UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
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Master Degree Project in Management

Disassembling the Elephant

Translating Agile Project Management into a Banking Context

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Master Degree Project
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Abstract

This paper investigates the concept of Agile project management (APM) within the Swedish banking context. In order to explore how the idea of APM has travelled to and become translated in practice, the study draws upon interview data collected in a Swedish bank currently undergoing transformation as a result of changes in the Swedish banking market. The aim was to highlight contextual implications as the concept of APM has travelled to, and materialised in practice. Specifically, this paper focus on why, and how the concept of APM has been deployed in a Swedish bank by applying the translation perspective offered by Scandinavian institutionalism. We argue that contrary to common view generally advocated, in which APM needs to be implemented in its "pure" form, the concept of APM might be subject to change as it is implemented in a new and different context. As such, this paper offers a new way of viewing how APM becomes translated outside the software field as it has travelled into the very different, traditionally rigid, heavily regulated and institutionalized world of banking. In addition to contributing to existing IT research, this study also investigates how actors translate broad ideas from different industry contexts into work practices. Moreover, this paper might have practical implications for practitioners in the field as it has uncovered a number of dimensions which might be important to consider prior to implementing APM.

Keywords: Agile Project Management, Banking, Identity, Imitation, Translation theory

Introduction

For a very long time, banks have been the blood flow in society, building robust business models around credit supply, handling vast quantities of money and being able to exploit economies of scale (Corea, 2015). Furthermore, banks have been able to rely on a relatively solid and loyal customer base which generally have been slow to change financial providers (Dietz, Khanna, Olanrewaju & Rajgopal, 2016). Historically, banking has perhaps thus been one of the sectors which have been most resilient to disruptive technology change.

However, in the light of technological advances, not even the financial sector is immune to the digital wave that is increasingly disrupting old ways of doing business, and it is now widely recognised that the nature of banking services is rapidly changing due to diverse advances offered by information technology (IT) of the internet (Levy, 2014). Running a bank has therefore perhaps become more difficult than ever - battling increasing regulation in some areas and deregulation in others, a growing threat of new entrepreneurial market entrants (the so called ”Fintechs”), in combination with lost respect for banks in the face of recent years' financial problems (Harvey, 2016). These new market entrants come from other business such as IT, retail, social media and telecoms and is therefore very different from the traditional financial institutional structures. This means that banks increasingly find themselves having to catch up with rapid advancements in software development (Christou, Ponis & Palaiologou, 2010). Thus, the modern world of today is fundamentally changing the way banking services and products are developed, produced and distributed as well as consumed by the customers. In sum, advances in areas of technology, globalisation and customisation have created a new, dynamic banking environment in an effort to improve service quality and satisfy customer needs for faster, easier, independent and real-time service (González, Mueller-Dentiste & Mack, 2008).

In the face of this new reality, where customer interaction has moved from banking offices to customers' mobile phones, banks must rethink aspects such as accessibility, diversification, product development, distribution and branding (Swedish bankers' association, 2017). As such, the new reality that is emerging seem to be based not upon traditional financial and institutional structures, but rather upon the basic functions of the financial system itself (Wilson & Campbell , 2016). Thus, while banking sector is historically well known for using large, sometimes monolithic legacy systems, banks today must rethink these aspects in order to catch up with rapid advancements in software development which call for new, flexible and service-oriented computing paradigms (Christou et al., 2010). In line with this, a number of consultancy reports are increasingly highlighting the need for banks to adapt their existing business processes in order to facilitate faster time to market, new products and increased flexibility (e.g. Dietz et al., 2016; Jaubert, Ullrich, Dela, Marcu & Malbate, 2014; Skan, Dickerson & Masood, 2015).

One of the models being advocated and increasingly implemented in the banking context today to facilitate such a switch is agile project management (APM). The concept is an umbrella term for a number of changes in how software developers plan and coordinate their work, communicate with customers and external stakeholders, and is broadly considered as “the” project management approach of today (Špundak, 2014). Although there are a number of models, common to all APM approaches is the embodied core values of individuals and interactions over processes and tools, working software over comprehensive documentation, customer collaboration over contract negotiation and responding to change over following a plan (Beck et al., 2001). The core intent with agile is thus to embrace the modern dynamic world by the deployment of methods that manage change as an integral and undeniable part of reality through the substitution of rigidity for flexibility (Serrador & Pinto, 2015). Thematic literature reviews of the APM research field such as Dybå and Dingsøyr (2008), and Dingsøyr, Nerur, Balijepally and Moe (2012) have identified that such studies generally have fallen into categories of introduction and adoption, human and social factors, perceptions of agile methods

and comparative studies. So far, however, focus on APM application has been on the software industry (Conforto, Salum, Amaral, da Silva & de Almeida, 2014; Sheffield & Lemetayer, 2013). While some authors have argued that APM practices and tools can be adapted to other types of products or environments which resemble software projects (Highsmith, 2010; Chin, 2004), others have highlighted that notions such as regulatory constraints, formal requirements and legacy systems might pose barriers for implementation (Boehm & Turner, 2005; Mishra & Weistroffer, 2008). Because agile software development is based upon frequent feedback loops, iterative reviews and close customer contact, agile methods lose much of their effectiveness without this direct interaction (Hoda, Kruchten, Noble & Marshall, 2010). This is argued to be especially challenging for larger organisations with well-established routines and structures (Stettina & Hörz, 2014).

The APM literature has generally tended to reinforce the notion that APM should be implemented and used as a "pure" approach, following the practices, techniques and tools advertised in the theory (Conforto et al., 2014; Highsmith, 2010; Schwaber, 2004). However, it has been increasingly highlighted that specific organisational needs, processes and contextual restrictions more than likely lead to diverse and context-specific interpretations and implementations of the APM methods, which in turn also implies potential differences in perceived challenges and benefits (Abrahamsson et al., 2009; Dybå & Dingsøyr, 2008; Lyytinen & Rose, 2006; Ruhe & Wohlin, 2014). Thus, although there are many versions of agile methods, relatively little is currently known about how these methods evolve and are actually carried out in practice and what their effects are on the different areas of businesses that implement them, particularly outside the context of traditional IT software development organisations for which APM was originally constructed (Conforto et. al., 2014; Dingsøyr et al., 2012; Qumer & Henderson-Sellers, 2008; Sheffield & Lemétayer, 2013). As such, the current body of knowledge has several shortcomings and further empirical work is needed to investigate the applicability and context-specific implications of APM methods in different organisations and situations.

Today, we know relatively little about the processes through which actors translate broad ideas from very different industry contexts into workplace practices (Morris & Lancaster, 2006; Wæraas & Sataøen, 2014). Therefore, by drawing on a version of institutional theory which sees organisational change as a process of translation, the aim of this paper was to highlight contextual implications as the concept of APM have travelled to, and materialised in practice in a Swedish bank. We argue that contrary to common view generally advocated, in which APM needs to be implemented in its "pure" form, the concept of APM might be subject to change as it is implemented in a new and different context. As such, this paper may offer a new way of viewing how APM is conceptualised and have materialised in practice outside its traditional software field as it has travelled into the very different, traditionally rigid, heavily regulated and institutionalised world of banking. This argument builds on the assumption that APM as a concept may change as it is materialised in action in a new context, recognising that models may be subject to change as they travel in time and space. Specifically, by focusing on the questions regarding *how* and *why* the concept of APM have been deployed in a Swedish bank, this study not only offers added insight in IT research on how APM is used in practice in diverse contexts, but may also offer further insights into the travels and changes in management ideas, as well as their potential impacts on the organisations that have adopted them.

This paper is structured as follows: In the following sections, we first outline the relevant literature on the circulation of management ideas and the concept of translation, specifically focusing on the concepts of organisational change as a result of translation, imitation and identity creation. We then briefly explain the studied management concept of APM, followed by a presentation of the methodology. We then detail the findings from our study of the Swedish bank, and in the final section we outline the implications of our findings.

