What is your role in the organization?

My role is an XFT member.

What are your key responsibilities?

I don't see that I have any key responsibilities, because I can do a little bit of everything.

Mostly development work maybe?

Sure, taking part of the XFT work.

Have you worked here before they started the agile transformation?

Yes.

What were you doing then?

In this department I worked with something that was called «Test object» and that was the part when we took the software, wrote Erlang code to test them before it was sent off to the system tester. Pre-test situation.

Now, in the agile context, are the responsibilities for your role clearly defined?

To be a bit ironic I would say it's definitely clear because the XFT is responsible for everything in the ??? To be a bit more serious, with my responsibilities it's not that difficult because you can always ask someone and stuff like that, but I think the overall responsibility for the XFT team is not that clear really.

So you couldn't identify yourself with, say, a product or part of the product?

Ok, no, we have a part of the product we are working with, that is the responsibility. It's more in the area of testing and demands. Between them, I mean the boundaries of the responsibility (when do we take over the demands, who is setting the requests on the product, what do we leave for test, what is our test responsibility and what can we leave for someone else, and what is actually tested later on).

Are these responsibilities shared within other roles in the organization, overlapping responsibilities maybe?

I think it's not exactly clear where the responsibility passes from one to another. As I worked before, it was very clear. This is the responsibility for this, here, and this is the responsibility for the next level. Now we are kind of...

Floating along.

Yeah.

How does that influence your work in general?

It depends. When you're working on the boundaries, as I said, like, for test, then it's, okay you've done all the tests you need, you leave it, and then half a year later you see a TR and you say «Ok, why wasn't this tested?». I can't say that it THAT exactly influence the daily work, but some frustration sometimes.

Let's take a broader view now of the whole organization. Do you think there are major mismatches between the work of the XFT and organizational structure in general? Towards their agility?

Yeah, I do think so. Because as I have understood it (I'm not an expert on agile work) and as I've learned as we worked before at Ericsson, it's important to keep the ones that actually do the implementation, the designers, now XFT members, they and we, we need to be able to work efficiently and that is not taking care of stuff around us. Like nodes, who should I ask for this, I don't even know the name of the person responsible. Stuff like that.

Do you think there are parts of the organization that are different in their agility?

I think that we have not landed after throwing everything up [Swedish expression]. I mean, the change was made and now we are trying to, okey, what's missing, a role is missing here, maybe responsibility there. I think we are in that process right now.

How do you think you could be better supported by your environment? Because you say you have a lot of responsibilities and sometimes your environment demands too much, as you said, the nodes might not be working. Is there some lack of support?

Mainly, I think there are several steps that could be taken. First, the ones that actually do have the power to do something, they could at least listen. Next step is, ok, then they could inform us who to speak to that actually can do something. Someone should know that. And then yeah to move on, to remove impediments that are frustrating.

Do you feel like the parts of the organization are different in their support towards agile?

I haven't worked with anyone else with agile, I've just worked here, but what I've heard, it seems that it's working better in other places. That's just a rumor.

Places in company or?

In Ericsson, even within, so we can't just say that it's not working at Ericsson.

Let's focus on you. Can yo describe your communication circle, which roles do you normally communicate with? About what?

That is depending over time, I would say, and what you are doing. Some weeks you are not

communicating much at all outside the team. As I've been working a lot with test from the beginning here also, then it was communication with people that I knew had the same background as me and should be able to get the nodes up and running. But that was more like because I knew I've been working with them before. But then there were so many new people and you didn't know their background and what their areas of expertise were.

What type of work does cause a lot of communication and what type of work causes low if they differ so much?

It depends, if we do something very internal in the ANTSYS domain where we mainly are working, then ok, then we do an interface towards a certain part and we need someone do discuss who is working on the other end. But if we do something internally - only then we don't need this discussion. So it depends on where the functionality of what you're working with ends, and if you're working with test or with requirement or design. And then if you're working with documentation and you know that this other group, this XFT, they did this test the other month, then you can talk to them. So it's more of a what you're doing and who you know could be of use for your work.

Are there patterns in communication, any specifics that tend to affect your work negatively. Or are there anything around communication that makes you sometimes not to have progress as much as you'd like to?

