work routines, culture, organizing processes as well as relationships internal and external to organizations (Schwartzman, 1993; Atkinson et al., 2001; Smith, 2001). In addition, Watson (2011) argues that there is potential for ethnography to play a larger and more mainstream role in organization and management studies than it currently does. Ethnographies by Sharp et al. (2009) on the use of artefacts in agile teams and Taylor’s (2016) study of the adoption of agile software development methods provide examples of the understandings that can be gained through this kind of research. Ethnography is a way of getting close to the reality of a social phenomenon, of interactions, communication, and relationships taking place within the ethnographical setting (Hammarsley and Atkingon, 2007; Passos, Cruzes and Dybå, 2012). In that way and with support from the arguments used we argue that

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3 The tradition in anthropology requires in-depth studies for a longer period of time. We are aware of that a full-scale ethnography would require longer time in the field then the four months available for conducting this thesis.
observing day-to-day behaviour will enable us to contribute to the understanding of how agile is translated.

Ethnographic research is a genre of qualitative research (Shagrir, 2017). The close access is said to help in the investigation of both behavioural patterns and subjective experiences of organizational reality (Zilber, 2002). Thereby contribute to uncover ongoing negotiations in the process for adopting as well as adapting the agile idea (Zilber, 2002; Johnson, Melin and Whittington, 2003). Ethnography enables us to study the interpretations made by individuals at various levels and different departments within the organization. First, we strive to understand the reality from the perspective of each individual participating in the translation of agile, allowing us to investigate underlying explanations and informal insights, so to understand their behavior, values and beliefs behind them (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Second, this tends to be an open research strategy. While studying a phenomenon in a specific context, ethnography is considered as suitable due to the flexible means of gathering field material and the wide range of methods offered for data collection. Third, to achieve the purpose of this study we claim that it is essential to witness both formal and informal events, actions and negotiations. In that way, ethnography allows to observe the individuals in their own context where conversations and the interplay actually take place.

4.2 SEB Pension & Försäkring as the ethnographical setting

Our fieldwork was conducted at SEB Pension & Försäkring, a subsidiary of SEB one of the four major commercial banks in Sweden. The life and insurance business at SEB is one of the leading of its kind in Europe with business in Denmark, Ireland and the Baltics, and with branches in England, Finland and Luxemburg. SEB Pension & Försäkring bear the responsibility for the Swedish market. With the vision to deliver world-class service to its customers and as being part of The SEB Group, the organization offers a full range of financial solutions within both insurance and banking. SEB Pension & Försäkring deal with products as traditional insurance, fund insurance,
occupational pensions, private pensions and health care insurances. While this study is conducted within SEB Pension & Försäkring, Sweden constitutes as our geographical setting in this thesis. In order to illustrate The SEB Group and where SEB Pension & Försäkring belongs within the group as a whole, this is shown in the organizational scheme in figure 1.

SEB's office building in Arenastaden Solna has a total area of 97,000 square meters, houses about 4500 employees, and is the place where this ethnographic study has been conducted. Entering the carousel doors at the main entrance every morning, many employees at SEB passes by. Moving towards the elevators equipped with digital touch screens we walk the required way through the café, located just inside the gates, making employees meet spontaneously. Taking the elevators up to the fifth floor we are now close to the Business Development & IT department, where we during the time for this thesis been assigned our own desks in the middle of the open landscape office. At the department there works around 160 people, including consultants. While being an organization with approximately 600 employees, one might question why it is appropriate to primarily conduct our research at this department.

Agile was introduced for some years ago\textsuperscript{4}, but not without challenges or drawbacks during the years. However, the current state of the work towards an agile organization is in progress and has been for a while. In that way is our interpretation that the organization have started to get an understanding of the idea as well as the challenges involved with translating and adapting agile to the organizational context. We thereby argue that the organization is suitable for this ethnography since they claim to have adopted agile. The close access and our observations of the daily practices benefit the investigation of behavioral patterns and subjective experiences of the organizational context.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{4}2015}
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At this point, we wish to have made it clear why building the foundation of our ethnography at the Business Development & IT department. As seen in figure 2 the department constitutes of three different areas, which all reports to the head of Business Development & IT, and all three are placed adjacent to each other in the open landscape.

To sum up our description of the setting of this ethnography, we now make an attempt to present a broad overview of the research process:

- **December 2017**: First meeting with representative from the organization, in which we discussed the area of study and the possible access to the organization. Ending up in receiving acceptance to conduct our study at SEB Pension & Försäkring.
- **January 2018**: In the mid of January we started our fieldwork by routinely arriving to the office around 9 every morning. We started to learn about the organization and presented ourselves in order to establish the first contact with the employees and thereby took the first step of breaking some relational barriers.
- **February – April 2018**: During this time, the most of our field material were conducted and simultaneously taking fieldnotes as well as structuring our reflections and interpretations.
- **May 2018**: We continued to attend the weekly scheduled meetings. During this period, we have been able to confirm our findings from the fieldwork as well as our interpretations.

### 4.3 Field material generation

Ethnographers commonly collect their data through direct observations, participant observations, interviews, historical analyses or the collection of documents (Schwartzman, 1993). Ethnography calls for close observation and intense involvement in the field (Watson, 2011). Such observation can hence be substantially strengthened if, at the same time, interviews are carried out, and documents are analyzed (ibid.). Given the range of methods offered within ethnography we have in this thesis primarily used three methods for material generation: observations, interviews, and collection of documents. Each will be presented in the following sections.

#### 4.3.1 Fieldnotes trough observations

What individuals do at work, where they sit, who they talk to, hierarchical structures, meetings, coffee breaks and lunches, participating in both informal and formal interactions and activities. That is what we mainly have observed during our four months of intense fieldwork. We have dedicated a large majority of our time conducting this study located at the organizations’ office, taking notes and studying the daily
interactions and practices. While being assigned our own desks in the middle of the open landscape at the Business Development & IT department, we have been given excessive access to the organization during or work in the field. We have regularly dedicated time to participate and observe formal and organized activities:

- **Weekly group meetings** – Once a week there was a two hour long meeting between individuals working with various areas within the Business development and IT department. These included discussions about the adoption of agile, the progress of the agile way of working, the leadership involved, and more. These meetings have been scheduled with the name “efficient working methods” and the participants have either a formal management role or a formal area of responsibility.
- **Workshop** – Together with employees from the organization, we have participated in the planning of a workshop. During the workshop we also observed what happened and listened to the discussions.
- **Stand up/Kanban meetings** – Every Tuesday employees from the Business Development & IT department gathered in order to discuss the progress of various projects.
- **Informational meeting** – We have attended one larger meeting, in which all employees from the organization were invited.

However, we have during the time of fieldwork also been able to observe interactions of more informal character, for example:

- **Breaks and leisure activities** – Spending most of our time at the organization, we have been able to observe interactions taking place during breaks and some organized activities.
- **Lunches** – Everyday that we been at the office we have had lunch in the restaurant at the office in Arenastaden, often together with various individuals from the organization.