Theoretical framework

Introduction to Translation theory

Traditionally, the idea that new practices and models spread with little change almost automatically as passive organisations adopt and conform to the latest trends through the notion of diffusion has been the dominant view in organisational research (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996; Latour, 1986; Lounsbury, 2007). Early work on neo-institutional theory has observed how formal organisational structures conform to societal institutions in order to achieve legitimacy and long-term survival (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). However, this view has been contested, highlighting that institutional fields are influenced and shaped by a multitude of different, contradictory rationalities (Lounsbury, 2007; Pache & Santos, 2010), and that organisations may choose to respond and conform to such forces in distinctive ways (Oliver, 1991). Thus, when management ideas spread between and across fields, the practices have been found to be characterised by a number of local variants due to context-specific translation processes (Ansari, Fiss & Zajac, 2010; Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996; Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005), even in cases where organisations have adopted the same models and practices (Hwang & Suarez, 2005). In line with this, Scandinavian institutional theory has gained increased acceptance among researchers in studying the dynamic aspects of spread of management ideas - why ideas become diffused, how they are translated and what effect it has on organisations (Sahlin & Wedlin, 2008; Wæraas & Sataøen, 2014). The theory points to how the spread of ideas and subsequent organisational change is better understood in terms of a translation process and that, in order to make sense of the fact that organisations may be simultaneously both homogeneous and heterogeneous, requires an understanding of how diffusion happens and how different models and practices are shaped and reshaped as they travel both within and between contexts (Sevón, 1996).

The concept of translation is a useful theoretical tool that is particularly well equipped to explain such processes by shedding light on how and why certain ideas are appropriated (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996), and has been regarded as especially useful in studying how organisational ideas are institutionalised across different organisational fields (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). From this view, translation is conceptualised as a process wherein new practices and/or fashions become institutionalised in different fields at different points of time and space (Czarniawska & joerges, 1996; Morris & Lancaster, 2006). It draws from the realisation that organisations are not passive adopters of practices, but rather interpreters of external ideas (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996; Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005). As such, the notion of translation can be applied in order to highlight the more fragmentary and heterogeneous processes of institutional conformity (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996; Oliver,

1991). The theory draws upon the concept of theorisation which propose that ideas travel between apparently dissimilar contexts by being distilled into generalised, abstract concepts by establishing cause-effect chains which provide and explain how perceived problems might be fixed (Strang & Meyer, 1993). The concept of translation derives from the seminal works of Latour (1986) and Callon (1986), where the agency to modify, deflect or betray concepts as they are travelling in time and space is attributed to all individuals involved in the circulation process. This approach was then adopted by Czarniawska and Joerges (1996) in order to understand the spread of management ideas and practices, acknowledging that as something is moved from one place to another, it is subject to creative reinterpretation and, as a result, changes as it is reconstructed in its new context (Czarniawska, 2015). In this view, each act of translation also involves transformation, wherein both the object of translation as well as its translator are subject to alterations (Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005).

In order for ideas to travel, they need to become separated from their original institutional settings (disembedded) and translated into an object such as a text, prototype or picture (packaged), and then translocated in a new context (unpackaged). Finally, ideas are translated locally into a new practice (re-embedded) (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996). Thus, ideas in the form of models and practices can be adapted, modified or reshaped, but ideas may also take on new forms and meanings as they flow within and between contexts (Erlingsdóttir & Lindberg, 2005). The translation process takes different directions depending upon the context in which the translators are able and willing to reframe or transform to existing institutional settings in ways that fit the current demands (Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005). The key rationale is that change processes are problem-based and, as such, context specific and constructed in the local setting (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996). Consequently, adoption and implementation of new ideas and practices are frequently subject to efforts of modification and interpretation as organisations incorporate such elements into their existing organisational technologies, cultural settings and political arenas (Ansari et al., 2010). In this manner, certain elements are typically discarded and others added as they are transformed into actions and the idea is re-formed (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996). Thus, the content might change even if the packaging stays the same (Erlingsdóttir & Lindberg, 2005).

Imitation, Identity and Fashion

But what, then, puts the process of translation into motion? Perhaps the most poignant metaphorical explanation of this process has been put forward by Czarniawska and Sevón (2005), who eloquently stated that "translation is a vehicle, imitation its motor and fashion sits at its wheel" (Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005 p.11). The key rationale is that guided by management fashion, people and organisations imitate desires or beliefs that appear attractive at a given time and place, which then leads them into translating objects, ideas and practices for their own use (Abrahamsson, 1996). Each fashion, and the travelling imitative translation it creates, must be understood in the historical and specific context of the previous fashion it displaced, and the next fashion that will replace it (Sahlin-Andersson 1996). This is because individuals and organisations develop their interest, identities, resources and abilities in their social context from which they pick up and imitate new ideas (Sahlin & Wedlin, 2008).

Subsequently, guided by fashion, imitation becomes an important aspect in the diffusion and translation of practices and organisational change (Sevón, 1996; Sahlin-

Andersson, 1996), and provides an explanation to why ideas such as APM travel from one setting to another. In essence, the circulation of ideas follows from the desire to imitate what is seen as successful models (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996; Sevón, 1996). The intent of imitation is thus that organisations act similar to those they want to become more alike, with the purpose of achieving similar results. While the diffusion perspective has treated imitation as a mechanical process of copying in its literal and objective form, the translation perspective acknowledges that such transfers are not perfect but subject to transformation as it travels. To imitate then, is not only to copy, but also to change and innovate (Sevón, 1996; Sahlin & Wedlin, 2008). What organisations are imitating are merely abstract rationalisations of models and concepts. As such, what spreads are not experiences or practices per se, but rather standardised models of such concepts (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996). Planned organisational change is therefore rare and often lead to unintended consequences, i.e. differences between planned and actual results as models and practices travel and becomes locally translated and adapted to existing conditions and practices (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996).

The notion of imitation is further regarded as closely connected to the concept of organisational identity and change, in the sense that actors tend to imitate those they want to resemble (Sevón, 1996). Organisational identity is produced and reproduced in a continuous narration wherein individual and organisational activities are accounted for and made sense of (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1994). This process is however dualistic in its nature, in the sense that perceived identity shapes imitation, and imitation conversely shapes identity (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996; Sahlin & Wedlin, 2008; Sevón, 1996). Sevón (1996) draws upon the concept of logic of appropriateness (March, 1981), in which organisations through the judgement of what is considered rational through the matching of the identifications, situations and of desire to transform, lead to institutionalised action. In other words, identity transformation starts with a comparison between a current state and a desired state, where organisations asks; who am I, where do I want to go, and how do I accomplish it? Thus, initiating a process of finding other actors they want to become more alike, and adopting appropriate methods to do so. Another source of imitation is identity crisis (Czarniawska, 1997; Sahlin-Andersson, 1996). When the present organisational identity is threatened, one of the reactions might be to look for "idols", i.e. organisations deemed to be successful.

This form of imitation, seen as a result of matching, focused on identity is normally assumed to occur in organisational fields (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Sevón, 1996). Such fields can be defined as activity fields that is comprised of organisations with similar activity definitions (Sevón, 1996). However, imitation has also been shown to occur across different organisational fields (Forssell & Jansson, 1996; Sahlin-Andersson 1996; Sevón, 1996; Boxenbaum & Battilana, 2005). Uncertainty has been said to be one driver of imitation (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Sevón, 1996). That is, when organisations are faced with uncertainty regarding their own experiences, or when earlier and activities and development practices are questioned, they look for experiences and models to imitate (Sevón, 1996; Sahlin-Andersson, 1996).

An important point to make in Scandinavian institutional view is that in contrast to the neoclassical view, organisations differentiate themselves not only as similar, but also as exclusively different. As a result of different actions, the result of imitation as a process of translation is that the fields are to some degree both homogeneous and heterogeneous, which

over time might lead to new fields through the process of translation (Sevón, 1996). Even in instances of decoupling (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), the introduction of new language and models in many instances have been shown to have consequences in terms of how the organisations and practices came to be identified, assessed and presented. Diffused ideas could thus add to or result in changes to organisational identities and to what appeared as normal, desirable and possible. Thus, circulated ideas have appeared to trigger institutional change (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996; Forssell & Jansson, 1996; Brunsson & Sahlin-Andersson, 2000).

