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Reflecting Reality or Shaping Reality?

A Qualitative Case Study of the Intra-Organisational Interpretation and Mobilisation of IFRS 15

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Abstract

This thesis explores the introduction of the revenue recognition standard, IFRS 15, into a global, multinational organisation. Through a single, qualitative case study based on semi-structured interviews, it aims to examine the intra-organisational interpretation and mobilisation of IFRS 15. By applying the theoretical concept of boundary-work as introduced by Gieryn (1983), this study finds that in an attempt to concretise what the standard meant for the organisation, the group accounting function standardised the processes and practices relating to the revenue recognition process. This resulted in increased centralisation and decreased flexibility for the operational organisation. As a response, organisational actors mobilised themselves to create boundaries, to define and redefine their positions in the organisational context. Hence, the requirements of IFRS 15 created a tension between the vertical, hierarchical, steering process and the horizontal, operational process, where the hierarchical structure was less rigid. These findings suggest that as the standard was introduced, it became dispersed in the organisation, resulting in various enactments within the organisation. Thus, the study's main contribution to the literature on the intra-organisational interpretation of accounting-related regulatory frameworks and concepts, as IFRS, is that rather than being a single implementation process, the interpretation of an accounting standard can become enacted through multiple implementation processes in various organisational places. Further, we conclude that when boundaries are not originating from a single organisational place, but from multiple organisational places, boundaries are continuously redrawn and re-enacted in a dynamic and relational process. Thus, our findings suggest that an accounting standard both shapes and is being shaped by the organisational context which it seeks to represent. Lastly, our study also contributes to the previous literature on boundary-work by illustrating how boundaries are mobilised from more than a single organisational place.

Keywords: IFRS implementation, accounting-related regulatory frameworks, IFRS 15, sociological accounting, boundary-work

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1. Introduction

Following lengthy discussions, the European Commission agreed on a single set of accounting standards for financial reporting and the International Financial Reporting Standards (henceforth: IFRS) became effective in 2005[1]. Today, 144 jurisdictions require or permit the use of IFRS as a foundation for financial reporting (IFRS, 2018). The aim of having a harmonised accounting practice internationally is to attain comparability and transparency between nations and organisations, which in turn shall result in more efficient capital markets (Lundqvist, 2014). Accordingly, a large stream of research within the IFRS field, pre- and post its mandatory adoption, is concerned with the effects of IFRS on financial reporting in relation to its intentions. The research has mainly been challenging two aspects of its intended aim. Firstly, whether the implementation of IFRS has led to improved accounting quality (Barth et. al., 2008; Daske & Gebhardt, 2006) and secondly, whether IFRS has improved comparability of financial reporting across nations and organisations (Archer et. al., 1995; Murphy, 2000; Barlev & Haddad, 2007; Nobes, 2006). Substantial evidence suggests that the mere adoption of IFRS is not sufficient to secure quality and comparability of accounting. Factors such as consistent application through appropriate enforcement, the role of institutional factors, actors' incentives and the level of IFRS expertise have been shown to be of relevance for accounting quality (Brown & Tarca, 2005; Daske et. al., 2008; Soderstrom & Sun, 2007; Ball et. al., 2003; Shipper, 2005). However, a common theme in these studies has been to operationalise accounting quality in terms of quantitative measures. Further, most of the studies within this field of research are based on the assumption of a stable simple referent-reference relationship, i.e. that accounting reflects the underlying organisational substance. Thus, while these studies have led to substantial insights about the financial outcomes following the adoption of IFRS, they can only hint at the organisational problems and dilemmas faced in the adoption of IFRS (Hartmann, 2013; Hopwood, 2000). Due to their methodological approach, they do not address how IFRS shapes and is being shaped by the organisational realm which it seeks to represent.

This thesis has its foundation in the sociological stream of accounting research, which questions the functionalist assumption of accounting being delimited to constituting a reflection of reality (Hines, 1988). In contrast, sociological accounting research is concerned with the social and relational aspects of accounting. It views accounting as a dynamic process, influencing and being influenced by individuals, organisations and society (Hopwood, 1983; 1987; 2000). Organisational and accounting changes have been widely discussed in the accounting literature

[1] For further details on IASB and IFRS, please see Appendix C and D

(Hartmann, 2013). However, studying the implementation of accounting-related regulatory frameworks or concepts, such as IFRS, separates this study from literature concerning the intra-organisational interpretation of frameworks or concepts that are not defined by the common conception or a legislative body. Regulated accounting frameworks and concepts, like IFRS, either become enforceable by a legislative body or have gained formal status via support in society, leading to organisations either choosing to implement them to achieve best practice, or as a result of pressure from external stakeholders (Brunsson, 2002). As such, the implemented concept is defined as it enters the organisation, but simultaneously becomes redefined in the existing organisational practice. Prior research has provided insights into how the social and relational aspects come to play when actors define and redefine their position in the interpretation of a new accounting-related regulatory framework and concept in the organisational realm. Arena et. al. (2016) illustrate in their comparative case study how the imperative of an organisation, shaped how the Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) concept was incorporated in processes and practices. Cools et. al. (2008) note how the introduction of a new tax regulation shaped the adopting organisation by leading to increased centralisation and standardisation. Further, Mennicken (2008) shows how the adoption of International Auditing Standards (ISA) had complex implications when incorporated into existing audit practice. Lastly, Hartmann (2013) studies how IFRS became an actor within an organisation, which had implications for the link between management and financial accounting for the organisational actors, and on practices and role definitions. These studies have in common that they illustrate how actors mobilise themselves in the organisational realm following the adoption of an accounting-related regulatory framework or concept. The mobilisation is illustrated by the organisational actors' efforts to demarcate or delimit themselves in relation to other groups in the organisation to achieve their respective objectives. Hence, prior research suggests that the implementation of accounting-related regulatory frameworks and concepts in the organisational context both shape and is being shaped by the organisational context which they are incorporated into. However, the research field is under-investigated and a thorough understanding of the dynamics in place when international standards are interpreted and mobilised in the organisational context is lacking (Hartmann, 2013; Hopwood, 2000).

The intention of the IASB in its construction of IFRS has been to facilitate the economic decision-making of the users of the accounting information to enhance efficient capital markets. However, less focus has been directed at the preparers of the accounting, i.e. the organisations. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to contribute to the understanding of the interpretation of IFRS in the organisational context. Our study responds to a call for empirically driven theoretical contributions in this field of research (Robson and Young, 2009; Hartmann, 2013; Hopwood, 2000) by conducting a qualitative case study on a company adopting the new revenue recognition standard, IFRS 15, effective as of 1 January 2018[2,3]. We argue that IFRS 15 constitutes an interesting setting to study. Firstly, because it concerns the revenue recognition of a company, which impacts several organisational functions. Revenue often serve as a basis for strategic decision-making and revenue-related performance reward systems for employees. Secondly, because IFRS 15 was considered to be one of the most complex and challenging standard introductions for organisations in many years (EY, 2017). Since the issuance in 2014, the standard has been amended numerous times, one important reason being the calls for clarification of its perceived complexity by various stakeholders[4] (EY, 2017; PWC, 2016). Initially, the standard was set to become effective in 2017, but was postponed due to the extent of proposals for clarification (IFRS, 2015). Ahead of the effective date, auditors and consultants raised concerns regarding the impact of IFRS 15. It was argued that the impact would be significant and potentially unexpected for adopting entities, not only with regards to accounting and financial reporting matters but also in relation to the business, with effects relating to e.g. processes, systems, KPIs, business models and training for employees (PWC, 2015; Deloitte, 2018; KPMG, 2016; EY, 2018). However, to our knowledge, the intra-organisational consequences of the expected effects following the adoption of IFRS 15 have yet not been elaborated upon in research at the publishing of this study. Given the context discussed, we argue that the adoption of the standard provides an interesting setting for examining how organisational actors mobilise themselves when adhering to a new accounting standard. Hence, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of the intra-organisational implications following the introduction of an accounting standard, by answering the following research question:

"How do organisational actors engage in the interpretation and mobilisation of the requirements of IFRS 15 in the organisational context?"

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2 For all entities adopting IFRS or the US GAAP equivalent (the US GAAP equivalent include a handful of differences)

3 For more details on IFRS 15, please see Appendix E

4 Another reason was disagreements regarding the content and width of the new standard. Amendments made in 2016 include the clarification by adding additional illustrative examples as a guidance on the identification of Performance Obligations, accounting for licenses of intellectual property, and the principal versus agent assessment (gross versus net revenue presentation). In 2017, IFRS 17 "Insurance Contracts" was issues which permits an entity to choose whether to apply IFRS 17 or IFRS 15 to specified fixed-free service contracts that meet the definition of a service contract.

The study employs a single case study approach, conducted at a multinational organisation (henceforth, “GrandCo”) operating in an industry that was expected to be substantially impacted by the transition to IFRS 15 from a financial reporting perspective (IFRS, 2014). The empirical data is based on interviews with employees at different hierarchical levels within the company. Furthermore, on-site observations, public information and internal documents has been studied for additional insights and understanding of the case setting as well as to cross-check data. The purpose has been to form an understanding of the intra-organisational mobilisation of various actors involved in the interpretation of IFRS 15. The theoretical concept of boundary-work (Gieryn, 1983) is used to analyse the empirical data.

The study finds that, to concretise what the interpretation of IFRS 15 meant for the organisation, the group function standardised processes and practices, resulting in increased centralisation and decreased flexibility for the operational organisation. Organisational actors responded by mobilising boundaries to define and redefine their position in the organisation following the introduction of the standard. Hence, the standard dispersed in the organisation and resulted in individual enactments in various organisational places, despite the effort to standardise the interpretation. Thus, rather than being a single implementation process, the interpretation of IFRS 15 became enacted through multiple implementation processes in various organisational places. This suggests that IFRS 15 created a tension between the vertical, steering process and the horizontal, operational process in GrandCo. Further, we conclude that when boundaries are not originating from only a single organisational place, but multiple organisational places, the boundaries are continuously redrawn and re-enacted in a dynamic and relational process, as actors engage and respond to each other's boundary efforts to achieve their objective.

The remainder of the thesis is outlined as follows. Chapter 2 will provide an overview of the existing literature. Thereafter the theoretical concept of boundary-work it presented, which will be used to analyse the empirical data. Chapter 3 outlines important methodological implications of the research approach and critical choices made in the design and execution of the study. Chapter 4 provides the case study empirics, which subsequently are analysed via the lens of boundary-work in Chapter 5. Chapter 5 ends with an analysis of the case findings in relation to the domain theory and a conclusion of the study. Chapter 6 provides a problematising discussion of the implications of the case findings and suggestions for potential avenues for further research.

2. Literature Review

In the following section, we present previous literature in the research domain to which the study aims to contribute to; the intra-organisational interpretation of IFRS. Our research approach has its foundation in the research field of sociological accounting and thus, begins by elaborating on accounting as a social construct with formative effects. IFRS 15 is a recently formulated standard and prior research on the interpretation of IFRS in the organisational context in general is limited (Hartmann, 2013). Hence, we find support in prior studies examining how accounting-related regulatory frameworks and concepts shape and are being shaped by the organisation that they are interpreted into. Thereafter, we elaborate on studies examining the intra-organisational interpretation of IFRS in particular. Lastly, we present the sociological concept of boundary-work, which is the method theory which we will apply to analyse the empirical data.

2.1. Accounting as a Construct with Formative Effects

> "- It seems to me, that [...] people only think of you as communicating reality, but in communicating reality, you construct reality.
>
> - That's right, [...] but most of us are only just beginning to realise ourselves that we have this power. We have always thought of ourselves as being technical people. But it has becoming clear lately, that there is much more to our work. Much more... "
> (Hines,1988)

Within the sociological accounting community, scholars have for a long time problematised an underlying assumption of a functionalist view of accounting. This assumption is based on the idea that accounting is delimited to be a technical task which results in a reflection of the economic reality it seeks to represent (Hopwood, 1987; Hines, 1988). The sociological stream of accounting literature instead argues that by defining the status quo of what is, when it is and what it is in terms of accounting numbers, accounting shapes the observer's perception of her reality. As such, sociological accounting scholars have explored how the construction of accounting shall not be taken for granted as a fact, but rather be understood as a social construct within society (Barker and Schulte 2016; Hines, 1988). Hines (1988) elaborates on accounting's dynamic relation to society and argues that for accounting to retain its position within society, it cannot only define the reality but must also develop in accordance with the common conception of society. Hence, these are interlinked and constantly changing. Further adding to the understanding of accounting as a construct is Hopwood (1983; 1987), arguing that accounting should be understood as a dynamic process. Over time, accounting has repeatedly changed as a result of new techniques being incorporated as well as accounting serving a greater variety of different and changing purposes in society, resulting in consequences for organisations and society:

> "Accounting is not a static phenomenon. Over time, it repeatedly has changed. [...] When seen in such terms, accounting continually has a tendency to become that it was not. A fluid and emergent craft, its techniques and their attendant perspectives have been implicated in a number of very different ways in organisational and social transformations" (Hopwood, 1987)

The implication of this theoretical approach for researchers studying the interpretation of accounting in the organisational context, is the understanding of the need to examine the social and relational aspects of accounting. If accounting is understood as a construct within society and amongst individuals, its existence is both forming the common conception, but is also reliant on being accepted by the common conception (Barker and Schulte, 2016). As such, for our research approach accounting should be understood as a social and relational construct that both shapes and is shaped by the context which it seeks to represent.

To better understand the implications of the sociological accounting research approach, insights can be gained by studying how prior scholars have understood the construction of accounting in a societal context. This has e.g. been studied by Young (2006; 2014) and Humphrey et. al. (2017) whom have observed how accounting standard-setting bodies have shaped their position in the common conception by demarcating and delimiting themselves in contrast to other relevant bodies of expertise. Young (2014) studies the efforts by the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) to demarcate the technical from the political aspects of accounting standard-setting in the formulation of a new accounting standard for stock-based options, to retain its professional autonomy from political interference. The study sheds light upon the FASB's efforts to create boundaries between itself and the political domain, by contributing characteristics as "systematic", "objective", and "unbiased" to themselves, in contrast to their counterparty in congress. By doing so, the FASB could retain its independent position in the standard setting process in relation to the political body. Young (2006) further depicts the transition of FASB and its Conceptual Framework, from being focused on qualities such as conservatism, historical cost and consistency to being focused on its usefulness to a group of "made-up" user. The result was that the FASB managed to construct a user of financial reporting that demanded exactly the type of information that the Conceptual Framework stated was of interest to them. By being able to construct the recipient and its demands on financial information, FASB successfully embedded the accounting standard setting within a narrow economic discourse and secured the construction of accounting in the interest of the group's objectives. Further, Humphrey et. al. (2017) study the demarcation efforts performed by the International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC) to position integrated reporting within the corporate reporting field. Integrated Reporting as a concept was delimited from other accounting concepts by ascribing fallacies to the current reporting regimes and proposing IIRC as the solution. However, the study further illustrates that the construction of a concept in society is not only about positioning the group (IIRC), in relation to other institutional actors. To a large extent, traction for the concept was achieved by the inventors' prominent profiles within the accounting community and their ability to secure support for IIRC in their network, highlighting the relational aspect of accounting.

Hence, examining prior research on the formulation of accounting from the perspective of accounting standard-setters, increases the understanding of the social and relational nature of accounting. The fluid nature of accounting facilitates the standard-setter's ability to mobilise itself to construct its position within the institutional space. The positioning is achieved via demarcation efforts such as the contribution of different characteristics to other institutional groups in relation to the accounting standard-setting body. By doing so, the standard-setting body secures its professional autonomy, allowing it to construct the financial reporting frameworks and concepts in accordance with its objectives.

2.2. The Intra-Organisational Interpretation of Accounting-Related Regulatory Frameworks and Concepts

The perspective of accounting as a social construct with formative effects has implications for the understanding of the intra-organisational dynamics at play when introducing a new accounting standard, as IFRS 15. Hence, we find support in prior literature studying the implementation of accounting-related regulatory frameworks and concepts in the organisational context to form an understanding of these effects. Companies have implemented these regulatory frameworks and concepts as a result as of the formal status they have gained by society as best practice or because they have become enforceable by a legislative body

(Brunsson, 2002). This stream of research illustrates that the implementation is on the one hand influenced by how regulatory frameworks and concept are defined on a societal and regulatory level. On the other hand, the implementation is also dependant on organisational actors' individual interpretation and their actions taken to mobilise themselves to adhere to regulatory frameworks and concepts in the organisational context.

Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) is an emerging self-regulatory concept that has gained formal status as the relevant risk practice for organisations by society, referring to the definition made by the independent Committee of Sponsoring Organisations of the Treadway Commission (COSO). Hence, this self-regulatory concept has been examined by several scholars. Power (2009) discusses the organisational tendency to internally define ERM related processes on top of the organisational hierarchy, resulting in a mechanical and cybernetic form of control. He argues that while this helps to legitimise ERM within the organisation, the related processes become abstract and take different forms in different organisational contexts. In other words, ERM becomes a "rule-based compliance" concept rather than what it is externally defined to be, i.e. guiding management's decision-making. Moreover, Arena et. al. (2013) illustrate in a contrasting case study of three companies, the fluidity of the ERM concept as it enters the organisation. The externally defined concept of ERM, becomes fluid and undefined in the organisation, as it is shaped by the organisational setting, wider control issues and the organisational actors involved in the related processes. Further, as organisational actors interpret ERM through their embedded actions, these actions are not only influenced by the firm's programmatic ambitions but also by their individual desires, such as the opportunity to seize additional power, secure organisational recognition or pay limited attention to practices perceived as pure formal compliance tasks (Arena et. al., 2010). They conclude that as a defined concept enters organisations through it uses and functional properties, it intervenes with pre-existing risk management practices resulting in the concept being realised differently across organisations. These findings illustrate how organisations cope to internally define what externally defined concept means in the specific organisational context, but also that ERM is not a simply a black-boxed concept of risks and solutions to be implemented in an organisation. Rather, what ERM is, will also be shaped by the organisations pre-existing practices and ideas of risk control.

Other scholars investigate the organisational mobilisation to comply with legislated regulatory standards. Cools et. al. (2008) observe how the introduction of stricter transfer pricing tax regulation had implications on the design of Management Control Systems (MCS) in an organisation. This was illustrated by sequential implications on planning, evaluating and rewarding control systems. This included firstly, the change from transfer price negotiations on a product division level to having a single uniform policy as a basis for transfer pricing, that was managed on a centralised level as it was perceived to be the concern of the accounting function. Secondly, transfer pricing related activities became stricter, required extensive internal documentation and had to be followed under all circumstances even at the cost of value adding activities. Finally, lower-level managers were less involved in the target setting that became more uniformed, especially for financial targets. Accordingly, the implementation of stricter transfer pricing tax regulation resulted in a more coercive use of MCS. This is aligned with the insights by Eccles (1985, p. 256), who discusses the organisational tendency to create uniform transfer pricing policies as a result of the perceived advantage of implementing simple administrative processes, as well as the management concern of maintaining a fair organisational environment. While this approach helps to concretise the implications of a new regulation for the specific organisation, Cools et. al. (2008) also illustrate the potential disadvantages of a uniformed approach. Lower-level managers in the organisation accepted the increased centralisation and new structure of activities by referring to the importance of being compliant against the tax authorities, but also raised concerns regarding their lost flexibility to proceed with business opportunities and their ability to adapt to the changing market environment. This was the result of the high pressure on organisational actors to follow the internal transfer pricing policy that reinforced a tight, codified business practice. Accordingly, in the longer-term commercial entrepreneurship was reduced and managers lost motivation. Thus, Cools et. al. (2008) illustrate the dynamic character of regulation and its implications on organisational MCS. The quest to be tax compliant resulted in lost flexibility to pursue certain market opportunities and reduced the ability of organisational actors to adapt the company's business proposition accordingly. Hence, this suggest that there is a tension between regulators aim to stop tax evasion and manipulation as well as to avoid double-taxation, while organisations aim is to simultaneously comply with the regulation and to maximise firm-value for its shareholders.

