What is your role in the organization and with respect to the XFT Picnic?

I an the OPO for the Picnic team, an Operative Product Owner.

And what are your key responsibilities?

My responsibilities are to decide on priority of the stories or the WP they are working with in the G2 project.

How may teams do you have in total? Do you work with any other teams?

Yes, I am also working with a team that is called [???], it's a «wild cat» in Persian.

Are they G1 or G2?

It's G2, both are the G2 teams.

Have you been working here before the transition towards agile?

Yes, I have.

What have you been doing then?

I have been working as a Project Manager for I think it was like 5 years. Before that I was a team leader and before that I have worked as a software engineer also.

So you worked here for quite some time...

I have been here for a long time! Don't ask me how long. Too long, I think :)

And now, in the agile context, are the responsibilities for your OPO role clearly defined?

I think it is rather clear, but I think we are working rather different in the two programs. I think we are not working exactly the same in the G1 project and in the G2 project. But it's rather clear, I think, the G2 way of working.

Why is it different between G1 and G2?

Because it's 2 departments and we have 2 line organizations and they have different thoughts about it. For the G1 they have a set up for the feature project managers and the OPOs have a lot of teams, I think they have 6 teams each, the 2 OPOs here, so some of the teams are only working with TRs, so that's not so much work for the OPO. But I think they have at least 3 or 4 feature teams so they are just more prioritizing the stories and they are talking to the teams and they are not so much discussing technical things or they are not driving... Because we are also WP drivers in the G2 project, so we are kind of Feature Project Managers or something like that, so we have both the 2 roles, so that's why we are working different, I think. I think we are more involved in the technical discussions and we are more grooming a lot of things and we have not... In the G1 project, there

are coming in big features from the customers and they just break them down and they will just put, push them to the backlog. But in the G2 project they have only said «Ok, you need to make this for this new platform, the new software and this will be released in 15B next year and what will you do to fix this», so then we have more of grooming activities and more of workshops and see what can we do, so the OPOs are more involved in technical discussions and such things.

What are the roles you communicate most frequently and intense with?

I'm talking a lot to the program managers, Niklas Isaksson for the G2 and Carolina Narvinger, and I talk a lot to the other OPOs in G2, Stefan [???] and Ingmar [???], and a lot with the CA people. So we are working a lot together with continuous analysis department in Kista, so a lot with Lars Hennert [???] and a lot of persons there. So there is a lot of discussion in the pre-study phase. I think we are also very involved in the pre-study phase in the G2 project also. And then I also discuss a lot with the teams of course.

Can you think of any events that cause more communication than normally?

Yes, because I think this was a very special thing for me for the Picnic team, because I didn't talk so much with them, I think you have seen that in the survey. Because I have had a WP in my other team, which they have been working with, and I have been the WP driver for it and we have had one team here, we have had one team in Linköping and we have had two teams in Kista. So we had a coordinated delivery for that WP last week, it was just the week after the survey. We had a lot of things to discuss before, so that's why I was not talking so much with the Picnic team, because I've talked a lot in the other team. And then I talk a lot with the main — I don't know if you know this, but we have the main track we are delivering to, we have this common software and we have a lot of, this core team which is responsible for this main track, and they have a meeting and they are sitting in Kista and you must call to them and discuss if it is ok to deliver in which time, «is it ok if we can deliver this tomorrow?» «no, we have this uplift from another things». They have a lot of things, sometimes they have problems with the main track and then we can't deliver anything. So we had a lot of discussion with them and then I had a lot of discussions with this other, we have 2 verification instances for this main track: we have the main track, the common software, and there we verify it for the CPP platform and it's for the G1 program, and then we have this for the CS platform so then we verify it on another platform, that's the G2 project. Then we have discussed with that verification instance and we had to discuss with the other verification instance. It was 2 parts, which had to say it is ok to deliver at the same time, because it's a common software so we need to have it in place for both sides, that's very difficult. So it's a lot of people I communicated by mail, I think it was like 80 people, so 80 people on that list, that day we made the delivery. It was like 100 of mails, it was very tough, I think I was here like 12 hours that day, when we made this delivery, so than it was a lot of communication with all these instances of the verification. It was in Ottawa, and they made some of the tests there and there was a lot of things around. But it was not for the Picnic team, so it was rather strange, because when I was filling in [the survey] for Picnic, «nook, I haven't talked so much with them», but on the other side I have talked to a lot of people. So it's different different weeks.

