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AN ARCHITECTURAL APPROACH TO SOFTWARE EVOLUTION AND INTEGRATION

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ABSTRACT

As time passes, software systems need to be maintained, modified, and integrated with other systems so as not to age and become obsolete. In the present thesis, we investigate how the concepts of software components and software architecture can be used to facilitate software evolution and integration. Based on three case studies, we argue that considering a software system at a high abstraction level, as a set of connected components, makes possible a cost efficient and structured evolution and integration process. The systems in two of our case studies are information systems developed in-house used for managing and manipulating business-critical data. The third case study concerns an integration framework in which systems can be integrated without modification.

In the thesis, we describe how several architectural alternatives can be developed based on architectural descriptions of existing systems, and how these can be evaluated regarding a number of concerns in a relatively rapid way, while achieving an acceptable confidence/effort ratio. We describe how some of these concerns can be addressed in more detail, namely maintainability, cost of implementation, and time of implementation; we also discuss the risk involved in the decision. We show how although the existing architecture may reflect insufficient design decisions and an outdated state of practice, it can and should be seen as a prototype revealing strengths that should be preserved and weaknesses that should be addressed during redesign. We also describe four different integration approaches and the feasibility of each under various circumstances: Enterprise Application Integration (EAI), interoperability through import and export facilities, integration at data level, and integration at source code level. The two last of these are compared in more detail, revealing that code level integration is more risky but not necessarily more costly than data level integration, but is advantageous from a technical perspective.

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LIST OF PUBLISHED ARTICLES

The following peer-reviewed papers have been published at various international conferences and workshops, and are presented in reverse order of publication date.

Papers Included In the Thesis

The following papers are included in the present thesis.

Software Integration and Architectural Analysis – A Case Study

Rikard Land, Ivica Crnkovic, Proceedings of International Conference on Software Maintenance (ICSM), September 2003.

Integration of Software Systems – Process Challenges

Rikard Land, Ivica Crnkovic, Christina Wallin, Proceedings of Euromicro Conference, September 2003.

Applying the IEEE 1471-2000 Recommended Practice to a Software Integration Project

Rikard Land, Proceedings of International Conference on Software Engineering Research and Practice (SERP'03), Las Vegas, Nevada, June 2003.

Improving Quality Attributes of a Complex System Through Architectural Analysis – A Case Study

Rikard Land, Proceedings of 9th IEEE Conference and Workshops on Engineering of Computer-Based Systems (ECBS), Lund, Sweden, April 2002.

Information Organizer – A Comprehensive View on Reuse

Erik Gyllenswärd, Mladen Kap, Rikard Land, 4th International Conference on Enterprise Information Systems (ICEIS), Ciudad Real, Spain, April 2002.

Papers Not Included In the Thesis

The author has also authored or co-authored the following papers:

Taking Global Software Development from Industry to University and Back Again

Igor Čavrak, Rikard Land, Proceedings of ICSE 2003 International Workshop on Global Software Development (GSD 2003), Portland, Oregon, May 2003.

Is Software Engineering Training Enough for Software Engineers?

Ivica Crnkovic, Rikard Land, Andreas Sjögren, Proceedings of 16th International Conference on Software Engineering Education and Training (CSEE&T), Madrid, Spain, March 2003.

Software Deterioration And Maintainability – A Model Proposal

Rikard Land, Proceedings of Second Conference on Software Engineering Research and Practise in Sweden (SERPS), Blekinge Institute of Technology Research Report 2002:10, Karlskrona, Sweden, October 2002.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Many ways of improving the understandability of large programs have been suggested, and throughout the years some generally adopted concepts have crystallized – "modularity", "information hiding" and "separation of concerns" are some of these. The ultimate concern is to develop and evolve high-quality systems in a cost-efficient manner. More recently, the two complementary research fields of *component-based software* (focusing on the problem of writing reusable software entities – components) and *software architecture*[1] (dealing with the structural arrangement of components) have appeared to accomplish the same thing.

While academic research in software architecture has so far mainly focused on the design of systems before they are built, the architectural documentation being used during implementation, the component community has focused more on the use of components in evolving systems. With the present thesis, we contribute, by means of a survey of the relevant literature, three case studies and a discussion, to the overall research in architecture and components, addressing issues not thoroughly investigated to date. We focus on *software evolution* (i.e. all software in use is changed gradually as time passes) rather than new development, and in particular *software integration* (ranging from collaboration to amalgamation of several existing systems to constitute a new system). Another of our goals is to make architectural analysis rapid rather than exhaustive, relying more on intuition and experience than on comprehensive analysis using existing techniques (such as formal methods).

We have formulated a general research hypothesis and four more specific research questions, listed in section 1.1 below. We have provided answers to these through three case studies: a system redesign case study [103] reprinted in chapter 4, an integration framework case study

[1] In the present thesis, the term "architecture" and its derivates ("architectural" etc.) will be used interchangeably for "software architecture".

[62] reprinted in chapter 5, and a systems integration case study [105-107] reprinted in chapters 6, 7, and 8. These chapters are reprints of previously published conference papers.

The remainder of chapter 1 defines the research objectives in more detail, describes the methodology used and summarizes the contribution of the thesis. Chapters 2 and 3 survey approaches to the concepts of components, software architecture, and software evolution in literature with emphasis on issues related to the present thesis. Chapters 4 through 8 present our case studies. Chapter 9 uses the literature survey to generalize our findings from the case studies and discusses their limitations. This is followed by a brief summary in chapter 10.

1.1 Hypothesis and Research Questions

The main hypothesis underlying the present thesis is that *conceptually separating software into components [42], and reasoning about the relationships between these components – the system's architecture [13] – are useful means to manage software evolution in large complex software systems in a cost efficient manner*.

Although architectural analysis and system decomposition into components as well as composition of components are well known research subjects and relatively widespread in practice, there is still much to do to improve the state of practice, not least concerning system evolution and integration. So far, architectural evaluation [34] has mostly been used during development of new systems. We use architectural analysis to validate the hypothesis. Such analysis often includes abstracting or improving the system's documentation to include architectural documentation (see e.g. [35]) by decomposing the existing software into components. Through case study opportunities we have been able to investigate how far the hypothesis holds in practice. We will present the major issues we have investigated to support (or contradict) the hypothesis, in the form of four questions ("Q1" through "Q4", where "Q" stands for "question").

One evolution scenario is when a part of a system has to be redesigned, not to include more functionality but to improve its extra-functional qualities[2]. To what extent can such a system be redesigned without massive rewrite by considering it as a connected set of components? In this scenario, it makes sense to put some effort into evaluating several alternative designs beforehand and estimate their properties – not least their associated future maintainability. To which extent does it make sense to describe and analyze the system at the architectural level, as a set of software components, in this context? Can such analysis reveal weaknesses of design alternatives, to enable a well-founded decision on which alternative to choose? Let us call these issues on system redesign "Q1".

Another increasingly important aspect of software evolution is system *integration*. Many organizations have a large amount of technically separate systems, although conceptually related, and the reasons and situations in which software integration occurs are many. The software may have been acquired from several sources, which explains why it is not integrated although interoperability would be beneficial. But even with software developed in-house, there may be a need for integration as separate systems evolve and grow into each other's domains. When two companies merge the result may be that the merged company owns overlapping systems. The systems may be tools used only within a company to run its core business, or it may be the products the company manufactures. How can the concepts of architecture and components be used when integrating complex software systems? How can these concepts be used when developing a general integration framework? How can these concepts be used when developing a customized, tight integration? How can architectural

[2] With "extra-functional" , we intend features that are not mere "functionality", many of which are relatively intangible and escape quantification, such as performance, maintainability, availability, usability or reliability. These are also commonly called "non-functional" properties, "quality" attributes, or more popularly "ilities" (since many of these features are have the suffix "ility"). Depending on the context, we may use any of these terms in the present thesis.

analysis help in developing a long-term integration strategy? Let us call these integration issues “Q2”.

When analyzing an architecture before building a system, one wants to assess that it will provide the required functionality as well as having acceptable performance, being maintainable, and have many other “extra-functional” qualities. But all of these are of minor importance if not the business goals can be met, e.g. if the system will be too costly or take too long to build. Also, even if two different architectural alternatives are similar in these respects, one might be considered less risky due to e.g. a possibility of reusing existing code or not requiring total long-term commitment. How can such organizational and business concerns be addressed by architectural analyses and decisions during system evolution? Let us call these organizational and business issues “Q3”.

When developing a new system, one has a large set of technologies, architectures, etc. to choose from. When evolving or integrating existing systems, these possibilities seem to be restricted due to the technologies and architectures used in the existing systems. More specifically, which are these restrictions? Are there possibilities and opportunities as well? Let us call these issues “Q4”.

Let us summarize these research questions:

How can the concepts of architecture and components be beneficially used to estimate a software system’s properties during its evolution? **(Q1)**

Is it possible to beneficially use the concepts of architecture and components when integrating existing software systems, and how can this be done? **(Q2)**

How are architectural analyses and decisions related to organizational and business goals during system evolution? **(Q3)**

How does the architecture of an existing system restrict or facilitate its evolution? **(Q4)**

In using the term "beneficially", we have two specific notions in mind: avoiding *software deterioration* and achieving *cost-efficiency*, described presently.

- Even if a system is initially built to be maintainable and modifiable, the typical observation is that as it evolves, it *deteriorates*, meaning that it becomes more and more difficult to understand and maintain – which often negatively affects extra-functional properties such as performance and robustness before long. One important long-term goal when maintaining or modifying a system is not only to implement the requested changes, but also to do it in such a manner that the system does not deteriorate. How can the concepts provided by research in software architecture and component-based software be used to achieve this goal?
- The term "beneficially" should also be understood in the context of cost-efficiency: we are not interested in what *can* be done, if the resources required are too great to justify the expenditure. People and organizations are typically reluctant to try new technologies and processes, and prefer small-scale, low-cost experimenting first; especially as the effort required increases dramatically as the architectural alternatives to be analyzed as well as the features to analyze increase in number. We have therefore chosen to focus on situations in which the software is to evolve using limited resources.

1.2 Methodology

When research is begun in a particular field, the problem itself is not always obvious. Experience reports and case studies are the usual means of gaining insight into the problem, and outlining possible solutions. When many case studies demonstrate consensus regarding certain issues, the research is maturing, and experiments should be conducted to identify variables affecting the outcome, and to establish relationships between these. The fields of software evolution, software components, and software architecture have left their infancy but while some issues have been clarified, there is still much to explore. The research presented in this thesis falls into the relatively early exploration category, not being completely novel but still only outlining the problem itself. Gathering data from experience reports and case studies

in combination with studies of similar cases is therefore appropriate, and this is the methodology we have chosen.

When conducting this kind of research, one must be aware of the limitations of this approach. First, unwanted and even unknown factors, which cannot be avoided, affect the outcome. It is practically impossible to carry out the same project "in parallel" with "equivalent" people etc., so the researcher must consider why some factors affected the result more than others. Second, in case studies, the research hypothesis may have to evolve as the projects they study evolve – real projects are dynamic and must adjust to changing circumstances out of the control of the researcher, who cannot be sure exactly what type of observations to expect. Third, the research objective may be in conflict with business considerations if the economical conditions change. But case studies have certain advantages, which makes the methodology suited for investigating the presented questions. They permit the study of real industrial cases, complex and many-faceted as they are. This both enables the study of hypotheses in an industrial setting, necessary to validate the usefulness in practice of any research finding, and the identification of open issues. This provides the researcher with an understanding of a problem in a more holistic way, which forms an indispensable informal basis for argumentation and elaboration – even though this "understanding" is hard to quantify.

The author has been a participant in three industrial projects, serving as case studies or experience reports, in two of the case studies as an active member, and in one, as a discussion partner. To avoid the observations being subjective, other people have been involved, and the observations were then generalized by means of literature studies and discussions with academics. The three projects have resulted in five published papers, and the review process used at scientific conferences ensures a certain degree of confidence in the scientific soundness of the analyses.

1.3 Contribution

The present thesis contributes to a wider understanding of the nature of software evolution by introducing the notions of architecture and components. Our specific case studies contribute to the general understanding of the problem and are shown to support the hypothesis that the architectural approach to software evolution is beneficial, with the problem of software deterioration in mind and particularly addressing cost-efficiency.

The case studies have been described in five published papers, which are reprinted in full as chapters 4 through 8. The only changes made to the original publications are the following:

- All references have been collected in chapter 11 of the thesis.
- The layout has been modified to adhere to that of the rest of the thesis, including e.g. the positioning of figures and capitalization of headings. The numbering of headings and references (and the format of references) has been updated to make these chapters an integral part of the thesis.
- One incorrect figure text has been corrected (Figure 6).

The remainder of this section is divided into two parts: first, the contents and contribution of each of the case studies are described, and second (page 10ff), the research questions are revisited and answered.

System Redesign Case Study

This case study is based on the following paper (reprinted in chapter 4):

> **Improving Quality Attributes of a Complex System Through Architectural Analysis – A Case Study [103]**
>
> *Rikard Land, In Proceedings of 9th IEEE Conference on Engineering of Computer-Based Systems (ECBS), Lund, Sweden, IEEE Computer Society, 2002.*

The case study describes how a part of a software information system had proven unstable. One system part consisting of a number of cooperating, distributed processes was difficult to

debug and test, and during runtime, manual intervention was often required to shut down erroneous processes. The case study describes a redesign approach including architectural evaluation and analysis. Extra-functional attributes of the system part, such as performance and maintainability, were evaluated to permit comparison between four different redesign alternatives.

Integration Framework Case Study

This case study is based on the following paper (reprinted in chapter 5):

> **Information Organizer – A Comprehensive View on Reuse [62]**
>
> *Erik Gyllenswärd, Mladen Kap, and Rikard Land, In Proceedings of 4th International Conference on Enterprise Information Systems (ICEIS), Malaga, Spain, 2002.*

The second case study describes a framework for integration of information systems. The framework builds on the idea of using existing systems as components in a larger, integrated system. Different systems typically handle different aspects of the same data, and the framework enables a uniform view of and access to the information residing in different applications, presenting the users with a consistent view of the data. The framework basically assumes nothing from the existing applications. With relatively little effort, the framework can be implemented in an organization and its existing systems integrated. To enable a tighter integration, as perceived by the users, more effort may be expended, for example in modifying or wrapping the existing systems, or short-cutting their database access.

This case study also discusses how a small company was able to build the framework with few resources thanks to extensive reuse of existing products and technologies (which can be seen as a form of integration).

Systems Integration Case Study

Different types of observations on the third case study were made in the following papers (reprinted in chapters 6 through 8):

Software Integration and Architectural Analysis – A Case Study [106]

Rikard Land, Ivica Crnkovic, Proceedings of International Conference on Software Maintenance (ICSM), IEEE Computer Society, 2003.

Integration of Software Systems – Process Challenges [107]

Rikard Land, Ivica Crnkovic, Christina Wallin, Proceedings of Euromicro Conference, 2003.

Applying the IEEE 1471-2000 Recommended Practice to a Software Integration Project [105]

Rikard Land, Proceedings of International Conference on Software Engineering Research and Practice (SERP'03), CSREA Press, 2003.

In this case study, three systems that had been developed and used mainly in-house, were, after a company merger, found to have overlapping functionality and were identified as being suitable for integration. The three papers/chapters contain different types of observations of how a decision regarding an integration approach was reached. The first describes how four different integration approaches were discussed and how two of these (sharing data only, or integrating the source code) were more thoroughly evaluated and compared at the architectural level. This included analyzing how the architectural alternatives addressed a large number of stakeholder concerns. The second describes the process used in integrating the software systems and identifies certain challenges to this process. The third describes how a very lightweight analysis was used, relying heavily on the developers' intuition (based on experience), using the IEEE standard 1471-2000's focus on stakeholders' concerns [76].

Since these chapters were originally published separately as conference papers there is a certain amount of overlap and duplication of the text and figures introducing the case study; the focus and conclusions differ however between the chapters. Our apologies to the readers for this inconvenience.

Our research questions were addressed in the papers as described in the following.

Q1: How can the concepts of architecture and components be beneficially used to assess a software system's properties during its evolution?

This question was mainly investigated in the system redesign case study, as presented in chapter 4 and the systems integration case study as presented in chapter 6. When evolving a system, as well as when developing a new system, the most suitable of several alternative directions is that to be chosen. These two case studies show both how such alternatives can be developed on the basis of architectural descriptions of the existing systems, and how these can be evaluated and compared using limited resources. It is possible to apply a lightweight analysis on the architectural level to some properties, to be able to evaluate a larger number of stakeholder concerns and spend more time on the more important and/or uncertain properties of the system. We also analyze (in chapter 8) how the introduction of the IEEE standard 1471-2000 [76] was introduced into a systems integration project with measurable benefits at little cost.

There are also a number of characteristics of redesign and integration activities not present in new developments. First, the requirements are already there, at least to a considerable degree. Second, the existing implementation can provide invaluable information about good and less good design alternatives. Based on this knowledge, many of the components of the previous system(s) will be preserved, some will be changed somewhat, some will be totally removed, and some added. Some structural features may be preserved, while those considered insufficient are modified.

Q2: Is it possible to beneficially use the concepts of architecture and components when integrating existing software systems, and how can this be done?

Research question Q2 was investigated from two different points of view: from that of a framework manufacturer and from that of those performing an internal integration after a company merger.

First, integration of legacy applications into a framework was investigated in the integration framework case study, which is presented in chapter 5. It shows that it is possible to integrate existing systems without modifying them. The framework presents an opportunity to integrate systems even when source code is not available; all that needs to be known is some type of API, even if only in the form of command line arguments. To begin with, the user interfaces of the original systems are used, and the integration is on the data level. With more effort and information, it is possible to shortcut the database access and present a homogeneous user interface to the users.

Second, in the systems integration case study [105,107], as presented in chapters 6, 7, and 8, we describe an enterprise which, after a company merger, had three information systems with overlapping functionality. The systems were developed in-house and used mostly internally for the company core business, but were also installed on the premises of several customers. We describe how an architectural approach can be used to construct and evaluate different integration alternatives. This involves investigating the architectures of the existing systems and creating similar architectural descriptions, the components of which can then be reconfigured. It is shown that by using the IEEE standard 1471-2000 [76], it is possible to evaluate many concerns of several alternatives during a short time. We also describe the possibilities and implications of different integration alternatives; in particular we compare a data level integration with a full, code level integration.

Q3: How are architectural analyses and decisions related to organizational and business goals during system evolution?

This question is addressed mainly by the systems integration case study (chapters 6 through 8), where cost, time to delivery, and risk of implementation were the most decisive factors when choosing between two architectural alternatives for software integration. When building a new system, it is possible to estimate the effort required to build each component based on their respective estimated complexity, size, and similar. When integrating existing systems, these estimations of effort required must also take into account issues such as reuse, rewrite,

and new code. This will give a measure of the total implementation cost of the new system. To estimate the time of implementation, the dependencies between the activities involved and any possibility of executing them in parallel must be identified. This can be done on the basis of architectural descriptions of the systems to be built. When the resources available for implementation are not known beforehand, it is not possible to specify dates of deliveries, but an activity diagram can be prepared showing the required activities with their associated efforts and the dependencies between them.

The need to evaluate risk only became apparent at the end of the case study project, when management was to make its decision. This need had not been addressed and remains an important open issue for future study, how can the risk associated with different architectural alternatives be evaluated?

Q4: How does the architecture of an existing system restrict or facilitate its evolution?

This question is addressed by all three case studies, i.e. chapters 4 through 8. The evolution and integration of existing software are restricted by the technologies used in its development, and integration becomes additionally problematic due to the different technologies and languages used in different parts of the existing systems, bridged using customized solutions. If the changed requirements include improving extra-functional properties the existing architecture, as described by its architectural patterns, may be insufficient. And during integration, systems with different characteristics, including different architectures, must be merged. The databases used in information systems may be commercial or proprietary, and may range from relational databases to object-oriented databases to only a file structure. The data models in the systems are very likely different, even though they model the same business data. Under these circumstances, any integration attempt will be costly.

But while an existing architecture certainly restricts system evolution, it can also be utilized to facilitate evolution. In the system redesign case study (chapter 4) the existing architecture, although insufficient for the new requirements, could be used to demonstrate which concepts

worked well and which did not. In the systems integration case study (chapters 6 through 8) the three systems to be integrated represented three different architectural approaches, and it should be no surprise that the most modern architecture was considered to be technically preferable and was the obvious choice of the developers (although it was, for other reasons, discarded by the managers). The integration framework (chapter 5) provides certain integration possibilities if the systems to be integrated have certain architectural features: what type of database they use, what type of API they provide, in which environment they run (mainframe, PC, Unix, etc.).