Mikes (2011) conducts a contrasting case study of the emergent regulated risk management practices in banks, following the financial crisis. She finds that despite similarities in structural arrangements and risk-management techniques, as a result of the regulatory imperative, the intra-organisational risk management practices became influenced by the different types of organisational “calculative cultures”. On the one hand, in banks having a culture of “quantitative enthusiasm”, risk practitioners regarded quantified risk models as robust and relevant for decision-making in the organisation. They focused on expanding the initial risk quantification[5] into new domains of quantifiable risks. Quantified risk measures were not only used as an input to determine performance, but also as a way for risk practitioners to illustrate a distinct expertise and create boundaries towards other organisational actors. This distinction was reinforced by references to competitors and regulators who shared the same "quantitative enthusiasm" culture. The emphasis on quantification demarcated non-quantifiable domains of strategic uncertainties that in theory could not be measured, and in practice were claimed by another organisational function. As a result of their demarcation efforts, risk practitioners were not part of management's discussions of strategic uncertainties. On the other hand, in banks having a culture of "quantitative scepticism", risk practitioners combined the initial risk quantification with so-called "envisionment" practices (Mikes, 2011). "Envisionment" practices were based on the risk practitioners' intuition and experience, in order to be able to expand their practices into non-quantifiable domains of strategic uncertainties, beyond the quantifiable risk domain. As such, they expanded their domain of expertise to influence strategic decisions and became involved in the agenda-setting of the executive management. Further, they were able to influence decision-makers in the business lines by intentionally leaving the boundaries between themselves and other organisational actors blurred. Thus, Mikes (2011) concludes that international bank regulation created a new space of intra-organisational control, that had been given significant resources by the executive management to make the organisations compliant. Risk practitioners had gained formal status and visibility by the appointment of a senior risk officer, and the establishment of a direct reporting channel to the board of directors. However, risk practitioners had to simultaneously define, expand, and redefine their risk domain by continuously shift the boundary between yesterday's incalculable uncertainties and today's quantifiable or non-quantifiable risk measures. This suggest that the demarcation efforts of risk practitioners were contingent on their "calculative" risk culture. On the one hand, the risk practitioners having a culture of "quantitative enthusiasm" seemed more effective in gaining independence by their demarcation efforts, while they had limited relevance, or a lack of ambition to engage in topics outside of their quantitative expert domain, e.g. the discussion of strategic uncertainties. On the other hand, risk practitioners having a culture of "quantitative scepticism" seemed to have better ability to influence other decision-makers as they intentionally left the boundaries of their expertise domain blurred and porous towards other functions. Accordingly, regulatory requirements of banks set certain boundaries on what risk management is, but organisational styles and dynamics result in divergent practices

[5] First order measurement is the quantification of risk i.e. the process of identifying what risk to measure and what calculative technologies that are needed to quantify these risks (Power, 2004).

of the regulatory framework. This is demonstrated by how intra-organisational practices become legitimised as a construct based on organisational actors' culture of what it means and is, rather than by the regulatory framework itself.

Mennicken (2008) examines the implementation of international auditing standards (ISA) in a post-Soviet audit firm in Russia. She finds that the implementation of international standards has an integrative power when it comes to international standardisation and harmonisation. However, this power becomes undermined as the standards enter the organisation's existing set of audit labour, processes of interprofessional differentiation and differences in local accounting and accountability cultures. Mennicken (2008) argue that implementing and complying with international standards is not simply a technical implementation. Rather, the implementation process of a standard becomes contested and plays multiple roles in different settings as it travels into the organisation. Accordingly, it is important to capture and understand the multiplicity of roles, concepts and practices that become attached to the standards as they enter the organisations. Further, she concludes that the ambiguity of standards is both its strength and weakness. On the one hand, the abstraction is important for the standard to be implementable and translatable in a variety of different situations, worlds and ideals. On the other hand, when individuals and organisations attempt to concretise what the abstraction means, it results in different meanings and interpretations. According to Mennicken (2008), the illustrated formalised implementation approach is the result of the unstable nature of auditing standards, as they connect with different organisational contexts and actors, each of whom have different views on the interpretation and importance of the standards. To cope with the obscure and multiplied reference points of standards, it is natural for organisation to concretise what they mean by using a systematic and rational approach. To better understand how organisational actors cope with making accounting standards concrete and operable, we further discuss literature explicitly examining the intra-organisational interpretation of IFRS. Prior scholars within this stream of research have investigated how the preparers of financial reporting interpret accounting standards and subsequently mobilise the organisation for their calculative production of financial numbers.

Barker and Schulte (2015) illustrate how the shift by IASB, from a reliance on historical cost accounting to a focus on fair value measurement[6], has put a requirement on preparers of financial reporting to create a wished-for reality. The study observes the implications of IFRS 13 in the organisational context and argue that the Level 3 circumstances are incompatible with the notion of fair value representation. As Level 3 is applicable when there are no observable market values or inputs, the requirements put on preparers to construct values as if there was a market, becomes superficial. Barker and Schulte (2015) note that in the process of representing fair value, preparers of financial reporting find ways to circumvent the Level 3 requirements. Firstly, prepares outsourced the determination of input data to let third-party experts and auditors take the responsibility to determine the fair value e.g. letting Bloomberg determine the WACC. Secondly, they narrowed the problem down to make it more manageable, by simplifying the information provided to auditors, by e.g. providing only a subset of information for discussion to avoid complex valuations that would be questioned and require explanations. Thirdly, they found an alternative solution to subvert the Level 3 requirements by using their internal assumptions under the assumption that they shared the same view as market participant, as long as the auditors approved. As a result, it was arbitrarily up to the auditor to determine if the assumptions made or external parameters used where "market-based". Hence, as the prepares struggled to stabilise the accounting representation in a challenging setting, they demarcated themselves from the determination of fair values. This resulted in an inherent instability in the practice of determining the reported fair values, contradictory to the aim of the standard setter.

> "Financial accountants might find themselves in a centre of calculation which is to develop financial statements, but they cannot do this only by themselves" (Huikku et. al., 2016)

Huikku et. al. (2016) further expand on the implications for preparers of financial reporting when studying the production of goodwill impairment testing (IAS 36) under the influence of IFRS. They observe how a selection of financial accountants (CFO's, controllers and financial standard advisers) constructed their calculation of accounting numbers. The authors illustrate how the accountants acted to increase reliability in their impairment calculations by seeking reassurance from external actors, industry benchmarks and commonly used internal metrics,

[6] Fair-Value is measured in accordance with the Fair Value Hierarchy defined by IFRS 13. The hierarchy categories the inputs used in valuation methods to assess the fair value. Level 1 are quoted prices of identical assets or liabilities in active markets. Level 2 are inputs other than quoted prices included in Level 1 that directly or indirectly observable for an asset or liability. Level 3 are unobservable inputs for the asset or liability, that an entity develops based on the best information available in the circumstances which can include the entity's own data but considering all information about market participant information that are available (IFRS 13:76-89, 2017).

despite having the relevant knowledge and experience to make these assessments themselves. This was an effort to increase reliability in the impairment test, which by definition requires the forecasting of an uncertain future to arrive at today's value. Hence, the study illustrates the demanding and sometimes contradicting requirements put on preparers of financial reporting, as being conservative and accurate while having to decide upon uncertain features as unobservable market values or future cash flows. Huikku et. al. (2016) also illustrate accountants need to mobilise the entire organisation in their calculations. Accordingly, the calculative process and preparation of financial accounting numbers is not based on an individual's interpretation, but rather the production depends on a wider set of organisational actors including both human and non-human actors, that influence the financial accounting numbers. The accountant is in the centre of the calculative process but rely on inputs by others inside and outside of the company to make the calculations. This results in a process of finding, qualifying, stabilising and calculating the "traces" such as records, that are to be found beyond the company's financial infrastructure (Huikku et. al., 2016). They conclude that the accounting numbers presented in company's financial reports are rather based on normalised trends inside and outside of the company, than on the intra-organisational entrepreneurial activities which it seeks to represent. As a result, users of financial reporting are faced with a paradox, as to understand the underlying value drivers of the company, they will have to look elsewhere than suggested by the standard-setter.

Hartmann (2013) expands on the notion that accounting mobilises a larger part of the organisation than the accounting function in her intra-organisational study of goodwill and leasing accounting. The case study illustrates how IFRS came to play through the accounting function, but subsequently became engaged with other parts of the organisation. This resulted in change of values, organisational processes and boundaries between different roles and responsibilities beyond the accounting function. Further, the study illustrates how the preparers of financial reporting in the group accounting function engaged in tactics to make their construction of accounting black-boxed within the organisation, by e.g. making the impairment test calculations and numbers indisputable, by circulating a pre-set calculation spreadsheet that the business units had to contribute to. This reinforced the group accounting function's interpretation of IFRS. Further, it ensured the contribution and acceptance from the organisation, whilst keeping the ownership of the final calculation within the accounting function. Hartmann (2013) also notes how the interpretation of the IFRS resulted in increased cooperation and interaction amongst functions within the organisation that would otherwise have preferred to stay separated. The organisational interplay further caused a shift in responsibilities and expectations on certain roles, e.g. managers also became concerned with the accounting implications of their actions, which created an ambiguity in their role as they found themselves in a tension between managerial and financial accounting expectations. The result was that management and financial accounting became closely interlinked.

Thus, previous research on the interpretation of IFRS in the organisational context provides insights into the conflicting demands and requirements that preparers of financial reporting need to cope with when interpreting IFRS, as the construct of the standard is abstract (Barker and Schulte, 2015: Huikku et. al., 2016: Mennicken, 2008). Further, it becomes apparent that the preparer of financial reporting is commonly defined by authors as a narrow group of accounting practitioners with certain expertise and understanding of accounting (Huikku et. al., 2016: Barker and Schulte, 2015: Hartmann, 2013). However, for the preparers to be able to construct the accounting numbers in line with their interpretation of IFRS, they are dependent of, and need to involve organisational actors throughout the organisation (Huikku et. al., 2016: Hartmann, 2013). Thus, for a researcher studying the intra-organisational interpretation of accounting-related regulatory frameworks and concepts, it becomes clear that this process engages and mobilises actors throughout the organisation. Thus, to answer our research question, we aim to apply a theoretical concept to analyse the empirics that allow us to examine how the organisational actors engage to mobilise the organisation in line with their interpretation of IFRS. This will be elaborated upon in the next coming section.

2.3. Method Theory: Boundary-Work

Gieryn (1983), introduces the concept of boundary-work to elaborate on professionals' demarcation efforts in relation to other professional activities. The author studies the style and content efforts by scientists to distinguish themselves from what they argue to be non-science. He defines boundary-work as any social or symbolic activity shaping how social divisions or boundaries evolve over time, entrenched in individuals or institutions combat for power and prestige. Further, he concludes that the reason for establishing boundaries is often based on political or economic objectives, in order to expand constructed domains of expertise, to protect autonomy and prestige, or to gain control over resources. Hence, Gieryn (1983) uses the two concepts of *style* and *content* to understand how groups achieve three different organisational goals; *expansion of authority or expertise, monopolisation of professional authority and resources* and *protection of autonomy over professional activities.*

Firstly, he finds that the style used by a group to demarcate themselves varies, as different tactics to create boundaries are used to achieve the three different purposes. When the goal of demarcation is expansion of authority or expertise into domains claimed by other professions or occupations, groups create boundaries by heightening the contrast between themselves and rivals in ways flattering to the ideologist, as illustrated by Mikes (2011) in her study of risk practitioners positioning in relation to their peers at the competing firms. However, when the goal is monopolisation of professional authority and resources, a group create boundaries by excluding rivals from within by defining them as outsiders, similarly to the case in Mennicken's (2008) study of the demarcation of western audit firms from their Soviet counterparts. When the goal is protection of autonomy over professional activities, groups employ boundaries by exempting its members from responsibility for consequences of their work by putting the blame on scapegoats from the outside.

Secondly, when analysing how organisational actors mobilise themselves to define their position in the organisation, the concept of boundary-work is an effective concept to address the mobilisation of inconsistent ideologies, articulated as a shift of practice or a domain, depending on the contrasting characteristics chosen by organisational actors and their goal of the boundary-work (Humphrey et. al., 2016). This is captured in Gieryn's (1983) discussion about content. He illustrates the flexibility of content in his study by showing how science proved not to be a single thing, but that the characteristics attributable to science varied widely depending on the specific intellectual of professional activity designated as non-science, as well as upon the particular objective of the boundary-work effort. To explain this variation in content, both strain and interest theory prove insightful. Strain theory explain the need to adhere to conflicting norms, e.g. an accountant should be both "conservative" or "prudent" but also able to mimic fair value despite the absence of an observable market value (Barker and Schulte, 2015). However confusing, these conflicting norms also provide the preparer with a rich curriculum of characteristics to apply for the purpose of boundary-work. Further, if strain theory enables the multiple repertoire of characteristics to be attributed to a profession (e.g. accountants or preparers of financial reporting), interest theory guides which to apply for public presentation. The ideologist is able to apply characteristics to the profession that are successful for the particular professional or institutional goal, as in the case of the "systematic" and "independent" FASB versus the "politically" coloured congress studied by Young (2014). The presenter is also free to change these characteristics as circumstances warrant.

As expansion of authority or expertise, monopolisation of professional authority and resources and protection of autonomy over professional activities are generic features of "professionalisation", Gieryn (1983) argues that boundary-work can be used to provide insights beyond the field of science versus non-science. Boundary-work is arguably useful for studying the ideological demarcation of disciplines, specialties and theoretical orientations within recognised fields of expertise as accounting. Accordingly, previous scholars have proved how the concept of boundary-work can be insightful for studies in the financial reporting field, as illustrated by the studies by Young (2014), Humphrey et. al. (2017) and Mikes (2011), previously presented and discussed. As Mikes (2011) suggests, a knowledge system as accounting, which is defined by abstractions, can continually redefine its problems and tasks, defend them from intruders as well as seize new problems. Institutions and standard-setting bodies often help to clarify and certify this body of knowledge, but the specification of internal models, processes and organisational structures rarely enters the public domain, or the definitions set by standard-setting bodies (Mikes, 2011). This suggest that it is on a microsociological level that organisational actors position themselves using their abstract body of knowledge, influenced by regulatory principles and the constructed consensus. Hence, the sociological concept of boundary-work provides an interesting foundation to analyse how organisational actors cope with defining and redefining their position in the organisational realm, following a regulatory change of an accounting standard such as IFRS 15.

3. Methodology

This section outlines the main considerations and challenges related to the development of the research design, construction and execution of the study.

3.1. Research Design: Single Case Study Research

The research topic was chosen based on an interest in financial reporting in combination with the behavioural aspects of the standard-setting and its implications for an organisation. Whereas the concept of IFRS implementation has been extensively covered from a quantitative perspective, the stream of qualitative research, capturing the intra-organisational dynamics is narrow (Hartmann, 2013). As such, an understanding of the behavioural factors that interact in the organisational context when a new IFRS standard is implemented is lacking. Thus, our research responds to a call for further research in this field (Robson and Young, 2009: Hartmann, 2013; Hopwood, 2000). Accordingly, the status of the research domain is arguably nascent (Edmondson and McManus, 2007). Hence, we find support in various streams of research on the dynamics of the IFRS standard-setting as well as the implementation of accounting-related regulatory frameworks and concepts that share similar characteristics as IFRS, when constructing the theoretical foundation for our research question. Edmondson and McManus (2007) argue that the less known about a specific topic, the more open-ended the research question should be. Further, the chosen method should allow the data collected in the field research to shape and develop the researchers' understanding of the phenomenon. Thus, when conducting research in a nascent research domain, a research approach that is aiming at theory building rather than theory testing is preferably used. This process "includes understanding of how a process unfolds, developing insights about a novel or unusual phenomenon, digging into a paradox and explaining the occurrence of a surprising event" (Edmondson and McManus, 2007). Interviews, observations, open-ended questions and longitudinal investigations are suitable methods in this research effort. Given the time constraint limited to one semester when producing a master thesis, the longitudinal approach is outside the scope of this paper. However, we decided upon a research design that allowed for data collection via interviews and observations, to ensure methodological fit with the elements of our research project in line with the argumentation Edmondson and McManus (2007).

Hence, for the purpose of this study, a single case study approach was chosen. The case study is a commonly used approach for collecting qualitative data. However, the optimal structure of case study research to generate theoretical insights has been debated by numerous scholars (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt, 1991; Dyer and Wilkins, 1991; Siggelkow, 2007; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Dubois and Gadde, 2002). Eisenhardt (1989) argues that a multiple case study design is preferable as the use of contrasting cases force the researchers to go beyond the initial impression and increases the likelihood of capturing novelty findings in the data. Further she argues that the empirical grounding risks being unconvincing if fewer than four cases are used. However, as argued Dyer and Wilkins (1991) we note that the multiple case study risks lacking the depth and richness of a single case study. The authors hold that theory developed through in-depth single case studies can gain additional depth as it allows the researchers to go deeper into the dynamics of the specific case. Further, as noted by Siggelkow (2007) we agree that a single case study should not be disregarded as non-representative based on its singularity. Rather, the careful and deliberate selection of a single case study object is often desirable, as it allow the researcher to gain specific insights that another case study setting would not generate. However, we do agree with Eisenhardt (1991) that a single case study calls for caution in terms of methodological rigor. Efforts taken to ensure the quality of the data will be further elaborated upon at the end of this section.

The selection of the case company in this study was based on the interesting setting with regards to the industry context in combination with the unique data access we as researchers were granted. The case company operates in a competitive, consolidated industry with products and services that are characterised as complex from a revenue recognition perspective. As such, it was one of the industries that was expected to be most heavily impacted by the transition from IAS 18 to IFRS 15 (IFRS, 2014). As argued by multiple scholars the selection of controversial or extreme cases can prove powerful and insightful, as these cases activate the actors and basic mechanisms involved in the studied situation to a large extent (Siggelkow, 2007). Further, a unique access to the case company was granted via the Accounting Department at the Stockholm School of Economics (SSE), that had an established relationship with the case company. The access involved interview access to employees in the organisation as well as access to internal databases and steering documents related to the company's implementation of IFRS 15. Hence, the setting was apt for the aim to conduct a study on the organisational dynamics following the implementation of a new accounting standard. As such, the opportunity for unusual data access that was well-fitted with the research approach and theoretical framing was a key determinant in the selection of case company, in line with the arguments by Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007).

We further argue that the method theory employed to analyse the empirical data is well apt for generating insights via an interview-based approach. Boundary-work as a concept is concerned with the demarcation efforts of a certain groups in relation to one and other (Gieryn, 1983). As such, it is to a large extent based upon the rhetorical tools and characteristics that organisational actors apply to themselves. Hence, an interview-based approach allowed us to understand the rhetoric used by the interviewees in the organisation. Arguably a risk with an interview-based approach is impression management and retrospective sensemaking (Eisenhardt and Grabner, 2007). However, we argue that when studying a phenomenon as boundary-work, also these rhetorical constructions are insightful in understanding the demarcation and positioning made by different groups. Thus, we hold that the chosen research approach is theoretically relevant.

