

Lecture Notes in Business Information Processing

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Practice-Driven Research on Enterprise Transformation

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Preface

The PRET working conferences are set up as a one-day event in such a way that they attract an audience from both industry and academia. PRET 2011 was jointly organized with the 13th IEEE Conference on Commerce and Enterprise (CEC). It was a continuation of the PRET 2010 working conference, which was organized as part of the Enterprise Engineering week in Delft, and the PRET 2009 working conference, which was organized as the industrial track at the CAiSE conference in Amsterdam.

PRET has always been intended to be an international conference, bringing together researchers and practitioners in the enterprise transformation field. By coincidence, the first two versions took place in one country, The Netherlands. It was therefore a pleasure that the 2011 edition was in Luxembourg, which is one of Europe's most international cities. The international character of enterprise transformation is without doubt one of the major challenges in the field—as such, transformation is a so-called wicked problem, but add the multi-culture, cross-border, European or even global dimension, and the challenge is even bigger. Luxembourg, with its long-standing heritage of European cooperation, inspired the PRET participants to deal with this challenge.

Enterprise transformation is indeed a wicked problem, i.e., a problem that cannot be solved with conventional measures, but for which the solutions have to be designed and constructed. This is not only due to its often international dimension, but to its complexity in general. Enterprise transformation affects an entire organization, and has a multitude of dimensions, of which culture, processes, technology, people and money are the most obvious ones. The intention of PRET is to consider these dimensions, either on their own or from a more holistic point of view.

Essentially, solutions for this multi-dimensional, wicked problem can be plotted on a scale with two ends. On the one hand, there is the *instruction-based* solution. In this type of solution, approaches and methods are invented (often, but not always, as a result of practice). These approaches and methods *instruct* the ‘enterprise engineer’ to design enterprises and to design enterprise transformations. On the other end of the scale, one can find the *principle-based* solution. This emphasizes the need for *design principles*, which guide the enterprise engineer toward models and designs. How the actual design will look like, or how the actual transformation should take place, is not specified – that is up to the enterprise engineer and the stakeholders in an enterprise transformation program. For enterprise transformation, this results in a spectrum of choices, which are of course highly situation-dependent – there is no single best way to conduct transformations, and researchers should be thankful for that.

The spectrum or scale between the instruction-based and the principle-based thinking corresponds to similar paradigms in other fields. Design thinking, which

has become popular in the last decade to explain the success of enterprises like Apple, can be considered as one of the more serious attempts to draw an analogy between enterprise transformation and ‘design’ in general. For instance, the aesthetics of a design (with attributes such as contrast, depth and rhythm), can be considered design principles. An aesthetic attribute such as contrast can be compared to the differentiators of a company. On the other hand, design studies have come up with rigorous engineering approaches, which can be applied in enterprise transformation as well. Design thinking positions itself as a paradigm to take on wicked problems, which should make it very suitable for our enterprise transformation challenges. I hope and expect that the PRET community, which originates from the information systems field, and the design thinking community, which is more geared toward organizational change management, will achieve the synergy that is required to advance the enterprise transformation field.

The third edition of PRET also marked a further collaboration between academia and practice. This year we invited some top practitioners to submit case studies. We did this with the specific purpose of cross-fertilization and learning: academia learning from practice about ‘real-world’ issues, and practitioners actually challenging the researchers to come up with good ideas for their transformation programs. This is why we accepted fewer academic papers, to give room for the case studies. As usual, the academic papers were all based on empirical research, to emphasize the “P” in PRET. The papers were submitted as book chapters, with an average size of about 25 pages. This size, enabling a slightly more in-depth coverage of the research topic, stimulated a meaningful discussion at the working conference, with the goal of developing the field of enterprise transformation, creating synergy and jointly identifying topics for further research.

June 2011

Frank Harmsen

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