2. TECHNOLOGY STATE OF THE ART

In this chapter, we take a look at the existing practice and research we build our work upon. We start by discussing what a component is, and continue with the structure of component assemblies – a system's architecture. We will present definitions of architecture and discuss their implications, we will describe the somewhat different views of architecture in academia and in industry, present architectural documentation good practices, including the notion of architectural views and viewpoints (or viewtypes), Architecture Description Languages (ADLs), architectural analysis, and architectural styles and patterns.

But let us start with discussing what a software component really is – or rather, depending on whom you ask: what a component can be.

2.1 What Is a Component?

To be able to sort out how the term "component" is used in the present thesis it is necessary to present some uses of the term, and which of these we have adopted. In their introduction to an SEI technical report on Component-Based Software Engineering, Bachman et al discuss highlight the diverse uses of the "component" term by stating that "all software systems comprise components" and that the "phrase component-based system has about as much inherent meaning as 'part-based whole'" [10]. However, they continue by discriminating components resulting from top-down design *decomposition* from components already available for *composition*. That is, the process of building a system from readily available components differs in many ways from the process of designing a system from scratch. Many large companies have moved from building complete hardware/software systems to acquiring standard hardware, and later also software such as operating systems [41], and the top-down approach to system development is no longer feasible. In the case studies of the present thesis, we mainly use components resulting from decomposition.

Let us anyhow discuss the idea of using available components when assembling systems. Components available in the market place are often called "off-the-shelf" (OTS) or

"commercial-off-the-shelf" (COTS) components. The expected benefits are that it is possible to build systems faster and cheaper while preserving or even increasing the quality of the system as compared to building the whole system in-house [43,66,179]. At the same time, the possibilities are restricted since one can only choose from available components. Some claim that that a component presents 90% [142] of the desired functionality, and the developing organization then has to decide whether the additional 10% can justify a much higher cost and delayed release date. The market for commercial software components has increased during the nineties [191] but currently seem to decrease. Still, component-based development may occur in-house, e.g. through adopting a product line approach [33] (see also page 55f).

To make component-based development possible, there must be frameworks and environments describing the rules for composition as well as runtime support. For source code components, the framework is the programming language. With the emergence of component models such as CORBA [175], COM [23], Java 2 Enterprise Edition [131,153], and .NET [180] it has become possible to manufacture and use components as binaries (See e.g. [47] for a comparison of these). In this way, components become language-independent and may be used from any language or development environment supporting the component model. For example, one popular framework for composing graphical components is the language Visual Basic – or rather the *product* Visual Basic, which provides a user-friendly integrated development environment – but the components may be written in other languages as long as they are compiled and packaged as COM or .NET components.

Szyperski captures the notion of "component" described so far is in a commonly cited definition [179]:

> A software component is a unit of composition with contractually specified interfaces and explicit context dependencies only. A software component can be deployed independently and is subject to composition by third party.

To enable a clear separation between components, which is required when they are deployed independently and composed by third party, the *interface* becomes crucial. A component user should not be required to understand how a component works, only how to use it. A component thus has to specify how it can be used, and this interface description is used as a contract between the component and the component user – it would make no sense to call it in any other way than what its interface specifies. This notion of interface as described in an interface definition language usually includes method signatures (method names, return types, and parameter names and types), but nothing more. It has been notified that this is not enough, since the accompanying documentation of the semantics of these methods may be incomplete or wrong. For example: the component's requirements on the environment, its behavior in case of failure, and its performance under different circumstances are not specified; neither is the actual semantics of the methods specified. One typically has to rely on documentation in natural language and code examples. Current research on component interfaces includes formal semantic specifications [121], through contracts [135]. Garlan et al describe a case where the chosen components made different assumptions about their environment, assumptions were undocumented and so subtle that this was discovered the hard way, during integration, quadrupling the project's time and schedule. The authors named this problem "architectural mismatch" [57]. Johnson writes that if "components make different assumptions [about its environment] then it is hard to use them together" [83].

With independent deployment, it has become possible to upgrade components without re-installing the whole application. In this way, error corrections or performance improvements in a single component can easily be deployed into already installed systems. However, if the syntax or semantics of the call interface of the component is different from the previous version, applications using this component will likely fail, and in particular when several applications use the same component the problem easily becomes unmanageable – the "DLL hell". These issues require structured approaches similar to classical configuration

management [109], and Microsoft's .NET [180] addresses many issues that were problematic with its predecessor COM [23].

Let us now turn to the notion of component as a unit of *decomposition* rather than of *composition*. To be able to understand and manage a complex software system, it makes sense to separate related pieces of functionality into separate components. The requirements may be logically structured in a way that makes separation of functionality into components straightforward. Or internal functions identified to be similar may be separated into methods or components, possibly parameterized; for example, there may be library routines for sorting and converting internal data types. But there are other reasons as well for componentizing a system, of more organizational kinds. For example, clearly defined components enable distribution and even outsourcing of development efforts [120].

How can these two approaches, composition and decomposition, be integrated? It is obviously a challenge to combine the process of decomposing a system into manageable pieces and that of assembling useful components into a system. It is naïve to believe that the parts of a top-down decomposed system will be readily available. Development using components has to include iterations between architectural design to know approximately what components are needed and component search, evaluation, and selection [78]. In many cases, the use of certain types of components such as operating systems and databases is more or less required initially, due to the enormous effort involved in developing this functionality. For other types of components, there is a gray zone: if a component does not provide all the required functionality or is unstable, the same effort saved by acquiring rather than developing a piece of functionality may be spent on working around flaws and adding the missing functionality in an awkward way.

Whether we think of source code or binary components, and independent of whether our approach to software development is top-down decomposition or bottom-up composition, components are not used in isolation. The components interact and form a structure, which to

a certain extent determines the system's properties. This structure is usually called the system's *architecture*.

2.2 Software Architecture

Today's notion of software architecture goes back to the early seventies, manifested by e.g. Dijkstra's description of the "THE" system [48], Parnas' "Criteria To Be Used in Decomposing Systems into Modules" [144] and Brooks mentioning a system's "architecture" [27]. Information hiding and similar ideas paved the path for object-orientation, and later binary software components. The large-scale structure itself was given attention during the first half of the nineties, when the importance of software architecture was recognized and gained momentum [2,46,59,148,173]. During this time, Rapide was developed, possibly the first architectural *language* [117]. Kruchten identified the need of describing the structure of software from several different points of *view* [98]. There was a special issue on Software Architecture in the IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering journal [75] and books began to be published [28,174].

This increasing academic interest reflects what happened in the software industry at the same time. Systems grew and became larger and larger. Object-orientation became popular and the need for object-oriented analysis and design methods was addressed by e.g. the Booch, Objectory, and OMT methods [18,77,155]. Recent trends include Internet technologies and web applications typically implemented with a three-tiered architecture using .NET [180] or J2EE [131,153].

In the following, we will look at how software architecture "serves as an important communication, reasoning, analysis, and growth tool for systems" [12]. This includes issues such as how to notate an architecture in text or using a graphical representation, informal and formal analysis methods, architecture's role in a life cycle context, and more. But let us first try and understand what software architecture really is.

Definitions

There is an abundance of definitions of software architecture around. The Software Engineering Institute (SEI) maintains a list of definitions [164], but we will not repeat them all. We will content ourselves with quoting two of the arguably most cited and well known and discuss their implications. The arguably most commonly quoted definition was given by Bass et al [13]:

> The software architecture of a program or computing system is the structure or structures of the system, which comprise software elements, the externally visible properties of those elements, and the relationships among them.

To be correct, the most commonly quoted definition is that of the first edition of the book, which reads "components" instead of "elements" [12]. This change reflects that architecture does not only deal with "components" in the compositional sense described in the previous section.

We can note several implications of this definition. First, a system has not only one structure but several, "superimposed one upon another" [27]. You can e.g. consider the source code files and their dependencies as one structure, and the runtime processes and their interactions another. This feature of architecture is captured by the concept of architectural *views* (see section 2.3). Second, the properties of interest of the components are those that are externally visible, which is its interface (in a broad sense). However, it is a great challenge, partly addressed by the present thesis, to decide which properties that can indeed be ignored and only need to be dealt with later. Third, every software system has an architecture according to this definition, because you can always view a system as a set of related components, however messy the structure you perceive the architecture to be.

There are many definitions on the same theme, describing structures of components. But let us also consider the definition given by Perry and Wolf in 1992, which is of a somewhat different kind but also commonly quoted [148]:

Software Architecture = {Elements, Form, Rationale}

In context, this compressed formula expresses that elements refer to what is now usually called components, form is structure, and rationale refers to "the motivation for the choice of architectural style, the choice of elements, and the form". This definition (and some more) considers the rationale for choosing one solution or another part of the architecture itself, while the definition by Bass et al only considers the structure, as objectively observable in a system. This is not a mere academic difference, but have practical consequences. For example, which is the most accurate architectural description: the box-and-line documentation describing the basic design decisions or the code itself (or a diagram of interdependencies extracted from code)? Is it possible to re-engineer a piece of software to find its architecture? Carmichael et al "compare the extracted structure to that which was intended by the designers of the system" and discuss the limited value of visualizing code structure if expecting to find the intended design [30,157]. The difference between these definitions (and others) can be explained by a slight difference in focus: from a development or maintenance point of view, the fundamental design choices must be understood, but when working with technologies and techniques, the reason to use a particular technology is not an issue for the technology itself. These definitions thus reflect a difference in scope rather than ignorance or fundamentally different opinions. We could even broaden the scope more: as described above, enterprise architecture describes the structure of software in the context of an organization.

One thing that is not directly apparent from the definitions as presented here, but from the context of these quotations, is that not only *components* (or *elements*), i.e. the boxes in a graphical architecture description, are treated as first-class entities, but also connecting elements or *connectors* (the lines). With "elements", Perry and Wolf include "processing elements", "data elements", and "connecting elements" [148], and with "structure" and "relationships", Bass et al include "connectors" [13].

Software Architecture in Industry

The focus in texts by industry practitioners is not so much on the structure of the software itself, or evaluation techniques, as on specific technologies on one hand and the business and organizational context on the other. Significant for the industrial view is the focus is on the *architect* as a person or a profession, rather than on the *architecture* as the structure of a software system. It is people rather than technology, techniques, and processes that will enable the building of large software systems [172]. The World-Wide Institute of Software Architects (WWISA) is a nonprofit organization founded to "accelerate the establishment of the profession of software architecture and to provide information and services to software architects and their clients" [194]. In 2002 WWISA had "over 1,500 members in over 50 countries" [172]. One book in the "Software Architecture Series" co-sponsored by WWISA [49,123,172] accordingly has the title "The Software Architect's Profession" [172]. These authors' view of the profession, "the architect is the catalyst whose feet are planted firmly in two worlds: the clients' and the builders'", reminds of Brooks' [27]. This notion of architecture denotes the structure of a system as perceived by the users [27] (or the "inhabitants" [172]) rather than the internal structure.

Here it is also appropriate to briefly discuss approaches to "enterprise architectures". There is a correlation between the structure of an organization and that of its software. The "Zachman Framework for Enterprise Architecture", promoted by the Zachman Institute for Framework Advancement (ZIFA) [198], is a framework within which a whole enterprise is modeled. This is done in two dimensions: the first describing its data, its people, its functions, its network, and more, and the other dimension specifying views of different detail [195,198]. Another enterprise information systems framework is "The Open Group Architectural Framework" (TOGAF) [139]. These frameworks thus in a way encompass more than the academic definitions, in that e.g. people and business goals are included. At the same time, they include less, in that the software modeled as part of the framework are software used for running an enterprise. Software products such as e.g. process control or embedded software is not

included, although these products also have architectures – i.e. when software architecture is discussed as a technology, as the definitions above and the present thesis do.

The IEEE standard 1471-2000, "Recommended Practice for Architectural Description of Software-Intensive Systems" [76], aimed at practitioners in industry, adopts the notion of architecture being:

> The fundamental organization of a system embodied in its components, their relationships to each other, and to the environment, and the principles guiding its design and evolution.

We can note several things from this definition. First, it reminds of the definition by Bass et al [13] in that it talks about components and their relationships to each other and to the environment. Second, it embraces the idea of the rationale behind design choices being part of the architecture. Third, it is particularly aimed at being used in software system evolution.

The recommended practice contains a framework of concepts but does not mandate any particular architecture description language or set of viewpoints to use. Rather, the emphasis is on documenting the rationale for the choices made. Guidelines for how to make decisions are also provided, and these are in essence very simple: every choice must address the *concerns* of a *stakeholder*. These concepts are even defined in the standard, along with definitions of "architecture" and "views": a *stakeholder* is "an individual, team, or organization (or classes thereof) with interests in, or concerns relative to, a system", and a *concern* are described as such:

> Each stakeholder typically has interests in, or concerns relative to, that system. Concerns are those interests which pertain to the system 's development, its operation or any other aspects that are critical or otherwise important to one or more stakeholders. Concerns include system considerations such as performance, reliability, security, distribution, and evolvability.

This focus on addressing stakeholders' concerns implies that nothing should be done that does not address a real concern of a stakeholder, and this ensures that the efforts are concentrated on the most productive activities.

Architecture in a Lifecycle Context

"Software architecture" is traditionally associated with the earliest design phase, occurring before "detailed design". But this has changed, and many sources now involve architecture in more phases: "the role of the software architecture in all phases of software development is more explicitly recognized. Whereas initially software architecture was primarily associated with the architecture design phase, we now see that the software architecture is treated explicitly during development, product derivation in product lines, at runtime, and during system evolution. Software architecture as an artifact has been decoupled from a particular lifecycle phase." [21] According to IEEE 1471-2000, "architecting contributes to the development, operation, and maintenance of a system from its initial concept until its retirement from use. As such, architecting is best understood in a life cycle context, not simply as a single activity at one point in that life cycle." [76]. There are suggestions that project management has much to gain from being "architecture-centric" [146], and reports that during experimental prototyping and evolutionary development "explicit focus on software architecture in these phases was an important key to success" [31]. The product and the process affect each other, and the product's architecture is the artifact that bridges the gap between them. For example, resource planning cannot accurately be done unless there is an architecture to base the work division on, but the scope of the product and resources available are important when its architecture is being developed. One of the six "Industry-Proven Best Practices" the Rational Unified Process (RUP) builds on is the use of component architectures [99]. On the other hand, in agile methodologies such as eXtreme Programming (XP) [14,15] the architecture is not designed or documented as such beforehand, due to the assumption that requirements will change during development and the design will need to change accordingly.

But architectural issues are included in the methodology: the code is to be constantly refactored [54] to ensure the system always has a feasible architecture.

2.3 Architectural Documentation

Producing accurate documentation that is used in practice and continuously keeping it up to date are always challenges in the software industry. Literature on architectural documentation usually avoids these issues and instead focuses on good practices for architectural documentation.

The uses of architectural documentation are many. First, an architectural description serves as a communication tool between stakeholders of the system [13,35]. An architectural description describes a system at a high level understandable by e.g. as managers, customers, and users, as other artifacts such as source code or test cases are not. A system's possibilities – and limitations – can be explained to these stakeholders. Second, architectural descriptions can be analyzed before a system is built [13,32,34,86,88,89]. This makes it possible to compare several alternative architectures beforehand. Third, by describing several systems at a high level, common patterns or styles are discernible. In this way, it becomes possible to describe patterns [28,55,159] with known properties, which can be used when designing or evolving other systems [34,76,174].

Considering the various existing graphical notations for capturing different aspects of software systems, it seems as visual representations are intuitively appealing to humans. Usually, the high-level structure of a software system is thought of as a box-and-line diagram. But graphical descriptions of a system's architecture tend to be ambiguous [13,34]. There may be plenty of boxes and arrows, but it may be less clear what they mean exactly. Is a box a design-time entity or a runtime entity? Not least the lines tend to be of many kinds. Does a line represent a static or a dynamic relationship? What type of relationship – uses, sends message to, inherits from, etc.? What does an arrowhead mean? Sometimes the difference between two types of connectors is not obvious at first. One common example is the difference between control flow and data flow; sometimes only one or the other occurs,

sometimes they coincide, and sometimes they are directed at the opposite directions (e.g. an asynchronous request for data). In architectural documentation, it is important to provide a key to the graphical notation, or if possible use a standardized language [35] (such languages are described in section 2.4).

It has also been repeatedly emphasized that the *rationale* for the choices made should be documented [35,76][3]. By understanding the choices made maintainers will arguably be able to perform changes efficient and without violating the conceptual integrity of the system [24,110]. Also, by documenting the assumptions for certain choices, it is possible to re-evaluate the existing architecture as soon as these assumptions change.

Views

Other engineering products, such as integrated circuits, buildings, or cities are represented differently depending on the purpose. For example, a city map[4] may use different colors to denote parks, buildings, and industry areas, but another map of the exactly same city contains only straight colored lines with dots evenly spread. Each type of map is an abstraction of the reality, emphasizing different aspects while ignoring others, designed to address different needs: those of tourists or subway commuters. No abstractions reflect the full richness of reality, and no single abstraction can therefore be used for all purposes. For a single piece of software, it is obvious that its source code structure may differ completely from e.g. its interaction patterns during runtime, and it makes sense to design, analyze, and document both. With the words of Brooks: "As soon as we attempt to diagram software structure, we find it to constitute not one, but several, general directed graphs, superimposed one upon another" [27]. In architectural documentation and design, this has given rise to concept of *views*, a term

[3] As we saw earlier, some argue that rationale is indeed an integral part of an architecture. See page 20.

[4] The most common analogy used for software architecture is that of building construction, which some authors claim to be "perfect, profound" [172], while others find the metaphor "tired" [35].

being defined by the IEEE 1471-2000 [76] as being a “representation of a whole system from the perspective of a related set of concerns”.

Such views are typically visualized graphically as a box-and-lines drawing, with different types of boxes and lines in different views. For example, in a runtime view of an object-oriented system, we may have the component type “object” and the connector type “message” to our disposal while a design-time view might include “classes” and “inheritance”. See Figure 1. There are research on how to enable formal reasoning around how the components of different views are correlated [67,196] (see also discussion on UML on page 32).

The language used can have a stronger or weaker syntax and semantics; it is not uncommon in practice to not use an established notation but rely completely on intuition for interpretation; it is also common to mix components and relationships that should belong to different views, making the descriptions unnecessarily ambiguous. Such a description can be useful for informal discussions or overviews of a system, but should not be documented for the future – it will most surely be misunderstood and should not be seen as a substitution for more detailed descriptions in separate views [35]. In Figure 1 we have adhered to UML [19,183]; there is a class diagram to the left and a collaboration diagram to the right[5].

A particular system is described in different views, but when discussing systems in general the concepts of *viewpoints* [76] or *viewtypes* [35] can be used to denote a template from which a view is instantiated, or a language in which the particular system is described – “a viewpoint is to a view as a class is to an object” [76]. IEEE 1471-2000 defines “viewpoint” as follows [76]:

[5] What is usually called views in architectural terminology is called diagrams in UML.

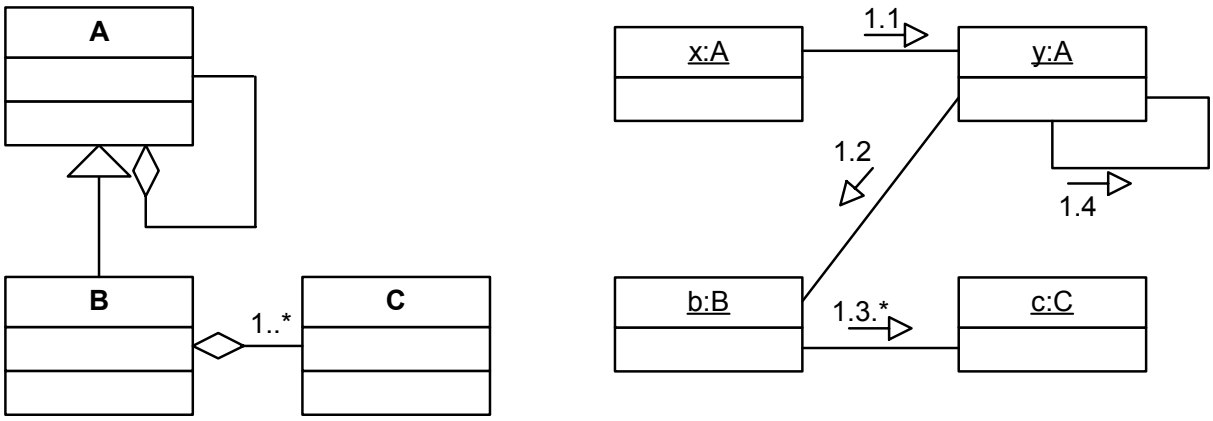

Figure 1. Two views of the same simple system.

> A specification of the conventions for constructing and using a view. A pattern or template from which to develop individual views by establishing the purposes and audience for a view and the techniques for its creation and analysis.