3.2. Data Collection: Semi-structured Interviews

In the data collection, interviews comprised the primary data source. Interviews are arguably an efficient way to gather rich, empirical data (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Edmondson and McManus, 2007). Further, when exploring a novel phenomenon, ability to adapt the data collection process as new empirical themes emerge, is vital and a natural part of the research

(Eisenhardt, 1989). As such, we employed a semi-structured interview approach. The approach was semi-structured in the sense that an interview skeleton was initially sketched up. This included general introductory questions common to all employees, with regards to organisational role and main responsibilities. Further, it included important themes and areas of interest to be covered. The semi-structured interview approach allowed us to have a set of themes which we as researchers explored in the interviews. These themes were guided by our initially, loosely constructed research scope, which concerned the implementation of IFRS within an organisational context, through the analytical tool of boundary-work. However, as guided by Edmondson and McManus (2007) understanding of a new phenomenon requires the researcher to be open to new themes and be guided by the data. As such, during the interviews, we as researchers actively pursued a strategy to keep asking for clarification and follow-up questions related to specific themes that emerged. We were also guided by new insights and understanding as the data collection process progressed and adjusted the themes explored, as new insights unfolded, as advised by Eisenhardt (1989). In this sense, we constantly moved back and forth between data collection, theory and analysis, as has proven insightful when studying a nascent research topic (Edmondson and McManus, 2007). However, a semi-structured research approach also leads the risk of drifting of beyond the scope of the study. Given the time constraints during the interviews this was not ideal. As such, the interview guide served as a reminder of which areas that needed to be covered.

We initially interviewed a respondent in the Central Financial Reporting Group, as this was the person that the Accounting Department at SSE had connections with and whom was the initial person to lead the cooperation from the case company's side. This person subsequently connected us as researchers with other people in the organisation to interview with. Thus, the Central Financial Reporting Manager would contact these persons in advance to set up a meeting time slot and introduce the scope of the project. Whilst this can be argued to have skewed the data collection and the sample interviewees, it had a primarily two implications. Firstly, the sequence of interviewees naturally influenced the scope of the analysis, however, it also served a purpose in guiding the view of the implementation process form the perspective of the Central Financial Reporting Group, by indirectly defining which persons whom were heavily involved in the IFRS 15-related organisational processes. Secondly, we argue the initial support from a key internal stakeholder was vital to gain access to people within the organisation. However, as the data collection process progressed, we as researchers got ability to shape the direction of the interview process and selection of interviewees. Hence, based on the insights from the initial interviews, we expressed interest for certain role functions within the company that we managed to gain access to via the various persons we met. Hence, the influence on the data collection from the initial contact in the Central Financial Reporting Group decreased over the course of the study.

The result was 23 interviews with 22 different interviewees, totalling c. 22 h of interviews. Two interviews were conducted with the initial case company contact person, where the first interview was focused on setting the scene of the study. The shortest interview was 29 minutes and the longest 72 minutes. During all the interviews both the authors of this paper were always present. The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed in their entirety. The interviews were held in meeting rooms at the global headquarters of GrandCo, except for eight interviews that were conducted via telephone as the respondents were not located in Sweden 14 interviews were conducted in English and nine in Swedish. The quotes from the interviews in Swedish that are presented in the empirics were translated by the researchers. The interview persons were employed at different hierarchical levels in the organisation and had different responsibilities. This was a deliberate choice by us as researchers, as we aimed to capture how the adoption of IFRS 15 had affected different functions within the organisation. The choice of which specific roles to study was primarily guided by references from prior interviews, that shed light upon which organisational functions that had been influenced by the implementation to a large extent. Hence, the data collection transitioned from being focused on the Group Accounting Function to also involve the Operational Organisations. Some of the interviewees shared the same function or similar role descriptions, which contributed to the ability to cross check the answers. Further, the interviews were focused on a specific regional area of GrandCo. This grouping was considered vital to scope the data collection for the purpose of a master thesis. Further, focusing on one region instead of making a cross-regional study limited the interference of various cultural aspects in the adoption of IFRS 15. The influence of cultural aspects in accounting implementation is indeed interesting and has been a focus for prior academics but was outside the scope of this study.

In addition to the interview data, we received access to GrandCo's internal systems via two company owned computers. This enabled access to internal documentation related to the implementation of IFRS 15. The ability to cross-check the respondents view with the internal documents increased the understanding of the observations as well as constituted as a cross-check point of the consistency in observations. Lastly, also publicly available data on GrandCo was used for reference and increased understanding of the case organisation.

3.3. Data Analysis and Write-up Process

There was an initial effort to review existing literature within the broad IFRS implementation in the organisational context literature. Likewise, we relatively early on made an effort to review research on the concept of boundary-work. Hence, the design and execution of the interviews could be considered to be theoretically informed to a certain degree. As such, the interviews were tailored to explore concepts relating to boundary-work and the analysis process was focused on identifying important theoretical concepts and themes, but additional patterns would also emerge during the analysis process. Thus, additional literature was studied as the research process evolved. Therefore, the study could be categorised as applying an abductive approach.

The empirics are organised by a thematic grouping based on the prominent themes discussed by the organisational groups, as identified by the researchers. This structure of the empirics is an attempt to capture the complexity that appeared when studying the various factors that interacted in the implementation process. As the empirical account will show, there was an asymmetry in terms of time perspective between different organisational roles. While some people had been involved in the interpretation of the IFRS 15 for many years, others were affected by the implementation program only months prior to the regulation became effective. We as researchers argue that the timing aspect of when the various actors were involved in implementation program was important for the analysis, hence we did this distinction clear when presenting the empirics. One other inherent complexity when studying a large, multinational organisation in a transformation period, was that there were multiple factors acting simultaneously in the organisation. Some organisational changes that in essence were unrelated to the IFRS implementation, did impact how roles and responsibilities shifted within the organisation during the same time period as the IFRS 15 implementation program was carried out. To keep the analysis centred around the research topic, while noting the fluid nature that inevitably surrounds a large, multinational organisation, the aspects of the reorganisation that were deemed significant for the analysis, are noted in the empirics. Further, when these aspects are part of the analysis, this distinction is made clear.

3.4. Implications of the Research Approach on Judging the Quality of the Research

Whilst a qualitative single case study is an effective approach for studying an organisational and complex societal phenomenon, it is often criticised for its lack of representativeness and generalisability (Siggelkow, 2007). This reasoning has its roots in a positivist research tradition, where characteristics such as validity and reliability are premiered. However, for the chosen research approach, these concepts become problematic. Thus, in this section we will elaborate on the decisions taken to ensure methodological rigor and quality of the research given the research approach.

For a study employing a single case study approach, rather characteristics of internal validity becomes applicable. Thus, efforts to ensure the quality of the results and the ability to trace them were made. A prominent initiative by the researchers to ensure this, was to present a large extent of quotes from the respondents in the empirics. The purpose was for the reader to be able to assess upon what data the analysis was built. Further, as discussed, all interviews were conducted by multiple researchers and where recorded as well as subsequently transcribed in their entirety. As argued by Eisenhardt (1989), being multiple researchers have two key advantages. Firstly, it enhances creative potential of the study. Secondly, convergence of observations amongst multiple researchers enhances the confidence in the findings. Further, on-site observations, public and internal information was used. Since the single case organisation could not be compared to and sense-checked against another organisation, this was helpful for doing intra-organisational checks of the data. Each informant and source of data was checked against the other to ensure consistency in tendencies as suggested by Eisenhardt (1991). As such, no reported data was totally unique for only the single person.

Reliability relates to the replicability of the results and external validity relates to the notion of generalisability. These factors arguably become problematic if employing a qualitative, single case study approach. However, with the same methods as described in relation to the internal validity, the researchers have aimed for clarity in the empirical and analytical underpinnings. The purpose of this has been to facilitate the reader's ability to evaluate the generalisability of the study.

4. Empirical Data

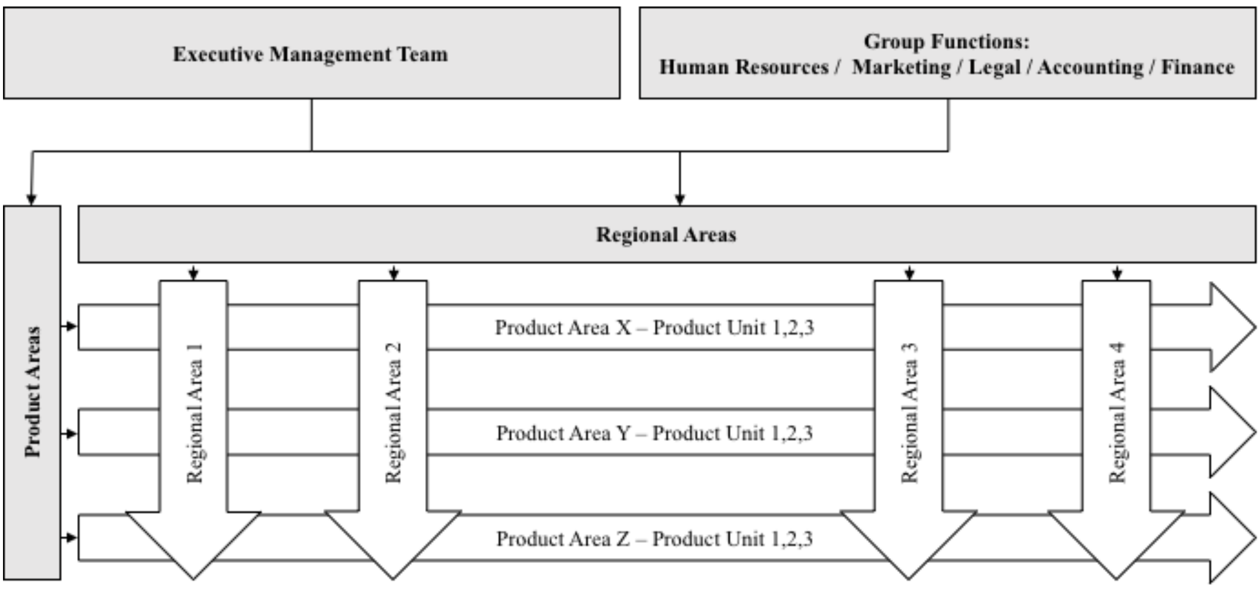
In the following section, we present the empirical data of the study. The intra-organisational interpretation of IFRS 15 serves as the object of our study, to examine how organisational actors mobilise themselves to adhere to the standard's requirements. We begin by presenting an overview of GrandCo, followed by a description of the activities and organisational actors involved in the revenue recognition process at GrandCo. Finally, the empirical data is presented, grouped based on the emerging themes that we discovered during the interviews.

4.1. Introduction to the Case Company

GrandCo is a publicly listed company with operations globally. The company operates in a consolidated industry with a few, large global players. The industry is cyclical, as it is highly dependent on customers' adoption of technology and timing of purchase. To be competitive, innovation, customisation and volume is key. As a result, contracts are customised, including a wide range of products from GrandCo's various product areas and units. To drive the number of orders booked, the Sales Function uses contract incentives and product related discounts based on volumes, commitments and the length of contract towards the customer.

The company recently went through a reorganisation program and simplified its organisational structure as part of the execution of its new strategy. The purpose of the new strategy is to improve profitability and regain market leadership. Further, the company is organised as a matrix organisation, consisting of regional areas and product areas, which are overseen by the group functions and the executive management team. According to internal documents, the group functions are formally responsible for the execution of the corporate strategy and to support the operational organisation. Secondly, regional areas are formally responsible for sales and delivery to customers including pricing, supply, invoicing and the accounting interpretation of contracts. Finally, the product areas are formally responsible for research, development and the production of products. Following the reorganisation, regional areas received more autonomy and control than previously is relation to the group function.

Table 1: Illustrative Organisational Chart



Prior to the transition to IFRS 15, GrandCo applied IAS 18 and IAS 11 for revenue recognition. According to GrandCo's annual report for 2017, the main impacted areas in the transition to IFRS 15 have been product related discounts, customised solution contracts, the determination of transfer of control and the presentation of contract related balances. From a financial perspective, the retrospective impact on 2017's net sales and equity as a result of the transition to IFRS 15 were a ~2% and ~3% decline respectively[7].

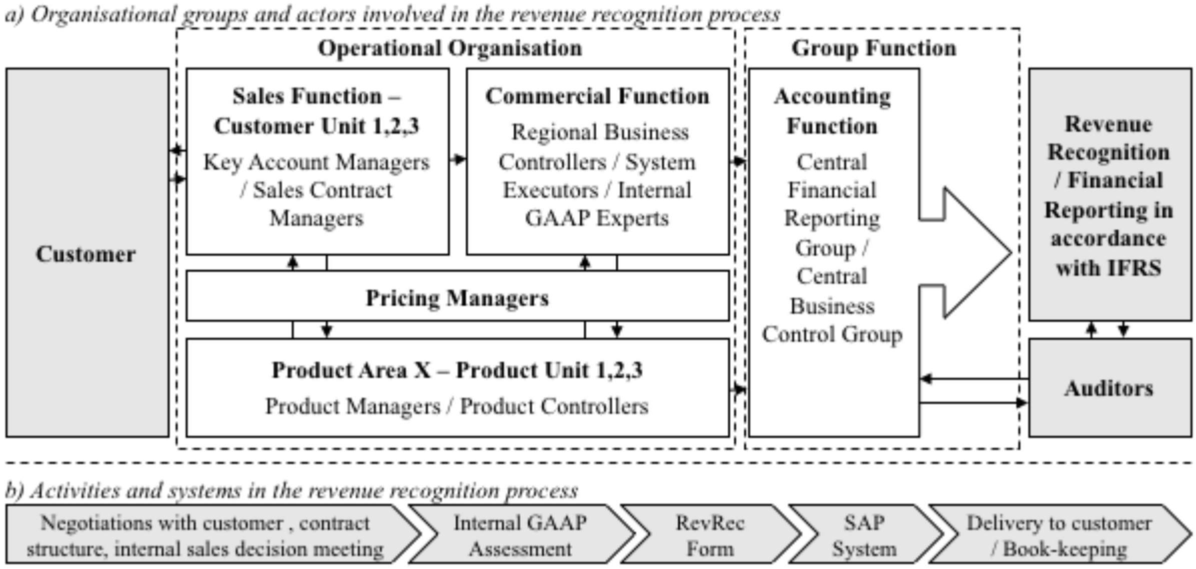
4.1.1. The Case Company's Revenue Recognition Process

The intra-organisational interpretation and mobilisation of IFRS 15 started already in 2014 and was carried out in a three-phase implementation program[8]. As part of the implementation program, certain roles and responsibilities were changed. The Central Financial Reporting Group was assigned the responsibility for updating the internal and companywide accounting directive, the Internal GAAP, by the executive management team. The Internal GAAP described the IFRS 15 requirements in relation to GrandCo's business, and how the revenue recognition assessment of customer contracts should be internally performed to comply with the standard. The updated version of the Internal GAAP consisted of 40 pages of interpretation, supported by ~50 pages of practical examples to help guide the organisation with specific example contracts. The Central Business Control Group was given the task by the Central Financial Reporting Group, to make the Internal GAAP operable for the organisation, by designing and determining the processes and systems accordingly, as well as delegating the appropriate tasks and responsibilities to the relevant roles in the Operational Organisation. The responsibility to make the Internal GAAP Assessment was transferred from the Product Controllers to the Regional Business Controllers. Some Regional Business Controllers also received the additional role as Internal GAAP Experts based on their accounting knowledge, to assist the organisation if they had any questions or unclarities with regards to the Internal GAAP Assessment. Pricing Managers received additional responsibilities as the IFRS 15 requirements increased their accountability with regards to the specification of internal and external price lists.

[7] According to IFRS, an entity could choose in the transition to IFRS 15 between the Full Retrospective Method, which is the application of all the requirements of IFRS 15 to previous years financial numbers, or to apply the Retrospective Practical Expedient Approach by applying one or more optional practical expedients, or the Cumulative Effect Approach (IFRS 15:C1-3, 2017)

[8] For further details on GrandCo's IFRS 15 implementation program phases, please see Appendix F

Table 2: Illustration of the Revenue Recognition Process



The Sales Function was organised into customer units or key accounts and had the responsibility for sales activities with customers, such as entering new contracts with existing and new customers. This included initiating business opportunities, managing negotiations, signing contracts as well structuring the contracts by specifying prices, products, volumes and the time frame of contracts. During the negotiations or after contract signing, Regional Business Controllers were responsible to assess whether the contract was aligned with the Internal GAAP as well as local jurisdictional accounting and tax regulations. The Internal GAAP Assessment was performed using the RevRec Form, a large excel file with standardised question with "Yes" or "No" tick-boxes. The answers to the questions served as a basis to assess if a contract contained the relevant information to identify and determine the requirements and specifications of IFRS 15 e.g. identification of a contract and performance obligation(s), determination and allocation of transaction price, and timing of satisfaction of performance obligations to recognise revenue[9]. Once the Regional Business Controllers had verified that a contract fulfilled the requirements in the RecRev Form, it was handed over to the System Executors who were responsible to insert the contract data into the SAP system. The SAP system was critical to start the production, delivery, invoicing and accounting processes based on the purchase order of a contract. System Executors had the mandate from the Group Accounting Function to halt the delivery of a purchase order if the RevRec Form did not contain the relevant information to record it in the SAP system. Pricing Managers had the responsibility to create and update the price lists which served as a basis in the Internal GAAP Assessment and SAP system to determine contract incentives and product related discounts. The price lists

[9] For further details on the requirements of IFRS 15, please see Appendix E

were used to determine the stand-alone selling prices of products, which in turn was used to determine and allocate contract incentives and / or product related discounts. As such, the Sales Function, Regional Business Controllers and System Executors were dependent on these price lists in their assessments. The Product Managers and Product Controllers were not directly involved in the revenue recognition process but indirectly took part in the sales process. They were assigned the responsibility to provide information about products and had been given the mandate to interfere if they had opinions regarding the pricing of their products during the "sales decision meetings". The Sales Function, Regional Business Controllers and Product Controllers took part in these meeting to discuss the structure of customer contracts with regards to prices, contract incentives, product related discounts and deliverables.

In the following sections we will elaborate on the themes that emerged during the interviews with regards to the introduction of IFRS 15 and the revenue recognition process. Firstly, we will present the discussions regarding allocation of roles and responsibilities. Secondly, we will elaborate upon the respondents view on the time and timing of the implementation program. Thirdly, we present how the revenue recognition processes, related practices and tasks were discussed and problematised by the interviewees. Fourthly, we lay out the discussions related to system support and automation. Fifthly, we expand upon how the interviewees discussed accounting expertise and understanding. Finally, the last section of the empirics constitutes of the perceived impact on customer relations and contract design as a result of the interpretation of IFRS 15 by the respondents.