Tricky question. Really tricky question. We have raised some issues towards team coaches and stuff like that. That has never seem like it's happening something when you do this. I think what is happening is that the roundtrip for something to happen in so long, it seems, it feels like nothing is happening. But the communication could have been better there, in like ok, the issue is here and it's doing this. The feedback of the impediments, what is actually happening with them. I don't remember the question now.

Any types of communication with any roles or anything, if you need to know something, do you get information fast enough if there is a decision which is open and needs to be made, which you already mentioned as the roundtrip is too long or such things? Do you feel like you need to wait for anything when you would rather just communicate and just go?

Many times I would like to just know «Who do I ask?». I mean I could ask one person just to get the name of the person who I really should ask to find out for a specific thing. Sometime this is working and then you don't think about it because it's working. You ask someone, you get a name, you write a mail or make a phone call and the question is solved – then you don't think about it. But when it doesn't happen, you ask someone and «I don't know who to ask» and then you ask someone else – «I don't know who to ask» and then it gets frustrating.

Does it happen often?

Mainly with the nodes. And tests.

If you were to pick, say, 3-5 roles you communicate with most frequently and intense, maybe from your immediate environment, who would you say it is?

PG, OPO, and I would like to say team coach, but we have been without a team coach for a long time now.

Did it affect you in any way, not having a team coach?

I think it affects the department more. I'm not sure that the team coaches are actually sure of what they should do, that's the overall impression I get.

So there is no difference for you as a team if there is one or there is none?

I would like it to be a difference.

So you see a need for a team coach?

Yes, I see a need. I'm not an expert on agile, but I see a team coach for two reasons. One is to help – I mean, ok, the Scrum Master should remove – but impediments that is impossible for the Scrum Master to master them out, that should be the role of the team coach. Also, to give the outside view on how we could improve stuff, because it's easy in a group that you don't get too broad on your insight that much, you need someone from outside to give you a bit of other perspective.

Information and feedback sharing between you and different organizational structures. You can either pick the ones you communicate with most frequently or occasionally. How do you think is it, is it sufficient, the communication form them towards you?

Who should I think, within like PG or other organization like CIRV or?

Maybe first just in your agile branch between your OPOs and your team and then maybe the SM so within this group of your intermediate environment. Do you think that information is shared sufficiently? Or first how do you share information then?

I think there is a problem here because we do complain that the information towards the teams is in a way too much, but in a way too little. We get a lot of information that might be very interesting to read but you can not read everything because then we won't have time to do anything. But then in other occasions we lack information that could really be useful. So what I think is really that I miss that kind of, I mean I've been working for Ericsson for many years, that kind of information spreading that you got before, like once a week when you had project meeting in a small group. We have project meetings in a very large group now and we have meeting with an OPO and she does share her knowledge about stuff but I thought that you got a broader picture of a current situation somehow when you had and a weekly meeting with someone, that the purpose of the meeting was to give out information. Because then it was like that person took all the information we get via mail now and filtered it to inform us of what is interesting for what you are doing now. That kind of

information I would like.

So, instead of a flood rather a filtered for your applicable part of your overall information?

Yeah.

Can you give any examples of how having this broad view on everything that's going on around you affects your work?

Not a very specific example, more like sometimes you get that XFT team is working on something here that really would affect my work, but as I didn't know anyone in that team I didn't get that information but I got the information that this team over there is working on something that is you do, because I've met that guy at the coffee machine and as I knew him from before I had a discussion. So it is depending more on your personal relationships with persons around in the organization than on actual information flow. I sometimes have that feeling.

And how do you in your XFT spread out the information?

That's a good question because I don't think we do that at all, not more than a PG. We have a PG, he is a half PG, half XFT member, so he is an XFT member but since he is a PG he is also taking the role of spreading ANTSYS stuff. But otherwise we don't plan or think or...

Do you think teams in general between one another could share information more sufficiently?

We have started with this exhibition, that is very nice that we go around and actually find out what other teams are doing. I think... a bit more organized... I can't put my finger on exactly what but a bit more ok, we have found a new way of doing block test that is very good, then it should spread out and everybody should start to take that road. Or we are working in this area and that affects this and this and this person over there so then we might share some meeting and have this up for a discussion. It is not forbidden to do today, of course not, it's just that you might not know. When we do know we do try to have this interconnection with other groups, other teams.