This notion is not widely spread, and especially in early architectural literature the terms are not separated, and in some contexts we would today rather use the terms viewpoint or viewtype instead of view.

Various authors have suggested complementary views, the most known (and the earliest) perhaps being Kruchten's 4+1 views, where a logical view, a process view, a physical view, and a development view are complemented and interconnected with a use case view [98]. Hofmeister et al suggest four similar views: a conceptual view, an execution view, a module view, and a code view [71]. Buschmann et al list two different sets of four views, one coinciding with the one given by Hofmeister et al and the other, now called "architectures", with Kruchten's four views, not including the use case view [28]. Other authors have suggested that four views are not sufficient and have described additional views perceived useful in at least some cases, such as an architectonic viewpoint [122] and a build-time view [181]. Recent approaches to views recognize the fact that "no fixed set of views is appropriate

for every system" [35]. Clements et al provide broad guidelines and classify views in three *viewtypes* [35]. IEEE 1471-2000 does not list any views other than to exemplify; instead it specifies what is required of a view: it must document which stakeholders and which concerns it addresses, and the rationale for choosing it [76].

2.4 Architecture Description Languages

As we have seen, architectures can be described roughly as a set of *components* connected by *connectors*. Depending on the application domain and the view, the descriptions can contain other entities as well. A number of formal languages have been developed to allow for formal and unambiguous descriptions. Such an *Architecture Description Language* (ADL) usually builds on a textual representation, which is easily visualized graphically (see e.g. Figure 3 on page 31).

An ADL defines the basic elements to be used in an architectural description. Different ADLs are designed to meet slightly different criteria, and have somewhat different underlying concepts. An ADL specifies a well-defined syntax and some semantics, making it possible to combine the elements into meaningful structures. The advantages of describing an architecture using a formal ADL are several:

- Some formal analyses can be performed, such as checking whether an architectural description is consistent and complete[6].
- The architectural design can be unambiguously understood and communicated between the participants of a software project.

---

[6] Allen provides a good explanation of these notions: "Informally, consistency means that the description makes sense; that different parts of the description do not contradict each other. Completeness is the property that a description contains enough information to perform an analysis; that the description does not omit details necessary to show a certain fact or to make a guarantee. Thus, completeness is *with respect to* a particular analysis or property." [7]

- One may also hope for a means to bridge the gap between architectural design and program code by transformation of a formal architectural description to a programming language, or the opposite.

The rest of this chapter describes the basic characteristics of some ADLs briefly.

Rapide, UniCon, Aesop, Wright

The *Rapide* language [117], developed at Stanford University builds on the notion of partial ordered sets. It is both an architecture description language and an executable programming or simulation language. A number of supporting tools have been built, e.g. for performing static analysis and for simulation.

UniCon [174], developed at Carnegie Mellon University, is "an architectural-description language intended to aid designers in defining software architectures in terms of abstractions that they find useful". UniCon is designed to make "a smooth transition to code" [174], through a very generous type mechanism: components and connectors can be of types that are built-in in a programming language (e.g. function call), or be of more complex types, user-defined as code templates, code generators or informal guidelines.

Aesop [56], also developed at Carnegie Mellon University, is addressing the problem of style reuse. With Aesop, it is possible to define styles and use them when constructing an actual system. Aesop provides a generic toolkit and communication infrastructure that users can customize with architectural style descriptions and a set of tools that they would like to use for architectural analysis. Tools that have been integrated with Aesop styles include: cycle detectors, type consistency verifiers, formal communication protocol analyzers, C-code generators, compilers, structured language editors, and rate-monotonic analysis tools.

Wright [7], also developed at Carnegie Mellon University, is a formal language including the following elements: *components* with *ports*, *connectors* with *roles*, and *glue* to attach roles to ports. Architectural styles can be formalized in the language with predicates, thus allowing for static checks to determine the consistency and completeness of an architecture.

ACME and ADML

Acme [58], developed by a team at Carnegie Mellon University, can be seen as a second-generation ADL, in that its intention is to identify a kind of least common denominator for ADLs. It is thus not designed to be a new or competing language, but rather to be an interchange format between other languages and tools, and also allow for use of general tools. One could devise one tool searching for illegal cycles, and use it for descriptions in any ADLs, as long as there exist translation functionality between that ADL and Acme. Acme defines 7 basic element types: components, connectors, systems, ports, roles, representations, and rep-maps (representation maps). See Figure 2 for a description of the five most important (figure slightly modified version from [58]). Acme's textual representation of a small architecture is found in Figure 3 (after [58]).

As was implied above, the success of Acme is highly dependent on the existence of tools and translators. The research team at SEI behind Acme has constructed the graphical architectural editor AcmeStudio. Translators between UniCon, Aesop, Wright, and Rapide have also been constructed [58]. However, voices doubting Acmes universality can also be heard, stating that "its growth into an all-encompassing mediating service never has taken place […] Acme should probably be considered as a separate architecture description language altogether" [45].

The Open Group found room for improvement of Acme and have defined the *Architecture Description Markup Language* (ADML): "ADML adds to ACME a standardized representation (parsable by ordinary XML parsers), the ability to define links to objects outside the architecture (such as rationale, designs, components, etc.), straightforward ability to interface with commercial repositories, and transparent extensibility" [141].

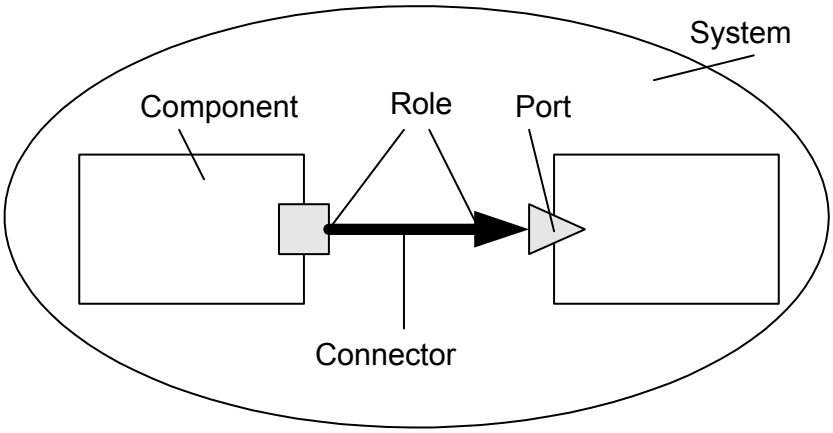

Figure 2. Elements of an Acme description.

```
System simple_cs = {
 Component client = { Port sendRequest }
 Component server = { Port receiveRequest }
 Connector rpc = { Roles {caller, callee} }
 Attachments : {
  client.sendRequest to rpc.caller ;
  server.receiveRequest to rpc.callee
 }
}
```

Figure 3. An Acme description of a small architecture.

Industrial ADLs

As an example of an industrial ADL, let us briefly present *Koala* from Philips. *Koala* is a component model and architecture description language used to develop consumer products such as televisions, video recorders, CD and DVD players [188,189]. Koala deals with source code components with not only "provides" interfaces (the ordinary API) but also explicit "requires" interfaces (what the component requires from its environment), similar to input and

output “ports” in Acme. While being an ADL used for modeling, Koala involves source code generation and is also a runtime component model.

The Fundamental Modeling Concepts (FMC) [65,90,91] is “primarily a consistent and coherent way to think and talk about dynamic systems” [65], but also comes with “a universal notation originating from existing standards [which] is defined to visualize the structures and to communicate in a coherent way” [65]. Its main focus is on human comprehension and separates conceptual structures from implementation structures. It is based on theoretical foundations such as Petri nets, and contains three distinct types of structures: compositional structures, dynamic structures (behavior), and value structures (data). FMC can be seen as an Architectural Description Language for describing the runtime view of a system. FMC has successfully been applied to real-life systems in practice at SAP, Siemens, Alcatel and other companies. It has also been used in a research project to examine, model, and document the Apache web server [61,64].

We should also discuss *UML* (Unified Modeling Language), the current de facto-standard for object-oriented design and modeling [19,71,183], but parts of it are also used for modeling non-object-oriented software as well as for systems engineering. UML has adopted the notion of modeling in several viewpoints, although in UML views are called “diagrams”; there are class diagrams, object diagrams, statechart diagrams, sequence diagrams, deployment diagrams, etc. In each diagram there are different components such as processes, nodes, etc. Can UML be used for architectural modeling? Is UML an ADL? There are different answers to this question, depending on whom you ask and what their criteria for an ADL are [36]. Some argue that since UML is de facto used in industry to model architectures, UML *is* an ADL [93,97]. Others argue that UML lacks many features a fully-fledged ADL would have: “UML lacks direct support for modeling and exploiting architectural styles, explicit software connectors, and local and global architectural constraints” [124]. The confusion that may arise from using the same notation for different levels of abstraction has also been pointed out [70]. UML is not primarily intended to be an ADL, and “if the primary purpose of a language is to

provide a vehicle of expression that matches the intuitions and practices of users, then that language should aspire to reflect those intentions and practices" [126]. UML can be extended to incorporate ADL characteristics, for example by extending existing diagram types [156]. UML has also been subject to research on how architectural views can be correlated. There are e.g. approaches to defining the semantic correlations between entities in different UML diagrams [196] and to combine elements of different diagram types into more expressive diagram types [67].

The big advantage of UML seems to be that it is widely used and understood, and depending on the context, it may be a good or bad choice; Hofmeister et al chose UML to describe software architectures, with the motivation that although "some of our architecture concepts are not directly supported by existing UML elements […] the benefits to be gained by using a standardized, well-understood notation outweigh the drawbacks" [71]. Medvidovic et al are along the same line: "using UML has the benefits of leveraging mainstream tools, skills, and processes" [124].

UML *models* are defined by *meta models*, which in turn are defined by *meta-meta models*. The meta model level defines the language of models, i.e. meta models define legal UML specifications (e.g. connections between classes). This architecture of the language allows users to define new constructs. The idea of using the meta model level for extending UML with architectural constructs has been investigated by Medvidovic et al [124], who also investigated the possibility of constraining UML with its built in constraint language, OCL (Object Constraint Language) [19]; this would enable existing UML tools to without modification work with architectural models. Their conclusion was that, whichever strategy chosen "adapting UML to address architectural concerns seems to require reasonable effort, to be a useful complement to ADLs (and, potentially, their analysis tools), and to be a practical step toward mainstream architectural modeling" [124].

The specification of UML 2.0 was recently officially adopted [140]. Some of the new language features are of particular interest for the present thesis. "A first-class extension

mechanism [which] allows modelers to add their own metaclasses" [140] could possibly allow for architectural extensions in line with the suggestions of Medvidovic et al [124]. There is "built-in support for component-based development to ease modeling of applications realized in Enterprise JavaBeans, CORBA components or COM+" [140]. There is also "support for run-time architectures [which] allows modeling of object and data flow among different parts of a system" [140]. How well UML 2.0 is received by the architectural community, and to what extent UML 2.0 will be used in practice to model software architecture remain to be seen.

Other ADLs

These were only examples of languages aspiring to be ADLs. There are numerous others with more or less exotic names such as *ArTek*, *C2*, *CODE*, *ControlH*, *Demeter*, *FR*, *Gestalt*, *LILEAnna*, *MetaH*, *Modechart*, *RESOLVE*, *SADL*, and *Weaves*; see e.g. [126,163,165] for further references.

2.5 Architectural Analysis

Given an architectural description, it becomes possible to analyze it. The purpose of the analysis may be e.g. to evaluate whether the design is good enough before implementing it, to compare different alternative architectures, or to estimate the impact of a planned change to an existing system. The approach to the analysis depends on its purpose; given a description in a formal ADL it is possible to analyze it statically for consistency and completeness, it may also be possible to execute or simulate it [6,7,117]. Another approach is to use stakeholder-generated scenarios to analyze what happens in certain scenarios; extra-functional attributes such as maintainability are typical candidates for this type of analysis. This section will describe informal analysis methods.

An important observation reported from case studies with informal analysis, apart from the actual evaluation results, is the effect the analysis process has on people. These are explicitly said to be both technical and social [12,88,89]. The analysis "acts as a catalyzing activity on an organization", in the meaning that "participants end up with a better understanding of the

architecture" and generates "deeper insights into the trade-offs that are implicit in the architecture" [12], simply because the issue is brought to attention. The importance of letting everybody involved influence th7e choices made is emphasized [12,19,20,88,89], which in itself is an important step forward to create quality software.

None of these analysis methods are designed for any specific quality attributes or software metrics, but rather to serve as a framework leading the analyst to focus on the right questions at the right time. *Any* quality attribute can be analyzed with these methods; examples are modifiability [88,102], cost [89,102], availability [89], and performance [87,102]. If anything, SAAM is biased towards evaluating maintainability.

SAAM

The *Software Architecture Analysis Method* (SAAM) uses scenarios to evaluate quality properties of an architecture [12,34,86]. Scenarios are developed by different stakeholders as illustrations of likely or important possible future events affecting the system. These scenarios are then "executed", meaning that their impact on the system when they occur is assessed. Different scenarios are used to estimate different properties; so can e.g. the scenario "the user presses the 'start' button" address performance by tracing which components need to be involved, how much database or network access etc. A scenario like "the commercial database used is exchanged for a competitor" addresses maintainability: if many components are affected, the database upgrade will likely be difficult and expensive.

SAAM cannot give any absolute measurements on quality properties, but should rather be used to compare candidate architectures. The results are of the sort "system *X* is more maintainable than system *Y* with respect to change scenarios *A*, *B*, and *C*, but less maintainable with respect to scenarios *D* and *E; X* has higher performance in scenarios *F* but lower in scenario *G* and *H*". These results thus form a basis for project decisions where priorities as short-term and long-term costs, time-to-market, and future reusability are weighed against each other. To be able to compare architectures, they must be described in a consistent and understandable way – thus some sort of ADL must form the basis of the

analysis. For the outcome of the analysis to be reliable, it is crucial that the selected scenarios are indeed representative for actual future scenarios. SAAM therefore emphasizes the participation of all stakeholders of the system, i.e. project managers, users, developers etc.

A tool prototype for aiding in SAAM analysis (as well as aiding in documenting architecture in general), "SAAMtool", has been built [85].

ATAM

The *Architecture Tradeoff Analysis Method* (ATAM) also builds on scenarios generated by stakeholders [34,89]. Here, the importance of making tradeoffs has been noticed, i.e. the decision needed to choose between alternative architectures to arrive at a set of properties that are acceptable. It is naïve to believe that architectural design aims at finding *the* architecture, meaning the cheapest to build *and* the most resource-effective *and* the most portable *and* the most reusable:

> It is obvious that one cannot maximize all quality attributes. This is the case in any engineering discipline. […] The strongest bridge is not the lightest, quickest to erect, or cheapest. The fastest, best-handling car doesn't carry large amounts of cargo and is not fuel efficient. The best-tasting dessert is never the lowest in calories. [12]

Many such quality attributes are correlated to some extent with each other, meaning that improving one often improves another – or deteriorates it. For example, optimizing performance often makes the program less easy to understand and maintain. The engineering approach is thus to try and find an *acceptable* tradeoff, considering not only the technical aspects of the software, but include all related concerns such as management and financial issues. ATAM supports projects when discussing the system and agreeing upon an acceptable tradeoff by introducing the notion of *tradeoff points*:

> Once the architectural sensitivity points have been determined, finding tradeoff points is simply the identification of architectural elements to which multiple attributes are sensitive. For example, the performance of a client-server architecture might be highly

> sensitive to the number of servers (performance increases, within some range, by increasing the number of servers). The availability of that architecture might also vary directly with the number of servers. However, the security of the system might vary inversely with the number of servers (because the system contains more potential points of attack). The number of servers, then, is a tradeoff point with respect to this architecture. It is an element, potentially one of many, where architectural tradeoffs will be made, consciously or unconsciously. [89]

The ATAM is somewhat more detailed than SAAM and defines nine steps. It requires business drivers and quality attributes to be well specified in advance as well as detailed architectural descriptions to be available. In some contexts, ATAM is a good choice, but in other types of projects of more exploratory kind, it may be unfeasible.

ARID and QASAR

The *Active Reviews for Intermediate Designs* method (ARID) [34] builds on *Active Design Reviews* (ADR) and incorporates the idea of scenarios from SAAM and ATAM. It is intended to be a formal review procedure involving several stakeholders for evaluating partial architectural descriptions. The *quality attribute-oriented software architecture* design method (QASAR) puts architectural analysis and evaluation in an iterative development context [20]. According to this methodology, one should first design an architecture that fulfills the functional requirements and then refine the architecture until the quality attributes are satisfactory.

Clustering Techniques

We can also mention *clustering* techniques. Cluster analysis means grouping entities together in clusters, based on a notion of similarity so that intra-cluster similarity or cohesion is high and inter-cluster coupling is low. Clustering is used in as different areas as e.g. studies of galaxies, chip design, economics, statistics, classification of species, and business area analysis [118,193].

In the software domain, coupling and cohesion are believed to impact extra-functional attributes such as maintainability, flexibility, portability, and reusability [13]. By considering a collection of software components a cluster at an appropriate level of abstraction, it is therefore possible to reason about different properties of the particular division of components into clusters. Clusters may be defined differently to achieve different goals. If clusters denote source code modules, and procedures are considered components, it is possible to organize a system so that procedures e.g. sharing resources are collected into cohesive modules [160]. If clusters denote nodes in a network, it is possible to e.g. increase computing parallelism by maximizing the cohesion inside a cluster and minimize the coupling between the clusters, i.e. maximizing the number of connections between components within a single cluster and minimize the number of inter-cluster component dependencies [130]. These approaches are used to reorganize existing systems, where there are dependencies that were maybe not anticipated in the design. They therefore serve as tools for evolution of an existing system rather than during architectural design prior to system implementation.

One challenge when designing cluster algorithms is how to define what "similarity" means, another is to decide whether one searches for the optimal solution or only one that is "good enough" [160,193]. Yet another challenge is to find a level at which to try and find a suitable solution: the most cohesive cluster is the one with all components inside it [193].

2.6 Architectural Styles and Patterns

As software systems have been built and used over the years, certain ways of solving recurring problems have been repeatedly tried and proven to be "good". Such solutions have been generalized and made public in form of *patterns* or *styles*[7], and given names such as "model-view-controller", "publisher-subscriber", and "client-server". We can note that there are patterns for all levels of abstraction; Buschmann et al divide patterns into three levels:

[7] The terms "pattern" and "style" are often used interchangeably; the present thesis will not distinguish between these terms or elaborate upon possible differences.

architectural patterns, *design* patterns, and code-level *idioms* [28]. Patterns are described according to a three-part schema consisting of a *problem* within a *context*, and a *solution* [28,55,159]. Attempts have been made to formalize what constitutes a pattern in a formal language [2], but so far the great impact of patterns have been at the level of increasing the knowledge of developers and architects.

There are several benefits of patterns. First, the solution is proven to be a good technical solution for a certain type of problem. Instead of spending time inventing something, one can immediately adopt a pattern that most likely is better than any new invention. Second, patterns form a common vocabulary among developers, so other developers will immediately grasp the basic idea when a system is said to conform to a certain pattern.

A style typically addresses specific problems, often quality-related:

> When we have models of quality attributes that we believe in, we can annotate architectural styles with their prototypical behavior with respect to quality attributes. We can then talk about performance styles (such as priority-based preemptive scheduling) or modifiability styles (such as layering) or reliability styles (such as analytic redundancy) and then discuss the ways in which these styles can be composed. [12]

Some styles found in literature are explained briefly below. We have listed styles discussed in existing literature, even though it can be argued that some of these rather are e.g. lower-level "techniques" (object-orientation) It may also be noted that some styles emphasize static structure while others are useful to describe the dynamic behavior of a system.

With an *object-oriented* architecture, the focus is on the different items in the system, modeled as objects, classes etc. Object-orientation as an architectural style is discussed in literature [12,20,174], but it can be argued whether object-orientation is an architectural style or belongs to lower levels of design.

In a *pipe-and-filter* system the data flow in the system is in focus [12,35,173,174,190]. There are a number of computational components, where output from one component forms the input to the next. This style could be implemented e.g. as Unix processes and pipes, threads with shared buffers, or a main function calling sub functions (filters) in a certain order (the pipes are implemented as parameters to these functions). This is a suitable style when likely maintenance tasks can be expressed as reconfigurations of filters; depending on the implementation it may also be possible to allow users to reconfigure filters. This style fits a program that can be expressed as analyzing and formatting text or data (for example, compilers are often described as pipe-and-filter systems [4,174]), but does not express user interaction or data storage.

A *blackboard* (or *repository*) architecture draws the attention to the data in the system [12,173,174,190]. There is a central data store, the *blackboard*, and *agents* writing and reading data. The agents may be implicitly invoked when data changes, or explicitly by some sort of external action such as a user command. A database can easily be described by the blackboard architectural style, where the blackboard itself of course is the data in the database. Examples of agents are client applications, database triggers (small pieces of program code that are executed automatically when data changes), and administration tools.