4.2. Roles and Responsibilities

As a part of the IFRS 15 roll-out, the Central Financial Reporting Group emphasised the importance of defining clear roles and responsibilities and to allocate them accordingly:

> "There are a few roles, a few positions, that were assigned to do certain jobs. And this is a good thing at [GrandCo]. All the jobs and defined responsibilities. So if my responsibility is to do ten tasks, and the IFRS 15 requirements touch one of my job tasks, by default it was communicated in some way. So we reached all parts of the job roles, as of the responsibility." (Central Financial Reporting Project Manager)

The Central Financial Reporting Group argued that, by defining the scope of responsibility of certain key stakeholders within the organisation, there would be an increased understanding within the organisation for what needed be adjusted within each area of responsibility after the implementation program had closed in Q1 2018:

> "“We have defined our 400 responsible tasks, some are at this level, and some are this level straight forward. And the persons responsible, we track that we are, in terms of delivery, in terms of engagement from others. So that is a good practice I would say [...]” (Central Financial Reporting Project Manager)

The definition of roles was argued to have led to a more prominent role of the Group Accounting Function within the organisation: “[...] [the Group Accounting Function] is sort of the main stakeholder of the IFRS 15, has an increased role, essentially, in clarifying this if needed. So, there is a higher responsibility there, that maybe was not there in the past [...]” (Pricing Manager 1). However, the introduction of IFRS 15 was argued to have resulted in an increased focus on accounting also for roles that previously had not been concerned with accounting:

> “Of course, there is an increased responsibility also in the [Sales Function] and also [Commercial Function], to make sure that the offers are presented, and whatever reports are provided to [the Group Accounting Function] [...] are in line with the IFRS 15 requirements. So there is of course this additional responsibility, to make sure that this happens.” (Pricing Manager 1)

Another interviewee stressed that “I would say the Operational Organisation and Accounting Function has come closer to each other, earlier in the deal making, than before” (Product Manager). However, Regional Business Controllers problematised the allocation of roles and responsibilities by arguing that they had difficulties adhering to their assigned tasks following the introduction of IFRS 15. Their new task of performing the Internal GAAP Assessment using the RevRec Form, was time consuming and required manual labour to the extent that they did not cope with following the processes designed by the Central Business Control Group: “There are many processes and work routines and systems [at GrandCo]. But when you come down to the operational parts, you realise that to follow all processes and instructions to the exact letter is very, very challenging” (Regional Business Controller 1). To cope with their new responsibilities, the Regional Business Controllers in certain circumstances bypassed the requirements in the RevRec Form, by using their own solutions to handle unclarities with regards to the Internal GAAP assessment of specific contracts:

> “People are doing what is practically possible and try to do the correct approach, but it results in different islands where people have different approaches [...] you talk to your colleagues and decide that ‘ok then I will do like this’” (Regional Business Controller 1)

According to Regional Business Controller 1, the situation resulted in that: “On an externally reported level, we are compliant [...] but we do not follow the internal procedures to the exact letter”. Despite the complexities and heavy workload to perform the Internal GAAP Assessment, Regional Business Controllers highlighted that their new responsibility reinforced a sense of professionalism: “[People felt] that it was an important task that came to them. It was a form acknowledgement of expertise and professionalism” (Regional Business Controller 1). Further, they described their role as two-fold. One the one hand they regarded themselves as a control function:

> “One could say that in relation to the [Sales Function] [...] we are first and foremost kind of like a police function [...] they want to account for an order early and believe that they have done their job so we can account for it. But, then we have to say to them that we cannot book this order before we have this information.” (Regional Business Controller 1)

On the other hand, it was noted that building a close relationship with the Sales Function was critical to be able to be involved earlier in the sales process, preferably during the contract negotiations, which was important for the Regional Business Controllers to carry out their work effectively:

> “if you only work as a police, you will never be involved early, you will be involved in the end [...] if you have a Regional Business Controller that is good at keeping a relationship with his sales team [...] then he will automatically be involved.” (Regional Business Controller 1)

To build a closer relationship with the Sales Function, Regional Business Controllers took a supporting and assisting role, executing tasks beyond their assigned role and responsibilities resulting in that the division of responsibilities between the two roles was less defined and fluid: “if you can step out of your own role to some extent and be helpful with things, or just answer questions or jump into an area that might not 100% be your domain, that is very appreciated [...]” (Regional Business Controller 1). In contrast, the allocation of tasks between System Executors and the Sales Function was more strictly defined. The mandate of System Executors to refuse to process incomplete contracts from the Sales Function created a distinct demarcation between the groups: "We have received an extremely strong mandate now as System Executors. We have been told since day one, we have to be compliant in accordance with IFRS 15. Since September [2018] we have an [accounting] mandate from the CFO" (System Executor). This was aligned with the Central Business Control Group's prioritisation of tasks and processes that ensured compliance for GrandCo: "We use compliance terror on the organisation. We use the compliance-whip to make sure that [the Sales Function] do what they should" (Central Business Controller 1). Further, System Executors had the final say in any disagreements with the Sales Function:

> "If I receive a new purchase order today, then I should also receive a complete [RevRec Form], if I do not, I do nothing [...] So now we push-back firmly [...] this mandate gives us the right to push back whatever we want and if we believe that something is not done right despite whoever's approval." (System Executor)

The Central Business Control Group had given the System Executors this mandate based on the rationale that compliance tasks needed be prioritised above selling:

> "We have learned the lesson that we cannot baby-sit any organisation. If this is not compliant and we have a standing order from [the Sales Function] we always need to be a responsible business and compliant. We are now introducing a hard 'No' for everything." (Central Business Control Project Manager)

However, there seemed to be remaining unclarities and tensions between the System Executor and Regional Business Controllers, with regards to the allocation of certain responsibilities that the groups had been assigned:

> "We have still ambiguities in what we are doing [...] Regional Business Controllers are saying 'who is responsible for this?'. We have decided that the Regional Business Controller is accountable to do the RevRec form, and that we have an assessment that is right. He is accountable for that. But we have questioned if we believe that something has been wrong or unclear. Then there have been Regional Business Controllers who have said 'But wait here, I am the one who is responsible you should just follow the [RevRec Form]'. That have not always been very efficient, to solve the problem when [Regional Business Controllers] say 'you should do like this' and we do not even understand what he means. They just think 'you should not question, you should just do'. This has been a bit twofold as they told us in the beginning that if we

> see something that is wrong, then [Central Financial Reporting and Central Business Controllers] will take it away." (System Executor)

Despite the fact that Pricing Managers in essence did not receive any additional responsibilities following the introduction of IFRS 15, the stricter requirements of IFRS 15 resulted in increased administrative burden for the group. According to the Product Manager, this had led to the role of Pricing Managers had become similar to the role of Regional Business Controllers, as they had to assist other groups with prices throughout the revenue recognition process:

> "[IFRS 15] requires that it is much more control in the systems, that the systems are updated throughout. And I just view that as a positive thing. There is nothing negative about that. There is more administrative burden on the Pricing Managers [..] they need to work almost as a Business Controller already in the negotiation of the deal. Previously the Business controller came into the process in hindsight and cleaned everything up." (Product Manager)

The Central Business Control Group discussed the challenges arising from the Sales Function being an independent function following the company's recent reorganisation with increased autonomy to determine their processes:

> "GrandCo has changed, when it comes to Sales, we have always had an ownership from the group function. [...] but this was taken away two years ago, and we do not have a centralised development function anymore. Every [regional area] has the right to develop their own strategy and development." (Central Business Control Manager 1)

> "I think one challenge we have right now from GrandCo's perspective is that we have decentralised a lot. We had a Group Function Sales previously which we could go to, to drive things. Now that is being a decentralised in the organisation, meaning that each region has got Sales. And now we have to go to [several] instead of one. So, it makes communication more challenging, makes the flow of information a bit more challenging as well. And as well the execution." (Business Control Manager 2)

> "The [Sales Function] is another organisation. [...] the issues we have confronted in the IFRS 15 implementation is really the engagement of the Sales Function, because that is an organisation that […] We are not saying it is hard to change, but it is not in our control." (Regional Business Control Project Manager)

However, the Sales Function argued that their cooperation with other groups in the organisation had intensified: “[...] it is more intense. Suddenly you need to spend a lot more time particularly with finance and accounting people.” (Key Account Manager 1). However, the Sales Contract Manager rather argued, that it was the Regional Business Controllers that had moved themselves closers to sales in the revenue recognition process rather than the opposite:

> “[Regional Business Controllers] have more of a financial point of view when they look at things [...] previously, they did not go deep to interpret the [customer contracts]. Now, they have had to move their position, as a result of IFRS 15, as they have to interpret more. And to be able to do so, they have had to move closer to the [Sales Function].” (Sales Contract Manager)

The Sales Contract Manager argued that the movement of Regional Business Controllers towards Sales Function was driven by the increased responsibility that they had received: “they are taking away the rod from their own back by helping out as much as possible. And this is being taken advantage of “(Sales Contract Manager). To conclude, the introduction of IFRS 15 was described as having led to certain shifts in the positions and relations between various groups in the organisation. Further, it had shaped how each function considered, as well as practically executed, their own tasks. Another theme that emerged during the interviews was the time and timing of the implementation program, which will be described in the following section.

4.3. Time and Timing

When describing the IFRS 15 implementation program, the Central Financial Reporting Group highlighted that the timing of involvement of the Operational Organisation had been carefully planned to ensure momentum in the organisation:

“You cannot run a project over two years and get a global organisation interested in a topic for over two years. You need to be very fast and focused, otherwise you will never get there. You need to plan to have it in a very condensed time frame [...] otherwise you will never do it, or you will never succeed. You are not succeeding over three years” (Financial Reporting Manager 1)

Moreover, time was emphasised as the rationale for the decision to close the implementation program in Q1 2018: “In theory you cannot extend a program more than basically three years.

So since we have been running this [implementation program] for three years by 2018, we said we better close this" (Central Financial Reporting Project Manager)

The Central Business Control Group argued that time had been a constraining factor in the implementation program "We had to think about the back-stop date" (Central Business Controller 2). The "back-stop date" referred to the actions taken to complete the roll-out of the practical implementation of IFRS 15 in Operational Organisation by the effective date of IFRS 15, being 1/1 2018. However, the interviewees also argued that it would not have been possible to start the implementation in the Operational Organisation earlier, given the continuous amendments and changes made in the standard by the standard-setter:

> "[...] IFRS 15 was changing. Every year there was inputs from different organisations, the accounting board was changing [the standard]. Even up to November/December 2017 they made the last changes. So, would it have been of any value to go through it before? I don't think so. It would have just been a waste of time and money and effort. [...] If the standard was set in 2016 and frozen in 2016, then I could say yes, we could have done differently" (Central Business Controller 2)

The Central Financial Reporting Group agreed that the timing of the roll-out closer to the effective date of IFRS 15 had been the right decision, as it had facilitated the adoption of the requirements for the Operational Organisation:

> "You learn in reality when you apply things [...] then you can be trained on the real thing. Sending people to training and you are not going to apply it immediately, you will not get the real. It does not stick" (Central Financial Reporting Manager 1)

However, when speaking to the Operational Organisation the views on the timing of the implementation program varied. The System Executors argued the timing of the roll-out in the Operational Organisation had suboptimal. They argued that they had been informed about the requirements of IFRS 15 too late and that they had not been given enough information or training to be able to carry out the related changes in their tasks:

> "In my personal opinion, I think that [the implementation program] has been made very poorly [...] when we went live in January, we had had training in mid-December. [...] The competency has not existed, because we have not been given training or information before that." (System Executor)

The inappropriacy of the timing of the roll-out was agreed upon by Key Account Manager 1:

> "I mean IFRS just came up and when we did the negotiations last year in the beginning, we didn't pay a lot of attention to it. And I think also our financial and commercial management people were not really prepared for it" (Key Account Manager 1).

Further the System Executor noted that:

> "I mean it [IFRS 15] was pushed through quite … in a good way. And many trainings and workshops and so on for different functions depending on how deep they need to understand it. But [the trainings] could have been done a bit earlier, right, so that we … financial people could have been more aware a few months earlier, which was not the case." (System Executor)

The Internal GAAP Expert 2 agreed that Operational Organisation had been informed and integrated too late, but that a related problem was that the Sales Function had not had time nor the resources to understand the implications of IFRS 15 earlier:

> "Given the timeline, [the Sales Function] have not had the time nor did they have the resources to allocate to this. So I think they are doing the best that they can in terms of their current priorities, their resources and the time that they can actually allocate to this. So you recognise that there is an element that will, it will eventually get there, it is just taking a bit of time due to the change" (Internal GAAP Expert 2)

To conclude, the organisational groups' discussions around time and timing were to a large extent focused on the timing of the implementation program. Especially the timing of the roll-out to the Operational Organisation was problematised. The Group Accounting Function argued that the timing of integration of the Operational Organisation had been appropriate to gain interest and momentum in the organisation, while the Operational Organisations held that the roll-out was initiated too late and had hindered them from acquiring the relevant knowledge in time of the introduction of IFRS 15. Another theme that emerged during the interviews was the processes and practices of organisational actors in relation to the revenue recognition process which will be presented in the next section.

4.4. Processes and Practices

The Central Financial Reporting Manager 2 described the IFRS 15 implementation program as: "IFRS 15 was an opportunity to take a new stance on the internal accounting directive". The Central Financial Reporting Group strove to keep the Internal GAAP short and simple: "We were trying to be rather short, which then people certainly complained about, it provided too little guidance" (Financial Reporting Manager 1). The purpose was to balance the development of a descriptive versus a simple Internal GAAP:

> "When you run a project like this, it is a conflict between being very descriptive in your directive. But then you risk that people are not reading it, versus staying on a higher level and the risk of people asking you first of all, 100,000 questions about it and complaining about not knowing what to do." (Central Financial Reporting Manager 1)

The choice to pursue a simple and guiding Internal GAAP was argued to empower the Operational Organisation to take responsibility for reflecting on what the standard meant within their individual role and responsibilities:

> "The more I specify in detail and give very descriptive instructions the less [the Regional Business Controller] is thinking [...]"need to make sure that people feel empowered to reflect and think. I am not empowering them if I do it super detailed and super descriptive, then people will specifically tell you when you come with something new, that they do not know what they are supposed to do." (Financial Reporting Manager 1)

However, despite arguing the importance of empowerment for the Operational Organisation, the Central Financial Reporting Group clearly stated that they had the last say in all accounting-related issues: "It is accounting, and when it is about accounting, we are the ones who decide and [the operational organisation] have to follow our directive" (IFRS 15 Deployment Manager). Further, the Central Business Control Group, that was responsible for operationalising the Internal GAAP, argued that the balance between having a theoretical and practical approach to the revenue recognition process was problematic:

> "People are very good at developing the [framework], but very bad at translating and secure that it is possible to execute on it [...] you can have a good [framework], but if you cannot execute well, you will not be able to get anywhere. But if you have a bad framework, that you can execute on, you will be able to get somewhere." (Central Business Controller 1)

To find a balance between a theoretical and practical solution was described as critical, otherwise there was a risk that people would not follow the set-up processes: "How do we make it practical for the person on the street? [..] If we go too theoretical, we will lose everyone in the implementation." (Central Business Controller 2). However, the top priority of the implementation program was to be compliant by the effective date of the standard. The interviewees suggested that this prioritisation had led to certain considerations becoming left out, e.g.: “We have not had time to ask the person sitting in Angola, ‘how is this affecting your way of doing business?’ [...] we have not had time to consider how IFRS 15 could help us improve our business” (Central Business Controller 2). Compliance was prioritised also at the expense of implementing the most efficient processes: “At this point in time we just want to be compliant, so whatever it takes to be compliant that is what we want. We will get there, but we realise that it will take some time because there is a limited amount of resource” (Internal GAAP Expert 2). A prominent initiative to operationalise and concretise the Internal GAAP was to standardise Internal GAAP Assessment in the RevRec Form. The Central Control System Manager, who was responsible for designing the RevRec Form, argued that standardising the Internal GAAP Assessment in the RevRec Form was necessary to ensure consistent application across the organisation, given the requirements in IFRS 15:

> “We have actually standardised the [Internal GAAP] assessment. IFRS 15 have a bigger requirement, and our aim is actually that the assessment result is very specific [...] My aim when developing the [RevRec Form] is actually, who ever do the assessment, they will always come up with solution A. So no ambiguity of the result of the assessment.” (Central Control System Manager)

The Regional Business Controllers perceived that the standardisation of the Internal GAAP Assessment in the RevRec form was too detailed which made it difficult for them to make judgements and to proceed with their task:

> “When it comes to the systems, when it comes to the instructions, then it is up to the Central Financial Reporting Group that result in that we do it on an extreme detailed level [...] In practice, there is no-one who can do their work on this detailed level.” (Central Business Controller 1)

This resulted in that Regional Business Controllers, on their own accord, manually added new excel sheets in the RevRec Form to be able to add comments regarding their judgements of contract specific factors. This was perceived as critical for their internal documentation and learning:

> “If you had free text comments, you get another understanding and then you can go back and see why you answered yes or no to the standardised yes or no question.

> To just fill in 'Yes' or 'No', it becomes very lonely and then it can result in limited value of doing [the RevRec Form.]" (Regional Business Controller 1)

To conclude, the organisational groups' discussions regarding the revenue recognition process and related activities, were centred around the trade-offs of having centralised and theoretical versus practical processes. The Group Accounting Function argued that standardised and simple processes and practices were key for the success of the implementation in the Operational Organisation. In contradiction, the Commercial Function argued that the revenue recognition process was too standardised and detailed, making it difficult for them to carry out their tasks, as they perceived their job to be based on judgements rather than answering standardised questions. The processes and practices were not only dependent on the organisational actors, but on the relevant system support. Hence, another theme that emerged during the discussions was system support and automation which will be presented in the following section.

4.5. System Support and Automation

> "The interpretation of the financial accounting is not that difficult. But then it is difficult to do the interpretation in practice, in the systems [...) so the most difficult part is the processes and system, which are more complicated than financial accounting." (Central Financial Reporting Manager)

The difficulty to develop an optimised system solution to support the revenue recognition process was highlighted by several respondents, despite "[GrandCo's] backbone is system solutions" (Central Financial Reporting Project Manager). GrandCo had considered implementing a new system, SAP-RAR, that was built on the requirements of IFRS 15 but had decided to not proceed with it due to several factors: "[...] at the time we thought we cannot just implement a completely new system and build on our complex system. So we have decided not to go" (Central Financial Reporting Project Manager). The Central Financial Reporting Group argued that it would not be feasible to implement a new system before the new roles, responsibilities, process and practices, following the introduction of IFRS 15, had worked in practice in the organisation. This was expected to take another two years:

> "You can only develop support systems once you have concluded how you want to operate. So getting support system setup, that is still something which we are working

> with. That will take another two years until I think we get to efficiently operate in this standard." (Central Financial Reporting Manager 1)

Another argument for not implementing a new system was that the system had not been proven in the market yet:

> "We did not have a proven case that companies like us, that have [GrandCo] kind of complex business, had implemented the system [...] We rather took the risk to take additional manual work for our people than to go with a solution that was not proven." (Central Financial Reporting Project Manager)

Moreover, relying on an automated system was described as being problematic in practice given the nature of accounting: "You build large mechanical systems, but accounting is built on judgements and estimates" (Central Financial Reporting Expert). However, the Central Business Control Group argued that finding a solution to decrease the manual work imposed on the Operational Organisation, was critical going forward: "We need to ensure that the short-term solution will not become a long-term solution, because that is a lot of manual work and people will go into suffer [...] It might be compliant but then it is not really efficient" (Central Business Control Project Manager) and: "Initially it could just be a simplified system with manual inputs, but overtime it should get more automated and digitised" (Central Business Control Manager 2). A new project had been initiated to investigate how the revenue recognition processes could be automated: "There is another project right now, implementing a system. [...] That is being implemented to at least automate most of the issues that we have to comply with IFRS 15" (Central Business Control Project Manager). It was further argued that an automation project had to be steered from the Group Accounting Function in order to be successful:

> "[...] we must become more automated. But that requires large group changes and that is something that the regional groups cannot do by themselves. Because this is like the backbone of the company and must be driven from a global perspective." (Central Business Control Manager 1)

Also, the Operational Organisation described system support and automation as key success factors in the long-term: "It is about getting support from everywhere, above all, system support. "At the moment, it is about, that even the system could be able to make it easy and simple to follow the requirements to allocate costs" (Internal GAAP Expert 1). For example, the System Executor's role included:

> "To assess every single purchase order, every row in the the purchase order to check if the prices [of the products] in the contracts reflect the determined stand-alone selling prices [..] A System Executor, maybe handles 500 purchase order a month. Every order has 50 rows [...] Then they have to check the prices on 25 000 rows." (Regional Business Controller 1)

The lack of system support caused frustration within the Commercial Function, that perceived their allocated tasks following the introduction of IFRS 15 as manual and time-consuming. As the System Executor described it: "Revenue allocation is today a pure manual task [...] we have not received system support to enable this [..] We do not really have the enablement to make this work automatically" (System Executor). To conclude, relevant system support was perceived as critical for the success of the introduction of IFRS 15. However, the Group Accounting Function held that the organisation was not in a position to implement new systems at the time of this study. In contrast, the Commercial Function argued that the lack of relevant systems hindered them from being able to carry out their job properly and effectively, due to the heavy workload imposed by the manual processes. Another critical component of the revenue recognition process emphasised during the interviews was the importance of the organisation to have the relevant expertise and understanding of accounting. This theme will be presented in the following section.