Can you think of any other way of how teams could communicate with one another, apart from information being given to some superior role and just distributes it?

Yeah, I think that team exhibitions that we have here is one way of doing it. I think there are so many teams so it also makes it complicated. I mean if you are 4-5 teams I don't think there wouldn't be an issue at all. So, I don't have any good suggestions, more like ok, check around, see if anyone has an idea, let's try it for a while. If it's not working and if someone else has another idea, try that one. Let's trial and error to make it work somehow, not just «Ok, this is the fact» or make it a mission of someone to collect the information spread out. Be agile, but do try to do something and please don't put that on the team also as the teams are very busy trying to get work done.

Let's focus now on the work of an XFT. How can a sprint be interrupted from whatever you planned?

I don't actually think we have interrupted a sprint, maybe we had but we didn't say we interrupted it, I don't know. Usually, if a TR comes in and takes a lot of time. Maybe we should interrupt it more when we figure out that the story is not what we thought it was or something like that, but we have chosen the path of carrying on anyway and trying to solve it, but we can't. I don't know if this a way to go.

Does the sprint change from time to time?

No, we usually, we see that due to the fact that the nodes weren't working and that we had two TRs that took a lot of time that we are not going to be able to finish the sprint as we thought, then we move the rest to the next sprint.

Are there any external influences that you have to take into account when you plan for a sprint?

We try not to have so many dependencies, but of course we found out that we have during a sprint. Same thing, TRs and access for nodes, access for information that we might need during the sprint.

Do you take them into account in any way?

We don't take as many points as we think we should if we didn't get any interruptions, that's what we do. So we take a lower speed just to be able to handle them anyway.

Can you give an example of a sprint that was more unproductive than the others?

I have so short memory. One of the reasons we have two week sprints is because we have two persons who can't remember two weeks back. So I don't know. A 1-1,5 years ago we were really struggling with the nodes, we couldn't compete as much stuff as we were supposed to do because of the nodes not working. And also delivery stuff, when we supposed to deliver stuff and it took days to deliver. That has changed now luckily.

So you've been struggling with nodes for 1,5 years now?

No, I stopped struggling with nodes, because I don't want to struggle with nodes. But yes, I have been struggling.

Are there no steps taken to address this?

I think they have tried to address it and now we do have someone else, we have a name now to go to when they are not working, yes. We can write tickets, «We can't access the node, please do something». But then it's moving up to another level, that's the installation of the node... So... But it has changed, yes.

On a contrast, can you think of any sprint that was really productive?

We had one sprint, I don't remember what we did, but I remember that we had actually managed everything what we should do and some more, because there we had no external interference: no TRs, no problems with nodes, nothing like that.

So how would you describe a perfect set up for a sprint?

A perfect set up... In my ideal world I, as an XFT member, if I have an issue with something that is with a node, with a requirement etc, I should have one person – if I don't know myself who to turn to – I should have one person I could go and ask. This person shouldn't be able to solve anything but this person should at least know where, as I said, I can ask someone I should ask. To find a path to just say «Ok, fix that for me», because I need to focus on the work I'm doing. I can't run around chasing who is responsible for this and who is going to fix that, because then I decrease in speed. So if you want to increase the speed then I should focus on actual work and nothing else.

Let's get back to the organizational structure. Let's say we have this line management part of the organization and the agile branch. How do you think they are integrated, is it working well?

I think my comment will be the same as I said before. I mean, the line managers has stepped in to be agile coaches and that could work, but I haven't seen it is working the way I would like it to work. The way I think it used to work before agile, when you were a designer and you had a problem and you couldn't solve it, then you raised it to the team leader, and the team leader was responsible for solving it. It was a clear structure, I as a designer, I put my energy and effort on solving this part of the work. It's nice that you are broadening yourself to take bigger steps in the development, but the struggle that really doesn't matter for the development but is a necessary mean to be able to... like IT structure, nodes and what is a requirement, really, who should I go and ask, stuff like that.

How about your communication as a team with department managers, program managers?

PgMs...I don't even know if I discussed anything with. DM... Sometimes it's very nice. We had a nice effect... When we didn't have a manager, our manager's manager stepped in temporarily. And when we raised stuff at the section meetings to him, suddenly things happened very quickly. That was an effect. What was the question again?