Today, we still know relatively little about the process through which actors translate broad ideas from very different industry contexts into workplace practices (Morris & Lancaster, 2006; Wæraas & Sataøen, 2014). As exemplified in the introduction of this paper, APM is a good example of a popular management model which is currently being transferred into diverse business contexts, being highlighted as "the" project management method of today (Špundak, 2014; Thummadi, Shiv & Lyytinen, 2011; West & Grant, 2010). Despite this, relatively little is still known about how these methods evolve and what potential effects are on the different areas of business that implement them (Conforto et al., 2014; Dybå & Dingsøyr, 2008). As such, the theoretical lense presented above can offer a new way of viewing the spread of APM as it travels into the institutionalised world of banking, and how the concept is treated in this new context. This argument builds on the assumption that APM as a concept may change as it is materialised in action in a new context, recognising that models may be subject to change as they travel. Therefore, in order to explore how the idea of APM is imitated and translated in practice and with what implications it has on the organisation that has adopted it, this study draws upon qualitative interview data collected from a study of a Swedish bank currently undergoing transformation as a result of changes on the Swedish banking market. The following sections presents the reader to APM as a concept and the methods that were used.

The Management Idea

The term *Agile Project Management* has become known as a result of the dissemination of a set of methods developed specifically for the software industry (Conforto et al., 2014). APM emerged as a response to the inability of traditional waterfall project management methodologies to manage changing environments (Highsmith, 2002). The APM method was recognised as a result of the spread of a variety of "lightweight" software development methods such as SAFe, XP and Scrum (Conforto et al., 2014). Together, the creators of such models contributed to create the Manifesto for Agile Software Development (Beck et al., 2001; Conforto et al., 2014). Although there are many variations that fall under the umbrella term of Agile methods, APM is in essence comprised of four core values, namely: "individuals and interactions over processes and tools, working software over comprehensive documentation, customer collaboration over contract negotiation and responding to change over following a plan" (Beck et al., 2001).

As projects and contexts become increasingly complex and dynamic, the need for different, more flexible, models of governing projects develop (Karlesky & Vander-Voord, 2008; Ballard & Tommelein, 2012). Contrary to traditional methodologies, APM manages unpredictability not by relying on specific, rigid processes and written documentation, but

rather on people's knowledge and resources (Mishra & Weistroffer, 2008) as well as emphasising extensive communication and collaboration within teams, furthering collective action and facilitating the agility of the process (Santos, Goldman & De Souza, 2015; Špundak, 2014). In turn, this has implications on the specific roles within teams whereby team members, empowered with more decision-making power, are not confined to specific roles. Instead, teams are self-organising, characterised by a high level of autonomy (Hoda, Noble & Marshall, 2013).

Like all project management methodologies, APM is organised around a bundle of values and practices. These include *testing* the components of the feature in order to ensure that it's done (Karlesky & Vander-Voord, 2008); breaking up projects into shorter and defined periods of time – *iterations* - to achieve effectiveness (Thummadi, Shiv & Lyytinen, 2011); *feature-driven development*, enabling project teams to ongoingly evaluate the product as it is developed, while obtaining timely feedback from users by comprising several rapid, iterative planning and development cycles (Hass, 2007), enabling project teams to learn and improve the working methods for each cycle (Tonnquist, 2012); *Simplicity* and *changeability* implying a strive for eliminating unnecessary waste by implementing necessary software only when it is created and a recognition that estimations and plans are faulty and can change (Leybourne, 2009); via *continuous integration* whereby created codes are tested to ensure that new features have not broken existing features, changes can be made early – minimising costs (Karlesky & Vander-Voord, 2008); lastly, the preferred *documentation* is limited, flexible and "just-in-time" in APM methods (Chau, Maurer & Melnik, 2003).

Methodology

Research design

Responding to the call for further empirical research on the topic of agile outside traditional software development organisations (Dybå & Dingsøyr 2008; Abrahamsson, Conboy & Wang, 2009; Ruhe & Wohlin, 2014) as well as the translation of broad ideas from different industry contexts (Morris & Lancaster, 2006; Wæraas & Sataøen, 2014), this study aimed to highlight contextual implications as the concept of APM has travelled to, and materialised in practice in a Swedish bank by investigating how, and why the concept has been adopted.

As pointed out by several authors in literature, agility is a multifaceted and context-dependent concept which might be achieved through various means depending on the organisational context. As such, organisations may exhibit unique interpretations of the commercial versions of APM (Abrahamsson et al., 2009; Conforto et al., 2014; Dybå & Dingsøyr, 2008; Lyytinen & Rose, 2006). Therefore, given our objective to explore how Agile have been implemented in an organisation outside its original context, we conducted a single-case qualitative study on the adoption of APM in a Swedish bank. A single case study was deemed appropriate towards the goal of providing a detailed and context-dependent understanding of the practice in the specific context (Yin, 2009). In addition, case studies are considered to be a good platform for investigating questions relating to "how" and "why" in organisational contexts (Yin, 2009).

Towards this goal, the focus of our study was a Swedish medium-sized bank, currently employing around 300 employees. During the last couple of years, the bank has

undergone several organisational and structural changes, as well as adopting new routines such as APM towards the goal of facilitating the adoption of new technology, new market entrants, regulation, changes in customer demands and increasingly fluid and fast-moving market conditions. As such, this bank was deemed to be suitable object for the aim of this study.

Due to the regulations regarding banking secrecy a decision to anonymise the bank was made. In a similar manner, the respondents and their potential quotes in this study have been anonymised in order to protect the respondent's identity. In order to protect the identities in a fulfilling manner, we have chosen to remove all attributes associated with the respondents which could possibly identify them. Subsequently, the bank will in the following sections be referred to as "the bank", and the respondents' names or positions will not be disclosed.

Data collection

In the interest of studying how agile has manifested in practice in the banking context, first-hand data has been collected using semi-structured, in-depth interviews (Silverman, 2013). The method was deemed appropriate because semi-structured interviews offer a possibility to better understand how concepts such as agile have travelled and settled down in a new context, as well as further facilitating later comparison of data (Eisenhardt,1989).

Data was collected in different phases, inspired by and in accordance with the ongoing nature of grounded methodology (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Firstly, we conducted one pre-interview with our contact at the bank, with the intent of obtaining general information regarding the current market conditions for banks today and new ways of working in order to meet new challenges and demands. The interview provided us with rich and information concerning the bank as well as agile methodology and pointed us towards interesting aspects of this process such as the relation between banking regulations and agile methodology. The main data was then collected through 16 interviews with individuals selected individuals in varying levels and positions in the bank, both within and outside of the IT department. The qualitative research design allowed us to analyse and make sense of the apparent "objective" concept of APM. As the aim of this paper is to gain a deeper understanding of APM in the context, purposive sampling was deemed appropriate and in this manner, respondents were chosen based on their informativeness (Mabry, 2008). Because we had limited knowledge of the context and which people would be appropriate to interview, our contact person provided us with names of possible respondents. Although this may have affected the result and diminished representativeness, different and contrasting accounts have been collected, reducing the concerns for not representing the whole picture. As stated, we aspired to interview people who were both directly involved in working with agile but also people who came in contact with the methodology indirectly. Thus, the respondents consisted of both people working in the IT department, but also in other departments within the bank who were involved in the project processes. To observe these interactive units allowed for a deeper analysis of the translations and characteristics of the process (Gobo, 2008).

Both researchers were present during the interviews, which were recorded and then transcribed verbatim. The interviews lasted between 30-60 minutes, which was deemed adequate in order to acquire a thorough understanding of the respondents' accounts. From the collected data, narratives concerning how they currently work with, or are affected by, agile

was collected, thus allowing a comparison between different accounts (Van Maanen, 2011; Silverman, 2013). The interviews were designed to explore more in depth the responses to the implementation of agile into the organisation and to understand how the process developed. Open-ended questions were subsequently used to explore more in depth, and develop an understanding of the perceptions about the current conditions in banking market in general as well as the underlying reasons for migrating to an agile methodology, and secondly how this was subsequently carried out in practice as well as what implications it has had on existing operations. Finally, questions were also focused towards the outcomes and lessons from the journey so far, as well as perceived possible benefits and challenges encountered throughout between a flexible fast-paced agile methodology and a traditional bank structure.

When conducting the interviews, there were some ethical aspects to take into consideration. Silverman (2013) present some general ethical principles, which we took into consideration when conducting the study. This relates to the voluntary participation and the right to withdraw one's participation as well as the promise of upholding the anonymity of the respondents. To ensure this, we provided a consent-form to the respondents regarding the study and how the data would be treated, allowing them to make an informed decision regarding their participation. Furthermore, the open-ended questions reduced the risk of steering the respondents' answers in the desired direction of the researchers. Such a mode of procedure allows the respondent to, in the extent possible, unreservedly talk about the subject at hand (Silverman, 2013). In addition, the power asymmetry of the interview is something to be aware of when conducting interviews and by recognising this objectivity and ethicality is reinforced (Kvale, 2006). Thus, by allowing respondents to freely account for the subject, this risk was mitigated. Furthermore, an adverse aspect of interviews is the subjectivity of the respondent's account of the phenomenon at hand (Czarniawska, 2014). For this reason, in addition to primary data, secondary sources of information such as organisational schematics and documents have been collected. Such data provided more detailed background information about the bank and guided us when constructing the interview guide (Kvale, 2007).