4.6. Expertise and Understanding

Several groups highlighted the importance of the organisational groups to have the relevant expertise and understanding of accounting, for the organisation to be able to successfully carry out their relevant activities in the revenue recognition process. During the interviews, some groups flattered themselves by highlighting their own understanding and expertise. Other groups used the perceived lack of understanding and expertise to discredited other groups. The System Executors argued that there was lack of understanding internally for IFRS 15 and how certain tasks were supposed to be carried out, especially questioning the competence of the Regional Business Controllers: "In the beginning, I think it was like a blind leading another blind. [...] the questions that were asked during the Regional Business Controller training made me question 'are they actually Regional Business Controllers?'" (System Executor). However, the System Executor also noted their own lack of relevant knowledge in relation to certain of their assigned task: "It had been decided that System Executors should answer a couple of questions. But this is impossible for us as we do not have the knowledge to do that" (System Executor).

The Sales Function's understanding of the relevance and importance of the revenue recognition process was discredited by several groups. The System Executors argued that it was difficult to cooperate with the Sales Function, as the Key Accounting Managers (KAMs) only cared about selling: "The KAMs are kings in the organisation" (System Executors). The Central Business Control Group also held that the Sales Function's inability to understand accounting and unwillingness to change their practices made it difficult to succeed with the requirements of IFRS 15:

> "We are talking about [accounting] here, and they [Sales Function] do not understand that" (Central Business Control Project Manager). Also the Product Manager discredited the Sales Function's mindset: "[...] to work in [accounting], it's pretty stringent [...] everything is extremely dictated and processed. And then you go to sales. They also have a global sales process, how you should conduct business [...] But it is kind of a joke [...] if you would do the same in [accounting] as we do in sales, we should probably have not only SAP, we would have a number of tools. Some would still continue work in Excel [...] We will have days for closing our books, but some will close the books in one week, the other will close the books the second week [...] there's a lot of these things that is not well-functioning in sales. They're a little bit more like sort of the wild guys to compare with [accounting]." (Product Controller 1)

In contrast, it was simultaneously argued that it was important that the Sales Function could focus their efforts on selling and not on administrative tasks and compliance:

> "As a sales person you should be able to sell. I mean, in order to be able to sell you should not need to think about compliance, that should be built-in in what you do. You should never need to think about "If I do A or B, I will be compliant or not", that should be automated in the tools and processes." (Central Business Control Manager 1)

Further, the Regional Business Controllers flattered themselves by emphasising their understanding and expertise in comparison to the Sales Function:

> "The sales team are responsible for selling. They are quite bad at processes, routines, steps and documentation. Regional Business Controllers are in general good at processes, rules, routines [...] in many cases we know better how they shall execute certain tasks that they are responsible for than they know themselves. [...] then we get to help them and tell them what to do." (Regional Business Controller 1)

The Sales Contract Manager agreed that the Sales Function had another mindset in comparison to the Group Accounting Function and the Commercial Function with regards to accounting. According to the Sales Contract Manager, the difference had been further amplified as the roll-out of IFRS 15 had been driven by the Group Accounting Function:

> “The whole IFRS 15 implementation was driven by the [accounting function]. That is the easiest way for them to implement this, to use their own people to make sure it worked [...] that was the first mistake they did, that they did not see this as a companywide concern but a [accounting] concern [...] I guess that if you shall communicate with someone it is easier to communicate with someone with exactly the same background [...] but eventually reality gets to you.” (Sales Contract Manager)

According to the Sales Function, their lack of understanding was connected to the increased complexity of IFRS 15 comparison to IAS 18, which had complicated the revenue recognition process of GrandCo:

> “Previously [the revenue recognition process] was more smooth because the translation between the sales view and accounting view was more straightforward. We booked what we sold. That is not possible anymore, this means that today [Regional Business Controllers] need to translate the sales in excel sheets“. (Sales Contract Manager)

The Sales Contract Manager further exemplified the complexity arising from the judgement calls that had to be made in the Internal GAAP Assessment, when Regional Business Controllers translated the contract terms into accounting numbers:

> “The numbers are not an issue, the problem is that it is a lot of text. Because it is the terms in the contracts that determines the accounting. [...] you need to really read and understand, that is the tricky part [...] previously you did not need to bother about that, you just stuck to the numbers.” He finished by noting that “very few Key Account Managers at [GrandCo] have a full understanding of how a contract is structured [...] numbers everybody understands.” (Sales Contract Manager)

Further, also the understanding of accounting in comparison to external actors was used by groups to position themselves. For the Central Financial Reporting Group, the involvement of external auditors in the implementation program had been important to reinforce their position: “We tried to keep [the auditors] involved in all important decisions” (Central Financial

Reporting Manager 2). The group held that the goal of the implementation program was to become compliant and that this assessment was made by the auditors: “We will not know if the IFRS 15 implementation is successful until Q1 2019, when the audit has been approved” (Financial Reporting Manager 1). As such, the success of the implementation program would be determined when the annual financial report had been approved by the auditors: “Then you get the kind of complete view on if you have at least satisfied the external auditors demand” (Central Financial Reporting Manager 1). Hence, the close relationship with the auditors was used by the Central Financial Reporting Group to reinforce and legitimise the quality of their interpretation of IFRS 15 in the organisation. However simultaneously, the group questioned the expertise of the auditors. Firstly, the auditor’s ability to adhere to the new requirements was questioned:

> “[...] auditors certainly learn from having done something in many places in a continuous base, and by that taking the learnings into the audits. A new standard with the significance of IFRS 15 has come like a huge disruption for them, because they do not have any history of an audit.” (Central Financial Reporting Manager 1)

Secondly, auditors were argued to be too narrow with regard to their accounting expertise in comparison to the Central Financial Reporting Group:

> “I mean they have certainly accounting specialists, which as worked with the standards and done all the nice PowerPoints and webcasts and so on which these auditing firms distribute. But are also five guys [...] addressing from 1,000-2,000 companies when the new standard comes.” (Central Financial Reporting Manager 1)

In the same manner, the Central Financial Reporting Group distrusted the expertise of external consultants and prided themselves in relation to GrandCo’s competitors for not employing external consultants: “I understand from my colleagues around the world that we are a clear minority [not using external consultants] in the implementation” (Central Financial Reporting Manager 1). The rationale for not using external consultants was described as:

> ”Our conclusion was that we would not get too much benefit from using external consultants, which start with the same kind of knowledge [of IFRS 15] as we are [...] I was not willing to pay for training them on a new standard” (Central Financial Reporting Manager 1)

Further, the choice of not employing external consultants was argued to be based on the importance of keeping the expertise within GrandCo: “[...] because we wanted to keep expertise and knowledge [within the organisation]" (Central Financial Reporting Manager 1). The Central Financial Reporting Group argued that they had the relevant knowledge in-house to interpret IFRS 15 and understand what it meant for GrandCo's business: "Actually, the guys which we have, read the standard as the auditors, but they know the business on top [...] so what is they value I can get from using external consultants?" (Central Financial Reporting Manager 1). Therefore, it was concluded that it was not worth paying for external consulting services, as the Central Financial Reporting Group would have needed to educate the consultants, both about GrandCo's business and on IFRS 15.

To sum up, the organisational groups used different rhetoric with regards to understanding and expertise, to position themselves towards each other. In some instances, they demarcated themselves by flattering their own accounting expertise, and in other instances they questioned other groups' accounting expertise. This rhetoric was used by groups to position themselves against both internal or external groups. The final theme that emerged during the data collection was the perceived impact IFRS 15 had had on the business. Some groups argued that IFRS 15 had only had effects on the timing of revenue recognition while other argued that it had had implications for how contracts with customers were negotiated and structured. This will be elaborated upon in the following section.

4.7. The Relation with Customers and Business Proposition

> "Financial accounting is a reflection of the business, transactions and the contracts. If you write unclear contracts, the accounting becomes unclear with a lot of reassessments and surprises, but that is not the accounting's fault" (Central Financial Reporting Expert)

The view on the interpretation of IFRS 15's effect on the business proposition, i.e. how contracts were structured, varied. The Central Financial Reporting Group argued that the introduction of IFRS 15 had not resulted in an impact on GrandCo's business proposition. Rather, the group argued that the introduction of the standard merely had changed how intra-organisational processes were carried out: "Changes in the business environment are not driven by the accounting standard as such, but certainly [...] all companies need to follow [IFRS 15]. They will look into how to adhere to a standard and then start to adjust the processes accordingly" (Financial Reporting Manager 1). In contrast, the Central Business Control Group argued IFRS 15's impact on GrandCo's organisation and processes had been underestimated:

“We have believed that this is only a [accounting] change, which is not. It affects everything from sales, controlling, pricing and [accounting] to operations. It changes target-setting, it changes KPIs, it changes practically a large part of [GrandCo]” (Central Business Controller 1). To align GrandCo’s business proposition with the requirements of the standard was perceived as difficult:

> “The accounting standard on one end of the world is deciding ‘this is what we are going to do’. Businesses are moving in this direction based on their own volatility and where they are. Are the two going to meet? Probably not. So you have to then find a common ground of how you are going to address both sides.” (Central Business Controller 2)

Another view that emerged during the interviews was that IFRS 15’s level of impact on the business proposition was dependent on the Sales Function’s independent decision of how to structure contracts. Their sales decisions were argued to have indirect effects on the business proposition, depending on the Sales Function’s desire for the timing of revenue recognition:

> “How you write terms and conditions in contracts will influence the result and the recognition of revenue [...] we show [the Sales Function], this is typical for your business, this is how you work today, this is will be the effects with the risk of delayed revenue [...] we can never force [the Sales Function] but they should be aware of that if you choose alternative A the result will be this, and if you choose alternative B the result will be this. This is what we help [the Sales Function] with.” (IFRS 15 Deployment Manager)

Another factor that was argued to influence how the Sales Function structured contracts was the internal allocation of revenue, contract incentives and product related discounts. Prior to the implementation the allocation of contract incentives and product related discounts had been agreed upon amongst the Key Account Managers, Product Manager and Product Controllers at the “sales decision meetings”. Usually, the allocation was based on an unofficial agreement to share “equal pain” (Product Controller 1). This meant that a product unit which had higher margins would agree to be allocated a larger portion of a contract incentive for the benefit of another lower margin product unit, to reduce the risk of recognising negative margins. However, following the implementation of IFRS 15, the amount of flexibility towards customers and the internal allocation of incentives had been reduced as a result of the detailed requirements of IFRS 15[10] in comparison to IAS 18: “It is much more strict how we use our incentive systems, how we apply them and account for them” (Central Business Controller 1). The limited flexibility was described by the Sales Function as:

> “We kind of signed the contract with [Customer X], with our function how the internal distribution of the revenue would be. But then afterwards, after the contract … or the deal was done, and then we prepared all the details for contract signing it became apparent that IFRS 15 had some special rules that was limiting us in our freedom to allocate the revenue internally.” (Key Account Manager 1)

Thus, the Sales Function found themselves in a situation with conflicting demands. The new requirements in the Internal GAAP, resulted in that the way they had traditionally structured contracts resulted in dissatisfaction internally. Simultaneously, the use of incentives was perceived by the Sales Function as an important tool to incentivising customer to sign a contract:

> “Consequences then that some [product] units in [GrandCo] are more happy with it with the outcome, and some are less happy with it. [...] I mean we have been discussing and people are hoping for something else, like we have done it earlier when we have incentives that gives you a little bit more possibility to balance out the revenues internally and to make the stakeholders happy. But as that became apparent then some business units were not so happy with the revenue that they got allocated” (Key Account Manager 1).

Hence, the Sales Function found themselves in a conflicting position to balance the internal demands of Product Controllers and external demands of customers:

> “[...] I mean that is the funny thing in the job of Key Account Manager is that you are always in the middle. [...] You need to meet the customer target, otherwise they won’t close the deals. And you need to meet internal target, otherwise I don’t get approval for the deal. So kind of we have to manage as the man in the middle, and that is not getting easier.” (Key Accounting Manager 1)

[10] IFRS 15 requires entities to distinguish between incentives and discounts, when allocating the transaction price to the performance obligation(s). The transaction price can vary as result of e.g. discounts and incentives. Incentives must be proportionally allocated to the performance obligations’ transaction price. Discounts can be allocated to a specific performance obligation based on past customary business practices. The allocation is based on the stand-alone selling price of the performance obligation. For further details on the requirements of IFRS 15, please see Appendix E

As a result, the interviews indicated that the Sales Organisation adjusted the way they structured contracts to solve the tension: "...we have to structure the deal accordingly so that we can achieve our internal targets and satisfy the stakeholders, even though we are not so free in doing the things with IFRS 15" (Key Account Manager 1). The perceived decrease of flexibility in the contract negotiations, was argued to have impacted the Sales Function's business proposition and negotiation position towards customers: "And then this will impact also our negotiation with the customer, that we may have to insist on some other things. And which are then more important for us, so that we can achieve our internal targets." (Key Account Manager 1). Key Account Manager 1 argued that the negotiation position risked being impacted negatively:

> "[...] it is [deal negotiations with customers] going to be a little bit more tricky, [...] because you need to satisfy internal requirements, then they [the customers] would not have a big understanding for it. It is not their problem, and then in the end probably you end up that if you want to achieve something special, [...] we will have to trade something else for it. So it does not make all position better, but it is more tricky because you have to ask for help or for favours. Or even trade other things to achieve what we could have achieved otherwise easier." (Key Account Manager 1)

This difficult situation for the Sales Function was also described by the Sales Contract Manager:

> "You are forced to put on the big MNO-hat [...] you can never focus only on your product area but see the greater picture, and that can be difficult". [...] the sellers might receive higher internal sales but also sell a contract that according to [product areas] is very bad, but for [GrandCo] in total it is a very good contract. It is not a easy balance to handle" (Sales Contract Manager).

The Sales Contract Manager concluded that the introduction of IFRS did not directly steer the structure of contract, but that accounting indirectly had an effect on how the Sales Function structured contracts as they would consider the accounting implication of the structure:

> "IFRS 15 does not steer how you sell, but how you account for it. It is very stupid to sell in a way that resulting in that you subsequently cannot account for it as you want. Which means that it has not a direct, but indirect steering on how you actually do your business" (Sales Contract Manager).

The Product Controllers blamed that the simplified design of the Internal GAAP was the source to the unfavourable allocation of contract incentives resulting in negative consequences for product areas'/units' margins:

> "[...] this simplification could threaten strategic choices [product areas] make. If we look at profitability of [product area X] which would probably have gone down to negative margin. Then if you sit at the top of this company and you look at the profitability of the different businesses we have, then you could probably say 'What kind of unprofitable business is this?' Probably better that we cut it down and we source it externally instead. But since we are in reality showing an incorrect result, because how the interpretation of IFRS 15 must be made, then that could cause us to source in even more expensive services [...] it was a simplification that would potentially lead us into a situation where we would not be IFRS 15 compliant, plus it would also led to that we would see dramatic differences in the result per segment." (Product Controller 1)

To avoid this unfavourable situation, Product Controllers described that they had managed to "force" themselves into IFRS 15 implementation program, to lift their concerns regarding the Internal GAAP principles on allocation of contract incentives to the Group Accounting Function:

> "I forced myself into the project [...] we cannot just let this become a [accounting] project [...] we saw that the Central Financial Reporting Group had the ambition to simplify the process so much it would not be more easy for people that would actually work with in the field" (Product Controller 1)

As a result of their efforts, the Product Controllers had managed to change the Internal GAAP principles: "Now we have an approval that we must distinguish between discounts and incentives, and it should be done already when we do our offerings [...] the biggest challenge is that in certain markets, we are not following the sales process" (Product Controller 1). Despite the perceived success in influencing the Internal GAAP, some Product Controllers had chosen to physically move from the Accounting Function to the Sales Function to be able influence the Sales Function's contract design "Me and another guy from [Product Operation], although I belong to [accounting], I sit in the [Sales Function]" (Product Controller 1). Another feature of IFRS 15 that had impacted the business proposition was the determination of transaction price, as described by the Product Manager:

> "One thing you have to do is how we handle incentives. Because we often want to keep a price level towards our customers. And there is always a risk that price levels are spread, so we do not want to open up too much about these price levels we establish through our contracts. But then to win a contract, then one might give them [the customers] an incentive. A one-time incentive, or incentives can extend throughout the project. And it's not as easy to expose it to other customers, so to speak, they are very customer-specific. […] so it will not be the same risk of spreading. So that the customer sees another final price. And our net price may be the same among different customers, but what we call net effective price will be different. "[...] Earlier then we could control these incentives ... what should we say ? I am not going to say really how we wanted, because there was something [the Internal GAAP] that governed this pretty much. But with IFRS it has become even stricter [...] And it can control a little how we make the business decision, it can impact how we structure the commercial model as well."

Thus, in summary, the organisational groups' view on the implication on GrandCo's business proposition as a result of the requirements of IFRS 15 were contradictory. On the one hand, the Group Accounting Function argued that the structure of contracts was an independent decision of the Sales Function and their desire to recognise revenue as soon as possible. On the other hand, the Sales Function argued that the conflicting internal and external demands of the product areas and customers led them to adjust their contract structure. Finally, the product areas had mobilised themselves to influence the Group Accounting Function to change the principles of the Internal GAAP. This was a result of the product areas' dissatisfaction with the new treatment of contract incentives, as the removal of internal re-allocation of revenue negatively impacted the margins of certain products.

5. Analysis

In the following section we present the analysis of the empirics. Firstly, we analyse the empirical data through the lens of boundary-work to answer our research question[11]. Thereafter, we problematise the contribution and its implications for the understanding of the interpretation of accounting-related regulatory frameworks and concepts, as IFRS, in the intra-organisational context, which is the domain which the study aims to contribute to.

[11] For a summary overview of the analysis of the empirics through the lens of boundary-work, please see Appendix G

5.1. Boundary-Work in the Intra-Organisational Context

Boundary-work as a theoretical concept demonstrates the efforts in style and content employed by organisational groups to demarcate themselves from others, to achieve three different objectives: expansion of authority or expertise, monopolisation of professional authority and resources and protection of autonomy over professional activities (Gieryn, 1983). Hence, boundary-work can be applied to understand how organisational actors engage and mobilise themselves to draw boundaries between themselves and other organisational actors to achieve their objective. In the current study, various themes (content) and rhetorical presentations (style) were observed through the interviews with the organisational groups of GrandCo. Prior studies have primarily focused on how individual actors such as risk experts (Mikes, 2011), standard-setters (Young, 2014) or accounting experts (Humphrey et. al., 2017), employ boundary-work to implement or advance their agenda related to an accounting-related regulatory framework or concept. In contrast to these studies, our study examines multiple organisational actors and their efforts to mobilise boundaries towards each other to attain and retain their position within the organisation, following the introduction of a new accounting standard. As such, our study contributes to the prior stream of literature by providing insights into the dynamics of boundary mobilisation between multiple groups. We conclude that boundaries are not mobilised from only one organisational place. Our study instead illustrates how various organisational groups mobilise boundaries from various organisational places in the interpretation of IFRS 15. Since the boundaries are continuously renegotiated a redrawn amongst the groups, the result is multiple implementation processes within the organisation, as IFRS 15 is interpreted and re-enacted by various actors.