Does that happen often that communication shifts towards a certain team?

Yeah I think it is like that. Now it was very special for that other team when we had this big delivery. But now I was the WP driver for that team and then it's more communication, a lot with the other parts and the other teams and everything. Then I think it was switched over because now with Picnic we had a workshop and they have a lot of WPs they must work with now, so now I think it will be more work with the Picnic team. So I think it's rather different different weeks.

Does it work fine, the shift of focus, or are the teams somewhat sometimes a bit left behind because you have to focus on something else?

I think it is working fine when... Now they had a good package, which they are working with documentation and they know, they knew what they should do, so then it's ok. That's why we in G2 have chosen that we only have 2 teams, each OPO, because we think it's too much if we should communicate with so many people.

And when you communicate with so many different people, do you think there is one single person who takes too much responsibilities and in a way is a bottleneck, causes some kind of stalling?

I think one bottleneck we have in this organization right now for the main track, I think, we have this person Kim Gröndin [???], who is responsible for the main track and he is a coordinator for all this deliveries and he is sending out a mail everyday almost and says «Ok, now you can deliver, now you can deliver, now it's delivery stop here» etc and he is I think. Because we discussed with him very much that day and then I called him another day and he said «Oh I'm so busy». I think it's difficult, because you always have some key persons on the top of the organization. I think he needs to have some help, should be more like a team or something. So we have a lot of key persons I think.

So it does not have to be one person, it can be distributed around more.

No I don't think so, yeah. I think, he is very good at it so that's why all others are just «You can talk to him», but I think it's not so good in the long way.

You as an OPO, how do you share the information with the XFTs?

I'm talking to them at the stand-up meetings in the morning and then we have these sprint planning meetings and reviews. Then we have a lot of meetings in between. I usually call for meetings when we would like to have meetings with this continuous analysis, the system people, in Kista and if we would like to have connections with other teams, and set up a meeting.

Would you describe it as a bidirectional communication, both you share information with the team and you get feedback from them as well?

Yes.

Is it working fine in general or are you missing some kind of information at times?

I think it's working fine. I don't know, maybe in this agile transformation thing...Before, when I was a project manager, it was a lot of status information, you talk to a lot of in information meetings and

we have like that. But now, I think, when we changed to this form, I have not take so much information like status and such things, because I think we should try to have it directly from the program managers and the line managers. So I think we have tried, I have tried to minimize my status to the teams, because I think they could have it directly from the other persons, but I don't know if they like it or not, I don't know if they think it's enough or not, I don't really know. It's interesting, if you have these interviews with the team members, if they would like to have more of these status information from me, I don't really know.

Between OPOs how do you normally share information, what kind of coordination?

We have a meeting with the line, where there are the line manager and all of the OPOs, both in the G1 project and the G2 project. We are discussing which parts in the software we are working on right now, different features, so we try to see if «here it would be a conflict if we would work together» and they can see ok now, we have this delivery or not, so they know when we are doing uplifts or something and if we give more work for the others [???]. So we have such a meeting and then we have, because then it's a lot of line managers and they would like to have such information for them, but then we have also a secret OPO meeting, it's only the OPOs and there we are discussing rather free, what do you think the problems are right now. So that's very good also, I think. So it's also once a week I think. Then I have a stakeholders meeting, we have with the line manager where they can put in what they would like us to do, if they have something. The line managers or PGs, if they would like to add something in the backlog, or if we would like to have something from the, we have an Interface Guardian, so we have a lot, we have a stakeholder meeting also. And then I have a meeting with Niklas, where he is going through the backlog in Handsoft[???], a backlog meeting for the G2 project. So it's a lot of meetings. Then I have a big grooming meeting, it's each third week, we have a grooming meeting with Kista and a lot of people from Linköping and Kista and Lindholmen, we are discussing WPs and trying to find where we have problems. Then we have all these platform, the CS platform, people and we have people from all the rats [???]. It's the software, we are working with this CAT, it's a common software, and then we have all the RATS we are saying, it's NRAT and WRAT and GRAT, it's for the different standards. The GRAT is for GSM, WRAT is for WCDMA and the LRAT is for LTE. They are also represented at this meeting and we are discussing a lot which WP are the most important right now.