Data analysis

Combined with our aim to connect it to and develop the theoretical account of the translation of APM, the narratives regarding the bank's work with APM have been analysed in a manner inspired by grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The process of implementing agile relies on the abilities and actions of organisational actors and the collected material presents the actors' accounts of it. Because there is a clear structure to how grounded theory should be conducted (Payne & Payne, 2004), the analysis was inspired by did not completely follow the rigid structure of the methodology. Martin and Turner (1986) present grounded theory as a way for researchers to identify and exploit a theoretical account of a general theme by grounding the narrative in actions and processes found in empirical data. As a result of interaction between the given accounts, grounded theory progress as the process evolves (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Thus, a continuous comparative analysis of the qualitative data collected from the semi-structured interviews (Martin & Turner, 1987) was conducted.

The process of coding the material was conducted in three steps and began after the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Firstly, we used open coding as a means of breaking down, comparing and categorising the data in order to identify what transpires in the data

(Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Examples of such codes were “deep ruts”, “strictness of SAFe”, “building modulary”. The second step of coding entailed a higher hierarchical level of abstraction in a process of axial coding (Martin & Turner, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). During this step, we linked and categorised the initial, detailed, coding into broader categories (Martin & Turner, 1987; Czarniawska, 2014). From this, some core categories were identified: (1) The need for Agile; (2) The implementation process; (3) Challenges, and; (4) Organisational implications. Lastly, selective coding was used in order to refine and define our analysis towards the chosen theory, arriving at theoretical categories (Glaser, 1978). The final analysis of the field material was done drawing on the Scandinavian school of institutionalisation, which enabled us to understand how the idea of Agile has travelled to, and settled, in the new local context. This aided in the understanding of how the concept was understood within the bank, as well as how it became translated and adapted into the local context.

Empirical findings

A changing macro environment

> Banks are institutions, but what is happening on the market today makes us...the struggle between being an institution and suddenly the carpet is pulled under your feet and rules changed and the banks wonder what happened. In a lot of ways, banks have not needed to care in the same extent before, I mean...everyone needs a bank and you have been very keen to have a relation with your bank, loyalty and so on. But this is disappearing now and others will do things much better than banks because banks weren't fast enough. The banks don't even have the right people, they don't have innovators, they have banking people - economists. Banks need to rethink, think new, analyse trends…or we will be overtaken. (Respondent, March 2017)

The journey of migrating to an APM methodology commenced in the spring of 2015, when the bank began the process of implementing agile in its IT department. The reasons for migrating to APM was by the respondents described as a combination of several aspects. Firstly, the respondents identified major changes in the macro environment as a driver of transformation. For example, the rapid pace of digitalisation and technological changes were identified as a source of fundamentally redrawing the arena for banks. Such technological advancements were regarded as a reason for changing the way customers interact with and use banking services and, in line with this, the respondents also connected this to changes in customer behaviour. This was highlighted by one respondent, who stated that:

> The customers today, they want banking services in a completely new way. It is completely different from when I started working in a traditional bank office when the customers came to us when they needed our banking services. Now, we have to be where the customers are. It does not matter where, this traditional way where you went into a bank office, it's gone. And that is why the traditional project model is no longer valid, because this reality requires much quicker deliveries.

So, the need to change the way the bank interact with clients was necessary due to changes in the macro environment wherein the business for banks is changing. As a result, the traditional way off running bank service is not applicable any longer, according to respondents.

Secondly, the respondents also highlighted that in the wake of recent years' financial crisis, there has been an increase in the number of regulations as well as their comprehensiveness, and the speed in which they are introduced has accelerated. For this reason, an increased pressure on banks to adjust their operations has developed along with a need of having appropriate compliance and risk functions in place. Adding to that, new technology and regulations have enabled lower barriers of entry for new entrants into the Swedish financial market, which has paved the way for highly entrepreneurial and innovative "Fintechs". As one respondent states:

> For banks today, with the business models we have…so much has disappeared, we were very dependent on card transactions, ATMs and so on, but then "Swish" came a long and now no one is doing that anymore. So, we have lost a lot of that and need to find new things to focus on.

In line with this, new market entrants such as Tink, Swish and Klarna, are now nibbling at the business models of banks, described by the respondents as a result of banks being forced to open up their previously monopolised infrastructures according to new regulations. Consequently, the respondents reflect over the increasing need to be able to become a transformable organisation.

Internal reasons for adopting an agile approach

In addition to external pressures, there were also some internal key factors influencing the introduction of APM. Firstly, the organisation had identified a number of issues with the current traditional, sequential "Waterfall" project method related to efficiency, which they intended to reduce by migrating to an agile approach. For example, one respondent states that prior to implementing agile, the problem formulation they had was that they were essentially drowning in their own project portfolio, as the number of projects stretched their capacity:

> The organisation wanted us to do this much, but we were always told that there wasn't enough capacity on IT. And adding to that, if we had a development capacity of 100 %, then 30% were being taken up by essential changes as a result of regulations and necessary daily operations, which only left us with 70% that we could focus on actually creating something that would give us revenue and actual customer value.

Hence, the limited capacity was another factor stated by the respondents that urged the need of changing the way of conducting projects in the organisation. They expressed how, by adopting an APM approach, the bank could utilise the capacities in new ways and that there was a possibility of increasing productivity in that fashion.

An additional possible positive effect recognised prior to implementation, was the prospect of increasing the customer benefit through a faster time to market process enabled by the agile approach. This was highlighted by one respondent, who stated that, to that person, agile means more control:

> Before [in the old way of working], we could run a project that started in January 2015 and was delivered in 2016, and the only thing that we could be sure of was that when we delivered 1,5 years later, it was no longer what the customer wanted, because they wanted it in 2015. If we instead now deliver in smaller features, then we can deliver customer value much sooner, and some parts we might realise halfway through that we should not do at all.

As a result of previously working according to a traditional "waterfall" process, the IT organisation was largely organised in silos with a designated team manager to each silo, and the projects were run under longer periods of time in a sequential line from point A to B with a complete release date at the end. One of the respondents describes this process as:

> Person A did their task, and then B did theirs, and then C and so on, you did not work together the same as in the agile approach, each person had their own task and then you had a hand over at the end.

In line with the goal of increasing the overall IT project capacity at the department, this was brought up as one of the things that the APM approach was supposed to change by improving communication and making teams more cohesive. By doing so, the different features of the project could be released to the customer ongoingly as they were developed, resulting in better customer benefit than before.

Why APM?

As presented, there were a multitude of internal reasons for adopting a new project management methodology and subsequently chose to implement APM. However, the respondents all agreed that they could have chosen another method, because the essential issue was the recognition that they needed to change and that APM was an adequate method. As one respondent states:

> It is appropriate for the time, almost all companies work like that now. But also, because the world is so…everything moves so fast. If you are not in the game, you lose.

This was further highlighted by another respondent also stated that as things moves faster and faster, new methods must be introduced to cope with the new reality:

> We cannot sit and work in a way which was adapted for an old time when the reality today does not look like that anymore. It's about the same thing as still trying to pale hay on a hay rack with a pitch fork.

Hence, the main reason for adopting the APM approach was by the respondents largely attributed to the need to change the project method to increase efficiency. APM presented a working method aimed at delivering more efficiency by limiting unnecessary parts of the project process, making it a suitable choice when looking for options of how the bank could re-organise itself. Furthermore, the current trendiness and success of the method was also a key factor as to why the bank chose APM. The concept had positive results in other organisations and several other banks in Sweden had implemented it.

Despite organisational and structural differences such as regulatory compliance requirements, the main inspiration is said to have come from companies such as Lego and Spotify, which were regarded as highly innovative, arguing that the problem of banks is connected to the bank as an institution:

> Banks, they have been these stiff colossuses, and we have a fixed set of products which we have presented in a certain way. But what is happening now is that the borders are being erased as we are trying to be innovative and they say; does it have to be a bank in order to deliver banking services to customers? No, it really does not because you can build a layer on top that is connected to all banks. And that is what is so hard for us because the old way of thinking is so institutionalised and it is hard to change.