In a *client-server* architecture [12,20,171,173,174,190], the system is organized as a number of clients issuing requests to a server, which acts and responds accordingly. Although client-server is often thought of in terms of hardware, it is possible to implement a system completely in software running locally organized as clients accessing a server. The rationale of organizing processes in a system in this manner is that the server represents a resource that can or must be utilized by several clients. In a hardware client-server system the resource is typically file storage, a database, a printer, high computing power, or the ability of performing a specific service (such as sending email). What further distinguishes the client-server style from arbitrary communication is that clients are typically not aware of each other, can connect

and disconnect dynamically, and all activities are initiated on request from a client, not the server.

With a *layered* (or onion) architecture, focus is laid on the different abstraction levels in a system, such as the software in a personal computer [12,20,173,174,190]. It is typically visualized as a stack of boxes or a number of concentric circles. The layered style appears in design time and reveals how source code modules depend on each other. The layers imply how the modules, or layers if you want, are supposed to use each other, and the fundamental interpretation is that any layer can use the layer underneath it, although there is room for many variants [35]. By separating different levels of concerns, the layered style facilitates maintenance. For example, a portability layer may be introduced at the bottom, abstracting away the hardware and software platforms underneath it.

A close relative of the client-server style and the layered style is the *n-tier* architectural style [13,35,170]. The tiers of this style are organized as a stack of components interacting in a client-server manner. The n-tier style can also be confused with the layered style: both the layered style and the n-tier style divide a piece of software into different logical parts that are "ordered". But while layers are foremost a design time artifact (and may be compiled into one executable), tiers are easily discernible in runtime, as the different tiers typically execute on different computers, and the connection between them are made in runtime (typically as different types of network connections). The n-tier style is the common paradigm in information systems, not least those based on the Internet. There is data and end user client applications, and in a three-tier architecture there is a mediating component in between. The computing, storage, and networking capacity can be individually adjusted at each tier to maximize system performance; the system can also be adapted to take hardware limitations into account such as low network bandwidth to the clients. Three-tier architectures are believed to be maintainable, scalable, reusable, and reliable [170].

Software systems often control physical processes. There are a number of software paradigms for *process control* [174,190]. The significant properties are that the software takes its input

from sensors (such as a flow sensor), and perform control actions (such as closing a valve). The control loop may be of feedback or feed-forward type.

Heterogeneous Architectural styles

Patterns or styles at the architectural level are more about concepts than about implementation, and a very important use is to promote understanding and communication among humans. For many systems it is therefore appropriate to describe them with several styles simultaneously; such systems are called heterogeneous [12]. As with views, styles abstract away certain elements and emphasize others. "The glasses you choose will determine the style that you 'see'" [35].

Bass et al identify three kinds of heterogeneity [12]:

- **Locationally heterogeneous.** Different runtime parts use different styles.
- **Hierarchically heterogeneous.** A system of one style can be seen as decomposed into components, each of which may be structured according to another style.
- **Simultaneously heterogeneous.** Several styles serve as a description of the same system. E.g. a multi-user database can be viewed as both a blackboard and a client-server architecture. This heterogeneity "recognizes that styles do not partition software architectures into nonoverlapping, clean categories" [12].

Some styles and patterns by their nature describe a system on a very high level, while other styles may be applied on lower levels. For example, a three-tier system is likely to implement at least the middle tier with a layered architecture, and an object-oriented language is probably used. It is hard to conceive the opposite, a system that is described as layered on the highest level, and where some layers are tiered – layers call each other locally while tiers are distributed on several nodes.

2.7 Technology Summary

We have surveyed the literature to find a uniform description of what a *component* is. The most common notion is that the term most often means a deliverable piece of executable

(binary) software, manufactured out-of-house, or a runtime artifact (often the runtime instance of a delivered binary component), but it can also be built in-house, and/or be the same as a code module. We found that there is a great difference between components resulting from top-down design *decomposition* and implementation-time *composition*.

We have studied the notion of *software architecture*, and discussed how to describe and analyze it. This term concerns the *structure* of components, although one can discern a change in wording to avoid confusion with the word *component* as described above. Instead, the word *entity* can be used to generally denote a piece of software, be it discernible in runtime or implementation time. The types of components/entities to choose depend on what aspects of the system one want to see: runtime or implementation-time properties, and this gives rise to the notion of *architectural views*. The architecture of a piece of software can be described formally in an *Architecture Description Language* (*ADL*) , or less formal in e.g. UML, which may be a good enough choice for many practical cases. We also noted that many system architectures conform to well-known *architectural styles* or *patterns* such as the *pipe-and-filter* and *client-server* styles, and described some of these. We presented two methods for informal analysis of architectures: the Software Architecture Analysis Method, SAAM, and the Architecture Tradeoff Analysis Method, ATAM.

3. SOFTWARE EVOLUTION

The present thesis is said to address software evolution with certain tools: reasoning in terms of components and architecture. But what is software evolution? What is evolution? In general, evolution is "progressive change" [114]. In the software domain, it may denote several things. An executing program may modify itself automatically, if evolutionary programming techniques such as genetic algorithms have been implemented [11,128]. The process of evolving a specification into an executing program is also a type of evolution, but this activity is usually called "development", and the sub activities are named e.g. "design", "implementation", "compilation", "build" rather than "evolution". But when considering the development of a program at the level above, we find the most common use of the term "evolution", or at least the one we are concerned with in the present thesis: the process a software system undergoes as it is continuously modified and released in new versions.

3.1 The Evolution of Evolution

This notion is not new. Perry refers to Brooks [26] and state that: "Evolution is one of Brooks' […] essential characteristics of software systems: the only systems that are not evolving are the dead ones. Evolution is a basic fact of software life." [147] Unless a system is evolved it will age, meaning becoming less and less satisfying for the needs at hand. Parnas establishes that "software aging can, and will occur in all successful products" [145]. In the seventies, Lehman formulated his first "laws of software evolution" [113], which will be returned to later in this chapter (page 46f). Closely connected to the concept of software evolution is that of software deterioration, design erosion and similar [12,20,80,145,174,187]. As systems evolve, they become harder and harder to evolve further, and the original design choices are violated in more and more places. In short, such systems' complexity increases unless work is done to reduce it. Software evolution, software deterioration, and software aging are closely related: successful systems need to be evolved so as not to age, but while being evolved they typically deteriorate. Approaches how to successfully evolve systems (to

avoid them aging) therefore have to take software deterioration into account. We will return to all of these notions throughout this chapter.

What and Why of Evolution

Lehman and Ramil have not only focused on "the *how* of software evolution" but "the *what* and the *why* of evolution" [114][8]. They describe a program classification scheme they name *SPE*. In this classification scheme, software is divided into *S*-type, *P*-type, and *E*-type. *S* stands for "specification", but could also denote "static", and includes programs that "implement solutions to problems that can be completely and unambiguously specified, for which, in theory at least, a program implementation can be proven correct […] with respect to the specification." *E* stands for "evolution", and *E*-type software is defined as "a program that mechanises a human or societal activity" [114] and includes all programs that "operate or address a problem or activity in the real world". Programs of type *S* do not evolve according to the authors, since the requirements are stated formally and unambiguously, and they can be made to fulfill their requirements once and for all, and be proven to do be correct. *E*-type programs on the other hand "are intrinsically evolutionary" [114]; to remain satisfactory to their users they must continuously evolve. It is meaningless to talk about the "correctness" of *E*-type programs; they can only be more or less satisfactory in a certain context. They have to evolve to stay competitive and used, since the context in which they execute evolve: businesses evolve, societies evolve, laws and regulations evolve, the technical environment in which the software executes and is used evolve, the users' expectations of the software evolve. These effects are partly due to numerous factors out of the software's control, but they

[8] Lehman and Ramil have worked with software evolution for decades. Instead of referencing the original publications, we will use this reference throughout the section, since it summarizes much of what they have done. Also, they have made some differences over the years and we reflect their most recent statements.

are also effects of the use of the software itself. *P*-type programs can take the properties of both *S*-type and *E*-type programs and are not further discussed.

Lehman and Ramil also describe areas of software related evolution, and identify five different "levels". At the lowest level, we find what is usually called "development", i.e. progressive refinement from an initial vision via design and implementation to a released program. At the second level, "a *sequence* of *versions*, *releases* or *upgrades* of a program or software system" is discussed, the type of evolution mainly dealt with in the present thesis: "changes in the *purpose* for which the software was acquired" makes the software deteriorate in relation to its context, and the assumptions underlying the software are no longer valid. "In short, software is *evolved* to maintain the validity of its embedded assumption set, its behaviour under execution, the satisfaction of its stakeholders and its compatibility with the world *as it now is* or *as expected to be*." At the third level, applications, i.e. activities supported by the software, evolve. This is partly because the software itself affects its applications as new opportunities for enhancements and extensions are discovered, which drives a never-ending need for further evolution. At the fourth level, the processes of software evolution themselves have to evolve as research and practice finds new means of managing software evolution, and as the software and its contexts evolves. Finally, at the fifth level, models of software evolution, i.e. classification schemes such as is presented here, has to evolve. "The process evolves. So must models of it."

"Changes are generally incremental and small relative to the entity as a whole but exceptions to this may occur." [114] Our cases are such exceptions: redesign part of a system or systems integration are relatively large changes.

Lehman's Laws of Software Evolution

In 1974, Lehman formulated his first "laws of software evolution" for *E*-type systems [114]. They are based on observations of the evolution of the IBM OS/360 operating system, and have later been revisited and supported by other observations; currently there are eight laws, see Table 1.

Table 1: Lehman's laws of software evolution (after [114]).

Law No., Brief Name	**Formulation of Law**
I. Continuing Change	*E*-type systems must be continually adapted else they become progressively less satisfactory.
II. Increasing Complexity	As an *E*-type system evolves its complexity increases unless work is done to maintain or reduce it.
III. Self Regulation	Global *E*-type system evolution processes are self regulating.
IV. Conservation of Organisational Stability	The average effective global activity rate in an evolving *E*-type system tends to remain constant over product lifetime.
V. Conservation of Familiarity	On average, the incremental growth tends to remain constant or to decline.
VI. Continuing Growth	The functional content of *E*-type systems must be continually increased to maintain user satisfaction over their lifetime.
VII. Declining Quality	The quality of *E*-type systems will appear to be declining unless they are rigorously maintained and adapted to operational environment changes.
VIII. Feedback System	*E*-type evolution processes constitute multi-level, multi-loop, multi-agent feedback systems and must be treated as such to achieve significant improvement for other than the most primitive processes.

That is, *E*-type systems continually change, continually grow, become more and more complex, and loose in quality unless conscious efforts are spent in reducing these effects. Any evolution approach should try and mitigate the negative effects of these laws.

Software Deterioration

As said previously, *E*-type software has to evolve to avoid its being outdated, old-fashioned, inferior to its competitors, etc. [145] But as it is evolved, the typical observation is that it *deteriorates* or *degrades* [12,20,80,145,174], an effect sometimes called "design erosion" [187]. Each change is done under time pressure, and the maintainer short-cuts some original design decisions for one reason or another: they are unknown (they might even be undocumented), they might be misunderstood, or there is simply not enough time to implement the change in the way one would want. The result is that the system becomes increasingly harder to maintain.

Of course, as Lehman's second law states (see Table 1 on page 47) software deterioration has to be consciously considered and addressed to the greatest extent possible during system evolution. *Refactoring* is the activity of transforming the code to a functional equivalent in which it is easier to implement a particular requested change [54], thus "maintaining maintainability" [104,150]. Since refactoring apparently adds no value to the customer, only costs, it may be neglected. But in retrospect, it might be apparent that the code should have been refactored long ago, before it deteriorated too far.

From time to time, a requested change may be very awkward to implement in the existing architecture, and the choice is between implementing it in a way that makes the system deteriorate, and put a seemingly disproportional amount of work into refactoring it while implementing the change. There is thus a constant struggle between preventing software aging [145] and preventing software deterioration, and a constant tradeoff to make for the organization how much effort to spend now and how much to spend later. There are different strategies to this: in eXtreme Programming (XP), constant refactoring is mandated [14,15], in

other cases short-term costs have higher priority. In many cases there is maybe no strategy at all.

3.2 Maintainability

When discussing the *how* of software evolution, the obvious artifact to start looking at is the software itself. Is it possible to distinguish a piece of software that will easily be evolved from one that is more difficult to evolve? To some extent, this seems to be true. There are terms denoting this property as inherent in a system: maintainability, modifiability, portability, etc. In this section we will take a look at different terms and descriptions or definitions of these, then survey approaches to measuring maintainability, and finally describe the recognized effect of software deterioration or software aging: failure to maintain a system's maintainability.

Definitions of Maintainability

There is an abundance of terms used to denote a piece of software's ability to handle change: changeability, expandability, extensibility, extendibility, flexibility, maintainability, and portability (surely, there are more). Not even the definition of, or distinction between these terms is generally agreed upon. But let us take a look at the IEEE Standard Glossary of Software Engineering Terminology [74] and the terms it includes:

> **extendability.** The ease with which a system or component can be modified to increase its storage or functional capacity. *Syn:* **expandability; extensibility.** *See also:* **flexibility; maintainability.**
>
> **flexibility.** The ease with which a system or component can be modified for use in applications or environments other than those for which it was specifically designed. *Syn:* **adaptability.** *See also:* **extendability; maintainability.**
>
> **maintainability.** […] The ease with which a software system or component can be modified to correct faults, improve performance or other attributes, or adapt to a changed environment. *See also:* **extendability; flexibility.** […]

> **portability.** The ease with which a system or component can be transferred from one hardware or software environment to another. *Syn:* **transportability.** *See also:* **machine independent.**

There are more definitions of these terms, see e.g. [12,16,74,197] for definitions of *maintainability*, in essence very similar. The term *modifiability* is not included in the standard glossary referred to above, but let us quote one definition that synthesizes earlier definitions, one that seems reasonable and representative [16]:

> The modifiability of a software system is the ease with which it can be modified to changes in the environment, requirements or functional specification.

The terms are often used more or less as synonyms with different flavors, and it is hard to argue that there are any inherent fundamental differences between these types of changeability. For example, portability is the ease with which a software system or component can be modified to adapt to a certain type of changed environment, and it might be a customer's opinion or business agreement that determines whether a change is an error correction or an extension. The exact meaning of these terms, or differences between them, is not always so important for the work at hand. We will use the terms maintainability and modifiability interchangeably, and include all types of changeability in these terms.

Maintainability Measures at Source Code Level

As Lehman stated in his laws of software evolution, software deterioration gets out of hand *unless* something is done to prevent it. One therefore wants to control software evolution to be able to address software deterioration. Is there a way to measure maintainability? There are numerous approaches to measurement in this area. One approach is to measure the maintainability of the program itself; another is to describe a particular change and estimate the effort required to implement it. These types of measurements have been empirically supported, but one must bear in mind that measurements of the software itself gives but a limited picture of the complexity and richness of the challenges involved in software

maintenance; the software organization, its tools and processes are equally important factors to understanding software maintainability [150].

Many researchers have tried to quantify maintainability in different types of measures [3,9,37,136,137,169,197]. The simplest are Lines Of Code (LOC), percentage commented lines, number of statements, control structure nesting level, average number of commented lines (see e.g. [108,197]). The Halstead source code measures proposed in the seventies [63,168] have been used for describing maintainability [168,169]. More sophisticated measures include cyclomatic complexity [3,63,137,166]. Some other complexity measures worth to note: the Function Point measure [52,167], the Object Point measure [52], and DeMarco's specification weight metrics ("bang metrics") [52]. These require human intervention (to e.g. grade items as "simple", "average", or "complex") since not all parameters are measurable from source code; this is explained by the fact that these measures were designed for cost estimations (before source code is available) rather than of performing measurements on existing code. Although it seems hard to automatically evaluate the quality of documentation, which is an important artifact when maintaining software, there are approaches to it [3,101].

The most well known maintainability measure is probably the Maintainability Index, MI [137,169]. Its formula may seem unintuitive, but is based on empirical observations[9]:

$$MI = 171 - 5.2 \cdot \ln(aveV) - 0.23 \cdot aveV(g') - 16.2 \cdot \ln(aveLOC) + 50 \cdot \sin\left(\sqrt{2.4 \cdot perCM}\right)$$

where *aveV* is the average Halstead Volume *V* per module [63,168], is the average extended cyclomatic complexity per module, *aveLOC* is the average count of lines of code (LOC) per module, and *perCM* is average percent of lines of comments per module. Clearly, the nature of the comments determines whether they contribute to increasing the maintainability of the

[9] The numerical coefficients of the formula have been adjusted over time; the numerals here are from [169].

source code, and so the fourth term of the formula should only be used "if it is believed that the comments in the code significantly contribute to maintainability" [192]. In particular, when comments are out of date, when there are company-standard comment header blocks, copyrights, and disclaimers, or when code has been commented out, the comments are of little value for maintenance purposes, or even make maintenance more difficult [192]. All measures described so far focus on a static system – typically, these measures are validated using expert judgments about the *state* of the software [37,197]. The change in these measures as time passes could be a good measure on software deterioration [9,37,104,151,182].

Maintainability Measures at the Architectural Level

There are not as many measures proposed on the architectural level, but the most obvious aspect to investigate is the interdependencies between components. There are some variants of the number of calls into and number of calls from a component, also called "fan-in" and "fan-out" measures[10] [53,60,68,108], or call graphs [79]. But it has been pointed out that such measures are not as simple as it may first look: from the maintainability point of view there is e.g. a great difference from a function call with only one integer parameter and one with many complex parameters; one must also consider to what extent we are interested in unique calls (to not penalize reuse) [53]. In the FEAST projects, the researchers investigated the number of "subsystems" handled (i.e. changed, added, or deleted) at each change [111,112,151,152].

There are also approaches at an even higher level, where a program is considered completely at the architectural level, as a set of components. The actual source code is then not considered. The Software Architecture Analysis Method (SAAM) described in section 2.5 builds on the creation and evaluation of scenarios. The type of scenario determines the property to estimate: to estimate e.g. performance you need scenarios for the most important runtime scenarios (according to the stakeholders). Of particular interest in the present thesis are *change scenarios* that are used to estimate the modifiability of a system. We should point

[10] This is similar to the cluster analyses described on page 37.

out that SAAM analyses can only be used to compare several alternatives; it is not possible to measure the maintainability of one single system. A scenario describes a particular change, or a class of changes, such as "another commercial database is used". Based on the architectural description available, it is possible to estimate which components would be affected by a change. An architecture in which one scenario affects a large number of components is considered less apt to allow changes than one in which only a few components are affected. The total number of scenarios affecting each component is also taken into account: if all components are affected by about the same number of scenarios, it is an indication of a good division of components. Clements et al describe how ATAM (see section 2.5) was used to reveal risks and highlight tradeoff decisions between maintainability and other attributes [34].

Bengtsson describes a modifiability model based on a system's architectural description [16]. The model distinguishes between three types of modifiability activities: adding new components, adding new plug-ins to existing components, and changing existing component code. This model is used in the *Architecture-Level Modifiability Analysis* (ALMA).

The benefit of architectural approaches is that they can be used before there is source code available. This means they can be used during development or evolution to compare alternatives that are not yet implemented, and choose the most beneficial. The disadvantages with any early estimation based on anticipated scenarios are that the system may be designed for change scenarios that never occur and the methods may require too much effort at a too early stage to motivate a detailed analysis.

3.3 Software Systems Integration

Integrating existing (legacy) systems is a special type of evolution that has become increasingly important [25]. Arguably, the integration strategy to choose in a certain situation depends on many different factors. *Enterprise Application Integration* (EAI) is a relatively common type of integration, judging from available literature [5,44,62,82,115,116,154]. This approach concerns in-house integration of the systems an enterprise *uses* rather than *produces*, when it is typically not an option to modify the existing systems; maybe source

code or documentation is not available (physically or due to legal restrictions). Integrating such enterprise software systems involve using and building wrappers, adapters, or other types of connectors. In such a resulting "loose" integration the system components operate independently of each other and may store data in their own repository. Well-specified interfaces and intercommunication services (middleware) play a crucial role in this type of integration. Johnson applied architectural analysis to integration of such enterprise software systems [82] and found that in spite of the frequent problems to accurately describe architecture of this type of systems because of poor available documentation, architectural analysis can be successfully applied to enterprise systems integration.

It has been suggested that information systems can be linked together at either of five different levels: data, application, method/transaction, business process, and human level, pictured as a pyramid with "human" at the top [149]. Each level presents different challenges, and integration typically becomes more complex and expensive towards the top of the pyramid.

