# Foreword

This book is important: I will tell you why. I will also say a few words about me so that you get an idea of this person advising you on how to spend your time. Finally, I will outline my wishes about the direction I would like the future research on enterprise modeling to take.

In general terms, this book is focused on tools for the management and change of enterprises. The basis for this is the systems approach: viewing the enterprise itself as the main enterprise system, with the information system as a subsystem. The general idea is that we have to be able to grasp both the enterprise system and the information system in a thorough and comprehensive way to be able to manage change. If we do not know anything about the "enterprise boat," it sure is risky to try and steer it. This book outlines some individual tools and methods on how to get optimum ideas about the "enterprise boat" with all its information systems. To be able to grasp both the enterprise system and the information system, we have to apply modeling languages. These modeling languages are used to produce models of the modeled systems. These models, in turn, can be employed as tools both for integration, that is, making it easier to merge different parts of systems together, and for comprehension, making it easier to gather relevant aspects of the modeled systems.

This is of major importance simply because if we cannot coordinate the different parts of the enterprise boat, it will be almost impossible to steer it. More seriously, if we do not have a good comprehensive view of the boat, we do not know what it is exactly that we are steering. And moreover, we do not know how to steer and how to improve the steering information systems.

Today many enterprises are more or less blind, and they survive more by pure luck than by using rational thinking and tools. More than that, communication between the people building and maintaining information systems and the people building and maintaining the enterprise is often poor. New tools and a new way of thinking are needed. This is why this book is so important.

Then, who am I that you should trust such bold statements? First, from a more theoretical point of view, you might know that I have been a coworker with C. West Churchman who, for many people, is the main designer of the systems approach to enterprise management. When he was invited as the keynote speaker of a major conference, he wrote to me and asked if I could go there in his place, since as he said "You can say this as well as I can

do." So I have taken that as proof that I am a systems thinker. From a practitioner's point of view, I have been working with big companies, banks, and cities in Europe for the last 15 years. I have been very much involved in the new type of IT applications where customers and other stakeholders are directly involved in what we nowadays call communities and e-power infrastructure.

Against this background, I can see a desperate need to develop better languages able to overcome the barriers between the more technically oriented IT system builders and the more economically oriented enterprise management builders. The book accepts this challenge and presents state-of-the-art ideas and solutions.

What I foresee as becoming increasingly important in the future is the modeling of customer requirements and their integration into the language. Successful companies of today are well into the thinking that their customers are coproducers of value that becomes manifest in services and products.

What I also observe is that the general direction of the work presented in this book goes towards trying to develop and design a more common modeling language that can be used by more people more easily. In my opinion, this aspect is of growing importance. Maybe someone will oppose, putting forward the argument that it is important to have many languages because they all contribute by emphasizing a special view of reality, and only in their entirety can they provided a comprehensive picture. According to the systems approach developed by Churchman and others (Ackoff, 1981; Checkland, 1988; Churchman, 1968; Mitroff & Mason, 1981), this is not enough. Every view also relates to possible actions and solutions, and these are of different values for different stakeholders. In order to act or steer the enterprise boat, someone will have to select or codesign (Albinsson & Forsgren, 2005; Forsgren, 1991) the acting model and the modeling language behind, though. Without this creative and ethical step, the enterprise will be hard to steer, as this book shows. Following this line of thinking, we have to try to codesign better modeling languages, always keeping in mind that acting models have to be challenged. For that reason, we also have to design better arenas for the codesign of new acting models.

This book can be regarded as such an arena, and the aim is to codesign better acting-modeling languages. The reflective reader will ask how we can judge whether one modeling language is better than another. A crucial question, indeed, and I look forward to more discussions about that.

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