Thus, the respondents argue that the institutionalised form which banks have previously followed needs to be reformed in order to follow the current societal changes. However, this has proven to be challenging because the institution of how to carry out banking is deeply embedded in the organisation. Therefore, the respondents state that APM was selected in order to motivate and impel transformation.

A strict toolbox becomes something else

As presented, the need for change resulted in a decision to implement a new project management method and, for this reason, the IT and business management departments started to look at APM as a possible methodology in the spring of 2015. Towards this end, they recruited an external consultancy firm that introduced the organisation to the agile SAFe and Scrum frameworks. One of the respondents describes this initial contact as quite the epiphany:

> We became really enthusiastic and in a way almost indoctrinated by the SAFe-framework, so initially we swallowed it hook line and sinker, it felt really well thought through and it was very well packaged and presented to us […] it was as if it said; here you go run this gigantic tool box, but then it rather turned out to be a machine hall.

With the help of the consultancy firm, the work with implementing Agile in the IT department came under way. Although the initial intent was to implement the agile method "by the book," the respondents described how, as they started to work with the concept, it became obvious that what came to be implemented was rather a mix of different agile methodologies. This was by the respondents attributed to the fact that the frameworks of the chosen methodologies were quite rigid and required certain things that the organisation could not fulfil. As one respondent states:

> First, we had the management team do a 2-day training about how agile worked according to the SAFe-framework, and by then we were pretty clear on that we should work with agile, but we later realised that we had to do it in our own way.

Respondents who were involved in the implementation phase stated that the journey proved more difficult than originally anticipated, as a consequence of not being able to fully implement the concept according to the framework. For example, they describe how, when they introduced the new roles and concepts, they did not educate people fully which resulted in confusion among the staff, accentuated by one respondent:

> I think that what we initially did wrong was to take a pre-packaged concept and tried to copy-paste it on the department without thinking about what was applicable in our organisation. And how do we secure that people understand what is happening and why? I think we forgot change management a bit, but at the same time it brought with it a lot of value and brought us forward as a bank so I would not change the journey, to not have done anything would not have been an option.

As such, the respondents present how the concept was not implemented as anticipated but, on the other hand, the respondents also highlighted that they perceived positive effects in the sense that they started to focus on things that were important for them in the new business environment.

A new anchor

Several of the respondents refer to the process of going from waterfall to agile methodology as "*disassembling the elephant"*, i.e. instead of running long projects in a sequential process, projects are now instead delivered in smaller sprints, enabling more frequent project delivery and earlier business value. The respondents highlighted the positive aspects of this as it opens up for ongoing alterations and faster releases. Concerning measurable variables, productivity in regard to output from the total of worked hours has increased. According to one respondent, at best, the productivity improved with 30-40 percentage. Furthermore, the respondents state that the quality of the delivery has improved thanks to the shorter iterations and shorter lead time because the people doing changes remembers what is meant with it because it is considered directly; you do not make the change and then wait for feedback at the end of the project time.

The waterfall model was strictly planned and carried out according to the specific processes. In contrast, when using an agile methodology, it became easier to anchor and disintegrate the projects. By deconstructing the projects into iterations and features, delivery to customers are more occurring, making it possible to profit from the project sooner. However, there were some instances where the concept could not be fully implemented. The emergent need for adapting the method to existing conditions was largely attributed to the "backpack", i.e. the organisational characteristics and existing practices, of the bank, which made it challenging to implement everything according to the proposed framework.

Size matters

Initially, the department tried to build cross functional teams and value streams which is a central concept for the agile approach, but for several reasons this proved difficult. One of the major instances in which this became obvious was for example that they were a relatively small IT-organisation, as one respondent describes:

> I think this is a method intended for much larger organisations - like ABB or something…

In order to achieve cross functionality in the project teams, the teams would have to consist out of different competences, but according to the respondents, the same competences would have been needed in several projects at the same time:

> We tried to build cross functional teams for a while, but the supply and demand for resources have never been in balance and there are always new projects or tasks coming in with higher priority than the one before. And that means that you split the teams before you have built them.

Hence, cross functional teams have so far not been possible to have in the bank. Instead they have tried working according to value-streams in order to streamline the project process. In addition, the respondents express how solution architects, responsible for the organisational

processes, have gotten a greater role than originally anticipated as a result of not being truly cross functional.

Organisation wise, the IT organisation was by the respondents still described as somewhat "silo-based" due to the difficulty of organising the cross functional teams. Respondents claimed that, in some ways, they were more cross functional before when they worked in traditional project teams, for example:

> Previously, we got a project, asked for resources, put together a team which was cross-functional and then you had the resources within the team.

However, the respondents further claimed that because those same people worked in maybe five or six projects at the same time as a result of the few resources found within the organisation, and that was not optimal because as people worked in several projects coordination became difficult. Therefore, they needed to change their way of working.

As opposed to before when projects were run in a traditional waterfall manner from point A to launch date B, the projects are now described as iterative in nature, leaving increased room for smaller launches and incremental changes as well as risk adjustments along the way. Pursuing APM further implies that teams should be autonomous and self-governing - they should be able to themselves take decisions quickly. On the other hand, as a result of working iteratively with one feature at a time, some respondents highlighted that there is a possibility of renouncing the holistic perspective of what the features are a part of and by doing so, a risk of not being able to map together the totality of projects exists. Because the cycles of the projects are expeditious, and as a result of lack in communication, the different parts of the organisation are occasionally not aware of the contingency or lack of contingency between the different parts of the resource groups involved and work goes into coordinating the sprints in relation to the others. As one respondent states:

> It does not always become a natural flow in the process because in one place you sit and plan with your team on what has been decided, but if something is to be changed, it happens over there and those people are not really involved, and those people do not know what the others are doing so there is no natural way that we together change a bit here and there, because we have to wait or involve for example people from compliance and risk... But I think it all comes down to the fact that we are not truly cross functional.

In line with this, coordination and synchronisation of agile projects have sometimes proven to be challenging when working according to APM. The respondents impute this to the lack of cross functionality of the project teams and state that this problem is mostly found within larger projects wherein many people are engaged. Consequently, the project managers are today responsible for coordinating the work between the different resource groups.

Ongoing deliveries, but what about the rest?

Previously, when working according to the waterfall model, the projects were assigned resources, the project team was kept together and resource planning was a big part of unit managers' job whereby they decided the spending and working plan for each employee. Yet, the only thing certain back then, according to the respondents, was that the plans would not be

followed. Conversely, today the employees are given more freedom with responsibility in how they plan their own work, implying more difficulty in measuring the processes but, since the total productivity has improved, this is not considered a problem. In addition, because there are more releases, both the mission of operating the project portfolio as well as the risk management become more challenging. Before, there were bigger, less frequent releases whereas now releases are more frequent. Consequently, the work with the bank's portfolio after implementing APM became more challenging as complexity of this function increased. As one respondent explain:

> Things go off in all directions and you are to keep track of how much money is spent and what effects we have gotten home so far and so.

This is attributed to the fact that when a project is divided into smaller pieces, the budget of the project is in some respects more difficult to control. Moreover, the steering committee is inclined to take decisions based upon a certain structure decided in the organisation. Accordingly, the respondents state that more iterations result in more meetings concerning the decision of when to release, making the process even more complex and challenging.

A patchwork quilt of different competences and legal aspects

Because the bank must be regulatory compliant from day one when doing a project, the agile approach has, according to the respondents, sometimes proven challenging because they begin working on some feature that instantly must cover all compliance issues targeted by the whole project. Furthermore, if changes are done without considering the effects it may have on risk and compliance, problems can arise. This is highlighted by one respondent who stated that "You trade off control for flexibility." As a result of laws and regulations being imperative, the projects concerning such matters are prioritised over projects aiming to deliver new features to clients. According to the respondents, this creates a dichotomy between greatest value first, as prescribed by agile, and being compliant. As one of the respondents describe:

> And then somewhere, we came from a very waterfall-process oriented world, and in such a world it is relatively easy to map together legal frameworks, you have the tollgates, the documents and so on, but in an iterative agile world, that is not really how it works.