During our fieldwork, we have observed around 21 formal meetings that in some way either concerned discussions around the adoption of agile, or occasions that could be considered related to the agile way of working (*see table 3*). Observations usually materialize in the form of fieldnotes, and the other way around, fieldnotes are the first representation of observations (Emerson et al., 2001). The view of fieldnotes, how they should be written and on the time that one should write fieldnotes, differ among ethnographers (Bryman and Bell, 2011). We have written ours in paper notebooks that may be

<table>
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<td>Efficient working methods</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>2 h</td>
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*Table 3 - List of observations*
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comparable to a diary. We have not always carried the notebooks with us while walking around at the office. However, the notebooks which were filled one by one have been with us during all formal meetings and observations summarized in table 3. As the morning routine entering the office around 9 we have started by note the date. The events, actions and interactions that took place during the days have been described, summarized with short notes about our interpretations and personal reflections.

4.3.2 Interviews

During our months in the field, we have conducted 15 interviews (table 4) which all been recorded and transcribed. Shagrir (2017) describe interviews as a means of gathering rich and in depth information directly from the research population, and are often the most visible in ethnographic accounts. In this thesis interviews have enabled us to ask questions about what we have observed, providing us with a comprehensive picture of the translation of agile. The interview guide consisted of eight main questions (see appendix). However, this has initially functioned as guidance for us during the interviews. Following Shagrir’s (2017) recommendations, we have attempted to be active during the interviews by asking follow-up questions to get a deeper understanding of the answers and to avoid the risk of only obtain partial information. This has resulted in that the questions in some cases not been asked in the same order as stated in the interview guide.

<table>
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<td>2018-02-13</td>
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<td>Respondent 6</td>
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<td>Respondent 13</td>
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<td>2018-04-05</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018-04-11</td>
<td>Respondent 12</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018-04-26</td>
<td>Respondent 15</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 - List of interviews

The interviews have been performed at organizations office in meeting rooms behind closed doors. In other words, the context have been familiar for the respondents and our perception is that all been comfortable during our conversations. Both of us have been present during all interviews, with one leading the conversation and the other one taking notes. Additionally, all interviews have been recorded and transcribed. The interview sample is based on a mix of individuals from different levels, units and departments within the organization. We have interviewed individuals from all the three units
constituting the Business Development & IT department. Furthermore, in order to achieve a more comprehensive picture we have also chosen to include respondent from the sales department as well as the customer service department. Since we for obvious reasons didn’t know everything about the organization, we have in some cases asked for recommendations for suitable interviewees. In that way further ensuring that we have included organizational members with adequate experience and insights in relation to the studied topic of this thesis (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The approach used for deciding on a suitable interview sample are commonly used within qualitative research (Bryman and Bell, 2011), and we consider the sample as well as the number of interviews conducted to be satisfying in order to achieve the purpose of this thesis.

4.3.3 Collection of documents

We consider the documents collected to be valuable as a source of information, which have a great deal to say about the organization and it’s past. The various documents used consist of organizational schemes, internal newsletters, presentation material and meeting protocols. These forms of documents have been useful as background information about the organization, and are commonly used within ethnographic studies of organizations (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Worth to mention is that the documents collected are for internal use only, but which have been interpreted and constituted as a part of the material generation.

4.4 Our role as ethnographic researchers

The role of the researchers is important in ethnographic research. Studies have shown that research population more easily establishes contacts with researchers who seem to be similar to them. In other words, researchers who are perceived as unknown and different are viewed with suspicion by participants (Harrington, 2003; Heyl, 2001). As a first step, and one of the challenges in ethnographic studies is the issue of gaining continuous access to an organization (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Shagrir, 2017). However, access to the social context has been facilitated and achieved through a four month long relationship building process. As one of the authors has been conducting an internship at the organization during the fall semester of 2017, good contacts could be established with individuals in the organization. We perceive that this certainly have benefited our access as well as the level of trust from the individuals in the organization. It has broken
down social barriers as we have been able to build relationships beforehand and thereby getting quick access to data. The fact that we, as part of our ethnography, also have been taking part in informal activities, lunches, and coffee breaks have made us able to enter the natural environment we have been investigating (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

Another common discussion that occur in various situations ethnographers take part in is to what degree they should be active (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Patel and Davidsson, 2011). We do actually think that not everybody even at the Business Development & IT department been aware that we been conducting this thesis, but this is not because it been our intention. While attending formal and scheduled meetings we have made our purpose and appearance clear, not simply for practical reasons but also for some ethical considerations that will be further discussed in the following section. Our approach within our observations has primarily been to listen, taking notes and let the discussions and interactions have its natural course. However, we have at some points asked questions if we sought further explanations or if unfamiliar concepts were used.

4.5 Ethical considerations

Already at the first meeting with the organization about conducting this thesis, some ethical considerations were discussed. In this ethnographic study the Swedish Academic Council (Vetenskapsrådet, n.d.) has provided us with some ethical guidelines. First, we have conveyed and been clear with the purpose of this thesis, presented what we are supposed to do in the organization and for what institution we are assigned to write our thesis. We thereby consider that we have fulfilled our informative obligations. Second, we have continuously done our best to inform that the participation from the individuals involved has been voluntarily. They have been entitled to interrupt interview sessions and observations whenever they have wanted, and each time a new participant been involved during the various meetings they have been given the opportunity to accept their participation. In this thesis we would argue that we have considered the agreement of consent. Third, as well as present our purpose with this thesis we have attempted to be clear about our degree of confidentiality. This have been important for us, and especially while conducting ethnography. Recorded interviews and notebooks from observations have been kept away from persons other than us, and the collected material has not been stored for longer periods than we have considered being necessary. We
have strived to keep the anonymity of the participants by mentioning neither names nor other information that could reveal their identity. We thereby perceive that we have obtained a satisfying degree of confidentiality. Fourth, our collected field material has been used exclusively for the purpose of this thesis. This have been particular important since some of the collected material consist of document with information intended for internal use only. We would thereby argue that we have contented the ethical considerations of how the material been used, and contemplated all the ethical guidelines that are given by the Swedish Academic Council (Vetenskapsrådet, n.d.)

4.6 How field material been processed

Our data collection was primarily done during the period of March to April 2018 and ethnography has enabled us to collect a large amount of field material. We have filled four notebooks with field notes from our observations and interviews. 15 interviews were conducted with individuals from various departments and units within the organization. During our observational sessions we frequently engaged in formal and informal discussions. Moreover, we also interpreted various organizational document. Thereby a mix of sources of the field material has been triangulated (Bryman and Bell, 2011). This process continued throughout the thesis and developed a continuous interplay between data and new concepts (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). In line with Raviola´s (2010) dissertation, we organized our notebooks into three columns. In column one we filed date, time and the name of the various events attended. In column two our notes were documented and column three was used for our reflections and analytical thoughts. During our fieldwork we have regularly discussed with each other about what we had seen and heard to provide context to our field notes.