In the following section we elaborate on how the organisational groups of GrandCo engaged and mobilised themselves in the interpretation of IFRS 15. We elaborate on three aspects. Firstly, how the Central Financial Reporting Group mobilised themselves to expand in the organisation. Secondly, how the Central Business Control Group balanced the tension of being in the middle of the Central Financial Reporting Group and the Operational Organisation. Thirdly, we present how the various actors in the Operational Organisation mobilised themselves to draw boundaries and position themselves. Lastly, we elaborate on how the various enactments of boundaries in the organisation could be explained by a tension between the vertical, steering process and the horizontal, operational process.

5.1.1. The Central Financial Reporting Group Expanding Their Authority via the Central Business Control Group

During the interviews, it became apparent that the introduction of IFRS 15 had been considered to be an accounting-related issue, why the responsibility for the implementation program had been allocated to the Central Financial Reporting Group by the executive management team. The formal mandate allowed the Central Financial Reporting Group to take ownership of the interpretation of IFRS 15 and to fixate it in the internal accounting directive, the Internal GAAP. The design of the Internal GAAP embedded the IFRS 15 interpretation within a narrow accounting discourse as defined by the Central Financial Reporting Group. This was reinforced by the argument that the understanding of accounting was a technical task that was understood within the Group Accounting Function. As such, the Central Financial Reporting Group could create a boundary between themselves as an expert group against other groups, that were perceived to not have the level of accounting expertise to understand the complexity of accounting standards. Thus, their designated formal role and claimed accounting expertise created a boundary between the Central Financial Reporting Group and the rest of the organisation, that subsequently could be used to expand the Central Financial Reporting Group's authority and expertise. The boundary drawn to separate the group as an expert group was further reinforced by the time constraint of the implementation program (limited by the effective date of the standard) and the selected timing of inviting other organisational actors to participate in the implementation program. The implementation program initially consisted of a few accounting professionals from the Central Financial Reporting Group, and the integration of the rest of the organisation started close to the effective date. Thus, this resulted in limited time for other organisational actors to express any objections to the solution. By arguing that the timing of the implementation program was well-planned and correct, any contradictory claim by the rest of the organisation that the integration had started too late could be silenced. The Central Financial Reporting Group also undermined any potential critique by arguing that there was no possibility to contain momentum for a project for more than two years, indirectly questioning the focus capabilities of the organisational actors to carry out the implemented tasks if the chosen timeline of the Central Financial Reporting Group had not been followed. Hence, both time and timing effectively helped the Central Financial Reporting Group to monopolise their professional authority and resources by using time and timing to exempt other groups from the IFRS 15 interpretation and integration.

In addition to controlling when to integrate other organisational actors in the implementation program, the Central Financial Reporting Group could also control which organisational actors to integrate. The formal mandate to delegate tasks and responsibilities in relation to the revenue recognition process helped them to control which individuals that would make their interpretation of IFRS 15 practical for the Operational Organisation. By appointing the Central Business Control Group, which was part of the Group Accounting Function and shared the same accounting imperative, the accounting discourse was further reinforced: "The whole IFRS 15 implementation was driven by the accounting function. That was the easiest way for them to implement this, to use their own people to make sure it worked". As such, the Central Financial Reporting Group could effectively expand their authority and expertise beyond their formal organisational domain (i.e. the internal interpretation of IFRS 15) into new organisational domains, (i.e. the design of processes and systems related to revenue recognition) via the Central Business Control Group. This is similar to the case of risk management in banks, illustrated by Mikes (2011), whom note how a risk officer appointed employees who shared the same background as himself and thus, these reinforced the same culture of quantitative enthusiasm culture as he did. She further illustrates how certain risk related functions were organisationally moved into the risk function and argues that this increased the risk functions' influence over these units. Thus, similarly to our study, she concludes that the ability to dictate formal roles and responsibilities is a boundary tactic to expand the authority and expertise of an organisational group.

The Central Financial Reporting Group argued that there were few complexities in defining the relevant roles and responsibilities for the tasks related to the revenue recognition process: "There are a few roles, a few positions, that were assigned to do certain jobs, and this is a good thing at [GrandCo]. All the jobs and defined responsibilities". However, the empirics suggest that other groups perceived the definition of roles and responsibilities as problematic and complex. The ability of the Central Financial Reporting Group to define any such complexities as irrelevant, effectively put such claims outside the boundary of the Central Financial Reporting Group. This is similar to Young's (2014) study of the demarcation efforts by the FASB to keep standard-setting separated from political interference. She notes that placing certain matters outside the scope of discussion by implying their absence, is an effective tool to enact and reinforce boundaries. Further, whilst cementing the view that accounting was a complex task, the Central Financial Reporting Group also highlighted the importance of not imposing too detailed requirements and to let the Commercial Function apply their own judgement when using the Internal GAAP. Whilst seeming as a contradiction, it effectively created a boundary between their interpretation of IFRS 15 and any potential incorrect use or unintended consequences by the practitioners in the organisation. Accordingly, the Central

Financial Reporting Group created a boundary between their expertise and any incorrect practical application, that would be a result of lack of understanding in the Operational Organisation. Further, the Central Financial Reporting Group argued that accounting was a reflection of reality and hence, any effects on the business was delimited from the group's interpretation of IFRS 15 in the Internal GAAP. The separation of the production of the expertise area (in this case their interpretation of IFRS 15) and its consumption by the non-Central Financial Reporting Group in the revenue recognition process, was an effective boundary-work to protect their autonomy over professional activities.

Moreover, the Central Financial Reporting Group referred to external stakeholders to mobilise their position within the organisation. Firstly, the Central Financial Reporting Group argued that they understood both accounting and the business, while external consultants only understood accounting. Flattering themselves in contrasts to external consultants, helped the Central Financial Reporting Group to monopolise their professional authority to define the best solution for the interpretation of IFRS 15. Secondly, the Central Financial Reporting Group also referred to their cooperation with auditors and portrayed them as the final judges of successful compliance. This facilitated to legitimise the design of the Internal GAAP, by connecting it to an approval of a commonly accepted external expert group. This further minimised the ability for criticism from other organisational actors. Furthermore, the Central Financial Reporting Group rationalised the lack of system support and automation of the revenue recognition process. This was accomplished by referring to the inability to ensure the desired system support and by describing them as immature and unproven, unable to ensure compliance. Arguing that compliance and automation of systems was currently incompatible, effectively delimited the Central Financial Reporting Group from criticism of the manual processes that were connected to the revenue recognition process, whilst reinforcing the compliance imperative as the top priority.

This section has elaborated upon how the Central Financial Reporting Group engaged to mobilise boundaries and position themselves as an expert group with regards to accounting and IFRS 15 in the organisation. They monopolised their professional autonomy and resources and subsequently expanded their authority and expertise in the organisation, whilst protecting their autonomy by delimiting themselves from any unintended practical consequence of their theoretical interpretation. The Central Financial Reporting Function was responsible for achieving compliance but had traditionally had a less prominent position within the organisation. Thus, the mobilisation of boundaries was an effort to attain a more prominent position for the group within the organisation, facilitating the group's agenda of controlling the revenue recognition process by ensuring that the requirements of IFRS 15 were implemented as interpreted by the group. However, the practical implementation of the Internal GAAP was led by the Central Business Control Group, which will be elaborated upon in the following section.

5.1.2. The Central Business Control Group Blurring and Sharpening Boundaries to Balance Conflicting Demands

The Central Business Control Group was responsible for making the Central Financial Reporting Group's interpretation of IFRS 15, the Internal GAAP, operable in the organisation by designing and allocating activities and routines. The width of the implications of IFRS 15 became more apparent as the implementation program progressed. Thus, delimiting the influence of other organisational domains and to reinforce the position of the Central Business Control Group could be considered being an effort to protect and centralise the control over the interpretation and implementation of IFRS 15 within the Group Accounting Function, despite the reorganisation that had formally increased the autonomy of the regional areas. The Central Business Control Group was formally included in the Group Accounting Function and shared the accounting imperative of the Central Financial Reporting Group. Further, the Central Business Control Group had to adhere to and implement the Internal GAAP in accordance with the principles set by the Central Financial Reporting Group. However, the Central Business Control Group also had to expand their territory into the domains of the Operational Organisation to succeed with their task of having the Commercial Function following the Internal GAAP. As such, the Central Business Control Group was in a position with conflicting demands. The ability to adhere to conflicting demands and to use seemingly contradictory characteristics to describe oneself is a common theme within the boundary-work concept. To foster the groups agenda and to manage the conflicting demands, the group uses alternative repertoires, prescribing the most effective characteristic in each situation (Gieryn, 1983). Accordingly, the Central Business Control Group used tactics to simultaneously be a part of the accounting imperative but distancing themselves from having a too close connection with the Central Financial Reporting Group. They also took actions to blur the boundaries towards the Operational Organisation in certain instances, whilst drawing a firm boundary in other respects. Efforts to create a boundary between the Central Financial Reporting Group and Central Business Control Group included contrasting the Central Business Control Group as "practical" whereas the Central Financial Reporting Group was "theoretical". Further, the fact that the Central Financial Reporting Group and the Central Business Control Group had different views on the implications for the business, suggested that Central Business Control Group perceived itself as understanding the business and operations better, whilst the Central Financial Reporting Group incorrectly assumed that accounting was a mere reflection of the business. This separated the Central Business Control Group from the Central Financial Reporting Group and helped blurring the boundaries towards the Operational Organisation. These findings suggest that the same rhetoric can have various mobilising effects towards different groups in a system of actors. Blurring the boundaries facilitated the Central Business Control Group's ability to have a dialogue and interact with the Operational Organisation. This is similar to Mikes' (2011) insights, as she discusses the tendency to blur boundaries by observing how the risk practitioners practicing a quantitative scepticism blurred boundaries towards the rest of the organisation, to be able to influence the strategic decision-making of the organisation. Whilst this downplayed the status and the group as an expert group, it can be an effective tool to expand a group's territory of influence to other organisational domains than traditionally controlled.

However simultaneously, the Central Business Control Group also created boundaries towards the Operational Organisation by reinforcing the accounting imperative through its implemented solutions. The design of the RevRec Form was highly standardised to ensure consistent application in line with the Internal GAAP, minimising the applicability of judgement by the Regional Business Controllers: "My aim when developing the [RevRec Form] is actually, who ever do the assessment, they will always come up with solution A. So there is no ambiguity of the result of the assessment". The standardisation of processes created a solid boundary between the Group Accounting Function and the Regional Business Controllers. Thus, via the implementation of formal processes, the Central Business Control Group could expand their domain of expertise and authority, as these centralised the ability to make judgements within the Group Accounting Function and delimited the ability to apply judgement for the Operational Organisation. As the ability to make judgement was closely connected to the accounting and compliance imperative as defined by the Central Financial Reporting Group, the processes and systems designed by Central Business Control Group reinforced the expert role of the Central Financial Reporting Group. Hence, the empirics indicate that the action of one group (in this case the creation and implementation of processes and practices implemented by Central Business Control Group) can reinforce the position and boundaries of another group (in this case, the IFRS 15 interpretation by the Central Financial Reporting Group). The Central Business Control Group also created boundaries towards the Sales Function by contrasting their lack of understanding with the Central Business Control Group's implied understanding of accounting: “We are talking about [accounting] here, and they [Sales Function] do not understand that, so we need to translate that in their language”. To contrast their understanding of accounting, flattering themselves in comparison to the Sales Function was an effective way to monopolise their professional authority and expertise, minimising the risk that the centralised ownership of IFRS 15 related issues would be moved from the Group Accounting Function.

Further, similar to the Central Financial Reporting Group, the Central Business Control Group used tactics to protect their autonomy and to distance themselves from negative consequences of their efforts by referring to the time and timing of the implementation program. Whilst the Central Financial Reporting Group noted that the time constraint was necessary to create interest for the IFRS 15 implementation within the organisation, the Central Business Control Group argued that the time constraint had hindered them from designing a more practical process solution, which they would have implemented if they would had had more time: “We have not had time to ask the person sitting in Angola, ‘how is this affecting your way of doing business?’ [...] we have not had time to consider how IFRS 15 could help us improve our business”. As such, the empirics suggest that a factor such as time can be used by different groups in various ways to foster their objective to retain ownership and control over the interpretation of IFRS 15. Further, the Central Business Control Group discussed the importance of finding a practical process solution that would allow the organisation to be both compliant and efficient. By using the compliance imperative and magnitude of change when rationalising the quest to find an automated solution, the Central Business Control Group reinforced the expert role of the Group Accounting Function, with regards to accounting, and questioned the ability of the Operational Organisation to handle accounting-related issues. This was argued despite the fact that the implementation program had been closed since Q1 2018 and that the Operational Organisation had been mandated to develop their own solutions within their defined roles and responsibilities as stressed by the Central Financial Reporting Group. Lastly, the risk of the Sales Function not adhering to processes was blamed upon the formal separation of the Sales Function: “The Sales Function is another function. [...] The issues we have confronted in the IFRS 15 implementation is really the engagement of the sales organisation, because that is an organisation that… We are not saying it is hard to change, but it is not in our control”. To blame the formal organisational separation for any suboptimal consequences reinforced the notion that the Sales Function’s autonomy hindered the desired adoption of their practical solution. This was a mobilisation of boundaries to ensure protection of autonomy to retain control within the Group Accounting Function. However, these positionings was not conducted by blaming a specific individual or group per se, but blaming systems, formal roles and the time constraint of the implementation. Mikes (2011) has previously shown how protection of autonomy can be enacted against circumstances, e.g. as in her study, the financial crisis. However, our research suggests that a group can also choose to blame circumstances such as time, formal roles or systems, to create a boundary between their actions and any unintended consequences.

Thus, this section has shed light upon the efforts by the Central Business Control Group to mobilise boundaries to retain the control and ownership over the interpretation of IFRS 15 within the Group Accounting Function, while simultaneously ensuring the adoption of the Internal GAAP and related activities within the Operational Organisation. The complexity of this quest will be further elaborated upon in the following section, where we present how the actors in the Operational Organisation engaged in their interpretation of IFRS 15.

5.1.3. Operational Organisation Mobilising Boundaries to Define and Redefine Their Positions

The Operational Organisation took various actions to mobilise boundaries to define and redefine their position in the organisation following the implementation of IFRS 15. The executive management's choice to assign the System Executors an "[accounting] mandate "to halt incomplete orders from the Sales Function was an effective way for the Group Accounting Function to expand their authority, expertise and compliance imperative throughout the organisation, via formal role designations. The formal role definition and mandate created a boundary between the System Executors and the Sales Function. However, it simultaneously blurred the boundaries between the System Executors and the Group Accounting Function that expanded their territory into the Operational Organisation via the System Executors. The blurred boundary was not contested by the System Executors, rather the opposite. By using rhetoric similar to the Central Financial Reporting Group, e.g. focusing on compliance, the System Executors further blurred the boundaries between themselves and the Group Accounting Function. However, the new tasks that the System Executors had received were perceived to be too time consuming to adhere to. Hence, System Executors experienced a need to make clear distinctions between their own role and the other functions in the Operational Organisation to facilitate fulfilling their tasks. The organisational shift was a chance to reposition and mobilise themselves to create new boundaries between themselves and their colleagues. Accordingly, System Executors sharpened the boundary towards the Sales Function by arguing the latter prioritised early revenue recognition while System Executors in contrast prioritised compliance. As the compliance imperative was strong in the organisation, drawing boundaries using compliance rhetoric was a powerful tool that was difficult for other functions to question. The flattering contrast against the Sales Function facilitated System Executor's monopolisation of professional authority and resources, centralising their role in the revenue recognition process. System Executors' formal boundaries towards the Regional Business Controllers were less distinct, as responsibilities of certain tasks were not clearly defined. By discrediting Regional Business Controllers and questioning if they had the knowledge and capacity to carry out their work, System Executors created a boundary between the functions to further monopolise their professional authority and resources and demarcate themselves from what they perceived was the responsibility of the Regional Business Controllers.

Alike System Executors, Regional Business Controllers had been allocated additional responsibilities as part of the introduction of IFRS 15, which were dependant on input from the Sales Function. However, they had not received a formal mandate similar to the ability of System Executors, to adopt against the Sales Function if that function would not fulfil its responsibilities. As such, they found themselves in a situation juggling conflicting demands. On the one hand, they were part of the expanded territory of the Central Financial Reporting Group and Central Business Control Group, as the accounting-related tasks were their responsibility. On the other hand, they did not have a formal reinforcement tool to use towards the Sales Function. Instead, Regional Business Controllers had to form an informal relationship with the Sales Function to facilitate their own work. This was achieved by assisting the Sales Function with certain tasks outside of the Regional Business Controllers' designated area of responsibility. Thus, Regional Business Controller combined their formal role as "police function" as designed by the Group Accounting Function with an informal role as "sales supporter" to proactively assure that contracts contained the accurate information to proceed with the RevRec form. By doing this, Regional Business Controllers blurred the boundaries towards another group when faced with conflicting demands, as the formal mandate of System Executors made it difficult to expand into their territory. Thus, the empirics suggests that boundaries can be blurred if a group step outside of their formal role as exemplified by the Regional Business Controllers. Simultaneously, whilst practically blurring the boundaries towards the Sales Function, the Regional Business Controllers also sharpened boundaries by rhetorically demarcate themselves from the Sales Function. By describing themselves as a "police function" and using flattering comparisons as noting their expertise, structure and process orientation whilst the Sales Function was described as "bad" at these aspects, the Regional Business Controllers separated themselves from the Sales Function. This was an effort to monopolise their authority and resources and retain control and ownership over their formal tasks despite the blurred boundaries towards the Sales Function. Further, adding to the complexity of the Regional Business Controllers role, was the standardisation of the RevRec Form. The RevRec Form removed the ability to illustrate the judgements made when performing the Internal GAAP Assessment. The standardisation contradicted the Regional Business Controllers ideology of accounting that included the ability to make judgements. Thus, the Regional Business Controllers bypassed the processes set by Central Business Control Group by creating their own processes to be able to manage their workload and to have the flexibility they perceived was needed to pursue with their responsibilities. As a result, the aim to standardise the RevRec Form in detail rather fuelled various individual solutions to the Internal GAAP Assessment by Regional Business Controllers. In that sense, the boundaries fixating the Central Financial Reporting Group as the expert function with ownership of the accounting judgements was breached by the Regional Business Controllers.

Pricing Managers had in essence not received any extra responsibilities or tasks. However, the requirements in IFRS 15, that were enforced via the Internal GAAP, were reliant on input of standardised price lists from the Pricing Managers. Prior to the adoption of IFRS 15, the internal price lists had been dispersed and not conceived to be of high importance by the Operational Organisation. However, the new standard put stricter requirements on the quality of these lists. Further, the input from the price lists had become vital for System Executors, Regional Business Controllers, Product Managers and the Sales Function to conduct their tasks and had effects on how the customer contracts were accounted for in accordance with IFRS 15. This put the Pricing Managers in a more influential position in the organisation than previously, despite their tasks and responsibility in essence being the same as before. As such, their role was now described as become more alike a business controller role. Hence, the empirics indicate that the interpretation of the IFRS 15 requirements in the organisational context can shift the internal positions between functions by placing emphasis on a certain task that is the responsibility of a function. Fundamentally, it was the new requirements of the standard that allowed the Pricing Managers to expand their authority and expertise. This impacted their position in the organisational context, rather than any mobilisation of boundaries initiated by the Pricing Managers themselves, or any newly assigned tasks.