3.4 Evolution in Practice

Software evolution, software aging, software maintenance, software deterioration etc. are everyday experience in software industry, and many approaches to managing these issues have been published. There are conferences and workshops devoted to this, and slowly good practices are emerging, but we are far from a thorough understanding of software evolution. This section briefly refers to a few case studies and approaches related to the present thesis.

There are case studies on how legacy systems have been evolved, for example being web-enabled [81], componentizing them to decrease maintenance costs as well as reuse components in a web application [69,127]. There are reengineering approaches such as how to extract an architecture (or at least structure) from source code [13,22,22,30,61,157], and at a lower level how to understand the code-level invariants and implicit assumptions that should not be violated [50]. Solutions to the issue of tracing structural changes over many versions even when functions change names and the structure of source files is changed have

been proposed [182]. There are approaches to update a system to a new release in runtime, i.e. without shutting it down, based on its componentized architecture [143]. Evolution can be in the form of decentralized, post-deployment development of add-ons, scripts, etc. [142].

There are also architectural approaches to software evolution. There are case studies where evolution is addressed with SAAM [12,119] or ATAM [34,87,94]. The importance of having design rationale documentation available during architectural evolution has been investigated [24,110], and the role of architecture during evolutionary development has been reported [31]. Configuration management techniques has been applied to component based software and software architectures to address evolution [109,184-186]. Different types of variability in software architectures have been explored. Software architecture has been used to explore and understand enterprise software system integration [82], and there are also formal architectural approaches to software evolution [125].

Another promising approach to addressing evolution with components and architecture is that of product lines [33]. If it is possible create an architecture that allows different variants of the same product to be built, depending on which components are used, there will be large cost savings in the long term. This approach poses new challenges to the software community, e.g. mechanisms for variability to enable evolution of the products of the product line [178], new and stronger mechanisms to track changes to prevent the common assets from degradation [80,177], configuration management to control product derivation and evolution at the same time [184,185], and how to use stakeholder scenarios to evaluate the suitability of a product line architecture [94].

3.5 Software Evolution Summary

In this chapter, we looked at definitions of maintainability and closely related terms such as modifiability, portability, and extendibility. There is an abundance of terms and definitions describing the perceived properties of software, which is reflected in the various suggestions of measures of the ability of software o change, the most commonly known of which arguably

is the Maintainability Index, MI. Other existing complexity measures are the Function Point measure and the Object Point measure [52,167].

We have also investigated the fact that basically all software evolves, unless it is discarded altogether or can be specified unambiguously once and for all and correctly implemented. All programs interacting with the real world will be perceived to grow old and ever less useful and competitive. To prevent software from aging it must be enhanced and grow over time to remain satisfactory; this is due to e.g. users requesting more and more functionality and changes in environment. When software is evolved though, effort has to be put into refactoring it so that it does not deteriorate.

4. SYSTEM REDESIGN CASE STUDY

This chapter describes a case study in which part of a system was redesigned with the aid of architectural analysis.

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>
> **Abstract:** *The Software Architecture Analysis Method (SAAM) is a method for analyzing architectural designs, providing support in the design process by comparing different architectures and drawing attention to how a system's quality attributes are affected by its architecture. We used SAAM to analyze the architecture of a nuclear simulation system, and found the method to be of great help when selecting the architecture alternative to use, and to draw attention to the importance of software architecture in large.*
>
> *It has been recognized that the quality properties of a system is to a large extent determined by its architecture; there are, however, other important issues to consider that belong to "lower" design levels. We describe how detailed technical knowledge affected the design of the architecture, and show how the development process in large, and the end product can benefit from taking these issues into consideration already during the architectural design phase.*

4.1 Introduction

A nuclear power plant must be safe for humans and the environment; it must, moreover, be economical. To optimize plant maintenance in these respects, a number of computer simulations are performed. Governmental regulations state how and when safety analyses are to be carried out, to ensure that the plant is safe [176].

In the nuclear business domain, there are already a number of simulation programs [158], many with a development history of decades, already validated and approved by the authorities. Typically, the simulation programs are installed on powerful Unix servers. The input data to an execution is edited and stored in input files. The simulation program is started via a command line with arguments specifying e.g. the input files to use and simulation time. There may be some means of monitoring the progress of the simulation, and when it is finished, the output is available in output files. It is common that several input files are required, and the simulation produces several output files representing different kind of output data. Both input and output files may be either binary or text files.

However, this type of system is somewhat out of date. Files are stored in a central directory tree structure where users must know the naming conventions and the directory structure must be maintained. The users have to perform many tasks manually that could beneficially be done automatically. Since there are files, paper documents, and databases database in different formats, one has to rely on methodologies to ensure that input data is consistent. The problem is made worse by the vast increase in size of data, both input and output, over the years. The user interface is inhomogeneous and hard to master – the users have to collect data from different sources, edit text files describing input, and analyze the results found in the output files. A number of tailor-suited tools, e.g. graphical plot programs, have been written and are used during the analysis of the output, but a more integrated system would improve the efficiency and quality of the work.

To address these problems, Westinghouse Atom developed the PAM system (Plant, Analysis, Methodology). In PAM, data is stored in a relational database, many tasks are done

automatically, data consistency is ensured to a much higher degree through program code and the use of one single database, and all of these features are reached from an integrated graphical user interface, the *client*, executing locally. The question how to handle the simulation programs from within PAM was, however, not easily solved. One straightforward solution would be to port the simulation programs to the client's platform, but this is not practically possible for several reasons:

- Since there are a large number of simulation programs, it would require a huge amount of work.
- Many of the programs are commercial products.
- The programs would have to be re-verified and re-validated at very high costs.

The design of the simulation part therefore had to deal with existing programs, compiled, verified, and validated for a specific platform. We concluded that this requirement must be built into the highest design level, i.e. on the architectural level. Our goal was to find the best solution using different variants of architectural solutions. With "best", we intended the best tradeoff between certain quality properties; we wanted our system to be robust, maintainable, have acceptable performance and be as cheap as possible. We will see how these properties were included in the analysis and how they are affected by the architecture.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: the development of different architectures is described in section 4.2, the evaluation of the four alternatives in section 4.3, and section 4.4 contains other related observations.

4.2 The Architectural Description

At first, we designed one architecture. We soon found it useful to split it into four variants and compare these with each other. To evaluate the architectural proposals created during the investigation we used the Software Architecture Analysis Method (SAAM) [12,88], a general method for evaluating quality attributes. After the evaluation, it was found that there were a

few issues that needed more scrutiny. This refinement procedure was done in much the same way as with the methodology Bosch suggests [20].

With this case study we have followed the pragmatic approach that has characterized the field of software architecture so far; much of the architectural research has included case studies [12,20,22,28,69,71,87,174]. Bass et al describe case studies where SAAM is used [12]. The relation between architecture and quality attributes is emphasized by Bass et al [12] and Bosch [20]. The Architecture Tradeoff Analysis Method (ATAM) is a relative of SAAM, which refines the analysis by making the tradeoff choices even more explicit [87,89].

SAAM is applied early in the development cycle, and gives the architect the possibility to choose an architecture with an acceptable tradeoff between quality attributes. With this method, architectures are informally compared through the use of *scenarios*. In our case we had use cases like "the user starts a simulation" and change scenarios such as "PAM is extended with functionality to compare binary output files". For the outcome of the analysis to be reliable it is crucial that the selected scenarios are indeed representative for actual future scenarios. How could we be sure that we used enough scenarios – or the "right" ones? Every type of stakeholder of the system (users, developers, managers) had representatives participating during several discussion meetings in the development of the scenarios. Everybody was instructed about SAAM and scenarios in advance. Thus, the chance of any major scenario being missed was decreased. A dozen is a fair number of scenarios to use [12]; we gathered 19.

The Basic Features of the System

The first design decisions were quite straightforward: there is a client running in the PC environment, and a central database. To handle requests of executions from the clients, it was decided that some sort of PAM-specific software was needed on the server computers [102].

The PAM system thus contains three types of nodes with different tasks: the local PCs where the users work, a database server, and the Unix servers were the actual simulations are

executed. In the following, when referring to the "servers" we intend the Unix servers. The database is in most cases discarded from the discussion for simplicity.

The users collect and edit input data in the client; the data is then stored in a central database. The functionality we focus on in this paper concerns what happens when this data is to be used in a simulation. Data from the database is supposed to be formatted and written to the input files, and the simulation program should be started. During and after execution, the client shall be able to present the output files to the user. In some cases the data should be filtered, such as when only one variable among many in the same file is plotted.

To handle the simulation programs, we designed a basic architecture; all four alternatives share the basic features described in this section. In the following, we will use the word "process" with the meaning "separate thread of execution with a specific task"; whether we should implement the components as operating system processes or threads will be discussed in section "Processes or Threads" on page 71.

On each calculation server there is a very central process running, the "Service Broker" (SB). It simply provides the service of starting calculations to the clients. The idea with this process is to make the system robust: since it implements such a simple task, it should be possible to make it robust enough to always be running.

On request from a client, the SB starts a "Calculation Server" (CS), which maintains one simulation. It is a separate process without any direct connection to either the SB or the starting client. Any client can monitor and control the progress of the simulation through the means of sending messages to the CS.

One PAM-simulation consists of a user-written script, with loops etc., starting a number of *tasks*, which are the actual simulation program executions. The CS spawns one "Task Calculation Server" (TCS) process per task, not necessarily on the same node.

Figure 4 shows a snapshot of some of the processes in the system, describing how the processes interact when a simulation is started in the system. (The database is omitted from

this and the following figures. It resides on a separate node, and all processes connect to it during startup and remain connected during their whole lifetime.) The client process requests an execution from the SB process on one server, which starts a CS process (the directed lines); after this, there are no dependencies between these processes. The CS starts three TCS processes, each responsible for the execution of one task; the CS and TCS processes are dependent on each other during the whole simulation (the lines without arrowheads). In this particular case two tasks need to be run on the same node as the CS, and one on another (this could be due to where particular simulation programs are installed or to utilize the system's resources better).

The key features are that there is always exactly one SB per server computer, exactly one CS per executing simulation, exactly one TCS per executing task, and any number of clients on each PC.

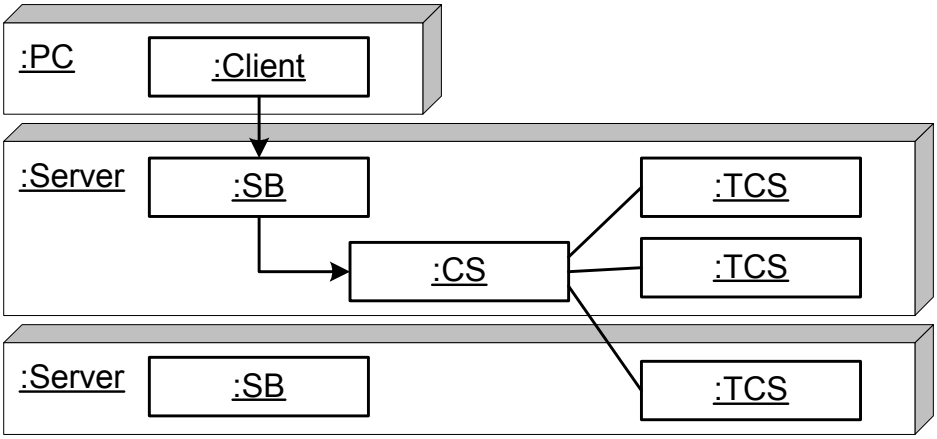

Figure 4. Process interaction when a simulation is started.

The Four Variants of the Basic Architecture

During simulation, the input and output files reside in a working directory, typically with as high performance as possible. When the simulation eventually is being "approved", data is to

be filtered (to decrease size) and moved into the database for long-term storage. However, in the meantime, we would like the files to be stored on an intermediate storage area, typically an ordinary disk with backup mechanisms. It can be discussed on which node the files should be stored during this period of time. We can discern two strategies: either the files are stored on the node where the simulation took place (the "distributed" approach which we will call "1"), or on one node acting as "file server" for PAM (the "centralized" approach, "2"). The former approach would probably give higher performance on the expense of system complexity, while the latter would be easier to understand but includes more overhead.

The other issue concerns the presentation of these files in the client. The files are processed and filtered before they are presented to the user, and the question is where this filtering should take place – in the client or on the server (which implies an extra component on the server). Intuitively, if the files are filtered on the server, performance would be improved because a smaller amount of data is sent across the network, but the system would be more complex and the server more loaded. We name the strategies of processing files in the client or on the server "A" and "B", respectively. Figure 5 shows the different strategies.

What makes these issues important is that the size of the files described above can be very large. 10 MB for one simulation is not uncommon. Each of these two problem dimensions (where to store files and where to process files) has two solutions. All solutions seemed to have advantages and disadvantages, and it was by no means obvious which solution, and combination of solutions, would include the "best" strategy. It is an axiom in software architecture that after quality attributes have been assessed, a tradeoff decision is required [12,20,71]. Thus it was decided that all four combinations should be treated as separate architectures and compared using SAAM. Figure 6 describes how the architectures fit into the two problem dimensions and how they accordingly are named – A1, A2, B1, and B2.

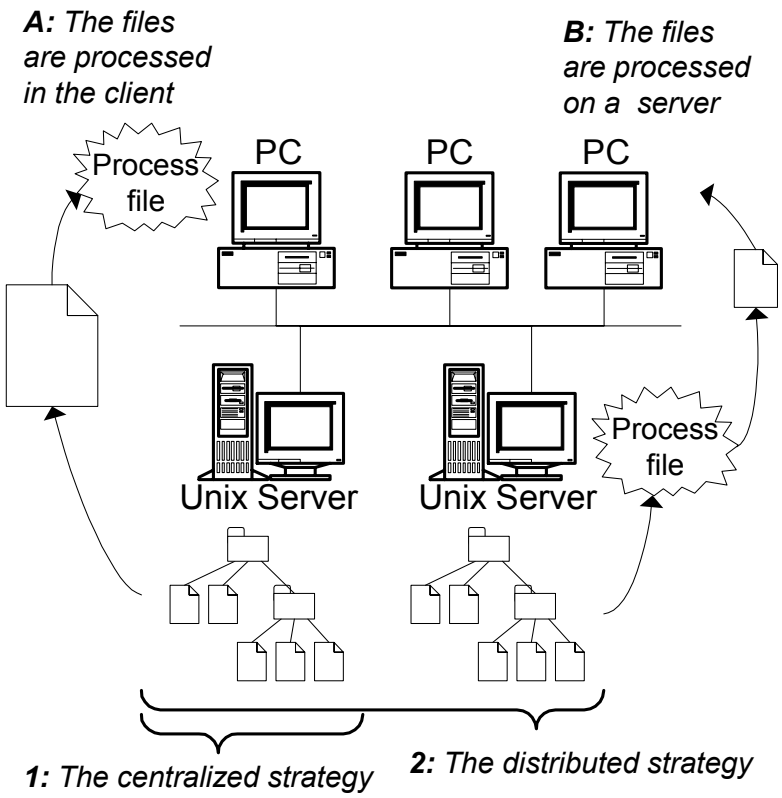

Figure 5. The different approaches for file handling.

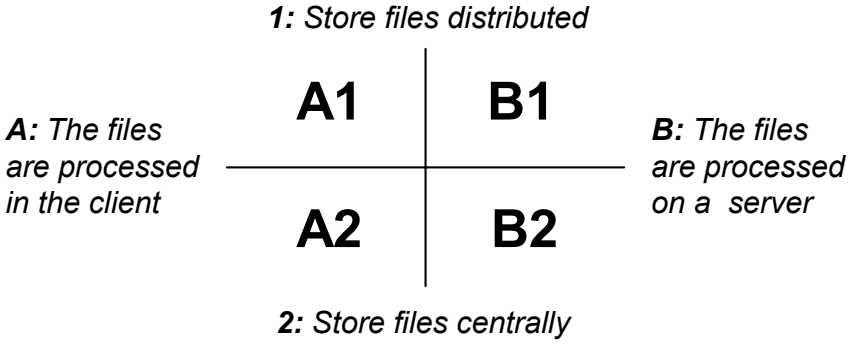

Figure 6. The four alternatives.

Figure 7 shows a snapshot of the processes in a small system according to alternatives A1 and A2 (the difference between them is not discernible in this view). There are no simulations executing, and the SB is idle. Files are handled in the client components, so there are no extra components. There are an arbitrary number of clients on any number of PCs, but only one SB per server computer.

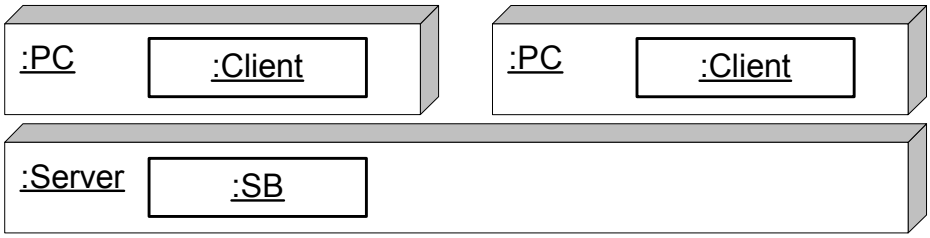

Figure 7. The processes in a small PAM system according to design A1 and A2.

In architectures B1 and B2, an extra process was introduced, called "Service Dispatch Server" (SDS). The task of the SDS is to process the input and output files associated with the simulations on the server before transferring them to the client. Figure 8 shows the processes graphically, according to alternatives B1 and B2 (there is no difference between them in this view); the system is of the same size and state as in Figure 7. There are an arbitrary number of clients, one SB per server computer, and one SDS per client.

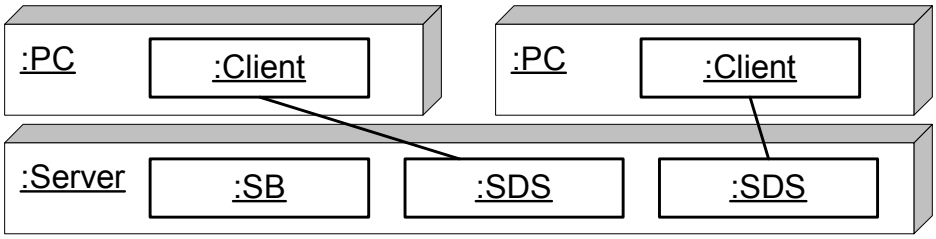

Figure 8. The processes in a small PAM system according to design B1 and B2.

We can clearly see that there are more components and dependencies in B1 and B2 than in architectures A1 and A2. The question to be analyzed is whether the expense in complexity pays off with other advantages, such as increased performance.

4.3 The Analysis of the Architectures

We will now describe how performance, system load, and maintainability were estimated from the architectural description.

Performance Analysis

As is described above, large files are sometimes transferred over the network, affecting performance negatively. In the performance analysis, the number of large data transfers over the network were measured or estimated. To be able to do this, we used five user scenarios including network transfers of large pieces of data, such as “a simulation is executed” and “two files are compared”.

The number of actual transfers during each scenario was estimated, and the result of this analysis can be seen in Figure 9. As an example, the figure describes that for scenario 1 (“a text file from a server computer is viewed in a client”) architectures A1 and A2 include one transfer, not necessarily of the whole file (depending on the circumstances), for alternative B1 always exactly one whole file, and for B2 between one and two whole transfers of a file.

Architecture B2 clearly performed worst in all scenarios, A1 and A2 was equal in all but one scenario, and it can be argued which of A1 and B1 performed absolutely best. A more detailed analysis would include determining an average size of the data and weighting the scenarios. For our purpose, however, this analysis was considered enough – we found that one architecture (B2) was worst, and the others comparable when considering network load due to large file transfers.

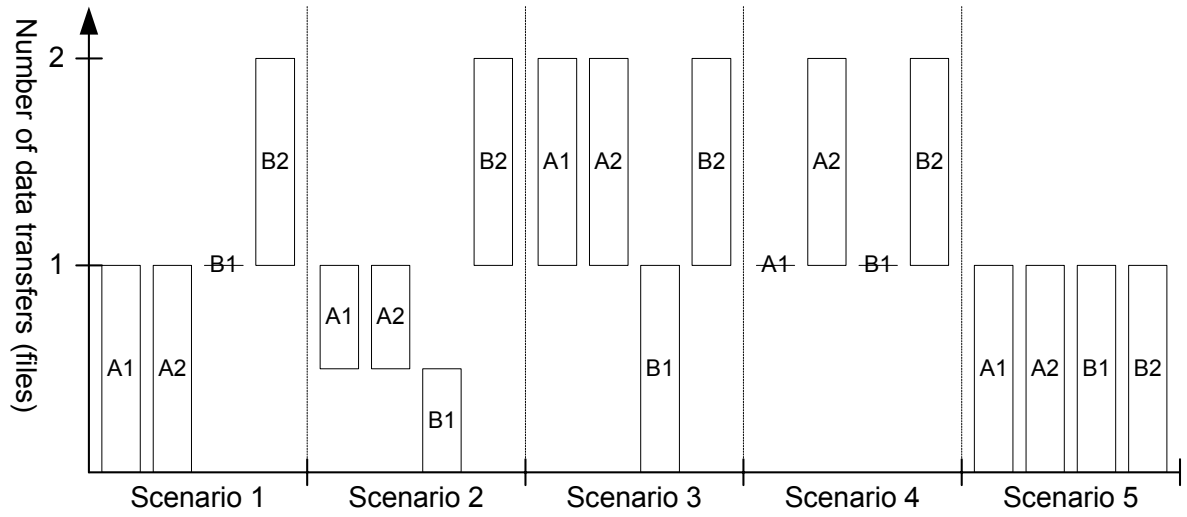

Figure 9. The number of large data transfers across the network in five different scenarios.