Does this amount of meeting causes any negative effects on you since you have to coordinate so much stuff as it seems?

I think it's rather good now. It's better now, it was more difficult in the beginning, it was very difficult, it was very much discussion about a lot of technical things and then it was very difficult to follow, because everyone has his own problem and then it is very difficult to follow it. But I think we have been better at this grooming meeting to discuss these things.

What changed, why is it better now?

I don't really know, if it's just we have more knowledge now or if we have changed the process. I don't know, I think it's more that we have more knowledge about it, I think, the products.

Would you say that the information circling around you is at times overwhelming and probably you shouldn't be involved in some parts of it? Maybe you have too many responsibilities.

Yeah, I think sometimes it is too much information, of course. We have a lot of information mails, I think that's rather difficult, because we have this verification part, the G2 verification department, and we are working with a lot of problems there, and there you can just send out mails if you have a problem, you can just send it out, or if you find something you can just send it out — then it will be a lot of mails and it's very difficult to say which part is for me, than you must read everything that is coming and just «Ok, that's not for me, not for me». So that I think is rather difficult.

Do you see any way it could be improved?

I don't really know. Then you need to know which person you would like to send this mail to, that I think is rather difficult right now. I think something should be better, I don't really know how. But we have a lot of, we are sending a lot of mails where we are using this CC field and that's not so good, I think, so we have a lot of «just so you know», so that can be a lot better I think.

Why is the person who is supposed to be a recipient sometimes unknown? Why do you have to guess and instead spread it to anyone instead of the ones who should get it?

I think sometimes you can spread it to anyone. But then it's a lot of information you don't want to have, so that's also difficult.

But should the sender maybe know who to send it to instead of recipient having to filter all? Why doesn't the sender know who to send it to, that's where the problem starts...

Yeah, it should be better if the sender knows who is very interested in this. That's not so good, I think we need to make something about it. Maybe you can have a solution for that :D

If you take a step back and look at the organization as a whole, do you think the info ration flow is bad as well? Between different departments or...

I think it's good from the Program and then down for me and to the Team — that is good in the program. But I think the line organization, I think these two departments, we have a lot of problems with the communication between. I think the teams, they are talking sometimes with each other in the 2 departments. The OPOs, we have this secret meeting together, just to talk to each other. But then we have a lot of decisions which are taken by the line managers and they are not talking to each other. I think this is the biggest problem right now, I think it would be much better if we just had one department. Or they could just talk more together, they have a lot of different views on things, I think.

And the integration between one department and the agile branch, say works fine

or are there also problems at times?

Yeah I think, we have had this discussion on our department, we have this domain teams or product teams, they are very good at one product, and we have one team for each product. And in the other department they would like to have teams for everything, they would just say «You can just shift between» and I think that has been a big problem, because then we can't discuss with another team, which is good at that product. That has been a problem, but now they all make a change there, that's good. That has taken one year or so, I think it is so slow.

Do you think there is lack of support towards transformation to agile somewhere?

Sometimes I think they should have more help. I think the line manager should have more help. I think they have a big problem right now, because they are sitting beside this flow and programs and they can't really do something, because when we are coming with a new impediment, they are «Oh, what is that?», they can't really understand the problem and then they can't go somewhere, they just go back to the team, «What do you think about this?». They don't have any good way to communicate to others, I think, sometimes they are just «Oh, I don't know who I should talk to». So I think they need to have more help on how things should be solved, maybe they need more help from agile coach, I don't know.

You as an OPO, your communication with DM, LM, what is it about normally, do you have any?