In line with this, the work was by another respondent compared with a patchwork quilt where many different resource groups or teams work in their applications, and if there exist a regulation related to it, it could affect several of the actors involved in the process. As a result, the respondents explained the difficulties in knowing how each actors' entity is mapped against the demand/regulation in this type of working methodology because of the different competences found in different parts of the organisation. As stated by one respondent, the problem is that they:

> Need to understand how the changes impacts the legality and since we have a multitude of laws and system of rules to relate to, the teams cannot themselves keep track of this. They need to talk with other competencies that have that knowledge and those are not available around the clock to answer questions for

> that project. First you need to get in touch with them, then they must read and analyse the law and then get back with an answer and this takes time.

Therefore, several respondents stated that a risk of disintegration of the totality of projects exist. However, they state that this problem is not related to APM, but is rather connected to the context in which the bank is situated; if they were not forced to comply to laws and regulations, the bank would not have any problem with working according to APM in this manner. Furthermore, in addition to affecting the project process as described above, laws and regulations also affect the way the organisation conduct written documentation. Swedish banks are required to have comprehensive documentation of their business and project processes. One respondent states that:

> To do right is not enough, first you need to have a defined process before, then you must do right, and then you need to document so that it is possible to afterwards check that you have done those three things.

The documentation must describe what has been done and why, as well as by whom it has been done. Consequently, when conducting projects, a copious amount of written documentation is carried out. The extensive documentation is a result of the bank's obligation to belay satisfactory handover, ensuring that the recipient organisation has everything necessary to manage the new parts of the administration. APM is based upon the premise that little documentation should be carried out, but on account of the requirements of documentation, respondents state that it has proven difficult to follow this. As a result, the respondents express that currently each feature has its designated documentation, as opposed to previously, when utilising the waterfall methodology, wherein each project had one directive. Therefore, the documentation has become more extensive and frequent than before.

Can we make music?

Moreover, because the bank has existing legacy systems upon which the business is built, the bank must "tweak" systems and processes in order for them to oblige the demands of new legal frameworks. The respondents stated that Spotify and Lego are role models for firms aspiring to adapt to agile. However, the structure of firms such as Spotify and the bank is dissimilar because in addition to striving to become increasingly efficient and innovative, banks have legacy systems and legal frameworks which affect the project processes. Consequently, this entails that the advocated modular working methods of for example Spotify cannot be fully adopted in the bank, expressed by one respondent:

> We have built banking systems for I don't know how long and we aren't building modularly, we built something a long time ago and then we added something to that, and then we wanted to be modern so we added something more, but in the end, it's the same old cobalt core running down there and the person who wrote it retired eight years ago.

As a result, the bank is often perceived to be "forced" into more of a waterfall methodology because of existing systems as well as securing manageability and compliance to laws and regulations in all respects. Therefore, some respondents express that they sometimes "black-box" the agile work.

A variant of an agile Scrum method

Although they have come a long way, the respondents agreed that as of today, the organisation has not yet fully implemented APM, but that it is a work in progress. One of the reasons for this is by the respondents attributed to the fact that change journeys must be done in steps and that the organisation has accomplished a lot considering the available capabilities:

> I think that we got stuck in the step of the cross functional teams, which maybe we should have done sooner, but at the same time, I think the reasons why we haven't done that is because the bank is a bit like the bumble bee that wasn't supposed to fly. Our IT-department in comparison to the biggest banks where they have six times more people at their IT department, but somehow thanks to the people here, we have managed to accomplish a lot with few resources.

As shown in previous sections, the bank has come a long way and accomplished much – they have changed their way of working and increased their productivity – but more transformations lie ahead. Presently, the respondents describe their current working method as a variant of an agile Scrum method, especially highlighting working in sequential steps and sprints, delivering the biggest value first. As a second step in their journey, they are currently trying to organise themselves according to value streams (banking, insurance and payment) as opposed to the traditional silo-based approach in order to achieve increased cross functionality. As of 2017, in a further step towards increased agility, the business development department has also implemented agile. Additionally, the IT department and business development department is trying to become increasingly cross functional by implementing value streams and work with a transformation is being done whereby replacement of several of the applications that they work with today with a standard core system from an external supplier will be carried out. Therefore, the respondents stated that the present way in which they work with applications and systems is currently not undergoing any more changes, because they:

> Do not want to meddle too much with how they work today, because it will probably be different soon.

This highlights the way in which the implementation has transpired; not by copying and implementing everything according to the planned frameworks, but in different steps. The respondents state that, overall, the implementation of APM proved to be a cultural journey above anything else:

> The realisation we came to was that what we really wanted to accomplish is mostly cultural, in which agile is a method to reach that goal.

This was again largely attributed to the “backpack” and perceived institutionalised traditional way of thinking in the business industry, making it difficult to become innovative. In an effort to solve this apparent problem, the respondents explained that APM provided a way towards becoming more efficient and innovative and initiated the organisational change.

Discussion

In this paper, we set out to explore the concept of APM within the Swedish banking context, answering the research call to further investigate the application of such practices in more rigid business areas outside the software development community. Specifically, by focusing on how and why the concept of APM has been deployed in a Swedish bank by building on the translation perspective offered by Scandinavian institutionalism, this study offers further insights into the travels and changes in management ideas as well as their impact on the organisation as they are adopted in new contexts. In this section, we discuss the results from the gathered field material with respect to the study's theoretical underpinnings and research question. From the field data, we have identified that there are a number of external conditions which have affected the implementation of APM into the bank, as well as internal aspects which have affected how it is subsequently carried out in practice. This will be more thoroughly presented in the following sections.

Field change and complexity fuels imitation

In order to understand how the concept of APM has travelled, the first part of our research question related to why the bank has adopted APM in its IT department. This follows from the argument that practices, and the traveling imitative translation it creates, must be understood in its historical and special context (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996).

Firstly, in the most general view, the implementation of APM seems to be related to general restructuring and transformations in the banking field. From the findings gathered in this paper, there appears to be a general view among practitioners, literature, reports from consultancy firms and the people interviewed in this paper that not only the Swedish banking market, but banking in general is currently in a state of progressive change; there has been a change in the way banking services are produced and consumed, which in turn is a reflection of larger societal change and restructuring around transformation enabled by digitalisation (Levy, 2014; Harvey, 2016).

As we have illustrated in previous sections, the banking sector is traditionally known for using large, sometimes monolithic legacy systems which stands in contrast to the more flexible and fast-paced processes associated with entrepreneurial Fintech organisations emerging in the banking market today. As such, the new reality that is emerging is not based upon traditional financial and institutional structures, but rather upon the basic functions of the financial system itself (Wilson & Campbell, 2016). In other words, as old, institutionalised and monolithic practices and product offerings are being dismantled and put together in new innovative ways, notions such as "customer value", "fast time to market" and "flexibility" seem to become of increased relevance in order to deliver customer service. Due to these changed rules for banks, one could argue that they are undergoing a form of identity change in which old practices are questioned and are being replaced by the new "rules of the game". This follows from the argument that identity is not stable; if one changes friends, the previously stable identity vanishes and a new identity must be built (Czarniawska & Wolff, 1998). Thus, as stated by the majority of the respondents in this study, this have put new pressures on the bank to adapt existing processes and look for new practices to cope with this increasingly dynamic and

very different market with new diverse and fast-moving market entrants. In the case of the bank, as a result of such forces, there seem to be a general desire and perceived need to become more innovative and therefore, in accordance with the logic of appropriateness (March, 1981) adopting practices such as APM that heeds to this desire. From this argument also follows that organisations are motivated by identity aspirations, i.e. what they would wish to become rather than what they currently are (Sevón, 1996; Kodeih & Greenwood, 2014).

In the case of the bank, inspiration to adopt APM was said to have come from highly innovative companies such as Spotify and Lego which seemingly displayed coveted attributes of entrepreneurship and flexibility. As previously illustrated, the bank seems to have searched for, and related to, apparent successful models utilised by other organisations with qualities deemed as appropriate for the new emerging setting and business context. What is interesting here is that the bank was seemingly relating and comparing themselves with companies which come from seemingly different fields. This is consistent with the view that when the present organisational identity is threatened, organisations have been found to turn their attention to what they and others previously considered to be different fields and seek to relate to, imitate and interact with organisations that were previously defined as being of distant kind (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996; Sevón, 1996; Czarniawska, 1997), which may explain why models such as APM are being imported and modelled from another line of business and then rendered appropriate for the bank.