There is no single process of analysis accepted by ethnographic researchers (Gibbs, 2007). In field work it is not possible to code, nor decide in advance how to catalogue information (Genzuk, 2003; Reeves et al., 2008). Instead, structure is developed while analyzing data and discovering findings that emerges from the field work (Shagrir, 2017). Both of us have read through the material collected. This allowed us to reflect on what was in the material and begin asking questions about the key events as new notes was written down. We started out by realizing that this was quite challenging given the amount of material collected from. As a first attempt we presented our field material
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categories through specific occasions, such as workshops, meetings and retrospectives. Hence, we realized that we couldn’t provide a logical structure with clear relationships to our purpose. However, this made us able to identify the patterns of translation in our field material, ending up in three central processes of translation. These represent a carefully selected mix of relevant field material. By doing so some interesting findings from the field material have been excluded as it has not been relevant for the purpose of this thesis. To this, we will portray what we have seen, heard and discussed during our fieldwork in relation to these three central processes that represent our main story. This is divided into smaller pieces of text as examples for our experience as our story is contrived as single observations or interviews didn’t offer sufficient details (Spalding and Philips, 2007). Our presentation of the selected field material is presented in chapter 5 and 6 and which will be discussed in relation to theory in chapter 7.

4.7 Reflections on research quality and our challenges
Fieldwork has not been easy, and some might questioning if this is an ethnographic study at all. A general discussion is for how long time ethnographic studies should be performed (Bryman and Bell 2011; Watson, 2011). While considering the scope of the thesis and the limited amount of time we don’t consider this as something that has been affecting the quality of our research. Conducting this study at the organizations’ office has provided us with data that otherwise would have been hard to get. To this, our months of conducting field material are considered to be satisfying to fulfil the purpose of this thesis as we contemplate the amount and richness of the collected material as one of the strengths of the study. We recognize that the opportunities to utilize a variety of methods and sources for material generation offered by ethnography have been favourable.

However, ethnography has been a new approach for us. Due to this it has certainly been challenging, but we have learned from our mistakes during the path. Given the excessive access to the organization and the individuals’ openness to share their views, we from time had to face slightly sensitive information. In advance we hadn’t expected such a degree of transparency when entering our first meetings and interviews. It could
be reflected about why the organization provided us with this access, and whether this has affected our work in this thesis. We have been aware of this and attempted to achieve a critical approach throughout the research process and the organization have not tried to limit or set the boundaries for the study. To this, it is important to reflect upon our role within this context by considering the degree of engagement in relation to what is being investigated when performing ethnographical studies (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 447). We have strived to not influence the perceptions of individuals involved in this study even though it has been of importance to build relationships with important informants who have paved the way for us in situations otherwise difficult to access. Additionally, we think that this have influenced the openness we have experiences at the organization. Being an ethnographic study, our interpretations constitute the presentation of field material. To address this and strengthening the quality both of us have been present during all interviews and observations. To this, we have used multiple sources of data methods, thereby using triangulation which strengthens the trustworthiness of our discoveries (Bryman and Bell, 2011). However, we do not make any attempts to claim that our study is transferable to other context. Instead, our study represents an additional example of how agile translates, and particularly in large organizations.

5. The organizational setting
When starting our field work, we faced several impressions when entering the massive SEB-office in Arenastaden. We not simply sought to understand how agile was adopted and adapted at SEB Pension & Försäkring, we acknowledged the need to understand the organization. This chapter aims to provide the background and context in which the adaption takes place. In this first and introductory section of our field material we attempt to share this view by illustrating the organizational setting and what has happened in the past. By doing so, we offer an understanding for the subsequent chapter.

5.1 Entering the office in Arenastaden
During our work on the field, we have learnt that the building in which a Swedish financial group resides has significance for the repute of the organization. The current
building of SEB and SEB Pension & Försäkring is located in an area called Solna Arenastaden, north of the Stockholm City Centre. Adjacent to the building is a commuter station, with connections that goes straight to the Stockholm Central Station. In May 2017 SEB Pension & Försäkring relocated their main business from Sergels Torg in the centre of Stockholm into the new building, designed by the architectural firm Alessandro Ripellino Aritekter. In an editorial report published on their website it is possible to read the following about the office: “With its more than 4,000 "residents", SEB's new building is a small city in the city” (Alessandro Ripellino Arkitekter, 2017).

The idea was to design a building that not would be perceived as to massive. It is divided into three houses which are linked together both above and below ground. On the ground, alleys are crossing the building. The modernity and impressive design makes it melt into the modern district of Arenastaden. The three houses are formed as sharp crystalline shapes. The facade is covered with glass and with white screen-printed triangular pattern. The new building is a powerful symbol of a modern business, one that facilitates collaboration between people.

From the main entrance you have to pass through the gates leading into the cafe. The buildings contain a variety of services. One can notice how sophisticated collaboration is linked to the layout of the building. The layout portrays openness through all the open spaces that is recurrent when walking around the office. While the atrium in the large building denote through being urban with restrained colours, limestone floors and durable materials, the two other atriums is recognized for having an living room style character.

There are approximately 600 meeting rooms in the building and digital touch screens a placed outside, displaying information about the name of the room, and a schedule. The different dimensions, size and furnishing allows staff to change their work environment, to what is actually is going to be done at work, ranging from individual work to larger workshops. Along the walls, various departments are located. Behind closed doors in the open landscape offices, here is where the daily practices take place, except when employees are attending scheduled meetings. The openness characterising the office is
obvious. This matters in particularly for spontaneous and often unplanned meetings, as one manager told us:

“It is much easier to meet with peers spontaneously, sit together and have a cup of coffee”. (Respondent 4, observation)

The building is characterising something new. It is a way to locate the large part of the SEB Group at the same place, in the same building. The subsidiary SEB Pension & Försäkring is no exception.