Yes we have this «pause board» [???] each Friday when we are standing in this coffee corner and we just talk like 5 min about these [???], so it's just a short meeting. Sometimes you can say, sometimes we have some problems and they just don't care. That's not so good I think, because then I would like to have help when I come in there and say I have a problem, and they just say «Ok, we can take it after» and then he just disappears. We have talked about this, to have some more meeting with the line so we have discussions about to add meeting, for the line managers and the OPOs and the teams, where we can say where we have impediments and just talk about the problems and say who can solve this, because otherwise we are just going around. The program managers, they have a meeting with line managers, and when they something to the line managers then the line managers go and ask me about it and then I just go back to the program manager — that's what we have talked about in another meeting, so it will just go round. So I think it's good if we have a meeting with all people: the program managers, the teams and the OPO and the line managers.

So it's not their lack of willingness to do something it's rather that they are alienated from the whole process?

I think it's rather that. I hope they are willing to change this.

Does it also apply to the Section Managers? As far as we know they are all about removing impediments, so if they are unable to do that it seems kind of severe.

Yeah, I think it's the Section Managers also. I think all the teams, I think they think it's a problem too, because we have had a lot of impediments, usually we knew we must solve this by ourselves

anyway. «Ok, what can we do? We must make this delivery, so we must have a decision right now» and we just take it, sometimes it's not so good. Sometimes maybe it's good also, that the team takes more responsibility. So, it's both I think.

Do you think they are in general compatible with the agile way of working?

The line managers? I think they need more education maybe, I think so. Because I think they have a very important role, so I think it's good if they have more, I think they should be better at this agile work than we are in the teams or in the programs, because we are thinking a lot about these technical solutions so we don't really have so much time, so we just work as they say in a way. «Ok, we have set up this way of working» and we just work, but I think they need to be more involved in this agile transformation. I think it's very good that you are here, maybe you can help them.

As far as we know there was no section manager for a long time now...

Yeah and that's not so good, because they didn't have anyone who could solve anything.

So it might hopefully change just by somebody being there.

Yeah, maybe it will be better now.

I'd be interested in communication between teams, do you think that works fine, do the teams communicate well between one another when they have to? Should they do more?

We have a lot of discussions between the teams, we have these PGs, we have set up a COP about...just a part of the software, so they are discussing just that part, how can we make this better and things like that. Then we have involved one team from the G2 project and 2 teams from the G1 project. It's good, I think. We have had for another team — they are working with the G2 project with one technical solution — and they have discussed a lot with another team in the G1 project. So I think we have it, on the team level it is good, but then it's not so good for the Picnic team because they don't have any other team on the G1 program, because they have not said that any team will work with the antenna systems, so that's not so good, I think. But hopefully it will come now, because they have said that one team will be an antenna system team. But I think it is very sad that they didn't have any team to talk to. Hopefully it will be a little better, for the Picnic team also.

What about your communication with the XFT Picnic? Do you think it is collaborative or is it just you get work to communicate to the team from somewhere and you just give it to them and that's it, or do they communicate back to you?

Yeah, a lot of back to me. Because it's a lot of discussions and they are very good at their product. I have said to you that the G2 product we are working a lot with technical solutions, so they have a lot of solutions by themselves in the team, and we try to make them in this program and say «Ok, we must do this», so we try to make them in the other WP.

How well do you think the teams are shielded from any kind of external influences? Can their sprint be interrupted in any way?

Yes, we have had this problem with the TRs in the G1 project. So they have been interrupted and we have had that … what can we say… unplanned stories at the Scrum board. So we have handled it like it unplanned stories and it will take like 10% from the sprint. But sometimes it has been more and of course sometimes it is less. When it's more then it's not so good and we have had to change a sprint.

Can you think of a sprint that was really unproductive?