As Kodeih & Greenwood (2014) have suggested, the emergence of new field logics creates institutional complexity which in turn brings an expansion in institutional infrastructure and thus new social referents. According to the authors, this brings about potential new structures and relationships and the possibility of benchmarking features and best practices from a wider reference group (Gioia et al., 2013). In the scope of this paper, we found that new entrants in the banking field are enabling the opening of new reference points, changing the field and making room for change and new practices such as APM in the process. As such, the findings indicate that changes in the field in which the bank is situated has led to a gradual dissolution of previous old and institutionalised ways of working. The changes are an attributing and driving factor for imitation, i.e. picking up and adopting practices from other companies which are deemed successful (Boxenbaum & Battilana, 2005; Sevón 1996). Similar results have previously been found by for example Sahlin-Andersson (1996) and Czarniawska (1997), who identified the increased interaction and identification with private organisations as an expression of an effort to change the identity of public organisations. In our case, the bank has seemingly picked up a concept from new market entrants and a new problem definition, rendering previous working practices such as the traditional waterfall project management method increasingly irrelevant. Thus, our argument is that it is this very restructuring which seem to have initiated the process of imitation in which new practices such as APM have been implemented into the bank. This perceived increased market uncertainty in which earlier activities and development practices are increasingly questioned (Sevón, 1996), may have been a driving force for imitation, and the subsequent adoption of APM. That is, based on increased uncertainty in the field, the bank is imitating those models/organisations perceived to be better geared for the new reality.

Thirdly, as indicated in the literature, (e.g. Dybå & Dingsøyr, 2008; Špundak, 2014), APM is generally portrayed as "the" project management method of today and as such,

it could be regarded as a fashionable management concept circulating in the business field, much like the metaphorical steering wheel portrayed by Czarniawska & Sevón (2005). Fashion is said to not only be structured by status and prestige, but also by a continuing pressure for innovation and change (Abrahamsson, 1996; Røvik, 2008). As the findings show, there was a general agreement among the respondents that APM is the way "everyone works now", which seem to strengthen this view. Therefore, when the organisation searched for successful concepts to imitate, APM became a viable alternative. This is especially evident in the expressions forwarded by respondents in that, while they could have chosen any concept, the important part was that they needed to change; and that the reason for picking APM above other methods at least in part was attributed to its current trendiness.

Where old meets new: a translated practice of APM

So far, we have illustrated the journey of how the concept of APM became disembedded from its original context and then entered the bank. But how was it materialised in practice? As indicated, the APM literature have tended to reinforce the notion that APM should be implemented and used as a "pure" approach, following the practices, techniques and tools advertised in this theory (Conforto et al., 2014; Highsmith, 2010; Schwaber, 2004), consistent with the view of the diffusion perspective (Latour, 1986). However, as we will illustrate below, although the original intent might have been copying the concept as a packaged deal, our findings show that it was not a direct journey from point A to B. This supports the findings of previous studies on the implementation of agile methodologies which have pointed to the fact that the enactment of APM ideas in organisations differ from the prescriptions of the methodology (Abrahamsson et al., 2009; Dybå & Dingsøyr, 2008; Lyytinen & Rose, 2006; Ruhe & Wohlin, 2014). Instead, as the concept met, and merged with existing practices, the journey (which is still ongoing) has been lined with instances of translations as the concept became re-embedded and adapted to its new context (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996).

As illustrated by our findings, the original problem definition in the bank was that APM was to solve efficiency problems, make teams more cohesive and improve communication in order to achieve faster time to market. However, as with most change projects, this turned out to be more complicated than originally anticipated. According to Czarniawska & Sevón (2005), the translation process takes different directions depending upon the context in which the translators are able and/or willing to reframe or transform to existing institutional settings in ways that fit current demands. In the case of the bank, there are several such contextual factors which might have influenced the materialisation and translation of the concept in practice which are normally not found in traditional software companies. Unique characteristics for the banking business in general are for example that not only competition and customers are in focus, but there is also the added dimension of strict regulatory compliance and process traceability. Such "distance" between the supposed source of the model-practice or action-pattern and the imitating organisations forms a space for translating, filling and interpretation (Sahlin-Andersson,1996; Morris & Lancaster, 2006).

In line with this, Ansari et al. (2010) have highlighted that diffusion processes across time and adopters should be assessed as an issue of dynamic fit between practice and adopter, and that this fit is influenced by technical, cultural and political factors. Following this argument, we identified the following main contextual factors from the findings which have

seemingly affected the outcome of the translation process. In the case of the bank, these can be divided into internal and external factors:

External factors

- Regulations/compliance
- Demand from external constituents (Finance Inspection etc.)
- Extensive documentation required

Internal factors

- Small organisation/ Number of staff
- Specific skills needed
- Legacy systems

In relation to such factors, previous studies have acknowledged that adoption and diffusion of new corporate practices often requires significant amounts of adaptation as well as interpretative effort, as organisations seek to integrate these practices into existing organisational technologies, cultural contexts and political arenas (Ansari et al., 2010). Our findings suggest that the sometimes conflicting demands exerted on the bank between on the one hand being driven towards more fast-paced models, while still being somewhat held back by the rigidity of the old legacy systems and processes and requirements related to documentation and regulatory compliance, are a source of friction (Czarniawska, 2015). Hence, this can be seen as a source of the translation of APM in the specific context of the bank. The dissonance between "old vs. new" is manifested in several tensions between the original intent, i.e. the APM "template" which have travelled to the bank, and the subsequent practices which have emerged as the method has become unpackaged and re-embedded (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996). We argue that, in the case of the bank, these instances between old and new manifests in tensions and described trade-offs between notions such as flexibility and control, autonomous teams and coordination, and more documentation versus. less documentation, and are as such the source of the specific translations and the subsequent manifestation of the method in practice.

To exemplify these tensions and translations, the first instance is related to self-governing, cross functional teams, which in the APM methodology are meant to enhance communication between team members and improve efficiency (Santos et al., 2015). However, as presented in the findings, in terms of cross functionality, this specific characteristic is currently not explicitly found within the bank. Although each functional team has proven increased internal efficiency, due to the complexity of bringing the total solutions together, it is still difficult to prove results on increased time-to-market in total. The divergence found between the original intent of APM and the organisational outcome is attributed to the number of staff in the bank - they simply cannot gather enough people to make up the cross functional teams. To mitigate this issue, they merged the new model with the old by deciding to keep the old teams but to create backlogs to facilitate an iterative process. This translation was due to an organisational restriction in which complex tasks are not easily shared or handed over to other members of the team. Furthermore, relating to cross functionality; the teams are supposed to be T-shaped; i.e. team members are supposed to carry out several roles in the agile team, however, as certain roles cannot easily be delegated, this have been difficult to achieve. As such, there is

a tension between the need to be a generalist while at the same time being a specialist. This illustrates how the identified contextual restrictions above prohibited a complete implementation (Ansari et al., 2010).

Secondly, by implementing APM, the ownership of projects is intended to be pushed into the hands of self-governing team members rather than management (West & Grant, 2010). As the findings suggest, the original intent in the bank was for the project manager to be responsible for setting up the project requirements and then place an order for delivery to the "IT-factory" which would then produce the solution in total, including all the IT-teams required to produce the solution. However, as reflected in the interviews, this proved difficult due to the somewhat silo-based organisational structure, which made it challenging to coordinate the work between the necessary parties. As such, the project managers have a bigger role today than initially intended in ensuring full coordination and communication between necessary parties and the packaging of the total project delivery.

Thirdly, according to the agile philosophy, documentation should be kept at a minimum (Karlesky & Vander-Voord, 2008). However, due to the context-specific requirements of clear and accurate documentation and traceability in risk analysis and decision making for financial actors, extensive documentation is a part of the strict demands exerted upon banks. Thus, there is a discord between the initial idea of APM and the subsequent translation of the idea in the bank. It has been found in previous studies that agile can result in less effective processes if organisations are required to document because agile methods do not support a high degree of documentation (Boehm & Turner, 2005). From the findings, we gathered that this is exemplified in the challenge of balancing, and finding an appropriate level of documentation at a feature level within the project - respective overall project level because of the lack of guidelines in this area. Furthermore, the iterative process was found to, in some instances lead to more documentation than in the old waterfall process to ensure proper project handover of respective feature/iteration. Therefore, the teams do not know if they document too much or too little.