5.2 Entering the Business Development & IT department

On the fifth floor of the building, the Business Development & IT department at SEB Pension & Försäkring is located. In the open landscape, where approximately 160 employees work, the subunits; business development, product, and IT, are placed adjacent to each other. Here works product specialists, business developers, IT-developers, and more. The head of the department has its own office in the middle of the department. Employees have their own workplace, placed in distinct columns with two or three desks on each row. Along the room windows emits light. The organization and placement of employees could be understood as organized in accordance with the flow of processes. During the time this thesis been conducted, managers decided to relocate the employees in a way that would enhance collaboration and contribute to a more efficient way to deliver services and products. How different units within the department complements each other could be seen in what one manager explained for us during a lunch conversation:

“...while business development is more of the product-traditional approach, conceptualization of our offers, operational development is more how the machine works - the infrastructure and how we work with the very inside of the business, effectively with the business” (Respondent 3, observation)

This represents the focus on collaboration. But also one of the ways in the continuous process of creating the right conditions to enable collaboration.
5.3 The history of adopting agile

The traditional way of managing work, and particularly at the IT department, is in the organization often referred to as “the waterfall model”. The waterfall model was essentially sequential, and characterized by extensive planning and with project involving handovers between the strict and formalized phases. As each phase was accomplished in specified period of time there were limited possibilities for change. Steaming from various pressures in the business environment, the organization faced several challenges with the traditional way of working. This included large and predictable projects, extensive planning, and sequential handovers. However, trends such as digitalization and a dynamic environment demanded structures and processes that enabled the organization to quickly respond to such demands. Framing an example, one individual expressed: At the time, approximately five years ago, SEB Pension & Försäkring was mainly organized around systems and products, which were given the highest priority.

“It was mainly on the business systems as the pressure increased more and more because all digitalization is about these technical platforms”.
(Respondent 7, interview)

The organization had completed some large projects characterised by heavily processes including extensive planning and bureaucracy leading to poor results. Reading books, articles, talking to people and with inspiration from other famous and successful organizations some individuals at the IT department started to contemplate the benefits of agile. Famous companies as Spotify and Google have been seen as role models due to their implementation and way to use agile. This inspiration from world leading IT-companies, as well as prominent companies from various industries has been substantial for the perception of agile, and what could be accomplished by adopting it. While pressures created a drive for change among individuals at operational level, they wanted to find new ways of conducting their work, and at the time: “the modern was to work agile” (Respondent 1, interview). To handle the environmental pressures individuals from the department began in 2015 on their own initiative to divide the work into shorter iterations and in smaller teams. While gaining an understanding of the possible benefits of adopting agile, upper management provided resources, e.g. mandate, time and people, to carry out a pilot project. They assigned specific groups to investigate
how to accomplish the involvement of customers in the development process. Management also identified the need to increase collaboration, communication, effectiveness and flexibility, and the processes at that time didn’t support these objectives. After running the pilot project, upper management communicated that SEB Pension & Försäkring should become agile. Still, this was simply at the IT department and management tried to set up guidelines for the agile way of working. However, this was easier said than done.

"I think that each employee had their own interpretation of this, but I think that the challenge came when management decided to go agile”
(Respondent 2, interview)

Even though a first attempt was made to adopt agile by handing out a manual, the meaning of agile and how this would be related to the daily work of each individual remained unclear. But adopting agile was seen as the way to stay competitive, efficient and flexible. As mentioned by one individual when referring to agile:

“A way to deal with an increasingly complex reality”. (Respondent 7, interview)

However, setting a manual and adapt agile from the top and down in the hierarchic structure didn’t work out as expected. Instead, top management considered that this would start from below, among the individuals conducting the daily work. During the spring 2017 some individuals, managers and one consultant started to reflect and discuss and concluded that somethings needed to be done about the way of working. They acknowledged the need for a unified understanding of agile and how this would be incorporated into the daily practices and across the different departments and units.
6. Three processes in the translation of agile

In our presentation of our fieldwork, structured in two chapters, we started by presenting a background of SEB Pension & Försäkring, from the organizational setting to the adoption of agile. This information provides an understanding of where the translation takes place when entering this second chapter of our field material. We show that the translation of agile requires adaption to the organizational context. In this chapter we present what we have identified as three processes in the translation of agile at SEB Pension & Försäkring. These are presented as (1) adaption through unifying the understanding, (2) adaption through testing of agile elements, and (3) adaption through negotiations. Ethnography has enabled us to collect a large amount of field material used for the presentations given in following section. The major part originates from our observations and interviews but which not will be presented by following a certain timeline. Rather we portray what we have seen, heard and discussed during our fieldwork in relation to the three processes of translation.

6.1 Adaption through unifying the understanding of agile

In the process of translation we identify how adaption of agile occurs through unifying the understanding of agile. This is done by conducting activities such as retrospectives, workshops and several recurrent meetings where agile is discussed. Agile is to date well recognizable around the organization, and not simply for individuals working with IT. Agile is seen as a way to meet the market demands quicker. It is about shorter iterations with customers as the starting point. It is seen as flexible means of handling change, delivering value and about continuous learning. Agile constitutes a working method, and agile is the composed name for the way to conduct the work. When asking one manager during one of our first interview about what agile means for the organization, it was said that:

“I think that agile is the composed name, but there are many that says that we can’t do like this since it is not completely agile. So it is better to find out what our approach stands for, and the values for our future way of working. This is what many refer to as the agile way of working. So it is rather that this becomes a conclusion that our approach is agile, rather than start thinking about agile and then tries to understand what that means”. (Respondent 3, interview)
It is seen that the organization acknowledge the vagueness of agile and additionally the importance to collaboratively and across departments conveying the essence of agile, what it means within the organization. For example, we observed one individual describing agile during a meeting in April as:

“Collaboration is the essential, but everybody needs to gain an understanding of the agile way of working”. (Respondent 1, observation)

Without unifying the understanding the adaption of agile could rarely be applied successfully into the daily practices. In general individuals proves to provide similar understandings of why and what to be achieved by adopting agile. But collaboration, flexibility, customer focus, and even agile is sometimes considered vague as they struggle to adapt this to the organization.

6.1.1 Interpretability affects the understanding of agile

When talking to individuals at the organization they often describe agile in a similar way that they describe their role in the organization. They tend to construe agile in accordance with their own work, and this interpretability affects the adaption and understanding while attempting to convey the essence of what agile means. Organizational members attach the meaning of agile in accordance with their practical work and/or area of responsibility. For example, we see in both interviews and meetings how individuals highlight certain understandings of agile that are central for them. While talking with individuals working with customers, the customer focus is pervading in their way to describe agile and their point of view taken when talking with others in the organization. Others highlight that teamwork not is possible due to their specific conditions. This is exemplified as it during a discussion in the recurrent meetings appeared that:

“Everybody says more or less that they are working agile, but in different ways”. (Respondent 13, observation)

Diverse understandings and adptions exists in the organization even though it is generally described in similar ways. The terms used to describe agile is considered as general, but what agile means in the practical work, and for each individual seems to be
diverse. In this meeting everyone around the elongated table seemed to agree, and one individual answered that:

“...we don’t have a common view of how agile should work within the organization”. (Respondent 11, observation)

We have shown how this is due to individuals’ interpretability of agile that affects their understanding of how it should be applied to their work. This demonstrates how individuals consciously or unconsciously interpret agile in accordance to their understanding of how they should conduct their work, and what is seen as the essence of agile as an idea.