The product areas had not received any formal role or additional responsibilities connected to the introduction of IFRS 15 but was indirectly influenced by the Internal GAAP requirements regarding the allocation of contract incentives. Hence, the Product Controllers had an objective to expand into the domain of the IFRS 15 implementation program to be able to influence the revenue recognition process. To achieve this, they used rhetoric referring to the "risk of not being compliant" and showing "an incorrect result" to blur the boundaries between themselves and the Group Accounting Function, as the compliance imperative was prioritised by that function. A complexity for Product Controllers was that the relocation of the Internal GAAP assessment to Regional Business Controllers, had created a sharp boundary between the Product Controllers and the Sales Function, where boundaries previously had been blurred. Before the introduction of IFRS 15, the boundaries were blurred by personal relationships and agreed upon "equal pain" allocation of contract incentives between Product Controllers of different product areas/units and the key accounting managers at the sales decision meetings. The ability to "re-shuffle money" was removed with the new Internal GAAP principles. To find a new way to blur these boundaries and to be able to expand authority and expertise into the territory of the Sales Function, Product Controllers informally moved to sit physically closer to the Sales Function. By doing so, the Product Managers could informally influence the Sales Function and intervene with arguments if the Sales Function used contract incentives in an unfavourable way for the respective product units. Thus, our empirics suggests that the physical distance and relationships can be used to blur boundaries and hence, expand authority and expertise into domain that are outside the formal responsibility of a group.

The Sales Function considered their primary task being to ensure the volume of sales. As such, their primary objective was to minimise the efforts spent on what they perceived to be administrative tasks related to accounting and compliance. Hence, the Sales Function created boundaries between itself and the Commercial Function by attributing accounting-related work to the Commercial Function and rationalising this by referring to the importance their ability to focus on sales. Thus, the Sales Function successfully delimited any formal responsibilities and tasks relating to the revenue recognition process following the transition to IFRS 15 to Regional Business Controllers. Moreover, the Sales Function accepted the additional support from the Regional Business Controllers in the contract assessments, rhetorically arguing that the Regional Business Controllers "Were much better than themselves in carrying out the additional administrative tasks". Hence, the Sales Function could actually use the same rhetoric that other functions used to discredit the Sales Function, namely their "lack of understanding of accounting", to demarcate themselves from the Group Accounting Function and the additional perceived accounting-related administrative tasks, that they had received following the introduction of IFRS 15. Any unintended practical consequences related to contract assessment was further blamed on the Commercial Function and delimited from the Sales Function by e.g. arguing that the Commercial Function "were not up to speed". As such, they could effectively protect their autonomy and focus on selling. However, also the Sales Function had to adhere to conflicting demands. The new Internal GAAP's implication on contract incentives put the Sales Function in a position as the "man in the middle" between the Product Controllers' internal demand for positive margins and the customers' external demand for flexibility and contract incentives to agree on deals. To adhere to these conflicting demands from product areas and customers, the empirics indicate that the Sales Function adapted how they negotiated and designed contracts to meet both demands. Thus, this suggests that the Sales Function simultaneously blurred the organisational boundaries between the Commercial function and itself functions to meet both internal and external demands.

Our analysis of the empirical data through the lens of boundary-work concludes that the initial formal assignment of the Accounting Function to lead the IFRS 15 implementation, coupled with executive management team's support, had implications for the subsequent mobilisation of boundaries performed by organisational actors to position themselves. The formal responsibility led to that the Central Financial Reporting Group could reposition themselves in the organisation and gain increased influence. This led to increased centralisation and control for the Group Accounting Function in relation to the Operational Organisation, despite that the recent reorganisation had decreased the centralisation in GrandCo. The Central Financial Reporting Group further expanded their authority via the Central Business Control Group, leading to increased standardisation and reinforcement of control over the revenue recognition process within the Group Accounting Function. To cope with lost autonomy in the revenue recognition process, other groups mobilised themselves to create boundaries to advance their respective objectives. Simultaneously as the stricter requirements led to increased standardisation and decreased flexibility, the empirics suggest that the mobilisation of boundaries resulted in various individual enactments in the Operational Organisation. Thus, the stricter requirements had an ambiguous effect as they were interpreted and mobilised in the Operational Organisation, ultimately resulting in a shift in positioning between the functions. The empirics indicate that this eventually had an impact on how contracts were constructed in the sales process[12].

Thus, our study responds to our research question by illustrating how multiple organisational groups simultaneously mobilise themselves to create boundaries, aiming to reinforce a position or reposition themselves as a new regulated accounting standard is introduced in the

[12] For a summary overview of the analysis of the empirics through the lens of boundary-work, please see Appendix G

organisation. Our study illustrates how the Accounting Group Function regarded the implementation as one centralised implementation program, whereas the concept, when it was introduced, dispersed in the organisation and resulted in various enactments. This suggests a tension between the vertical and horizontal processes in GrandCo. In the vertical process, the hierarchy of the organisational groups in GrandCo was clear. However, in the Operational Organisation's horizontal, operational process, the various groups positionings in relation to each other had less of a clear hierarchical structure. This resulted in that the actors in the Operational Organisation mobilised boundaries to define their position when the new accounting standard was introduced. Hence, various actors made their own interpretation of what the standard meant within the revenue recognition process, and subsequently mobilised boundaries to position themselves accordingly. Thus, our study suggests that rather than being one implementation process, the implementation of the accounting standard became multiple implementation processes, conducted at multiple organisational places, as various actors interpreted the standard differently. As such, our study also contributes to prior research on boundary-work by explicitly examining how multiple actors mobilise boundaries. We conclude that when boundaries are not originating from a single organisational place, but multiple organisational places, the boundaries are continuously redrawn and re-enacted in a dynamic and relational process as actors engage and respond to each other's boundary efforts.

5.2. Implications for the Literature on the Intra-Organisational Interpretation of Accounting-Related Regulatory Frameworks and Concepts

Our analysis of the empirics through the theoretical lens of boundary-work has provided insights into the interpretation and mobilisation of the IFRS 15 requirements by actors in the organisational context, which is the research question the study aims to answer. As our purpose has been to contribute to the prior stream of literature on the interpretation of accounting-related regulatory frameworks and concepts, as IFRS, the following section will elaborate upon our findings in relation to prior literature, to draw any implications for the domain theory.

In line with Hopwood (1987) and Hines (1988) and their argumentation regarding accounting as a social and relational construct, our study suggests that it is in the continuous intra-organisational social interactions that accounting and its implications for the organisation is constructed. Our findings suggest that while organisations are shaped by the requirements of accounting standards, organisational actors will simultaneously shape how the requirements become enacted in the organisational realm through continuous social and relational positionings. Arena et. al. (2016) illustrate the implications of the fluidity of externally defined concepts as it enters the pre-existing domains of organisations. As a result, concepts become undefined and mean different things in different organisations. Further, Arena et. al. (2016) demonstrate how organisations interpret standards through their embedded actions, but that these actions are not only influenced by the company's programmatic ambitions, but also by organisational actors' individual desires and goals. Similarly, our study illustrates how organisational actors' individual desires and goals have implications on how they interpret IFRS 15 in the organisational context. However, we also show that organisational actors' ability to accomplish their goals and desires will depend on how effectively they position themselves in a dynamic context, as they simultaneously encounter and react to other organisational actors' boundaries.

Further, Cools et. al. (2008) identify the potential negative consequences of a compliance imperative in an organisation. Similarly, to Power (2009) and Mennicken (2008), the authors observe the organisational tendency to apply a systematic and rational approach to concretise what complying with a new regulation means for the organisation. This was enacted by centralised pre-planning and the use of a top-down approach in the implementation process, to legitimise the regulation within the organisation. Similarly to their studies, this is illustrated in our study by the Group Accounting Function's effort to ensure control over the implementation program and the revenue recognition process. This was manifested by the centralised and standardised development of the Internal GAAP and RevRec Form. As a result, the Operational Organisation felt constrained due to pressure to adhere with the strict policy and procedures. These findings show the complexity of implementing hierarchical centralised processes into the horizontal processes by dictating the interpretation of a concept. Consequently, the lower-level managers in the study by Cools et. al. (2008) could not proceed with market opportunities and lost commercial entrepreneurship. As a consequence, Cools et. al. (2008) problematise the tension between regulators' intention of regulation and organisation's aim to comply, but simultaneously maximise shareholder value. However, they do not elaborate further on the potential implications of these findings. Our data does not allow us to make any conclusion whether GrandCo experienced a conflict between complying with IFRS 15 and maximise shareholder value. However, we do find that the interpretation of IFRS 15 in the organisation led to increased standardisation and reduced flexibility. This subsequently influenced how practices were carried out in the Operational Organisation and impacted the business proposition offered to customers by the Sales Function, suggesting an effect on the business model. Thus, in line with the argumentation by Cools et. al. (2008) we argue that there is a rationale to problematise whether the interpretation of IFRS 15 potentially had an impact on the shareholder value proposition.

Further, in addition to Cools et. al. (2008), Mikes (2011) provides insights for the implications of a compliance imperative, similarly to the situation in our study. Mikes (2011) illustrates how risk practitioners, while restricted by the regulatory requirements, had flexibility to define the practice of risk management within their respective organisation. The study illustrates that the way they defined their position was contingent on their calculative cultures. Her study focuses on an emergent expert group's demarcation efforts to define their risk practice domain. Our study adds to these insights by illustrating how different organisational actors defined and redefined their position within the boundaries of an already established revenue recognition process following the introduction of a regulatory change. The revenue recognition process itself was delimited by the requirements in IFRS 15, but within these requirements there were opportunities for the organisational actors to redefine their positions by mobilising boundaries. These mobilisations of boundaries were driven by each groups' objectives and resulted in that the positions between the functions shifted. Further, alike Mikes (2011), our study illustrates the implications of certain organisational actors being designated as expert groups. The Central Financial Reporting Group had been mandated as the expert group with regards to the interpretation of the new accounting standard. This meant that Central Financial Reporting Group received an opportunity redefine their organisational position and expand their authority via their interpretation of IFRS 15. While Mikes (2011) does not elaborate further on how other organisational actors mobilise themselves as response, we contribute by showing how other organisational actors subsequently used the compliance imperative in their arguments to mobilise their own boundaries. As such, they aligned themselves with the ideology of the Central Financial Reporting Group but could mobilise the compliance imperative to position themselves to fulfil their individual objectives.

Mennicken (2008) illustrates in her case study that the introduction of a new standard goes beyond designing the relevant technical implementation, as the standard will be contested and play multiple roles in different settings as it travels through organisation and collides with the organisations pre-existing set of domains. She concludes that it is important to capture and understand the multiplicity of roles, concepts and practices that become attached to standards as they enter the organisation. Our study responds to the call to examine this further, by illustrating how the systematic and rational implementation approach by the vertical process originating from the Central Reporting Function, was contested in the horizontal process by the Operational Organisation. The groups in the Operational Organisation mobilised their boundaries in various ways to position themselves against each other depending on their interpretation of the standard and their individual objective. This resulted in that the interpretation of the standard took various forms in the horizontal process, ultimately resulting in multiple implementation processes at various organisational places.

Thus, similarly to Hartmann (2013), our study finds that despite accounting initially being the responsibility of accountants, the intra-organisational implications of the new accounting standard, subsequently resulted in the engagement of organisational actors beyond the accounting function. Alike Hartmann (2013) we identify how the accounting function aimed to black-box their interpretation of the accounting standard into the organisational processes, roles and responsibilities beyond the accounting function. We further note how this led to increased focus on accounting for groups that previously had not been concerned with the accounting domain. However, we contribute to the insights by Hartmann (2013) by examining how other organisational actors responded by mobilising boundaries to position and reposition themselves following the interpretation of the new standard. Furthermore, in contradiction to Hartmann (2013) we suggest that various groups do not always prefer to stay separated but informally might strive to move closer to other functions to be in a better position to achieve their objectives.

Alike Hartmann (2013), Huikku et. al. (2016) and Barker and Schulte (2015) discuss how the production of financial reporting directly and indirectly engages the entire organisation. However, while Hartmann (2013) explicitly examines the intra-organisational implications of the introduction of IFRS, these studies illustrate how preparers of financial reporting cope with the requirements of IFRS in the calculative production of financial reporting. The studies examine how the, sometimes contradicting requirements put on preparers by the standard-setter, led to that the preparers adopted various tactics to cope with fulfilling these requirements. Our study contributes with an additional perspective, showing that it is not only the standard-setter that can put contradicting requirements on adopting organisations, but that organisations themselves can impose contradicting requirements on their organisational actors to cope with the ambiguities related to the interpretation of a standard. For example, in GrandCo, imposing a simple Internal GAAP was argued by the Central Financial Reporting Group to be important for organisational actors' ability to make their own judgements. However, in contradiction, they simultaneously highlighted the importance of having a standardised solution to minimise the risk of the Commercial Function to come up with different solutions in their accounting interpretation of contracts. Thus, we expand upon the notion of Huikku et. al. (2016) and Barker and Schulte (2015), whom highlight the dynamic relationship between the standard-setter and the interpretation by the adopting organisation. This is done by also examining the contingent dynamic relationship amongst the organisational actors in the intra-organisational interpretation of the adopted standard. Thus, we illustrate that the introduction of an accounting standards both shapes and is being shaped by the organisational realm which it is incorporated into.

5.3. Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to answer the research question:

"How do organisational actors engage in the interpretation and mobilisation of the requirements of IFRS 15 in the organisational context?"

Our findings suggest that the effort to concretise what the interpretation of IFRS 15 meant for GrandCo resulted in a standardisation of processes, enacted through the Group Accounting Function as an accounting expert group within the organisation. The standardisation was employed in practice by roles and responsibilities, processes, practices, time, timing and rhetorical boundaries that reinforced the accounting imperative of the Central Financial Reporting Group. These efforts resulted in decreased flexibility for the Operational Organisation. In response, impacted organisational actors mobilised themselves to create boundaries and position themselves in the organisation. This suggests that the standard, when it was introduced, dispersed in the organisation and resulted in various enactments in different organisational places.

The findings indicate that the requirements of IFRS 15 created a tension between the vertical process and the horizontal process in GrandCo. In the vertical process, the hierarchy of GrandCo was clear, however, in the horizontal process, the organisational hierarchy between the groups was less clear. This enabled mobilisation of boundaries by various groups to reposition themselves following the interpretation of the new standard. Hence, rather than being a single implementation process, the interpretation of IFRS 15 became enacted through multiple implementation processes in various organisational places. Further, we conclude that when boundaries are not originating from only a single organisational place, but multiple organisational places, the boundaries are continuously redrawn and re-enacted in a dynamic and relational process as actors engage and respond to each other's boundary efforts. As such, our study contributes to the prior literature on the intra-organisational interpretation of accounting-related regulatory frameworks and concepts, by suggesting that the requirements of standard, as IFRS 15, influences and becomes influenced by the organisational context which it is incorporated into.

Our findings also contribute to the prior stream of research on boundary-work. The study's primary contribution to this field, is to illustrate how multiple organisational groups mobilise themselves to create boundaries towards each other, as prior studies applying the boundary-work concept mainly have observed boundary-work originating from one single organisational actor. Further, previous scholars have commonly applied boundary-work to study practitioners in an emergent field. Our study contributes with a new perspective, by studying how a regulatory change of revenue recognition accounting came to play in an organisation with existing revenue recognition practices.

6. Concluding Discussion

This study has been driven by a curiosity for the intra-organisational implications of regulated accounting standards, such as IFRS. Our findings suggest that the organisational adoption of the requirements and principles of an accounting standard is dynamic. The study has its foundation in the sociological accounting literature and problematises the idea of the functionalist approach of accounting, which views accounting as being delimited to being a reflection of underlying organisational substance. The following section will discuss the implications of our findings from various perspectives, including a standard-setting, economic decision-making and managerial point of view. Lastly, we present suggestions for future research.

Firstly, we note that the transition to IFRS 15 had a moderate impact on the financial position of GrandCo, as its retrospective net sales and equity declined by roughly ~2% and ~3% respectively according to the annual report 2017[13]. While the effect on accounting numbers often is of main interest when performing financial analysis, our intention with this study has been to shed light upon the importance of understanding the implications of accounting standards beyond the financial reports. Our study suggests that an accounting standard influences and is being influenced by the organisation that it seeks to represent. As our study is

[13] The financial impact can be assumed to be moderate based on a comparison of the retrospective financial impact, following the transition to IFRS 15, on Swedish publicly listed companies made by Anja Hjelström and Tomas Hjelström (2018)

a single-case study, performed in an intra-organisational context, we do not elaborate on potential implication on harmonisation and comparability of accounting quality across organisations. However, we argue that the implications of our findings could provide another perspective on such issues. Given the intention of IASB[14] in its construction of IFRS, we argue that a problematisation of the intended aim of IFRS in relation to the implications in the intra-organisational context, is of relevance when conducting a study on the implementation of an accounting standard.

The Conceptual Framework[15] of IFRS states that the objective of its standards is to facilitate the decision-making of the users of financial reports, to enhance efficient capital markets. The rationale for the adopting entities to employ resources for financial reporting is based on the Conceptual Framework's "cost constraint" (IFRS 2:39; 2:43, 2017) argument. This argument states that the cost of entities complying with IFRS should be outweighed by the benefit to the capital markets from financial reporting, that should facilitate efficient allocation of capital. However, the benefit for investors can be problematised, if the standard impacts the underlying organisational substance it seeks to represent, as suggested by our findings. The functionalist view of accounting perceives accounting numbers as being a reflection of the underlying organisational substance, produced in isolation within the company's accounting function. Thus, in theory, accountants should translate the entity's transactions and events ex-post into accounting numbers, within the requirements and principles of the accounting standards. However, if the requirements of a standard ex-ante influence these transactions and events, IFRS has implications on the entity which it seeks to represent. This is not addressed by the standard-setter and risks being inconceivable for the recipient of the financial information. Thus, one can ponder whether compliance and shareholder value maximisation in certain instances becomes conflicting. If companies are unable to proceed with business opportunities to maximise shareholder value, as a result of their interpretation of the accounting standard's requirements in the organisational context, accounting is not delimited to be a reflection of the business, but also shapes the business. If this leads to reduced capital efficiency in the market, it impacts the investors' interests of shareholder value maximisation negatively. This would in essence lead to that IFRS could impose capital market inefficiency in the market, rather than the opposite.

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[14] For further details on the IASB and IFRS, please see Appendix C and D

[15] For further details on the Conceptual Framework, please see Appendix D

However, our findings also suggest that there might be potential benefits for investors from the adoption of an accounting-related regulatory change, related to the stewardship of the organisation. One aim of IFRS is that financial reporting should help investors asses the management's stewardship of the entity's economic resources[16]. Following the adoption of IFRS 15, there seemed to be a convergence of the internal practices and the externally reported numbers in GrandCo. This was evident in the adoption of the same pricing towards the customers internally as externally. Further, the internal allocation of revenue and contract incentives between products units became based on the IFRS 15 requirements rather than by internal negotiations. Consequently, the organisation's internal processes seemed to move closer to what was externally represented in the financial reports. This would arguably increase the ability for the investor to assess the stewardship of the organisation in question. We note that this observation is reliant on the assumption that the internal and external accounting steering indeed did converge. While our data does not allow us to make such conclusions, we note that this could be an interesting area to examine for further research. A convergence of internal and external reporting would arguably be aligned with the aim of the standard-setter, who aims for the financial reporting to reflect the underlying organisational substance.