Thus, the findings illustrate how initial concept has been altered in several instances to fit the organisational context and some aspects of the idea are in this moment left out. In some occasions, this can be seen as leading to situations of decoupling whereby the organisation has adopted Agile, but due to perceived contextual restrictions discussed above, continues to use certain aspects of the waterfall methodology (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). In line with this, the current project methodology is seemingly made up of a combination of waterfall- and agile project methodology; the etiquettes on what they do, even if the practices they perform are the same as previously, are framed by APM, using agile expressions such as "sprints", "epics" and "features", although the project process - according to the standard agile blueprint - is not entirely agile. This is consistent with the view of Erlingsdóttir & Lindberg (2005), stating that the content in models might change even if the "packaging" stays the same.

The findings thus show how, as the model materialised in practice and became adapted to the context, the context and subsequent translations led to a number of unintended consequences, i.e. differences between planned and actual results of the change process, which were not originally anticipated (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996). As an example, increased complexity and iterative processes led to a perceived need for solution architects to coordinate and make sure new launches are being built in accordance with existing platforms. This was

originally supposed to fall on the project teams but as cross functionality has not yet been possible to achieve, there was an additional need for solution architects. Furthermore, there was a change in the role of the project leaders, and as previously highlighted, sometimes more frequent documentation to ensure traceability in the agile iterative process.

Above, we have highlighted instances of translation as a result of contextual restrictions. Interestingly, the tensions and subsequent translation instances presented above also seem to point to a paradox of *complexity*, appearing when APM is contextualised in the bank, where the new APM model, in some aspects so far in the translation process has resulted in more complex processes than the previous waterfall methodology entailed. For example, this is materialised when APM, promoting projects being divided into iterations and features in order to facilitate project efficiency, was translated into the bank. While it increases efficiency on a team level, dividing projects into iterations seemingly have also entailed a somewhat more complex process of project methodology, for example in ensuring overall project coordination. Furthermore, findings show that finding the adequate level of documentation in the APM process has been challenging. As stated, documentation is required to ensure adequate traceability throughout the project process and in decision making, and as agile iterations opens up the possibility for more frequent changes, documentation is in fact in many instances more extensive than previously. Consequently, our findings show that agile does not always result in more efficient project processes but can in some aspects and instances rather create more complexity in this type of environment. When this occurs, it is evident that the initial reason for implementing APM, to streamline project processes, in some respects stands in dichotomy with how it has played out in of the practice so far.

Identity creation: Disassembling the elephant

Although the findings show that the idea of APM have been changed from what was originally intended, this does however not mean that the idea itself have been depleted. On the contrary, as Czarniawska (2015), and Czarniawska and Sevón (2005) have highlighted, it may be enriched and developed in the process. What is evident from the results is that although the implementation of APM did not turn out exactly as originally intended, its introduction brought with it several positive effects such as increased team function efficiency and more frequent deliveries which leads to delivering business value earlier in the process. Above else, the findings highlight the framing of the model as a change in thought processes; a new way to frame problems, to think and act which is more in line with the perceived present. As stated by (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), even in instances of decoupling the introduction of new language and models in many occasions have been shown to have consequences in terms of how the organisation and practices comes to be identified, assessed and presented. In this view, diffused ideas such as APM could add to, or result in organisational identity change. As stated in the beginning of this discussion, identity is dualistic in its nature in the sense that perceived identity shapes imitation, and imitation shapes identity (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996; Sahlin & Wedlin, 2008; Sevón, 1996). Subsequently, changes in identity is not something fixed, but rather incremental in its nature in which activities, and perceptions of the reality is continually changing. Thus, the findings highlight the perception among the respondents that the introduction of concepts such as APM was necessary and that it in itself might be a step in a larger ongoing journey in the bank in which previous notions of stability, extensive

documentation and control are being challenged by notions of flexibility, customer focus and the ability to deal with rapid change. As such, the introduction of the practice of APM becomes an example of not only translation, but identity change through practices, i.e., making room for new innovations, enabling them to - in the words of the respondents - begin to disassemble the elephant.

Conclusion and Implications

In this paper, we set out to explore the concept of APM within the Swedish banking context, answering the research call to further investigate the application of such practices in more rigid business areas outside the software development community. In order to explore how the idea of APM has travelled to and become translated in practice, and with what implications it has on the organisation that has adopted it, this study draws upon qualitative interview data collected from a Swedish bank currently undergoing transformation as a result of changes in the Swedish banking market. The aim was to highlight contextual implications as the concept of APM has travelled to, and materialised in practice. Specifically, we focused on why, and how the concept of APM has been deployed in a Swedish bank by drawing on the translation perspective offered by Scandinavian institutionalism. In addition to contributing to existing IT research by showing how the concept of APM has travelled, and become embedded in a new field of business, this study also attends to the theoretical research gap regarding how actors translate broad ideas from different industry contexts. Moreover, we argue that our study might have practical implications for practitioners in the field as it has uncovered a number of dimensions which might be important to consider prior to implementing APM.

Relating to the first research question of the study concerning why APM has travelled to the bank, our findings indicate that market changes constitute a key factor for motivating imitation. This study illustrates how transformations in the banking field has led to a gradual dissolution of former, institutionalised business ideas and practices. As new market entrants have begun redefining the banking business, previous institutionalised ideas of what it means to be a bank are challenged. Seemingly, this put pressure on the bank to adapt its existing processes, consequently resulting in a search for new practices to cope with the increasingly dynamic and fast-paced market. Interestingly, we found that the bank imitated highly innovative companies outside of the traditional banking context, distinctively different from traditional banks, mainly because these organisations epitomise successful examples in markets framed as dynamic and innovative. This is attributed to how field transformations have the potential to generate new reference points, enabling change and adoption of new ideas and practices. Thus, our study highlights this phenomenon as the bank adopted the fashionable idea of APM currently circulating the field, advocated as “the” project management method of today.

Our second research question was related to how APM subsequently became translated and embedded in the new context. Although the original intent was consistent with “copying” i.e. diffusing the idea into the bank, our findings show how that as the concept met and merged with existing processes and the new context, APM was subject to a number of translations and led to a number of unintended consequences. This supports arguments of

previous studies on the implementation of agile methodologies, which have pointed to the fact that the enactment of APM ideas in organisations may differ from the prescriptions of the methodology (Abrahamsson et al., 2009; Dybå & Dingsøyr, 2008; Lyytinen & Rose 2006; Ruhe & Wohlin, 2014). Specifically, we show that the subsequent translation of the concept of APM and the practices that have emerged was a result of internal and external contextual factors such as the size of the organisation, legacy systems and compliance requirements which in some cases restricted a full implementation in accordance with the originally ascribed APM framework. However, our findings also show that although it did not turn out as originally intended, APM has nevertheless delivered business value and positive effects, especially highlighting the framing of the model as a change in overall thought processes. From this, we present how the translation process in turn was indicative of a greater identity journey wherein previous old ways of working are now increasingly being replaced by notions of "flexibility, "customer focus" and managing change as a undeniable part of everyday reality.

One limitation to this study is that it only captures a relatively early phase of the introduction of APM in the bank under study wherein the concept has not yet been fully adopted. As such, it does not disclose what happens with the APM idea in a longer time-span. Taking into account that translation processes and notions of imitation and identity is an ongoing phenomenon, we therefore argue that a longitudinal study would be interesting in future research to investigate such notions. For example, a possible future research topic could focus on how APM develops over time and, in turn, what implications it has on the organisation; what is it that is being translated and reshaped in the long term? The labels, the practice, or something else? An additional possible topic to further investigate is the identity processes of organisations adopting APM; what happens with the identity in a longer time perspective and can similar results be found in other banks? This could be of distinctive interest in this context due to the rapid and ongoing developments on the banking market in general, making it difficult to predict what will happen with banks and the project management method in the future.

An additional limitation concerns the single case nature of this study. By reason of the focus on a single organisation situated in a specific context, a possible future direction of research could be to study other banks of different sizes to determine if the results are the same. Such a study could further broaden the understanding of how APM becomes translated in the banking field. Moreover, an additional topic of interest would be to conduct comparative studies within and between different fields. As presented, unique characteristics for the banking context such as legacy systems and regulatory compliance affected the translation of APM. Therefore, it would also be interesting to examine other sectors with similar restrictions and study what happens in the translation process in such a context.

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