6.1.2 Old habits as a challenge affecting the adaption

In the work of adapting agile, individuals sometimes face uncertainty due to the various interpretations leading them into old habits that certainly affect the adaption. They do not just take on agile and perceive everything to be set, but rather they realize in their discussions that they need to find the best possible solutions for the organization. Throughout conversations, the agile idea is often set in relation to the traditional way of working and the organizational context. As one individual expressed during a meeting:

“It is important to emphasize that we have to adapt this to the business we are in, and not copying best-practices from other industries, I think that would be fatal”. (Respondent 11, observation)

Hence, the traditional way of working (waterfall) and the traditional structure of the organization impact the adaption and understanding.

“Our history have impacted that we don’t have a full understanding of what agile is”. (Respondent 14, interview)

Illustrating this further with a conversation during a meeting, one individual stated that:

“...we need to drop the command and control” (Respondent 4, observation). Another one replied instantly: “...we don’t have a feedback culture and we still have too much of - we have always done like this... it is our habits from the past” (Respondent 8, observation). Taking it further, in one of our interviews one individual developed this challenge of the adaption as:
”…It has changed completely, and it becomes a collision between command and control and the new focus on collaboration and self-organization, two different mindsets that make people confused”. (Respondent 7, observation)

In general, the picture of the current situation is coherent. The adaption is influenced by old habits and the traditional waterfall methods used before. From both interviews and meetings it has been described that the use of agile had imply a need for a gradual change of values and attitudes, instilling a mindset based on building openness, collaboration and flexibility. Everyone seems to agree that they need to encourage a specific behaviour, attitude and mindset to reach a unified adaption across the organization.

6.1.3 Opening up for a unified understanding of agile

In the adaption the organization realizes that they need to unify the understanding of agile. This is done by opening up for individuals into interventions such as meetings and workshops. Interventions aimed to adapt agile by unifying the understanding and challenge the old habits and courses of association by encouraging what the organization consider as an agile behaviour, attitude and mindset. For example, as mentioned during one of our interviews:

“To understand and work agile is considerably a mindset issue”. (Respondent 5, interview)

One example we see as the starting point of the adaption of agile is the large retrospective conducted during the fall 2017. The organization acknowledged a more unified understanding of agile and by gathered organizational members into discussions. The organization thereby opened up for discussion and took a first step for unifying the understanding of agile. The retrospective ended up in nine findings with the highest priority, obstacles mentioned in the discussions for achieving this were highlighted. Also, the vision related to each issue as well the desired conditions for going towards the vision was expressed (table 6).
An ethnographic study on the translation of agile
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The nine highest prioritized issues based on the retrospective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Vision</th>
<th>Conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. From start to finish</td>
<td>Obstacle: Too many waterfalls/handovers.</td>
<td>One team that takes responsibility from requirements to delivery.</td>
<td>A clear responsibility and mandate, and that the team posses the competence to succeed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The ordered/Order representative</td>
<td>Obstacle: Loses the need and the overall picture during the along the development.</td>
<td>A person that is present during the way, from requirements to delivery.</td>
<td>Clear expectations on the orderer and a defined role for Product Owner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Focus</td>
<td>Obstacle: Teams has too many parallel tasks at the same time.</td>
<td>The teams are working with pull rather than push, and become in that way more effective.</td>
<td>Teams have the mandate and takes responsibility for conducting the work in collaboration with a Product Owner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mindset</td>
<td>Obstacle: Falling back into previous habits</td>
<td>We agree on an attitude and behavior and follow it</td>
<td>Managers as well as other employees are clear how they want things to be done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Communication</td>
<td>Obstacle: Don’t receive any communication on what was ordered or on what was assembled.</td>
<td>The orderer and the teams get continuous communication on what has been assembled and ordered.</td>
<td>The processes around the development process are clear and synced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Feedback</td>
<td>Obstacles: We don’t evaluate our performances.</td>
<td>A culture there we give and receive feedback in order to grow and develop.</td>
<td>Managers as well as other employees are clear how they want things to be done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Syncing</td>
<td>Obstacles: Teams lack knowledge about the dependencies to other teams.</td>
<td>An understanding of the comprehensive picture and that syncing is a natural part of the daily work.</td>
<td>The roles as well as the teams’ responsibility and mandate are clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Team development</td>
<td>Obstacles: Teams consists of a group of individuals.</td>
<td>Teams act as teams.</td>
<td>The team devotes time to get the team to work and develop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. A unified way of working</td>
<td>Obstacles: The way of conducting work varies among the teams.</td>
<td>We have a structure for how to work together, and that this change in along with the teams.</td>
<td>The structure is set is acknowledged and complied to.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 - The large retrospective

This characterizing the understanding through nine points of adaption required for becoming agile in the eyes of the organization. It provided insights on the main focus for adaption and the requirements for changes needed for a successful adaption; they highlighted the need for a unified alteration of conducting the work.

Since then the organization use similar interventions, meetings and workshops to discuss and convey a unified understanding of how agile should be adapted. They attempt to agree upon the suitable attitude and mindset to enable the change and to work agile. They recognize that agile not simply is about IT, they need to increase the understanding throughout the whole organization. During a lunch conversation we asked the manager responsible for inviting individuals to the retrospective about the purpose of such interventions:
“I want that everybody should be able to share their views and bounce ideas, I am always able to talk about the agile way of working. Our mission is to gather the nine main findings from the retrospective and make something sensible about it. Now on Thursday at the department meeting I am going to present how we take these findings forward. So we are going to need new retrospectives, we need to increase the understanding of agile throughout the whole organization”. (Respondent 3, interview)

In relation to what this manager said we started a conversation with another individual a late afternoon, getting the description: "workshops can be used to immerse in a problematic area" the individual continued: "...depending on the maturity of a specific issue, a workshop may be used for different things, for example we use them to create a consensus among people with respect to different objectives". (Respondent 1, observation)

Workshops is one form of interventions that been used to invite coworkers in the adoptions, and an opportunity to put them in the front seat. This represents just one example of interventions that is used to immerse in central areas and to adapt agile by unifying the understanding of agile. Other interventions had taken place in the past and are planned to be performed in the future. We have observed the existence of these collaborative forums in which, one can socialize and learn from other's thoughts and behaviors. These are seen as a way of creating consensus of how agile should be adapted by reinforcing new behaviors and teaching to generate the suitable attitude and mindset.