System Load Analysis

In the system load analysis, the number of processes in a running system was calculated. This was thus not a SAAM analysis, but rather a simple addition of processes, based on the number of server computers and an estimated average number of clients and simulations ("small", "medium", or "large" systems). As is shown in Figure 10, the number of processes is consistently lowest for architectures A1 and A2, while the number of processes may be almost doubled in architecture B1.

Before performing this analysis we had no clear notion of what the outcome would be, but when looking at these results in retrospect, we found them to be very intuitive. The extra processes in systems according to B1 and B2 are due to the inclusion of the SDS component. The great difference between B1 and B2 are due to the strategy on which servers there must be SDSs, which in its turn depends on whether the simulation files are stored using a central or a distributed approach.

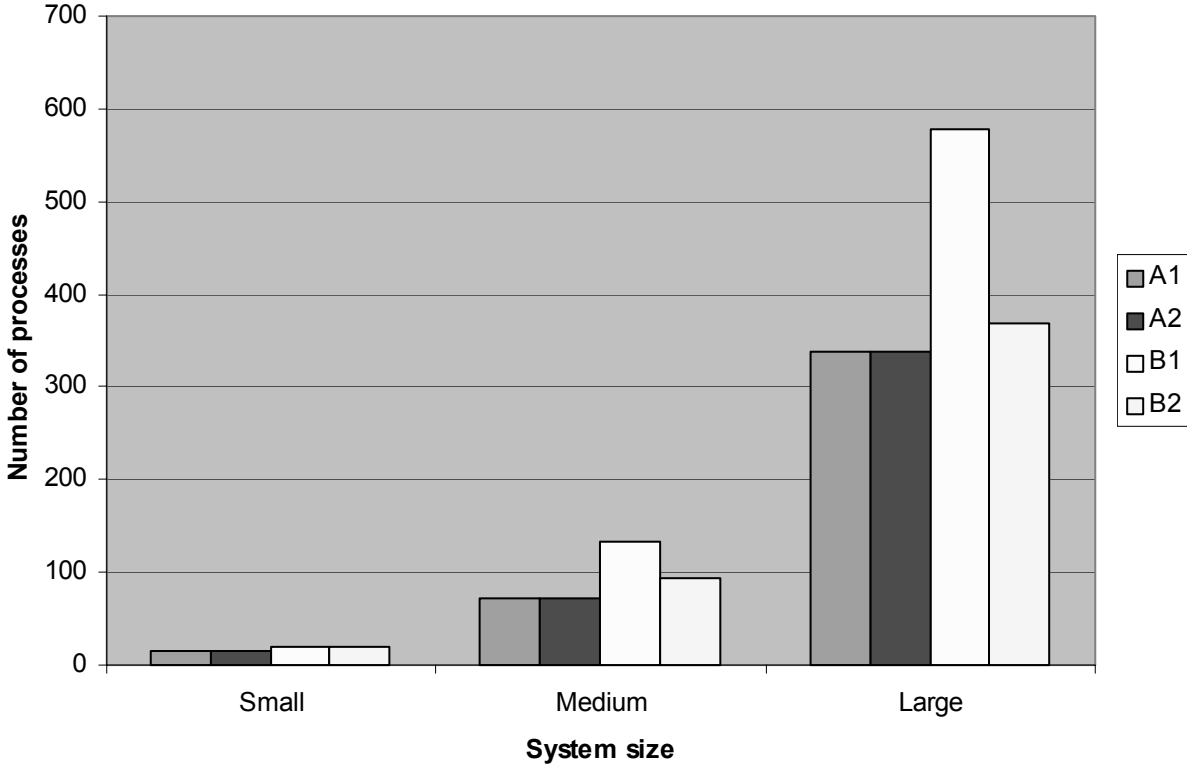

Figure 10. The number of processes in running systems of different sizes.

Maintainability Analysis

The stakeholders formulated 16 change scenarios, containing the addition of functionality. An example of a change scenario is to "include functionality to compare two binary output data files". The results from the execution of these scenarios are presented in Table 2 – it turned out that architectures A1 and A2 were undistinguishable, as was B1 and B2. Architectures A1 and A2 in general score better than B1 and B2, which of course is because architectures B1 and B2 include more components (the SDS). However, two scenarios affect the SB in architectures A1 and A2, which is undesirable because of its central position and the robustness requirements.

Table 2. Statistics from the scenario executions.

	A1/A2	B1/B2
Number of components affected: total (average)	23 (1.4)	28 (1.8)
Number of scenarios affecting at least 2 components	6	10
Number of scenarios affecting the SB	2	0

Scenarios are said to *interact* on a component if both affect it [12]; if several unrelated scenarios affect the same component, this is an indication that the separation of concerns between components may be insufficient. The more interactions, the more complex it is to maintain the system. However, as always there are no absolute numbers on how many interactions are considered "too many"; these numbers should rather be used for comparing architectures (which is done here), or to focus attention on particular components with many scenario interactions. See Table 3.

With only five or six components and 16 scenarios, this analysis gives a rather decent distribution, apart from the client. However, the client is equally unstable in all architectures.

How should we interpret these results? The figures clearly say that architectures A1 and A2 are more maintainable than B1 and B2 and seem to leave no room for alternative interpretations. However, this result is at least partly a consequence of the fact that some functionality is added to an extra component, the SDS. If this means that architectures B1 and B2 are more fine-grained than A1 and A2 it is not fair to compare the architectural descriptions – they describe the system on different levels of abstraction. We considered this objection seriously, and among other things tried to estimate the size of the code in the components. We arrived at the conclusion that the client code would be slightly smaller in architecture B1 and B2 than in A1 and A2, but that the program code of the SDS would be substantially larger than the decrease in client code size. We finally decided that the

architectures were indeed comparable, and the figures of the analysis fair. In addition to this, we had gained the insight that B1 and B2 would require more coding, which speaks to their disfavor.

Table 3. Scenario interaction on each component. (The variations depend on how certain scenarios are implemented.)

	A1/A2	B1/B2
Database	Affected by 4 scenarios	
SB	Affected by 2 scenarios	Affected by 0 scenarios
CS	Affected by 3 scenarios	
TCS	Affected by 3 or 4 scenarios	
Client	Affected by 10 or 11 scenarios	Affected by 9 to 11 scenarios
SDS	N/A	Affected by 7 or 8 scenarios

Other Analyses

Besides analyzing performance, system load, and maintainability, we informally evaluated testability, reusability, and portability. However, these analyses did not reveal any differences between the architectures – we therefore omit the details of the analyses.

However, the conclusion that several architectures are indistinguishable is also a valuable result, from which it is possible to draw conclusions. Firstly, since these properties are not affected by the choice of architecture, any of the alternatives can be chosen (as far as these properties are concerned). Secondly, if these properties were considered crucial for the system's success, we might have devised more alternatives, to explore whether these properties could be improved at the architectural level. SAAM can only compare different alternatives, not give absolute measures of the quality properties, so the outcome could mean "they are equally good" as well as "they are equally bad". We did not pursue this track further

because we were confident that our understanding of how these properties were affected ensured that these properties would not pose any major problem. So, thirdly, through the analysis process itself, we had gained insight enough into the problem to make the decision that further analyses were not needed.

At this stage, we summarized the analysis and found performance, system load, and maintainability to be the properties distinguishing the alternatives.

Discussion

It was not easy to without aid predict which architecture would be the most fit for our requirements. The analyses clearly helped serving as a basis for a choice. We found that architecture B2 was inferior with respect to the number of large data transfers, while B1 was inferior with respect to the number of processes in the system. So far, if performance is important, either architecture A1 or A2 should be chosen; A1 was estimated to have slightly better performance than A2.

When evaluating maintainability, we see that A1 and A2 are superior, the only problem being that two change scenarios affect the SB, whereas in B1 and B2 the SB is unaffected by all scenarios. In other analyses the architectures were found to be equal.

It is quite clear, then, that architecture A1 or A2 should be chosen.

4.4 General Observations and Lessons Learned

Processes or Threads

So far, we have described the runtime components as “processes”, but the architectural description does not require the CS and TCS components to be implemented as separate operating system processes. They could very well be implemented as threads executing in a designated “CS and TCS host” process, or why not in the SB. The choice between processes and threads can be considered a lower-level design issue. This does not mean that the choice does not affect the properties of the system, but rather that this tradeoff does not need to be solved on the architectural level. There might indeed be a tradeoff between system load and

robustness – processes load the system more, while a failure in one thread is likely to affect other threads. In the actual implementation of PAM, it was decided that the system would be more robust if processes are used in the case of a component failure, and that a threaded solution would be considered if there were any system load problems.

We can draw the general conclusion that *an architectural description does not need to distinguish between processes and threads*, but can simply describe the runtime components as "separate threads of execution". The choice of whether these are implemented as processes, operating system threads, or language-level threads can be postponed to later design stages.

Detailed Knowledge Useful

One possible source of instability in the system would be that the system is spammed with CS and TCS components having lost contact with each other. However, instead of being a potential source of instability, the communications channel is used to increase robustness. Sockets proved to fulfill our expectations well. Indeed, the knowledge of the socket mechanism was an important input to the creation of the architecture. Let us view the connection between a CS and one of its TCSs. Both sides will be noticed whenever the socket is unexpectedly closed, and immediately terminate themselves. The socket could be closed due to several reasons – the network might be lost, or the other component can have failed or terminated unexpectedly (due to e.g. a bug). The components show a consistent behavior in all such cases, provided that the sockets mechanism is reliable enough to always notice these cases (which we believe it is). Thus, the architecture builds robustness partly on the sockets mechanism.

Since we wanted to reuse legacy code written in the Tcl programming language [162], we knew in advance that Tcl was a strong candidate of implementation language. Our experience of the socket functionality being very robust and easy to use in Tcl strongly influenced the development of the architecture as described above. We also knew that the use of Tcl would support portability since there are Tcl interpreters available on the platforms of interest; as a consequence we found it superfluous to support portability in our architectural description.

The general conclusion to be drawn is that *detailed technical knowledge is an important input to the architectural design process*.

Simplicity Implies Robustness

Our next observation concerns another way the system is made robust. In earlier prototypes of the system, there were problems with robustness. There were many scenarios where a failure in one process made other processes fail too. Attempts were made to handle every possible faulty state, but this proved to rather introduce new errors and make the code incomprehensible. One of the governing ideas behind the new architectures has been to make the runtime components as independent of each other as possible, in the sense that the system as a whole is in a sound state even if many individual components and communication channels fail. It should be noted that this feature is not implemented through any advanced fault-tolerance techniques, but rather by creating a relatively simple architecture. Of course, the robustness, as well as any quality attribute supported by the architectural description, is ultimately dependent on how well the system is actually implemented.

Our experience supports the idea that *one should build important properties directly into a system's architecture*, rather than try to add them afterwards [12].

An Unexpected Solution of a Tradeoff

When discussing the outcome of the evaluation, there were a few minor issues that needed more consideration, of which we will describe one. As we saw, the results of the analysis indicate that we should choose between A1 (with a distributed file structure) and A2 (with a central file structure). On the one hand, the project group intuitively felt uncomfortable with the idea of having files distributed over a large number of computers when tracking errors, while on the other hand this implies slightly higher performance. When considering this problem, it seemed as we had to decide on a tradeoff. This proved to be both true and false. We found that the choice of strategy where to store files did not need to be decided upon until installing a PAM system, thus making a system administrator responsible for solving this tradeoff (for it is indeed a tradeoff). We decided that viewed this way, the resulting

architecture could be described as a synthesis of A1 and A2, or in other words that there was no difference between A1 and A2.

In the general case, instead of making tradeoff decisions during the design phase, it might be possible to give the system manager the freedom to choose the tradeoff considered optimal in his particular situation. We believe that *one should consider whether a tradeoff can be postponed to the configuration and maintenance phases*. However, we are aware that such an approach may introduce new tradeoffs: a highly configurable system may be harder to understand and maintain, and harder to test, than a less configurable system.

4.5 Conclusion

We devised one architecture, but created four variants of it and compared these at the architectural level to be able to assess the quality attributes of the final system. SAAM provided a useful way of evaluating our four suggestions, revealing drawbacks not obvious at first sight. The analysis provided a basis for taking conscious decisions on which architecture to choose, given an estimate on what quality attributes the four variants would have. The use of SAAM proved to bring more benefits: the stakeholders of the system became more conscious of quality attributes and the architecture's impact on these; moreover, a fruitful interaction between analysis and design took place thanks to SAAM.

Besides supporting the usefulness of SAAM, we were able to draw a number of general conclusions. We learned that the creation of an architecture cannot be performed in an "ideal" world, rather the knowledge about the availability of implementation issues are both necessary and advantageous. In our case, the architecture was colored by the knowledge of specific Tcl and sockets features, and this knowledge was taken advantage of to create a robust architecture. We achieved a certain degree of robustness due to inherent features of the architecture, which is preferable to writing error-handling code. During the design process, we found it useful to discuss the runtime components in terms of "processes", although it was not decided whether these should actually be implemented as processes or threads. We have also described that it was possible and useful to postpone one tradeoff decision to the system

configuration and maintenance phases. With further research we hope that these issues will mature from mere observations to more formal models incorporated into the theory and tools of software architecture.

During the analysis, the important question was raised whether the architectural descriptions, containing different numbers of components, actually were comparable. We were able to give what we believe to be a satisfactory answer by estimating the size of each component. With further research it might be possible to more formally decide when architectural descriptions differ too much and when they indeed are comparable – a prerequisite for any analysis.

Finally – what is our study worth for the stakeholders of PAM? Are our estimates of performance, system load and maintainability accurate? Is the system robust and portable enough? We will not be able to answer these questions until PAM has been in production use for some time. We hope that we will then be able to gather measures of the quality attributes of interest and compare it to our analysis. This will provide useful feedback to our research.

5. INTEGRATION FRAMEWORK CASE STUDY

This chapter presents an integration framework and discusses benefits and drawbacks with it.

Original publication information:

Information Organizer – A Comprehensive View on Reuse [62]

Erik Gyllenswärd, Mladen Kap, Rikard Land, 4th International Conference on Enterprise Information Systems (ICEIS), Ciudad Real, Spain, April 2002

Keywords: *Reuse, integration, legacy systems, Business Object Model, software components, extensible, lifecycle support.*

Abstract: *Within one organization, there are often many conceptually related but technically separated information systems. Many of these are legacy systems representing enormous development efforts, and containing large amounts of data. The integration of these often requires extensive design modifications. Reusing applications "as is" with all the knowledge and data they represent would be a much more practical solution. This paper describes the Business Object Model, a model providing integration and reuse of existing applications and cross applications modelling capabilities and a Business Object Framework implementing the object model. We also present a product supporting the model and the framework, Information Organizer, and a number of design patterns that have been built on top of it to further decrease the amount of work needed to integrate legacy systems. We describe one such pattern in detail, a general mechanism for reusing relational databases.*

5.1 Introduction

It is commonly believed that software reuse put into practice would solve many problems related to software development [8,100]. There are many aspects of reuse: one can (at least in theory) reuse anything from mere concepts to data, information, program code, and executable components (see e.g. [100]). However, in spite of the potential benefits of reuse, it has proved hard to put reuse into practice in a large scale. Related to reuse is the idea of integration – many organizations have a large number of legacy systems; an integration of these would provide great benefits by increasing the possibility to provide appropriate and related information in a timely manner. Is there any elegant solution to both of these problems – reuse and integration? We believe there is. In this paper we present a model for integrating existing applications, information and component reuse. The model is intended to cope with all aspects of an object and extensible enough to be used during the whole lifetime of a system.

The concept of reusing whole applications has been somewhat neglected in discussions of reuse. With this, we do not mean modifying applications to include new functionality, but rather to reusing whole applications, "as is", without need of access to source code, recompiling, reconfiguration or any other modification whatsoever, much like "components" as defined by Szyperski [179]. If this is possible, integration is facilitated at a very low cost. Such attempts have been done [133,134,138] but have mostly been focused on debating the different competing standards for interoperability. Other attempts [1,73,96] focus more on information reuse and integration.

We have developed the *Business Object Model*, *BOM*, which defines a conceptual model for the integration of applications. To make BOM "come alive", it has been implemented in *Business Object Framework*, *BOF*. This implementation is the "core" of Information Organizer, a commercial product itself made possible through extensive reuse. Information Organizer has been used as the base for the implementation of several *application patterns*, such as a pattern for workflow applications and a pattern for database connection. For

applications conforming to these patterns, it is possible to configure them to a particular organization's need with a minimum of effort.

We will thus cover three aspects of reuse throughout the paper: reuse of existing applications (through integration in a larger system) , reuse of application patterns, and reuse to make the construction of Information Organizer possible.

We will use Information Organizer as a starting point and describe the features of the model and how it is realized in a framework in section 5.2; we then continue by describing the application patterns in section 5.3, and conclude with a discussion and a summary in sections 5.4 and 5.5.

5.2 The Model and the Framework

The *Business Object Model*, *BOM*, is a *model* which extend the concept of "directory enabled applications" [72,92,129,161] with important capabilities for integration and modelling inspired by OMG [138] and IEC 1346-1 [73]. The Business Object Model, BOM, represents different entities of importance in a uniform way to the user. Business Object Model defines five central concepts: *objects*, *aspects*, *roles*, *relations* and *views*. *Objects* represent quite large grained entities such as issues, pumps or valves. An object can be described as an empty container; business logic is added in form of *aspects*. An object can play a number of *roles*, implemented by means of aspects. A *relation* connects objects, and finally, the concept of *views* provides a means to restrict access to a system and all its information.

While the Business Object Model is a conceptual model, the *Business Object Framework*, *BOF,* is a design environment provided to assist application programmers in building components and applications, and integrating existing applications. BOF thus provides an implementation of objects, aspects, relations, views and roles, as defined by BOM. It also contains tools for creating instances of these, finding them in a distributed environment and communicating with them. Business Object Framework can be described as a toolbox with a number of tools and software components common to different applications for effective

reuse. The Business Object Framework is thus the *implementation* of BOM; it is based on Microsoft Active Directory and COM, and follows existing standards and de facto standards.

Business Object Model - BOM

We have designed Business Object Model to support cross-application integration and to be easily extensible. It supports integration through the means of *aspects*: different aspects can be associated with completely different systems. It is extensible in that an object can be extended with new aspects during its entire lifetime (without affecting other aspects of the object). It is important to understand that this model is independent of the manner in which the different external systems model their part of the entire activity; BOM resides "above" the systems it integrates – these systems need not be "BOM-enabled" in any way.

The five central concepts of the Business Object Model – objects, aspects, relations, roles, and views – are described in more detail below. Their relationships between these are also described in Figure 11.

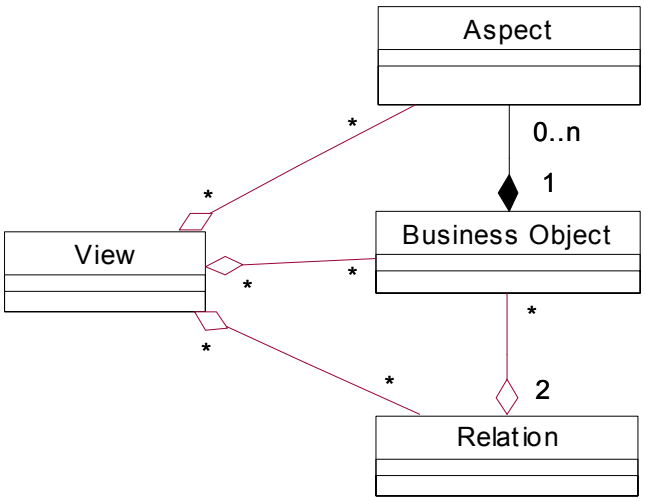

Figure 11: The relationships between the concepts.

