

Foreword

“Science does not think!”

In this famous and controversial statement¹, the philosopher Martin Heidegger certainly did not mean that scientists were stupid or that science was irrational. He was rather expressing the fact that science did not take time to think about itself, meaning its own goals and practices. This can inevitably lead to excesses or undesired results.

The book you are holding could be entitled “IT doesn’t think”, or “IT does not think enough!” Starting from scratch, it rethinks the goals of a “good” information system, asking what a “good” information system is, beyond choosing the “best” technology and beyond meeting deadlines or budget constraints.

The answer proposed here, “simplicity of the IS”, relies on a thorough analysis of the countless sources of complexity that tend to make the IS into a chaotic jumble, which is hard to maintain and even more difficult to improve. This situation penalizes companies striving to remain viable in a fast-moving and competitive environment.

¹ *What is called thinking?*, Martin Heidegger, Harper Perennial, 1976.

The value of this book is not in this or that specific recommendation but rather in the global vision that justifies the recommendations that are being made.

One of the major insights of this book is its repeated emphasis on the human factor, whether from the point of view of end-users or that of IT Departments.

IT people are often considered introverts who are uninterested in anything other than the latest techno hype. Because they also generally have a hard time meeting deadlines and budgets restrictions, IT management inundates them with technological, architectural, and organizational dictates. The necessity to master this vast array of tools, languages, and methods can leave them feeling disempowered.

The authors of this book argue that one should trust those on the frontlines and that some freedom should be given back to them, because the authors believe that this is the only way to build an IS with a minimum of common sense, which is to say, by never losing sight of the idea that simplicity, the essence of an IS, is not a goal but an ongoing journey.

It is not possible, unfortunately, to drop everything and start over from scratch: our hope is thus to determine where we want to go, to map out our journey, to regularly check that we are not straying from the chosen path, while giving ourselves the leeway to gaze at the panoramas before us and perhaps choose yet another path.

This book should be considered a sort of “survival guide”, simple enough to be usable and thorough enough to be relevant.

Pascal Grojean
Managing Director, Emoxa
Co-author of the books *SOA Architect's Guide and
Performance of IT Architectures*.