Yes, sometimes we have had some unproductive sprints. I think, it's difficult because we have got a lot of questions from other teams in this ANTSYS because it's not so many people who is good at the antenna system. Now they are oh ok, now they have found a team. So they have got a lot a lot of questions from other teams. That's difficult, I think. I don't know if it's because they can't say «You can't answer that question, because now you are disturbed in the sprint». It's very difficult to say if it's too much or it's ok, because that's a new thing, I think. We have talked about in the G1 program, of in the G1 project, they have… because they are not so… that a team that is working with one product, that they have worked with it all the time — they have just moved around, which I've said before, they are moved around a lot in the product, and then they are putting a new team on a feature, maybe some which will impact this antenna system, and then they can't do, they can nothing about the antenna system and they just say «Oh, you can take thins package or feature, because you are free this time». And then they ok, then it will take some time to learn about the antenna system and what will the team do, they will contact the team which is the best of this antenna systems of course, and then it's difficult to say «No» to the questions. And then they just say «Oh, it's ok that you solved this package», but then this antenna system team, maybe they will not fix their sprint to their promised work package. That's I think is difficult, to know how much help you should give another team. I think that's difficult. I don't know what have they said, maybe they think it's easy, but I think it's difficult. Because you have this sprint goal and you have the sprint and you have planned for it and then you got a lot of questions from other teams. You should be nice and answer them, but sometimes it destroys the sprint. I think that is difficult and I as an OPO, I can't say «Oh, you can't answer that». It's difficult.

Is it that they then have sometimes too much responsibilities and are trying to do too much even though they are meant to do a lot.

Maybe it's like that and maybe it's because we just have one team which is good at this product, because we are too little people who is good, we need to have more, spread it.

It's like a focus of knowledge, but it might go away over time? Or somehow it needs to be spread differently and shouldn't be like one team gathers it all and tries to get it out again and never reaches a perfect osmosis of things.

Yeah I think we should spread it.

How much long term planning kind of contrasts with agile and the agile way of working? To me it sounds like agile iterates very fast, but then there are also long term goals because you need to plan things for long, does that somehow cause tension at times, or does it work well together?

No, I think that is also difficult. We have had a workshop recently and just discussed how much work do we have for this CS platform, this new platform we will release in one year, and then we tried to take all the WPs and just put them out in the line, «Ok, how long will they take?». That's very difficult, because then we don't have so good prediction, it's just like, oh, like 5 sprints or something and this it's like maybe 3 sprints, and then it's rather difficult to say and you just try to see, can we manage to make this package to the end of this year. So that's difficult I think. And then we are just starting to work and then it will take always longer time, so that's very difficult, I think. It's hard to make this long plan, but I think we need it at Ericsson, because we need to say something to our customer. I don't know. Then we'll just work and we will just say «Oh, right now, you have this urgent». The way they are working right now it is like they say they are telling at this, maybe this Barcelona big conference, «Oh, in a year you can have this and that» and they just promise everything and the customers «Oh, that's good, that's good» and then we need to do it. I don't know, maybe they shouldn't say so much on this conference, maybe they should just wait and say «Now we have something for you» and it will be ready, so maybe I think we need to change the whole process of what we are saying to the customers, because now we have always promised everything. When we get it, when we get the information, then they have already sold it. So I think that's a problem.

How much of that long term vision is communicated to teams, do they know what their goal is in say half a year or more than half a year?

They haven't had this plan before, the workshop we had this week, so if you ask them for, I think, 2 weeks ago, then I think they must have said no, we don't have any long term, but now they will say they have a long term.

Did they ask for a long-term vision? Do they kind of demand it?

They have asked for it.

Why do they want to know it?

I think they like to know what we will go, the goals, but i this agile world, I think, it's sometimes it will just change again, even if we have this plan. It's difficult.

Was it one and only time you communicated this vision?

No, they have worked with the package for like 1 year or something, so I think we had no plan for like 2 months or something. So we had a plan before and then we just changed the focus area and then we put this new plan. But it was a time between when we didn't have any long-term plan.

Do you have any other persons in the PO circle, like area PO?

No, I don't really know if we have any APO in the G2 project. I mostly talk to Niklas as a program manager and a technical coordinator and to this continuous analysis, this CA organization.

How does the overall vision and plan for the team developed for the G2? Is there some zen master that knows it all?

They have a little group, they have meetings. I donut know if you have talked to Niklas yet. No? They have some Kanban Master, I think, Stefan Sand [???] so they have some people who is very, and they have a project manager for the whole G2 project, but it's more like a project manager, no APO. They have not taken the whole agile way of working.

Could the team contribute back if the say this might be really good for the G2, can they contact that person to incorporate their idea into the product?