Further, we argue that our study problematises the notion of whom the preparer of financial reporting is and what expertise this actor is perceived of having. IFRS has clearly stated the level of accounting expertise that the recipient of financial information is expected to possess: "financial reports are prepared for users who have a reasonable knowledge of business and economic activities [...]" (IFRS Conceptual Framework, Ch. 3, 2017). Moreover, the user is assumed to be: "present and potential investors, lenders and other creditors" (IFRS Conceptual Framework, Ch. 1, 2017). Thus, IFRS refers to a narrow group of market participants. As such, IFRS expects the user of financial reports to have a certain level of accounting understanding and expertise to be able to consume the content of financial reports in accordance with the intentions of IFRS. However, the Conceptual Framework does not explicitly address who the preparer of financial reporting is. Neither does it specify the level of expertise this organisational actor is presumed or required to possess to adopt the standard in the intended manner. Similarly, to several other scholars (Barker and Schulte, 2015; Huikku et. al., 2016), our study finds that the calculative processes of accounting incorporates multiple organisational groups. Accordingly, it has foundation in numerous organisational places with various degree of accounting expertise (Lundqvist, 2013). Evidently, the heterogeneous network of

[16] For further details on the IFRS intention regarding to stewardship, please see Appendix D

organisational actors implies that the preparer of financial reporting can be disconnected from the accounting function in the organisation. Hence, we hold that the implicit assumption of the Conceptual Framework, that the preparers of financial reporting have the relevant knowledge and understanding of accounting, results in a narrow and simplified view of the preparer. We wish to problematise this view and the implications it might have for the interpretation of IFRS standards in the production of financial reports. We argue that neglecting the heterogeneity of the participants in the calculative processes of accounting, risks leading to an incomplete understanding of the organisational implications of an introduced accounting standard. This could in turn lead to unintended consequences as the accounting standard it adopted in the organisation.

Lastly, we want to elaborate on potential avenues for further research. Firstly, insights could be gained by studying how the introduction of standards differs across organisations in a contrasting case study. Secondly, we suggest further research on the intra-organisational interpretation and mobilisation of other accounting standards than IFRS 15, to understand if various standards have varying implications for the organisational context and in case, what underlying factors that can explain those potential differences. Also, given the dynamic accounting environment suggested in this thesis, additional insights could be found by performing a longitudinal study to explore how organisational actors mobilise boundaries over time.

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8. Appendix

8.1. Appendix A: Interview Agenda

Topic	Areas to Cover
Introduction	Personal and thesis scope presentation Career development Research confidentiality matters
Role & responsibilities	Description of roles & responsibilities Assigned tasks Challenges in role
IFRS 15 implementation	Critical steps in the roll-out of IFRS 15 Impact on the specific role (trainings, processes etc.) Impact on relation to other functions
IFRS 15 today	Critical aspects of IFRS 15 today Relation to other function Contracts perceived as complex vs. less complex
Final questions & round-up	Specific questions tailored depending on the role and the insights from the interview Reference to other functions to speak to Final remarks

8.2. Appendix B: Description of Interviewees

Formal Role	Function	Interview Minutes	Medium
Central Business Control Project Manager	Central Business Control Group	72	Face-to-Face
Central Control System Manager	Central Business Control Group	51	Face-to-Face
Central Business Controller 2	Central Business Control Group	54	Face-to-Face
Central Business Controller 1	Central Business Control Group	65	Face-to-Face
IFRS 15 Deployment Manager	Central Business Control Group	52	Face-to-Face
Central Financial Reporting Expert	Central Financial Reporting Group	64	Face-to-Face
Central Financial Reporting Project Leader	Central Financial Reporting Group	55	Face-to-Face
Central Financial Reporting Manager 2	Central Financial Reporting Group	117	Face-to-Face
Central Financial Reporting Manager 1	Central Financial Reporting Group	77	Face-to-Face
Pricing Manager 1	Product Area / Unit	22	Telephone
Product Strategy Manager	Product Area / Unit	47	Face-to-Face
Product Controller 1 - Product Area X	Product Area / Unit	51	Face-to-Face
Pricing Manager 2	Commercial Function	45	Telephone
Regional Business Controller 2	Commercial Function	29	Telephone
Regional Business Controller 1	Commercial Function	57	Telephone
Internal GAAP Expert 2	Commercial Function	50	Telephone
Internal GAAP Expert 1	Commercial Function	70	Face-to-Face
System Executor	Commercial Function	59	Face-to-Face
Regional Business Controller 3	Commercial Function	56	Telephone
Regional Deployment Manager	Commercial Function	55	Face-to-Face
Sales Contract Manager	Sales Function	63	Face-to-Face
Key Account Manager (KAM)	Sales Function	22	Telephone

8.3. Appendix C: The International Accounting Standards Board (IASB)

The International Accounting Standards Board (henceforth, IASB) is a non-profit, public interest organisation established in 1973, that develops a single set of principles for financial reporting, International Financial Accounting Standards (Henceforth, IFRS), based on its conceptual framework. The standards are based on a set of requirements followed by companies in their preparation of financial statements. IFRS are set by its standard-setting body, IASB. IASB consist of a group of independent professionals that serves as experts in financial accounting and reporting based on their appropriate professional experience within financial accounting (IFRS, 2018). The Conceptual Framework serve as basis and guide for IASB when developing IFRS to ensure that the accounting standards are conceptually consistent and that transactions are treated consistently (IFRS, 2018). To provide further guidance on how to apply the standards, the IFRS Interpretations Committee develop authoritative interpretations called IFRIC interpretations (IFRS, 2018). Moreover, a Transition Resource Group (TRG) is appointed following the issuance of a new standard to help and support companies with the implementation. TRG consists of members from adopting companies, auditors and other professionals, to raise potential stakeholder issues to be discussed by the boards following the implementation, to consider eventual actions and changes needed. Finally, the vision to accomplish a global set of accounting standards is also supported by other international regulatory frameworks e.g. the Basel Committee on banking supervision, the Financial Stability Board, G20 and the World Bank.

In 2002, The European Commission regulated that all listed public companies within the European Union must prepare their financial reports in accordance with IFRS (European Commission, 2018). The aim of having a single set of rules, was to harmonise financial accounting practice internationally, to achieve better comparability and transparency between nations and organisations, which in turn shall result in more effective capital markets (Lundqvist, 2014; Hartmann, 2013). To date, IFRS is required in 144 out of 166 jurisdictions globally. In the US, the IFRS American equivalent US Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (henceforth, US GAAP) serve as the accounting standard principles and framework for American companies. This framework is issued by the American IASB equivalent, the Financial Accounting Standards Board (henceforth, FASB). A collaboration between IASB and FASB was initiated in 2002 to minimise the differences between the frameworks due to the increased globalisation. Non-American companies that are listed on a US stock exchange are since 2007 allowed to prepare their financial reporting in accordance with IFRS.

8.4. Appendix D: The Mission Statement and Conceptual Framework for Financial Reporting of IFRS

The mission statement of IFRS is to enhance transparency, accountability and efficiency to capital markets globally. The aim of the framework is to serve the public interest and to support trust, growth, and long-term stability in the global financial markets. Firstly, transparency foster international comparability and quality of financial statements, to allow investors and other market participants to make informed economic decisions. Secondly, increased accountability reduces the gap of information between capital providers and the entities who are entrusted to use their capital. Thirdly, IFRS support economic efficiency by helping investors identify investment opportunities and risk globally, which enhance capital allocation.

The Conceptual Framework for Financial Reporting serve as the foundation when IASB develop IFRS (IFRS, 2018). It consists of seven chapters which will be summarised below (chapters of the Conceptual Framework that have been assumed as more relevant for the scope of this thesis has been described in more detail. For further details on the Conceptual Framework, please see The Annotated IFRS Standards Part A):

Chapter 1- The Objective of Financial Reporting

The objective of financial reporting is to provide financial information that is useful to users when making decisions with regards to providing resources to the entity. To make these decisions, user need information about the entity's economic resources, claims against the entity, changes in those resources and claims as well as information to help them assess management's stewardship. Users of financial reporting are defined as an entity's "existing and potential investors, lenders and other creditors". To make investment decision, the users asses' prospects for future net cash inflows to the entity and the management's stewardship of the entity's economic resources. Assessing management's stewardship refers to financial reporting providing information about the entity's economic resources that indicate how efficiently and effectively the entity's management has used these resources in its stewardship of those resources. Such information is helpful for predicting how efficiently and effectively management will use the entity's economic resources in future periods.

Chapter 2 -The Qualitative Characteristics of Useful Financial Information

The qualitative characteristics of useful financial information including fundamental characteristics such as “Relevance” and “Faithful Presentation” as well as enhancing characteristics such as “Comparability”, “Verifiability”, “Timeliness”, and “Understandability”. However, the cost of providing and using information shall never exceed the benefit of providing information.

Chapter 3 - Financial Statements and the Reporting Entity

Presents the objective and scope of financial statements, including definitions of the reporting entity and financial statements.

Chapter 4 - The Elements of Financial Statements

Includes definition of the five elements of financial reporting, as asset, liability, equity, income and expense.

Chapter 5 - Recognition and Derecognition

Includes the criteria’s for recognising and derecognising assets and liabilities in financial statements. Recognition is appropriate if results in “Relevance” of information and “Faithful Representation” of the items. For a transaction or event to be recognised in the statements of financial reporting, an item need to meet the definition of an asset, liability, equity, income or expense. As for financial reporting decisions, there is “cost constraint” on recognition.

Chapter 6 - Measurement

Description of various measurement bases are historical cost and current value. Current value includes fair value, value in use (assets), fulfilment value (liabilities) and current cost. Factors to consider in selecting measurement basis include “Relevance” and “Faithful representation”. Considerations include the characteristics of the asset or liability, contribution to future cash flows, measurement inconsistency and measure uncertainty. As for financial reporting decisions, there is “cost constraint” on the selection of a measurement basis.

Chapter 7 - Presentation and Disclosure

Includes concepts on presentation and disclosure as well as guidance on when to include income and expenses in the financial statements and other comprehensive income as well as when to consider recycling from other comprehensive income to the financial statements.

8.5. Appendix E: IFRS 15 - Revenue from Contracts with Customers

The new accounting standard concerning revenue recognition, IFRS 15, became effective as of January 1st, 2018 for all entities adopting IFRS or the US GAAP equivalent[17]. The new standard created a single source of requirements for revenue recognition for all companies and replaced all of the previous IFRS standards and IFRIC interpretations[18] (EY, 2017). The standard was issued in 2014 and was unique in its sense, as it was a joint deliberation between IASB and, the US equivalent, FASB to bring IFRS and US GAAP closer together, in order to improve comparability of revenue globally (IFRS, 2014). The standard-setters perceived the previous revenue recognition standards to be too diverged, resulting in different accounting treatment of transactions that were seen as "economically similar". Further, IFRS previous revenue recognition standards were argued to not be detailed enough while the US GAAP equivalent were argued to be too prescriptive and conflicting in some areas (EY, 2017). To find a common solution, IASB and FASB spent over a decade working and consulting to develop the new requirements for revenue recognition. The result of their work is IFRS 15, a single model described as being more prescriptive and detailed than previously, as it is based on a robust framework, clear principles and enhanced disclosures requirements, in order to improve comparability across industries, jurisdictions and capital markets (EY, 2017).

The objective IFRS 15 according to IFRS: "to establish the principles that entity shall apply to report useful information to users of financial statements about the nature, amount, timing and uncertainty of revenue and cash flows arising from contracts with customers" (IFRS 15:1, A708, 2017). To meet these objectives the core principles of the standards is that: "an entity shall recognise revenue to depict the transfer of promised goods or services to customers in an amount that reflects the considerations to which the entity expects to be entitled in exchange for those goods or services" (IFRS 15:2, A708, 2017). This core principle is applied based on a five-step model framework, which is summarised below. When applying the five-step model framework, an entity has to judge and consider the terms of the contract(s) and all its facts and circumstances, including implied contract terms. The entity must on quarterly and annual basis disclose qualitative and quantitative information about its contracts with customers, significant

[17] The US GAAP equivalent include a handful of differences as the principles to asses collectability threshold and criterion, contracts that do not meet the step 1 criteria, immaterial goods or services, shipping and handling activities, non-cash considerations, licenses, sales taxes, reversal of previous impaired contract.

[18] Including IAS 11 Construction Contracts, IAS 18 Revenue, IFRIC 13 Customer Loyalty Programmes, IFRIC 15 Agreements for the Construction of Real Estate, IFRIC 18 Transfers of Assets from Customers and SIC-31 Revenue – Barter Transaction involving Advertising Services.

judgements made as well as changes made in those judgements, and contract cost asset (EY, 2018).

Table 3. Summary of IFRS 15 five-step model for revenue recognition

1. Identify the Contract(s) with Customer	**Contract**		A contract is defined as "an agreement between two or more parties that creates enforceable rights or obligations" (IFRS 15, 2017, Appendix A).
2. Identify the Performance Obligation(s) in the Contract	**Performance obligation 1 (PO #1)**	**Performance obligation 2 (PO #2)**	A performance obligation is defined as "a promise in a contract with a customer to transfer to the customer either a good or a service (or a bundle of goods or services) that is distinct, or a series of distinct goods or services that are substantially the same and that have the same pattern of transfer to the customer" (IFRS 15, Appendix A, 2017)
3. Determine the Transaction Price	**Transaction price**		Transaction price is "the amount of consideration to which an entity expects to be entitled in exchange for transferring promised goods or services to a customer, excluding amounts collected on behalf of third parties" (IFRS 15:47, 2017)
4. Allocate the Transaction Price to the Performance Obligation(s) in the Contract	**Allocation transaction price to PO #1**	**Allocation of transaction price to PO #2**	The allocation of transaction priced in based on the principle that "an entity will allocate the transaction price to the performance obligations in the contract by reference to their relative standalone selling prices (IFRS 17:74, 2017). The relative stand-alone selling price is based on "if a standalone selling price is not directly observable, the entity will need to estimate it […]" (IFRS 15:79, 2017)
5. Recognise Revenue when (or as) the Entity Satisfies a Performance Obligation(s)	**Recognise revenue PO #1**	**Recognise revenue PO #2**	Revenue is recognised as control is passed, either over time or at a point in time. (IFRS 15:32, 2017)

8.6. Appendix F: Description of GrandCo's IFRS 15 Implementation Program from 2014 to 2018

Phase 1 - Interpretation of IFRS 15

The implementation process of GrandCo started when IFRS 15 was issued in 2014. Initially, the project consisted of a core team of five people from the Central Financial Accounting Group. The group initially read the standard and interpreted what it meant for GrandCo's business by identifying the gaps between IFRS 15 and how they currently worked in accordance with IAS 18. The aim was to understand what changes that needed to be made in the internal Accounting Directive (Internal GAAP), the internal directive for revenue recognition. As they proceeded with their interpretation of IFRS 15, they realised that there were not only gaps in the internal accounting directive that needed to be solved, but that the implications of the adoption of IFRS 15 would potentially imply changes for roles, processes and systems as well.

Phase 2 - The Implementation Program

To address the mobilisation of roles, processes and systems, a central implementation program was introduced in 2016. The central implementation program was responsible for developing a global implementation solution for the organisation. The program consisted of a steering group, which included representatives from the Central Function and part of the Central Control Group, a Central Program Team with managers from different functions. The steering group was responsible for the decisions and governance on how the implementation should proceed, and the central program team was responsible for the financial and operational implementation work streams. The financial work streams consisted of developing the internal accounting directive, perform the transition financial reporting and address the new disclosure requirements. The operational work streams consisted of developing processes and support systems for financial accounting, supply, invoicing and sales.

Phase 3 - Deployment in the Regional Operations

The deployment in the regional operations was carried out during the fall 2017. Each of the of the regions had a local deployment team that was sponsored by the local CFO. The regional deployment leader was free to choose who to include in the local deployment team, and how to carry out the required implementations that had been set by the global IFRS 15 program. Typically, the regional deployment team had the same set-up has the global team, consisting of managers from Regional Financial Accounting, Business Execution and Sales Function. In each region, several controllers received the additional role as “TAD 18 Experts” to continuously support the organisation in what IFRS 15 mean for the contracts with customers. The global implementation program was closed in Q1 2018, following the effective date of IFRS 15 1/1 2018. However, at the time of the study both the group function and regional operations were still responsible to continue the development of processes and systems by addressing potential issues or changes in relation to IFRS 15.

8.7. Appendix G: Summary of Analysis

Table 4. Overview and Summary of the Analysis

Groups			Objective: Expansion of Authority or Expertise	Objective: Monopolisation of Professional Authority and Resources	Objective: Protection of Autonomy over Professional Activities
Group Function	Accounting Function	Central Financial Reporting Group	• Formal mandate facilitated ability to take ownership of the IFRS 15 interpretation, fixating it in the Internal GAAP • Rhetoric that accounting was a technical task cemented the accounting expertise within a narrow economic discourse • Dictated roles and responsibilities of other functions to expand the authority • Legitimised their interpretation of IFRS 15 via the relation with auditors	• Used a time limit for when the IFRS 15 was integrated into the organisation to separate them from the Central Financial Reporting Group • Flattered themselves in contrast to external consultants and auditors	• Argued timing was well planned to ensure momentum and focus • Argued that accounting was a technical task but that too detailed requirements would hinder own judgment by the Operational Organisation • Argued quality of automated systems could not be ensured, therefore it could not be automated • Did not take responsibility for any practical unintended consequences of their theoretical interpretation of accounting
		Central Business Control Group	• Standardised the RevRec Form, to expand the accounting imperative and minimize the ability for Operational Organization to make judgments • Described themselves as "practical" in contrast to the CRFG and blurred the boundaries towards the Operational Organisation to facilitate dialogue and interaction	• Flattered themselves in relation to the Sales Function, based on perceived accounting expertise	• Referred to time as a constraint, leading to inability to implement the optimal solution • Blamed the organisational structure for inability to implement the processes correctly • Questioned the ability of the Operational Organisation to impose accounting related solutions
Operational Organisation	Commercial Function	System Executors	• Received an "accounting mandate" to employ against the Sales Function • Referred to the compliance imperative to blur boundaries towards the Group Accounting Function	• Flattered themselves in contrast to the Sales Function • Discredited the Regional Business Controllers	
		Regional Business Controllers	• Balanced being a controlling "police" function simultaneously as being a "sales supporter" function, blurring boundaries to achieve their tasks • Created their own, local solutions to cope with the standardised RevRec Form	• Flattered themselves and their accounting expertise in relation to the Sales Function, to rhetorically sharpen the simultaneously blurred boundaries	
		Pricing Managers	• The IFRS 15 requirements made the Pricing Managers, and the price lists they were responsible for, vital in the organisation, shifting boundaries between the functions and allowing the Price Managers to expand their authority		
	Product Area	Product Managers	• Used the complicate imperative and risk of "not being compliant" to expand into the IFRS 15 implementation program • Informally moved to physically sit closer to the Sales Function to be able to influence them		
	Sales Function	Sales Function	• Blurred the boundaries between the Sales Function and the Commercial Function by adjusting the structure of contracts to meet both external and internal targets		• Demarcated themselves from any responsibility for what they perceived to be administrative tasks and compliance • Argued that they did not have the sufficient understanding for accounting • Blamed any issues or unintended practical consequences on the Commercial and Accounting Functions