6.2 Adaptation through testing of agile elements

It is seen that SEB Pension & Försäkring reconcile their conditions and tries to find a balance between the traditional and agile. We see indications of agile being adapted through continuous testing of agile elements. As we have shown, from the start of the adaption a pilot project was set up at the IT-department. As described during an interview:

“We conducted a pilot period, were it was said that we should try this and it was some teams at the IT-department that tried this during a period of time and then we decided to become agile”. (Respondent 2, interview)
Since the pilot period agile elements have been tested in the daily practices continuously. One example is provided by a manager during an afternoon conversation in May:

“... we did it with the employees, there were no managers, so we performed this in a group work with a few representatives from each department. We were about 20 individuals and spent about 30 hours together in October and November to work out processes and what's working and not working and so on and based on that we made our conclusions”. (Respondent 15, interview)

Agile is attempted to be adapted with respect to the conditions of the organization. Agile appear as elements that complements the existing processes and structures. One individual describe it as:

“... a mix of agile and things that has worked well in the past”
(Respondent 7, interview)

As an example of adaption the work is structured in teams that collaborates and communicate face-to-face instead of heavy documentation. But the construction of teams isn’t new. During a conversation with one individual in a meeting room it was expressed that:

“We have historically been constructing different teams, from time to time we had project groups and we had organizational teams, but it has never been built upon collaboration. Or we have collaborated, it meant that we met on Monday morning and talked about what everybody should do, and then everybody left the room and did it, you worked solitarily. We have not been in a room together and discussed and composed. So this is a huge challenge for many of us”. (Respondent 2, interview)

Throughout conversations the testing of various agile elements in daily practices is among other things a recurrent topic identified through our observations. In various meetings the practical work and process of delivering new products into market is essential. Sprints, projects and current work in progress are regularly referred to as examples of success or failures. One example is the Kanban board covering one of the walls at the Business Development and IT department. One individual describes this adaption as:
“For example, we started to use a Kanban board, which we haven’t done earlier. It captures much of the issue that everything should be transparent, and that everybody can follow the process as early as possible, which is much of the feedback.” (Respondent 3, interview)

Since then, employees gather around the Kanban board every Tuesday morning. At 10 am employees gather at the Business Development and IT department. Usually the presence is high during these meetings and more individuals tend to join the meetings as it continues. They inform each other about the progress of various projects, the progress which is illustrated on the board. Some are more active as they engage in the discussions while others observe these meetings. One individual leads the discussions in front of the Kanban board and move post-it notes which are placed in distinct columns based upon how the participates describe the progress. The obstacles and challenges are presented, characterizing the transparency and openness of these Kanban meetings. Previously these discussions were conducted separately, and not around the board covering the overall progress. Each project has been divided into proportional subsets representing tasks for a team to solve within limited amount of time.

While illustrating the adaption of elements with the example of the Kanban board, this indicates in a focus on transparency, openness and team coordination. In relation to agile this could be seen as an adaption as informal communication, team coordination and collaboration is part of the foundation the idea and the Kanban board appear as an agile element for this.

6.2.1 Adapting the principles of the agile manifesto

Another adaption of agile elements is shown when a separate construal was made of the 12 principles of the agile manifesto (table 5). The construction and interpretation done by the managers resulted in eleven principles. The principles intended to serve as guidance in the two main exercises at a workshop. These were labeled as principles for how the organization wants to work together and were illustrated in front of all the organizational members participating in the workshop.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles of how we want to work together</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The customer in focus - our highest priority is to satisfy the customer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Requirements shall change – requirements shall change along the way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Deliver often - the more often the better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Cooperation - business and developers must work together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Trustworthiness - provide the right milieu and the right support, and trust that the job is done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Physical communication - we communicate face to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Perseverance - keep a stable rate of development for an indefinite period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Simplicity - maximize the amount of work that does not need to be done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Self-organizing teams – provides the best architecture, requirements and design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Continuous learning - regular retrospectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Adaptability - through environmental monitoring of technology and design</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 - Principles, SEB Pension & Försäkring

By construing eleven principles based upon the agile manifesto, the organization attempted to convey the essence of agile in textual form. Even though the principles wasn’t carved in stone, it was presented in a workshop in front of the participants, it points towards the elements of the idea that are seen as central in the adaption. The eleven principles in relation to the original ones stated in the manifesto (table 2), is somewhat similar but clearly adapted. Generally, in the manifesto the principles are related to software development, this is not explicitly done by SEB Pension & Försäkring. Rather it is stated in a way adapted to the larger organizational setting, emphasizing customer focus, continuous change, collaboration and teamwork, physical communication and a flexible approach towards the environment. This demonstrates how elements of the manifesto are adapted. As agile and the principles is seen how they want to work together, and not simply within IT but in the organization as a whole, the organization adapt agile by highlighting what the they consider as central in their agile way of working.

6.2.2 Adapting new ‘agile’ roles

In our field material we can see that during meetings, interviews and conversations around the organization discussions often concern the adaption of new roles. Such roles are often discussed in relation to agile and leadership. It is about individuals’ ability to coach the teams, to give feedback and to not interfere in the daily work on a detailed level.

“With the agile way of working we need to start trusting the people in the organization, we need more coaching leadership styles rather than instructive”. (Respondent 1, observation)
This means that agile elements are seen in the adaption of new leadership roles within the organization as well as the way leadership should be performed. In a Monday meeting that came to concern leadership in the agile way of working one individual expressed that: “...we need leaders that can create conditions to achieve results collaboratively as efficient as possible” (Respondent 4, observation). Another individual seemed to be engaged about this subject and expressed the need for: “…a internal model for how leadership should be performed within the agile way of working” (Respondent 1, observation). The individual that started the discussing answered by highlighted an example based on own experiences: “for the team I am responsible for I attempt to create a common agenda” (Respondent 4, observation).

Similar discussion about leadership in the agile way of working is recurrent in the organization. For example, agile is seen through the adaption of agile elements which appear as roles such as Product Owner and Scrum which is considered to be coherent with the agile way of working. In a meeting in March one manager came to illustrate this in a presentation, making the participants reflect upon two separate organizations; one mechanical system and one agile system. The former constituted the original organizational scheme with the traditional hierarchical structure. The agile systems consisted of a similar scheme but with new roles emerging from the adaption of agile. Within the agile system leaders and managers are expected to create the suitable conditions to collaboratively reach result efficiently. Taking the example of the Product Owner, it was stated that the role represents the stakeholder’s interests in a project. Based on the requirements and needs expressed in the list called Backlog, the PO has the mandate to prioritize and decide what request should be delivered and when.

Various individuals have been given the opportunity to take on such roles, and the adaption of the roles is continuously evaluated as the organization test what works and what doesn’t work in the daily practices. As stated in one interview:

“...it was a way for us to test different roles in a context since we somewhat been anxious of going all the way directly, and that creates uncertainty. That is how we do it, we test this back and forth and point out individuals as product owner, you are in charge of the backlog, and see how that works”. (Respondent 15, interview)
Managers bring forth examples of individuals that seem suitable for these roles. Successful examples are based upon what they have seen and heard within the organization. In that way managers interpret previous experiences of what have worked well in the past. While highlighting specific behaviors’ that some individuals holds, the behaviors’ that is considered as favorable are translated in the construction of these new roles.