What kind of influence those structures have on your work as an XFT?

I don't know. I would like them to be more supportive in a way that we actually could perform the work that we intended to do.

Would you just address them whenever you need something or is there a meeting set up every week?

We have a meeting with our manager every week but that is for spreading information generally.

Otherwise I don't have any ways except walking to the manager's office and saying «This is not working».

You said you would like to know what the actual requirement is at times. Does that mean you don't get the vision of things at times, you just get too technical requirements of which you don't know what they are supposed to resolve into?

The reason that I mention it too much now is that we are working with documentation and we can see that the code and the old documentation is a mismatch. And then we can reason of what we do believe is the best solution even though it might mean changes in the code, that's fine, but then it would be nice to have someone that actually has more broad vision of the system than us as an ANTSYS team, to say «Yes, this seems like a good way to go or not». We do have some people to ask questions but it feels like it would be nice to have someone to say «Ok, I can review this and I can say ok» and then we know that it's ok for the whole system. Because we can not take the responsibility for the whole entire RBS when we are working with a small part of it. That's one thing. And now I forgot the question again.

If you would like to have a broader view on what's the goal is of the things you work on because you mentioned you don't know what the requirements are.

But that was very specific, the requirements for documentation, that's why I triggered. I really think that would be a very nice way to work. Of course we know the goal of the entire project, but that's far away. We know maybe the goal, hopefully the goal, of a story, that's very short. It would be very nice to have kind of intermediate goals that are very clear. The problem is that for a project manager goal can be very clear, but for the XFT team we say ok, but we have no idea what that means for us.

So it would be a project manager's responsibility to communicate it or rather OPO's or would you see..?

I would say it would be nice for the project manager, yes. And it would be very nice to have these intermediate goals that are very clear. But then I have, we had a discussion with a project manager, and the problem is that the project manager sees it very clear, the goal, but for me it's not, int's not clear. You say something like that, but the impact on my work, I have no idea. It would be nice to also know a bit of an impact.

Would it also be more motivating to know the overall goal?

Yeah. I think so.

You mentioned that he has a clear view of what the goals are, what the vision is and what the final end product is. Do you think it kind of contradicts at times with the way you work?

I think it's more of a «I want more details». I mean, on some level I think it's very clear, but for me it's not enough. It's like «Ok, we are going to deliver a product and it's going to contain stuff from

my module». Ok, nice, but what does it mean? What work do I have to do to reach this goal? Not every step of the work but what kind of work is it to be able to reach this goal. To see the path towards this goal. That would be good.

How severe do you think the impact of your XFT's work are on the planning of a project manager? If he has a strict plan and you might not be able to follow it? Does it happen often if there is a mismatch that he needs to postpone things?

I guess. But that is just because I have worked so long at Ercisson. I have actually no idea. I do think he is re-planning stuff and I know he is re-planning, but what it actually depends on. I don't know.

Would you be interested to know to maybe improve?

Yeah, yeah. And at the same time I don't want to know why the whole, I mean it's a big project, to take in all the information would be to much [???] but still. More filtered information.

How would you describe different interests between the Department Manager, Section Manager and Project Manager? Because the project manager seems to be very time focused.

That's a struggle that has been going on for Ericsson for as long as I know. I think it's a healthy struggle. The department, no the section managers should be taking more into account the long term development of the employees and the product and stuff like that. The project manager should care for his project. I think that is healthy struggle. So that struggle I see no conflict in. It should be like that to get the most of the situation.

But there should be more feedback between the two as you said? At times.

Somehow I'm lacking some kind of feedback. The Lean book we have read was talking about isolated islands between design and test and so on, but now we are also isolated islands, it's just whenever the XFT is an isolated island, sometimes it feels like, what is the improvement then?

We talked a bit about the problematic communication, you have lots coming towards you and you don't spread out enough. Do you think there is communication with some structures that works really well?

All the teams get a lot in, a lot of mails are running around with a lot of information about the whole BNET [???] structure I guess. If I feel that something should be raised, might need to be communicated to all the teams, I go to PGs and I talk to them. I, at least, think that's their task to spread it out because they might know, ok this is useful information for 2 other teams, not everybody, they can do the filtering out so to speak. Or this is good for everybody, then they can spread it.

Any other things that bother you in your working environment?

– Not with the communication.