Yeah, they can.

Is there any other problem with communication you have?

We have a lot of communication problems I think. We have these verification morning meetings where we are trying to solve these problems and the Picnic team is not involved in it right now. They will be and they have been but not right now, but my other team is involved in that meeting right now, and that's difficult, because they are talking about a lot of problems and it's on the telephone. So it's 30 people in Kista and they are talking a lot, then we just sit there «Oh, what did he say now? Was it put problem or not?». It's difficult to follow sometimes in such a meeting, I think it's very difficult to have. They have minutes of meetings and we try to follow them and so on. Sometimes it's difficult to follow the meeting when you are not in the place, when you just follow it from Lindholmen and it is in Kista. And it's the same, they have standup meetings we can also attend to, where they are talking about the whole G2 project, what is happening right now and what problems do we have. It's also a meeting in Kista, it's also difficult to follow here. Sometimes I would like to have more, we should have like web cameras, so it's easier to follow. We have this Lync where we can talk to each other, it's very good and w have it with telephones [???]. Sometimes it's good even with a web camera, so you can see it also.

So, mostly communication coming from the distributed kind of context?

Yeah.

Would you say it's possible to miss essential information because of this?

Sometimes, I think.

How does it get to you afterwards?

Then I need to call them, «What did you mean?». But it takes longer time, I think it's very important to think about how we communicate things, how we can make it better. I think we are not so good

at these things, usually we are very technical, we just work with the problem, we don't think so much about how we should say something.

If there are these big stand up meetings, is the information somehow persisted so people can look it up later on? Or is it all just informal and floats around and whoever remembers it.

Sometimes you can look at it after and that's very good I think. Sometimes it just disappears. That's also I think important to think about this and always write minutes of meetings and such things, that's very good. Sometimes...we have lots of discussions and then we just end up in nothing and that's not so good, I think we discuss a lot and we not write it don't, then we start a discussion again one week later and yeah. I think we have a potential to be better. I don't know if you are attending any meetings...

It seems like people have different opinions on the usefulness of COPs.

Sometimes they are good and sometimes they are not so good. I think it's different.

But it's a good idea?

I think it's a good idea, yeah. But sometimes they are not so good.

When are they bad, what makes them bad?

I think it's when we are discussing and we have not come to a solution or we can not...We just ended up in more questions, then it's not so good.

If you had one team you would like to improve for your team, what would it be?

Maybe more long-term plans, for these new WPs, for the Picnic team. To have a good plan for this 8 WP we will have to be finished with by the end of the year.

Would that also help to motivate them a little bit more?

I think so, I hope so. Now when we have this, the whole scope. I think it's good. I think that would be the most important thing right now to make the plan for this.

Do you have an communication channel to some role or person that works particularly well? Information and feedback sharing is just the way it should be?

I think it can be better everywhere, but is the question is if we have a department that is good at it? Who is good at this... I think we have had a much better discussion with the CA people and they are communicating feedback and such things, and the thing that is not so good, I think we have the most problems with communication right now with the line managers. I think it's the best in the program.

And when you talked about 2 LM not communicating with each other, do you see a reason why they don't do that?

I think they are two different personalities. And I think maybe when you are a department manager, you would like to decide everything by yourself. I don't really know. But I think it's very strange, because when I think, when I worked as a project manager, I worked together with the other project manager in Kista because we had two, because the line manager think that's very good if we have one project manager at each place, so that's good, and then we had to work together. And that was like, you need to work close together, and it's the same right now, Niklas is working with Karina [???], she's sitting in Kista, and they are working very close together. And we have the same in the G1 project, we have Johan and Marcell in Kista and they re also working very close together. Then ok, they must work together, it's just a requirement, but when you come to the LM then it's just ok to have this different visions and different ways of working. I think Tomas could just say «You must work together». But I don't really know, I think it's more difficult in the line. It's another kind of persons maybe, I don't know, we'd like to have another way of working or I don't know. But I think in the project it's just a requirement, you need to work together and you must, then we just solve it, we just do it, but in the department it seems like it's ok to have different ways of working. I think they need to work on it.