Objects – The most central concept of BOM is the concept of *objects* (or *business objects*, to distinguish our notion from other uses of the term); these represent entities of interest in one or several applications. Examples of objects are issues, steps in a workflow, organizations, departments, or pumps and valves. An object usually contains very little, if any, information or implementation in itself. Rather, objects offer a uniform way to assemble related information through the concept of *aspects*.

Aspects – Instead of attempting to permit an object itself to represent all its behavior, part of its behavior is delegated to different *aspects*. This means that new aspects can be added to the object at any time during its entire life without necessarily affecting other aspects or the object itself. Objects and aspects offer the possibility of componentizing applications in a natural manner due to the fact that new business logic can be added to the object when the object is ready for a new role (roles are explained below). Aspects can either contain all business logic themselves or be used to associate existing applications or parts of existing applications with an object and thereby their reuse. For an issue, aspects could include mail, Excel sheets, PowerPoint presentations, reports, or video sequences; for objects in other domains, examples of aspects are process dialogs, CAD drawings, and invoices. It should be emphasized that both objects and aspects are complex entities, encapsulated into the system without applying any changes on the components themselves.

Relations – To be able to build a usable information system, objects can be *related* to other objects. The Business Object Model offers a relation model with both generic relations and typed relations i.e. relations with a strong semantic significance. New relation types can be defined in the system during its service life. Any number of relations can be associated with an object, and in this way both hierarchic structures and net structures can be built. New relation instances can be associated with an object at any time. This means that new relations can be associated with an object even if the object cannot utilize them, because the object is not aware of the relation and not implemented in such way that the relation can be used; however, these relations may be useful if an external user understands them and can interpret

their semantics. With “external user” we mean both other applications and human users browsing through the information. Relations and aspects often occur together since aspects provide the semantics with which it is possible to interpret and utilize the relation. By extracting the relations and locating them outside the object, the architecture becomes adaptable in a changing world as new types of relation and instances can be added to the system, without affecting the existing functionality. This introduces a risk, however, since an object may assume that certain relations are present that has in fact been removed (without the object being informed).

Roles – The concept of *roles* is somewhat abstract, and must be seen in connection with objects, aspects, and relations. To take a simple example, a “person” object may play the role of a husband – to be able to play this role, it must have certain aspects, such as “being male” and “being grown-up”. A more business-oriented example of a role is “to be participant in a workflow”. A role can thus be said to define a certain function, or a set of capabilities, that can be offered by an object, and it is implemented by one or more aspects. A relation type associates two roles. A generic relation can associate any types of object as all objects are of the generic type.

Views – *Views* make possible the arrangement of objects, aspects and relations to limit the extent to which they are accessible to different categories of users. This is necessary, partly because certain information is classified but also to reduce the volume of information presented to make it easier for the user to understand. Initially, a system most often contains a number of predefined views. A selected object will remain in focus if the user changes view – this is useful when a user finds an object in one view (such as his personal view) and changes to another (e.g. a process view, describing the object in the context of a workflow). The concept of views is very important when integrating different systems – a personal view would e.g. show all issues per individual, even if the issues originate from different issue management systems. Views can of course be added in the same dynamic manner as objects, aspects and relations.

Let us illustrate the relations between the five concepts using an example. In the center of Figure 12, there is a business object (BO) representing an issue in an issue-management system. With the circle we try to describe the visibility of the object in different views; in an issue-management system we can easily imagine the following views: a personal view showing all the persons dealing with issues and the issues for which they are responsible, a process view showing the issue's location in a workflow, and an organizational view describing the organization and all its employees. In the personal view, the issue and its relation to a user (its "owner") are visible; the object also has the aspect "A-Notes" indicating that personal notes has been added to it. To be able to participate in a , the issue has been allocated the aspect "A-Workflow" and a relation to a workflow step; when the issue is processed, this relation will move to the next step (there are of course more steps visible in the process view than is shown in the figure). The organizational view shows how the organization is structured and, for each organizational unit such as a department, the issues associated with the department concerned. The aspect "A-Document" is placed on the white line to indicate that the document is visible in both the organizational view and the process view.

A user interested in how far in the workflow an issue has progressed can either browse through the process view to the issue of interest, or enter via another view, e.g. the personal view, find the object, select it and then change to the process view. The issue will then be in focus but visible in the process view, with the relevant relations and aspects.

Business Object Framework - BOF

Business Object Model is just a model, requiring considerable support in the form of tools and default implementations to be usable. Business Object Framework provides this support as a set of tools for building business objects. Some of these tools and functions are:

– A generic implementation of aspects, objects, views and relations.

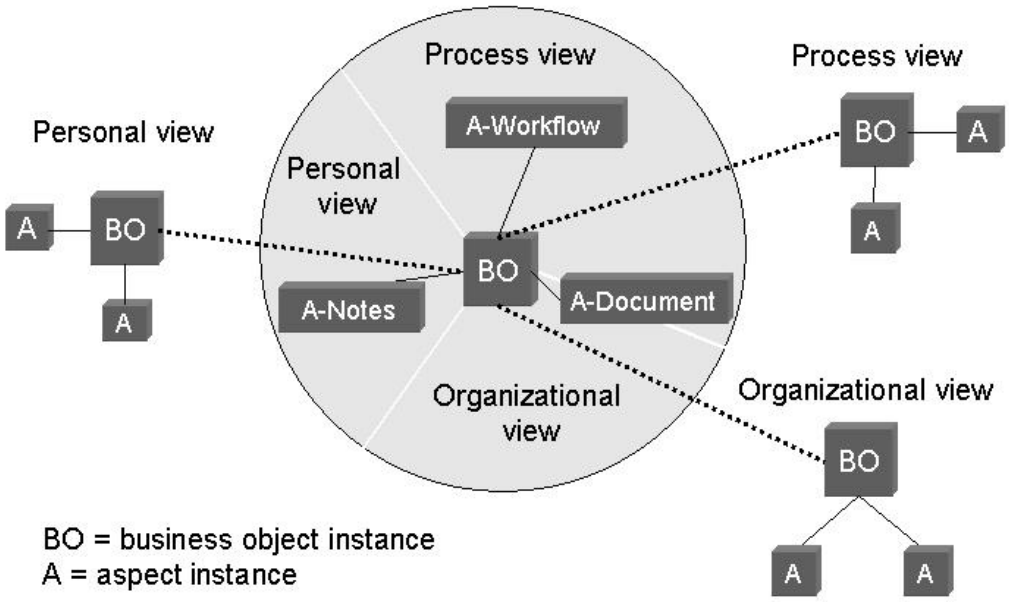

Figure 12: An issue with its aspects, relations, and views.

- A configuration environment with tools and models for the simple creation of new instances of existing types and the easy configuration of new types.
- A development environment making it possible to programmatically add new components in the form of objects and aspects. The development environment of Business Object Framework is completely integrated with Microsoft Visual Studio, permitting the programming of objects and aspects, easily and in any of several well-known languages.
- There is also an API allowing dynamic creation of relations and views.
- A runtime environment making it possible to execute components locally on a client machine or centrally on one or more server machines. Business Object Framework also provides services for finding and calling components over both the Internet and an intranet.

BOF could be said to be the "core" of Information Organizer, because this is where BOM is implemented. In addition to this "engine", where the concepts of BOM are realized,

Information Organizer includes other features, such as a user interface. The primary user interface for a user of the system is a standard browser. The system is largely based on the concept of "thin clients", even if "fat clients" are used with respect to certain functions and applications. An advantage with thin clients is that no code need be installed and maintained on the client machine. But if the system integrates legacy applications built without the Internet being taken into consideration, these applications must be installed in each client machine anyhow. The system also provides support for access to information via WAP.

Structuring and Search Mechanisms

The problem in large systems is not lack of information. The problem is often defective mechanisms to keep related information together and ways to find accurate information when needed. This is one of the key problems we tried to solve with the Business Object Framework. That is why the framework provides three major ways to structure and search information.

- The first way is the most fundamental and is provided by the core of the framework and the object model. Information can, as we have described, be structured in form of objects in both multiple structures and multiple views. This can be used to create information models spanning several integrated applications.
- The Relational Database Connector is the second way to search for information. As good as every application has its own information model – i.e. internal structures. In case of database applications these structures are very often represented as database relations. The design pattern implemented in the Relational Database Connector provides a common way to follow these relations via an Internet-enabled user interface regardless of from which applications they originate.
- The third way is based on the concept of indexing. The basic idea is that information visible to a user can be indexed; usually it means that different kinds of files (such as documents) are indexed. Due to the fact that very much information is presented in the form of generated cards it is important that these cards can be indexed and in case of a hit

the object represented by the card presented. By doing this, information in the system can be searched in the same familiar way as on the Internet; for example, keywords such as AND, OR and NEAR can be used.

Our experiences are that in large systems with huge number of objects the more static way to structure information is used to a less extent. The choice of structuring mechanism also depends on the nature of the application domain. In for example the automation industry some structures are of a quite static nature such as a structure representing the physical location of equipment. Thus are these structure quite familiar to people and they are used to follow for example the location structure to find a pump and all its aspects.

On the other hand when it comes to for example an issue management system people are very much influenced of the way information are structured and search for in a relational database. They are used to search for information in a variety of ways, which are impossible to foresee, and therefore more static structures cannot be used.

Integration

Aspects represent information included in the integrated system. The aspects can integrate information on different levels – at least three levels of integration can be identified: application level, business logic level and data level.

If the system is integrated on the application level, the application does not provide an API to its internal parts. When the application is referred to from an aspect, the application will be activated and the user will enter at the top level and is required to navigate to that part of the application at which the object (e.g. an issue) concerned is located.

To be able to integrate on the level of business logic the application must be componentized or provide an API permitting access to its different parts. I.e., when called, the application could itself receive a number of input parameters describing the part in which the user is actually interested and with the help of this information, navigate to the part concerned. The input parameters very much depend on the application to be integrated and are often stored in the aspect instance. The aspect can be seen as a gateway in between the framework and the

integrated application. The complexity of the aspect implementation very much depends on the level of integration but also which kind of application to be integrated. If the application is COM based it is very likely to be easier because the framework itself is COM based. To manipulate the data, in this case an issue, the application's own dialogs are used i.e. its own business logic. For the user, a modular/component-based picture of the integrated application would be presented even if it is not implemented in a component-based manner.

Integration at data level means that data is accessed directly without invoking the business logic (code), which the integrated system itself makes available for the presentation, and processing of data. In many applications, this is an appropriate level of integration. It can be used to present information from many different systems but to change data, system dialogs already available should be used. The Relational Database Connector, described in section 5.3, is an example of a component providing support for the integration of applications on this level. By using the connector information stored in a relational database can easily integrated. If data is stored in some other data source a specific connector for that particular data source must be implemented. In practice, this level has been found to be very useful as a rapid integration can be performed and Business Object Framework features (such as access control) can be applied to each row in the database because they are represented as Business Objects.

Integration at data level is most often a suitable level of ambition at which to begin. The level of ambition can be raised subsequently and integration can then be performed on the business logic level.

5.3 Application Patterns – One Way of Reuse

A design pattern is a solution to a problem that occurs over and over again [28,55]. We have identified three major *application patterns* and implemented these in Information Organizer, using Business Object Framework and the concepts defined by the Business Object Model. With an application pattern, we mean a solution to a problem that occurs in many applications, such as a "workflow" pattern. In our case a pattern is implemented as a number

of objects, aspects, and relations. These patterns present a number of benefits: first, they are common to many applications and can thus be used in many contexts, and secondly, application boundaries are crossed. Moreover, due to the modular model of BOM, several patterns can be applied simultaneously; any object can be extended with the aspects implementing a pattern. We have used a number of patterns in practice when developing a document and issue-management system [38].

Patterns Implemented

The following three major application patterns have been implemented.

Business Process Support, BPS, provides support when building workflow applications, such as issue-management systems. This pattern is applicable when the items handled by the system flows between steps or phases, such as in a system implementing the review process of a scientific paper. Such systems are relatively easily built using the implementation of objects, aspects etc. that makes up this pattern. Worth to note is that BPS provides workflow functionality extending beyond application limits.

Document Management Support, DMS, supports management and generation of documents over the Internet, using templates and information from objects associated with the document. The template's "hot spots" are filled dynamically with information from business objects. One use of this pattern would be generation of reports on the history of an issue: dates of completion and names of people associated with different workflow steps would be filled in dynamically.

Relational Database Connector, RDC, provides a function by means of which, with the assistance of XML, external relation databases can be defined and imported. To import a database means that all the database objects are represented in Information Organizer but the data itself remains in the database. The RDC also provides support for building dialogues, which can present information from one or more data sources, and support for simple navigation between different lines in a database. All such navigation is performed with the help of URL's. In an imported database, all rows are represented as Business Object

Framework objects which in turn means that they acquire all the properties which characterize a Business Object Framework object, such as strong security, the ability to keep all aspects of an object together. One feature worth to note is that security on row level can be obtained since Information Organizer represents each row in the database by an object, and the security properties can be set on each object independently.

The rest of section 5.3 discusses the Relational Database Connector in more detail.

Relational Database Connector

Many database applications have very little business logic and provide some kind of standard mechanism for accessing data directly (usually SQL). From the integration perspective, a viable solution is thus to provide such a generic front-end "connector" as we have done; it understands the target application's data (relational database concepts in this case) and provides components capable of encapsulating data from external databases for management, navigation, access and manipulation purposes. Since such a connector has no business logic whatsoever, it is unable to replace the original application entirely, but according to our work it can usually provide 60 to 80% percent of the original application functionality without any extension. The business logic of an application is however less often restricting "reads", and more often of the kind restricting how data can be modified or added. If an application contains much such logic, it is still possible to integrate database access but only permit reads. Such read-only integration can be of great benefit, if use cases including only reads are more common than use cases including writes.

Since the connector is generic, it is highly reusable because it can solve integration problems for many target applications with similar problems. An additional benefit is that the RDC components are fully integrated into the framework and can thus offer a much broader range of functions than that of the original application.

Description Files in XML

To define which parts of a database should be represented by objects in Active Directory, and how to present and interact with the database data, a number of XML description files are used. For each table in the database, three XML files have to be defined.

- The first one is mainly used to describe the table's columns and their data types. For each column it is possible to define whether it is editable or not and if a new data item has to be initiated or not. Related tables can also be described; for example, in a file describing a "decision", information is provided in form of keys to be able to find a way back to the correct issue. And in the "issue" object, file information is provided to be able to present the owner of, or all documents belonging to the issue.
- The second file defines how information can be presented in "summary cards", and describes available predefined queries. Whenever a row is selected in table, the data is presented according to the specification in the file. The XML file can of course be edited, and thus the summary card's appearance is modified. This approach provides an easy way to configure displays for different tables within a database, but also to present information originating from different database systems in a homogeneous manner. These summary cards are also the foundation to provide a powerful and common search mechanism for different information systems, integrated in Information Organizer.
- The third file provides means to map to the language of your choice.

The business logic using the description files are implemented as a number of Active Server Pages and COM objects.

5.4 Discussion

The following describes some of the lessons learned from practical experience gained from the development of Information Organizer [40] and the document and issue management system Arch Issue [38].

Reuse

The overall and certainly the most important lesson learned is that reuse can be highly profitable. For organizations with limited resources undertaking relatively ambitious development projects, it is the only viable - and therefore practically mandatory - approach. With a very limited investment, Compfab [39] was able to build a functionally comprehensive framework for its intended purpose, which in addition is secure, scalable, and reliable. This would not have been possible without total commitment to the reuse of not only platform components, but also architectural and design patterns, as well as "best practices" known for the platform.

We chose a set of standard products integrating e.g. Internet access and security. These not only provide a runtime and design-time environment but also a large number of components and knowledge of how to build user interface components. The word "build" was intentionally used to emphasize that a significant part of the development time was spent in learning the full capabilities and impacts of existing technologies and components on functionality and features targeted in the resulting framework. Development of custom functions for the framework actually occupied a smaller part of the total project time. Our impression is that this is one of the main reasons why verbal commitments to component-based development often fall short in practice.

Practical Experience

Information Organizer is currently used for developing an issue-management system [38], and therefore our practical experience of using Information Organizer, and the concepts of BOM, is somewhat limited.

However, experience from the application of the framework to real world problems only reinforced most of the conclusions arrived at from experience from the development of the framework itself. In general, integrating modern, well-componentized applications is easy and straightforward, provided the application is designed to run on the same platform at which the

framework is targeted (or provides "proxies" for accessing it when running on other platforms).

Integrating monolithic applications with poor or no defined application programming interfaces is difficult and cumbersome – sometimes to such a degree that the original motivation for integrating such applications becomes highly questionable. For example, if there is an order management application which encapsulates orders, customers, responsible personnel etc into well defined components, and another invoice management application which is monolithic and provides access to its logical parts only through the proprietary user interface, there is no way to automate management of relations between logically related objects in these two applications, even at the user interface level. Unfortunately, many database-centred applications existing today are precisely of that kind. However, since many of these applications have very little business logic but provide a SQL interface for data access, the Relational Database Connector is a simple but very useful means to integrate database applications in Information Organizer.

5.5 Summary

Reuse by integration of applications and information and reuse based on component-based development are two equally important ways to improve software development. Information Organizer emphasizes this and provides an object model, a framework and a number of components to encourage the building of integrated solutions. By taking the concept of "directory enabled applications" defined by Microsoft further by adding a number of important properties defined in standards such as IEC 1346-1 (defining the concept of aspects which relates all relevant information to an object), OMG (defining a powerful relation model) and IT4 (defining a way to build integrated industrial applications), we have achieved a strong and powerful environment based on a standard concept to build integrated systems. The total commitment to reuse not only platform components, but also architectural and design patterns and known "best practices" for the platform has been vital to the success of building not only the product itself but also components and applications based on it.

We have thus covered three aspects of reuse. First, with Information Organizer, implementing the concepts of BOM, it is possible to reuse whole applications, not originally intended for reuse. The level of integration can be chosen somewhat: either on user interface level or data level (using Relational Database Connector). Second, using the BOM concepts, we have implemented generic, i.e. reusable, application patterns. Third, we also described shortly how reuse of existing technologies made Information Organizer possible.

In the future, we will explore how different categories of users react to an integrated approach to different separate applications. How does the system respond to extremely large data quantities? How well does it support the maintenance of relationships when the original data sources changes? The “loose” coupling between objects and applications may prove to give rise to maintenance and consistency problems.

6. SYSTEMS INTEGRATION CASE STUDY

This chapter describes a case study where three existing software systems developed in-house were to be integrated after a company merger. We describe how architectural analysis was used in this process, and the benefits and shortcomings of this approach. This case study is also described in chapters 7 and 8 from other points of view.

Original publication information:

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>
> *Rikard Land, Ivica Crnkovic, Proceedings of International Conference on Software Maintenance (ICSM), IEEE Computer Society, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2003.*
>
> **Keywords:** *Architectural Analysis, Enterprise Application Integration, Information Systems, Legacy Systems, Software Architecture, Software Integration.*
>
> **Abstract:** *Software systems no longer evolve as separate entities but are also integrated with each other. The purpose of integrating software systems can be to increase user-value or to decrease maintenance costs. Different approaches, one of which is software architectural analysis, can be used in the process of integration planning and design.*
>
> *This paper presents a case study in which three software systems were to be integrated. We show how architectural reasoning was used to design and compare integration alternatives. In particular, four different levels of the integration were discussed (interoperation, a so-called Enterprise Application Integration, an integration based on a common data model, and a full*

integration). We also show how cost, time to delivery and maintainability of the integrated solution were estimated.

On the basis of the case study, we analyze the advantages and limits of the architectural approach as such and conclude by outlining directions for future research: how to incorporate analysis of cost, time to delivery, and risk in architectural analysis, and how to make architectural analysis more suitable for comparing many aspects of many alternatives during development. Finally we outline the limitations of architectural analysis.

6.1 Introduction

The evolution, migration and integration of existing software (legacy) systems are widespread and a formidable challenge to today's businesses [25,115]. This paper will focus on the *integration* of software systems. Systems need to be integrated for many reasons. In an organization, processes are usually supported by several tools and there is a need for integration of these tools to achieve an integrated and seamless process. Company mergers demand increased interoperability and integration of tools. Such tools can be very diverse with respect to technologies, structures and use and their integration can therefore be very complex, tedious, and time- and effort-consuming. One important question which arises: Is it feasible to integrate these tools and which approach is the best to analyze, design and implement the integration?

Architecture-centered software development is a well-established strategy [13,20,71,146]. We have experienced the architecture of a system as an appropriate starting point around which to concentrate integration activities. One common experience is that integration is more complex and costly than first expected due to “architectural mismatches” [51,57], and this problem should be addressed at the architectural level. It also seems possible that some architectural analysis techniques used during new development could also be applicable during system evolution and integration. In this paper we show the extent to which an architecture-centric approach can be used during system evolution and integration, and how accurate and relevant the result of such an architecture-based analysis is.