6.3 Adaption through negotiations

We have seen that the translation of agile imply that it is adapted through negotiations. The negotiations concern how agile should be adapted in the organization, and is understood as a procedure where discussions of translation motivate the adaption of agile. It is seen in both the work of unifying the understanding of agile and the testing of agile elements. During discussions at agile meetings, one might notice how the meaning of agile and different aspects of efficient work is continuously discussed by exchanging different views back and forth. Sometimes it may be about how a metaphor or parable are used in the context of a process, or how the structure of the work is or should be designed. What we have seen at several times at the meetings were agile have been discussed is how illustrations on the whiteboard are drawn up. Most often, these illustrations involve more complex organizational processes and how they relate to agile. One example is when a manager depictured the value chain in circles instead of linear. The size of the circles drawn reflected cross-unit teams and the number of people involved in various phases. From this, a discussion was raised as one respondent expressed that:

"...what we are trying to do here is to construe teams with focus areas, in one team we have requirement analysts and developers who will work with one area of focus, then product specialists and supportive competencies coming in". (Respondent 15, observation)

An attempt to construe teams with various competencies from certain departments was noticed. One participant partly agreed, but added to the conversation that: "we need to involve all units and not simply IT-development" (Respondent 6, observation). On the other side of the table yet another one agreed, claiming that: “It is too much IT focus” (Respondent 11, observation). The dialog went on and became more intense as
participants were struggling to offer their point of view, representing the unit they belong to: “Our unit consists of specialists and not generalists, we can’t structure our work into teams” (Respondent 11, observation). From this, the project group concluded that even within the organization different units and departments have diverse conditions. This dialogue demonstrates how negotiation concerns the traditional way of working in relation to agile. The rethinking of established concepts such as the value chain and team formation indicates a desire to surrender the traditional in favour of the agile. The process of negotiation blends new concepts and the organizational conditions into discussions were the exchange of different views drives the adaption forward. This is further supported by another example showing how consultants have participated in the translation of agile.

A person that previously hasn’t attended the recurrent meeting is entering the room; he titles himself as an “agile coach” from a consultancy firm. The consultant starts off by presenting his view of the agile way of working. However, most of the time consists of the participants describing how this is conducted at SEB Pension & Försäkring. They ask him questions, ask for advices. They describe how they work, how they have defined different phases of the process as well as their challenges with adapting agile. The agile coach that stands in front of the white-board is picturing up examples of how they should do and make an attempt to relate this to his view of an agile organization. How could they enable collaboration throughout the process, how could this be coordinated and how should they incorporate customer insights into the development process. That is the recurrent dialogues during the meeting. This is not the first-time consultants or other individuals been invited to the organization with the purpose of advising in the adaption of agile. Probably not the last time either as they currently looks for a suitable consultant to be a part of the meetings. After one of these meetings when asking one individual about the thoughts of this invitation it was stated that:

"It was one of the employees that said, I have a friend that is involved in these projects, do you want to take part of this? So I said absolutely, I invited him, so that was perfect. It is possible to do similar things more times, and other persons as well. You felt that he had one perspective on this, and then one can invite others that work with this, to get other perspective”. (Respondent 3, interview)
In the adaption of agile it clearly seems to be desirable to get new perspectives regularly, something to discuss about, and sometimes to relate aspects of agile to the organizational reality. They find value and inspiration from this, which is brought forward when communicating about the adaption around the organization.

6.3.1 Collisions drives the adaption forward and make things happen
As different perspective collides the adaption is taken further. We have identified how collisions of perspectives, sometimes leading to intense discussions, tend to direct the attention of organizational members to take actions for improvement. Step by step this drives the adaption forward in a way that is sustainable for the whole organization:

“...we must allow collisions to happen, otherwise we will not be able to learn [problems] will only by hidden under the surface. So transparency and clarity and the courage to accept failures is something that matches with agile”. (Respondent 3, observation)

This means there is a conscious choice of allowing collisions to occur, to display interests, opinions and problems, which would otherwise be masked. When exposed there is chance to learn, immerse into a problematic issue and renegotiate the meaning of agile to test new solutions. One of the recognized issues is that units have different standpoints: “...we talk different languages” (Respondent 8). This is one of the reasons for having individuals representing all the units at the meetings and other interventions were agile is discussed. It is necessary to have individuals who challenge the others point of view, another respondent explained this by using a metaphor:

“If everyone agrees that a wound really bleeds, then we have to do something about it. It's hard to ignore. So I think some things have to be triggered and provoked in order to take the next step”. (Respondent 8, interview)

The process of adaption is driven by the colliding interests and perspective from the individuals in the organization. It stands clear that individuals from different departments strive to establish their point of views. This is seen through complex negotiations of meaning and power battles and we demonstrate how this is driving the adaption of agile in the organization. This shows that it is possible to learn about the organization and its conditions by allowing perspectives to collide since it draws
attention to areas that needs to be changed or taken into consideration in the adaption of agile.

6.3.2 Adaption is a path towards definitions

In the negotiations new agile concepts emerge within the organization. While adapting agile new concepts and agile elements needs to be defined with respect to the organizational context. As we have seen this could be a challenging task and is noticeably a recurrent issue in the negotiation of its meanings. For instance, in one of the meetings when discussing the adaption of agile one respondent expressed that:

“We are in the organization continuously using various concepts, but we need to start filling them together”. (Respondent 4, observation)

We have previously described how agile is seen through fragments as Kanban board, 11 agile principles and roles such as Product owner and Scrum. We can see how such adoptions of agile had undergone discussion about the definition, what these entails. Together with other concepts these need to be defined and thereby adapted to fit the organization. Another example of how the adaption of agile requires negotiations of definitions is seen in the workshop “the requirement workshop”. This was an attempt to discuss and define what a specific phase in the development process would contain. Around the tables in the large meeting room, 28 individuals discussed this in smaller groups. The group's thoughts and ideas were written down on post-it pieces in different colors and pasted on the A3 sheets covering the walls in the room. The discussion continued to treat the roles and competences that need to be included in the preparation phase except those already available. The outcomes of each group’s discussions during the workshop were presented in front of all the participants. When the word was handed over to the facilitators who presented the outcomes for what needs to be done in the so-called ‘prepare phase’ to implement functionality that meets needs and creates value for customers. This only demonstrates some of the examples we have experienced in the organizations adaption, involving the adaption of new concepts that needs to be defined and construed and this is primarily seen through negotiations.
7. Discussion

This study sought to answer how agile is translated in large organizational settings. Our story has been about SEB Pension & Försäkring, and the story indicates that the translation in the larger setting is challenging as agile in our study becomes a recurrent topic for far reaching discussions. Becoming agile is not simply about copying a best-practice. The translation of agile imply that it needs to be adapted and we have identified three processes of translation; (1) adaption through unifying the understanding of agile, (2) adaption through testing of agile elements, and (3) adaption through negotiations.

Agile is in the organization realized as a way to quickly respond to market demands by structuring work in shorter iterations, to involve the customer, and primarily about collaboration in teams. To this, agile is appreciated as flexible and efficient means of handling change. Still, what agile means in the practical work and for each individual tend to be diverse. Individuals construe agile in relation to their role and responsibilities in the organization. Similarly as was found by Benders and van Veen (2001) interpretability gives adopters the opportunity to recognize their own situation in relation to the idea. We have seen that agile is hard to grasp due to the universal terms articulated in the twelve principles and four core values of the agile manifesto (Augustine, 2008; Stavu, 2014). Research had come to highlight this vagueness of MIs (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2005). In relation to agile the diverse meanings in the organization derive from individuals’ interpretability triggered by the vagueness conceptual ambiguity of the idea (Bender and Van Veen, 2001; Giroux, 2006). In translation theory this means that agile could be translated and travel into a variety of contexts (Czarniawska and Sevón, 1996). However, in this study this imposes challenges when translating agile. To better fit the organizational context the organization doesn’t adopt agile without modification, it needs to be adapted to the larger setting (Ansari, Reinecke and Zajac, 2010). It is thus evident that old habits and the traditional way of working (waterfall) influence the adaption as behavior, attitude and mindset is realized to be central for a successful adaption in the organization. In order to overcome such challenges the organization attempts to unify the understanding of agile through various interventions such as workshops, meetings and retrospectives.
To this, we recognize how these are used to immerse in areas related to agile such as objectives, problems and to get people to talk to each other face-to-face. Morris and Lancaster’s (2005) discovered that strategies to reinforce MIs relates to the learning of such behaviors and attitudes. Through various interventions the organization adapts agile through opening up for a unified understanding at larger scale, and use in their adaption similar strategies that Morris and Lancaster (2005) have stated as socializing and teaching techniques.

The organization adapts agile through testing of agile elements. Gandomani and Nafchi (2015) have concluded that agile adaptions are performed in iterative cycles. Similarly, we identify how the selection of elements emerges through a continuous process testing. For instance, we have presented how the organization have started to use a Kanban board signalling a greater focus on transparency and teamwork, they have attempted to translate the 12 principles from the manifesto, and adapted agile through new leadership roles such as Scrum and Product Owner. Tayor (2016) found that the adaption of agile had implications for the Project Manager role. In our study we add to understanding of that agile adaption imply changes and the need for new leadership roles. In accordance with Pries-Heje and Baskerville (2017) the organization choose agile elements on the basis of what best suit the organizational needs with respect to the organizational context. We argue that this process of translation by adaption through testing agile elements is performed with respect the organizational setting. Generally agile is adapted to software development practices (Dybå and Dingsøyr, 2008; Dingsøyr, 2012; Iivari and Iivari, 2011). We find that agile and the appearing elements not simply represent an adaption as an IT-practice, but rather it is seen as an efficient working method applicable to the whole organization. Sahlin-Andersson (1996) has shown how organizational context directs translation by limiting actor’s descriptions and retelling of ideas. We agree upon this, the larger setting imply that multiple perspectives and understandings take part in the translation and is seen in their way of translating agile through the adaption of agile elements. It is significant that a large degree of the translation derives from adaption of agile through negotiations. In these negotiations we have identified that collisions between various perspectives is in the organization seen as a driver of adapting agile. Processes of negotiations have in early research been
found to be central in the translation of MIs (Callon, 1986; Latour, 1987). While providing evidence of conscious negotiations of agile, the organization exposes problems sometimes resulting in collisions and intense discussions. This is to some extent in accordance with van De Veen and Poole’s (1995) reasoning. However, while van De Veen and Poole (1995) conceptualize distinct perspectives to explain organizational transformations, we can through two perspectives together demonstrate how planned initiatives (teleological view) are used in practice consciously to make perspectives to collide (dialectic view).

In sum, previous studies have shown that context directs the translation of MIs (Ansari, Reinecke and Spaan, 2014; Creed, Scully and Austin 2002). Similarly has Sahlin-Andersson (1996) highlighted the time and space as factors limiting the translation of MIs. In this study we see how the context set the direction for translation as agile is adapted to fit the organization. The organizational context and interpretability of agile indicate in a central role of actors engaged within the process of translation (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996; Latour and Callon 1991). Actors negotiate the meaning and interests of MIs over time (Waeraas and Nielsen, 2016). However, when actors attempt to convey their understandings to be the most relevant in the organization the perspectives sometimes collide.

8. Conclusion
The purpose of this thesis has been to explore the translation of agile in a large organization. Our study not only illustrate the process of translation in a larger setting, but we have shown how agile requires adaption. Our work indicates that the translation of agile in large organizations is challenging as they struggle to adapt agile to the larger context. Callon (1980) claimed that translation had an end result. However, we rather view the translation as an end-less process in accordance with Latour’s (1986) due to the challenges of translating agile in large organizations. First, agile is vague and it do not exist any universal best-practice for adopting the idea. This not only creates possibilities to adapt the idea as claimed within translation theory (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996). This also creates confusion and a desire for guidelines for how to convey the essence of agile in an organization. Second, as individuals struggle to
translate agile it is seen that the idea is discussed and negotiated, ending up in several meetings. Third, agile is challenging to translate to larger settings and this could be since the idea originating from IT and has primarily been used within smaller teams. To this, when agile reach beyond the boundaries of IT and intersects with existing practices in larger settings the demands for translation increase. We recommend organizations to be patient in their work of becoming agile since organizations needs to consider their specific context in relation to the foundation of agile. We suggest organizations to realize that challenges could occur in the continuous process of translating agile in large organizations.

The work in this thesis is not without limitations. For instance, as we have examined the translation of agile in only one large organization this limits the confidence that the three processes of translation will prove valid for other organizations. While our results have implications for agile and the broader range of management ideas, more work is needed to clarify the processes illustrated in this study. Although research on agile is extensive it has historically come to concern software related issues. As more and more organizations attempts to become agile in today’s dynamic environment we address the need for more research of agile within organization and management studies. Our study is further limited by the restricted time available to conduct ethnography. Thereby we suggest full-scale ethnographic studies within the field to explore the day-to-day translations of agile.
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Appendix

Interview guide

(1) In short, can you please describe who you are and what role you have at SEB?
(2) What does agile mean for you?
(3) Can you describe the background for starting to work towards agile? And why?
(4) How did you get in touch with agile? Did you pick up inspiration somewhere?
(5) How have agile methods been incorporated into the organization? Have it been necessary to change something to make this possible, can you give an example?
(6) Who do you consider to be the key individuals for adapting the agile methods to the organization? If there were any, who were they who opposed it?
(7) What is leadership in the agile way of working? Can you give some examples?
(8) What role has leadership in agile?

In order to get as nuanced picture as possible concerning how the organization adapts to agile principles and the role of leadership in agile working methods, are there any more you would like to tell us before we end up?
Main journal articles underlying this thesis