Our aim has been to present our experiences from a case study in which three software systems were to be integrated after a company merger. We have monitored the decision process, and the actual integration has just begun. The activities were focused around the systems’ architectures. We describe the three integration approaches that were discerned and discussed, how architectural descriptions of the two most interesting were developed and analyzed and the decisions taken for the development project. Further we analyze the proposed solutions showing the strong and weak sides of the architectural strategy as such.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section 6.2 provides the background of our case study, section 6.3 discusses four integration approaches, and section 6.4 uses the case study to elaborate on architectural analyses possible during system integration. Section 6.5 describes related work, and section 6.6 concludes the paper and suggests directions for future research.

6.2 Introducing the Case Study

The case study concerns a large North American industrial enterprise with thousands of employees that acquired a smaller (approximately 800 employees) European company operating in the same business area. Software, mainly developed in-house, is used for simulations and management of simulation data, i.e. as tools for development and production of other products. The functionality of the software developed in the two organizations prior to the merger was found to overlap to some extent, and three systems suitable for integration were identified. A project was launched with the aim of arriving at a decision on strategic principles for the integration, based on the proposed architecture for the integrated system. This was the first major collaboration between the two previously separate software departments.

Figure 13 describes the existing systems' architectures in a simplified manner in a high-level diagram combining an execution view of the system with the code view [13,35,71,98]. The sizes of the rectangles indicate the relative sizes of the components of the systems (as measured in lines of code). One system uses a proprietary object-oriented database, implemented as files accessed through library functions, while the other two systems, which were developed at the same site, share data in a common commercial relational database executing as a database server. The most modern system is built with three-tier architecture in Java 2 Enterprise Edition (J2EE), while the two older systems are developed to run in a Unix environment with only a thin X Windows client displaying the user interface (the "thin" client is denoted by a rectangle with zero height in the figure). These are written mostly in Tcl and C++, and C++ with the use of Motif. The "Tcl/C++ system" contains ~350 KLOC (thousands of lines of code), the "C++/Motif system" 140 KLOC, and the "Java system" 90 KLOC.

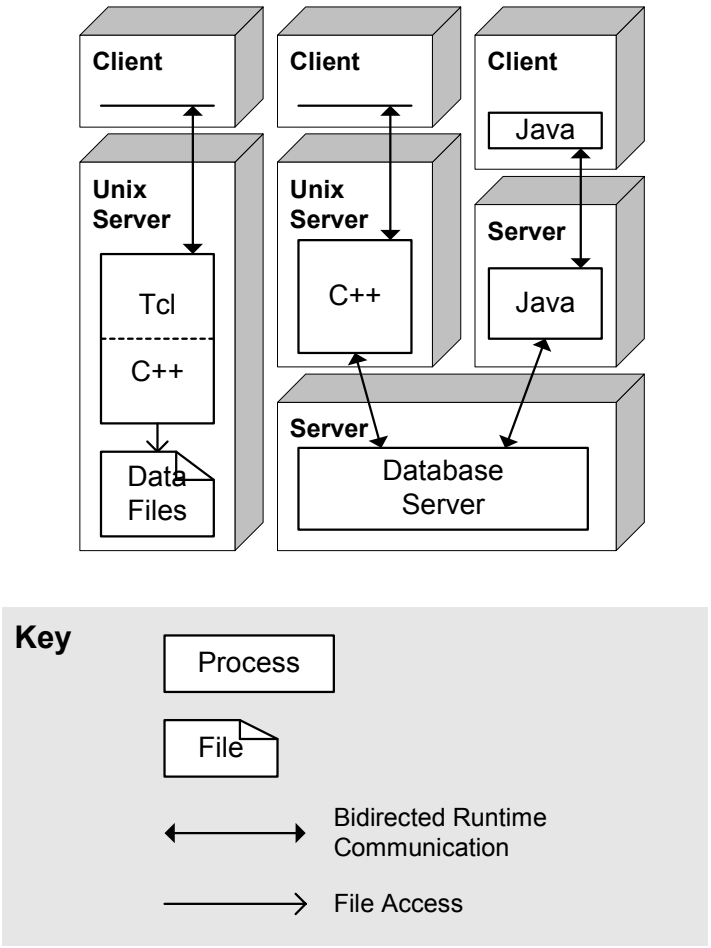


Figure 13. Today's three systems.

6.3 Integration Approaches

When developing architectures of new systems, the main goal is to achieve the functionality and quality properties of the system in accordance with the specified requirements and identified constraints. When, however, existing systems are to be integrated, there may be many more constraints to be considered: backward compatibility requirements, existing procedures in the organization, possible incompatibility between the systems, partial overlap of functionality, etc. Similarly, the integrated system is basically required to provide the same functionality as the separate systems did previously, but also, for example, to ensure data

consistency and enable automation of certain tasks previously performed manually. When developing new software, it is possible to design a system that is conceptually integrated [27] (i.e. conforms to a coherent set of design ideas), but this is typically not possible when integrating software since the existing software may have been built with different design concepts [57]. Another problem is how to deal with the existing systems during the integration phase (and even long after, if they have been delivered and are subject to long-term commitments). This problem becomes more complex the more calendar-time the integration will take as there is a pronounced tradeoff between costs in the short term and in the long term when different integration solutions have different maintainability characteristics. For example, there is an opportunity to replace older with more recent technologies to secure the system usability for the future. Scenarios possible if the systems are not integrated should also be considered.

In the analysis and decision process we have discerned four integration approaches or "levels" with different characteristics. They are:

- **Interoperability through import and export facilities.** The simplest form of using services between tools is to obtain interoperability by importing/exporting data and providing services. The data could either be transferred manually when data is needed, or automatically. To some extent, this could be done without modifying existing systems (e.g. if there is a known API or it is possible to access data directly from the data sources), and if source code is available it is possible to add these types of facilities. This approach would allow information to flow between the systems, which would give users a limited amount of increased value. It would be difficult to achieve an integrated and seamless process, as some data could be generated by a particular tool not necessarily capable of automatic execution. Moreover, there would be problems of data inconsistency.
- **Enterprise Application Integration (EAI).** Many systems used inside a company are acquired rather than built, and it is not an option to modify them. Such systems are used within a company, as opposed to the software products a company not only uses but also

manufactures and installs at customers' sites. Integrating such enterprise software systems involve using and building wrappers, adapters, or other types of connectors. In such a resulting "loose" integration the system components operate independently of each other and may store data in their own repository. Depending on the situation, EAI can be based on component technologies such as COM or CORBA, while in other cases EAI is enabled through import and export interfaces (as described in previous bullet). Well-specified interfaces and intercommunication services (middleware) often play a crucial role in this type of integration.

- **Integration on data level.** By sharing data e.g. through the use of a common database, the users will benefit from access to more information. Since the systems store complementary information about the same data items; the information will be consistent, coherent and correct. However, it would presumably require more effort to reach there: a common data model must be defined and implemented and the existing systems must be modified to use this database. If this is done carefully, maintenance costs could be decreased since there is only one database to be maintained and there are opportunities to coordinate certain maintenance tasks. On the other hand, maintenance becomes more complex since the database must be compatible with three systems (which are possibly released in new versions independently). Also data integration may have an impact on code change, due to possible data inconsistencies or duplicated information.
- **Integration on source code level.** By "merging" source code, the users would experience one homogeneous system in which similar tasks are performed in the same way and there would be only one database (the commercial database used today by the C++/Motif system and the Java system). Future maintenance costs can be decreased since it would be conceptually integrated, and presumably the total number of lines of code, programming languages, third-party software and technologies used will decrease. Most probably the code integration would require integration of data.

Interoperability through import and export facilities is the most common way of beginning an integration initiative [41]. It is the fastest way to achieve (a limited amount of) increased functionality and it includes the lowest risk of all alternatives, which is the reason why managers usually adopt this approach. In a combination with a loose integration (EAI) it can provide a flexible and smooth integration process of transition: the import/export facilities can be successively replaced by communicating components and more and more integrated repositories. Of course, this approach has its disadvantages – in total it will arguably require more effort, and the final solution may technically not be as optimized as the results of the "data level" or "code level" approaches. This of course depends on the goals of the integration.

Which integration approach to use in a particular context depends not only the objective of the integration, but also e.g. the organizational context and whether source code is available or not. For example, is the goal to produce an integrated product for the market, or is the system to be used only in-house? Is integration of software a result of a company merger? Is integration expected to decrease maintenance costs or to increase the value for users (or both)? Who owns the source code? Can the systems to be integrated be expected to be released in subsequent versions by (other) independent vendors? Is modifying source code an option, considering both its availability and possible legal restrictions? Business constraints also limit the possibilities – the resources are limited and time to market an important concern. One must also consider the risks associated with each alternative, meaning the probability of overrunning budget and/or schedule or not succeed with the integration. The risk parameters include not only those related to technical problems, but also those associated with the collaboration of two software development departments which had previously belonged to different companies and only recently began collaborating.

The project team of the case study intuitively felt that the benefits and the cost of implementation, the time to delivery, and the risk of the integration approaches described above should be related roughly as shown in Figure 14. The diagram is very simplistic

assuming there is only one “benefit” dimension, but as mentioned earlier there may be different types of goals for integration, such as increased usability or decreased maintenance costs. EAI was never explicitly considered as a separate approach during the case study and is therefore omitted from the figure.

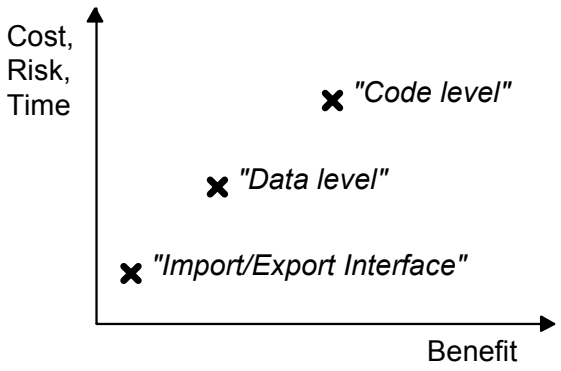


Figure 14: Expected relations between risk, cost, and time to delivery.

6.4 Development of Integration Alternatives

Developers from the two sites met and analyzed the existing systems at the architectural level, and then developed and analyzed two integration alternatives. The developers had architected, implemented and/or maintained the existing systems and were thus very experienced in the design rationale of the systems and the technologies used therein. The architectural alternatives were then handed over to management to decide which alternative should be used. The integration process was based on IEEE standard 1471-2000 [76] and is described in more detail in [105,107].

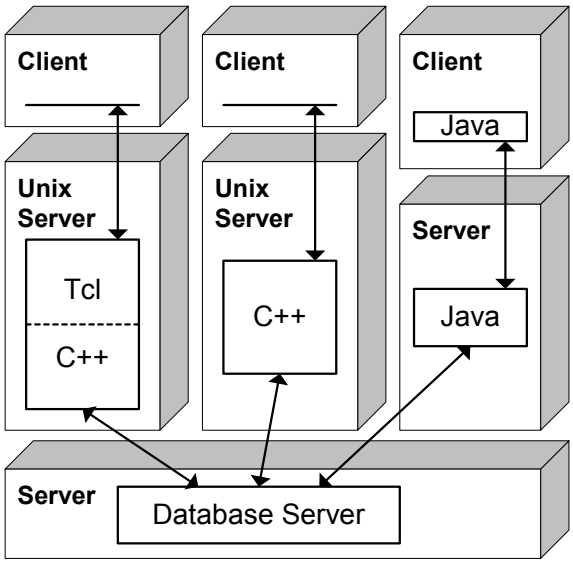
The “import/export level” interoperability was not discussed in any depth since it was apparent that more benefits were desired than could be expected with this approach. Instead, the software developers/architects tried the other approaches to integration, by conceptually combining the source code components of the existing system in different ways. The existing documentation had first to be improved by e.g. using the same notation (UML) and the same

sets of architectural views (a code view and an execution view were considered sufficient) to make them easy to merge [107]. Each diagram contained about ten components, sufficient to permit the kind of reasoning that will be described. By annotating the existing components with associated effort, number of lines of code, language, technologies, and third-party software used, the developers could reason about how well the components would fit together. During the development of alternatives, statements about the quality properties of the integrated system such as performance and scalability were based on the characteristics of the existing systems. Patterns known to have caused deficiencies and strengths in the existing systems in these respects made it possible to evaluate and discard working alternatives rapidly. The developers had a list of such concerns, to ensure that all those of importance were addressed. The process of developing and refining alternatives and analyzing them was more iterative than is reflected in the present paper where we only present two remaining alternatives and the analyses of three specific concerns in more detail (sections "Future Maintainability" on page 104, "Cost Estimation" on page 105, and "Estimated Time to Delivery" on page 107).

The two remaining main alternatives conformed well to the "data level" and the "code level" integration approaches. Both these alternatives would necessarily need a common data model and shared data storage. From there, the two different levels of integration would require different types of actions: for "data level" integration, the existing systems would need to be modified due to changes in the data model, and for "code level" integration, much of the existing functionality would need to be rewritten in Java; see Figure 15. In reality, these descriptions were more detailed than the figure suggests; About ten components were used in each of the same two views for describing the existing systems, a code view and an execution view.

Architectural descriptions such as these make it possible to reason about several properties of the resulting integrated system.

a) "Data level" integration, preserves existing architectures



b) "Code level" integration, uses 3-tiered architecture

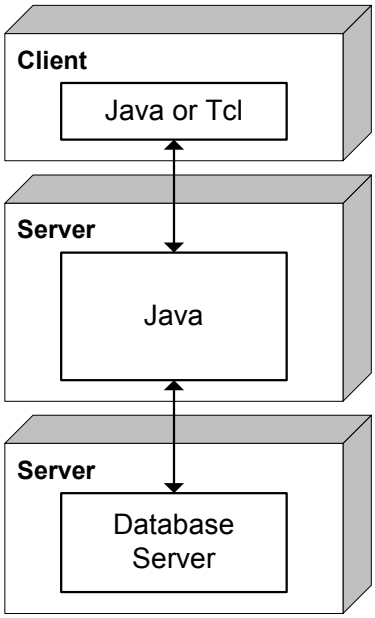


Figure 15. The two main integration alternatives.

Future Maintainability

The following factors were considered in the case study to be able to compare the future maintenance costs of the integration alternatives:

- **Technologies used.** The number of technologies used in the integrated system arguably tells something about its complexity. By technologies we more specifically mean the following: programming languages, development tools (such as code generators and environments), third-party software packages used in runtime, and interaction protocols. Too many such technologies will presumably create maintenance difficulties since maintaining staff needs to master a large number of languages and specific products and technologies, but at the same time tools and third-party software should of course be used whenever possible to increase efficiency. A reasonable number must therefore be estimated in any specific case. In our case study, the total number of languages and technologies used in the "code level" alternative would be reduced to 6 to 8 languages instead of the 11 found in the existing system combined, a number which would be preserved in the "data level" alternative. The number of third-party packages providing approximately the same functionality could be reduced from 9 to 5, and two other technologies would also become superfluous.
- **LOC.** The total number of lines of code (LOC) has been suggested as a measure of maintainability; it is e.g. part of the Maintainability Index (MI) [137,169]. In the case study, the total number of lines of code would be considerably less with the "code level" alternative. No numbers were estimated, but while the "code level" alternative would mean that code was merged and the number of lines of code would be less than today, the "data level" alternative would rather raise the need of duplicating more functionality in the long term.
- **Conceptual integrity.** Although a system commonly implements several architectural styles at the same time – "heterogeneous systems" [13] – this should come as a result of a conscious decision rather than fortuitously for the architecture to be conceptually

integrated [27]. In the case study, it was clear, by considering the overall architectural styles of the systems, that the "data level" alternative involved three styles in parallel while the "code level" would reflect a single set of design ideas.

It might seem surprising that in the case study, in the "code level" integration alternative, the server is written totally in Java. Would it not be possible to pursue the EAI approach and produce a loosely integrated solution, involving the reuse of existing parts written e.g. in C++? With the platform already in use, J2EE, it would be possible to write wrappers that "componentized" different parts of the legacy code. This was considered, and, by iteration the architectural description of this alternative was modified and analyzed with respect to the cost of implementation. Based on these estimates, all solutions involving wrappers and componentization were ultimately discarded and only the two alternatives already presented remained.

Whether to use Java or Tcl in the client for the "code level" alternative was the subject of discussion. Much more user interface code was available in the Tcl/C++ system than in the Java system which was preferable for other reasons. The pros and cons of each alternative were hard to quantify, and eventually this became a question of cost, left to the management to decide.

Cost Estimation

Estimating the cost of implementing an integrated system based on an architectural description is fairly straightforward. Based on previous experience, developers could estimate the effort associated with each component, considering whether it will remain unmodified, be modified, rewritten, or totally new in the integrated system. Clearly, the outcome of this type of estimation is no better than the estimations for individual components. The advantage of estimation at the component level is that it is easier to grasp, understand, and (we argue) estimate costs for smaller units than for the system as a whole.

This estimation is fairly informal and mainly based on experience, but it can be considered reasonable. First, the developers in the case study were very experienced in the existing

systems and software development, second, the developers themselves agreed on the numbers, third, these numbers were higher than the management had expected (implying it not being overly optimistic/unrealistic), fourth, management explicitly asked the developers during the development of the alternatives to find cheaper (and faster) alternatives, something they were unable to do – the only alternative according to them would be the import and export facilities (for the interoperability approach). When summing the effort associated with all components in each alternative the developers found (partly to their surprise) that the implementation costs would be the same for both alternatives (the total estimated times differed by only 5%, which is negligible for such early, relatively rough estimations). This was true for the variant of the "code level" alternative if Tcl was chosen for the client part - using Java would require more resources. The apparently high cost of the "data level" alternative was due to the definition of a common data model, and in the case of the Tcl/C++ system the use of a new database (a commercial relational database instead of an object-oriented proprietary database). These changes would ripple through the data access layer, the classes modeling the items in the database, and to a limited extent the user interface. Since the total number of lines of code is much greater than the estimated number of lines of code in the "code level" integration alternative, the apparently lower cost of modifying code instead of rewriting it would be nullified by the larger number of lines of code. It would also be necessary to write some new components in two languages.

Bridging solutions would be required and functionality duplicated in both C++ and Java by the existing code (and added to by the development of new functionality and the modifications of e.g. data access layers). When the developers estimated the costs associated with using both Tcl and Java in the client (since much code could be reused), and using only one (thus extending the existing code in one language with the functionality of the other), it was concluded that using two different languages in the client would probably be more costly than using either one, due to the same arguments as above. Some generic components, among them non-trivial graphical widgets, would need to be written in two languages.

Building a common data model from existing data models is one of the major challenges of software engineering [5,51], which was apparent from the cost estimations. We cannot claim, on the basis of a single case study, that the "data level" approach will always be as expensive as the "code level" approach, but this reasoning gives at hand that in general, neither approach is cheap, once a minimum of data level integration is decided upon. For the "data level" alternative this requires changes throughout the existing systems and the "code level" alternative requires changes, to adapt to both the new data model and a single set of technologies, languages, and architectural styles.

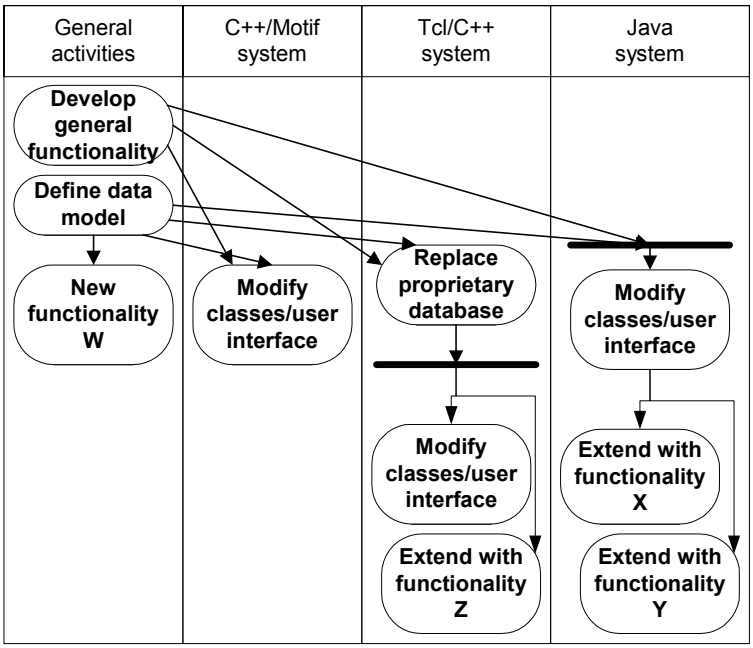
Estimated Time to Delivery

The resulting project plans developed in the case study are shown in Figure 16. Although the diagrams presented here are somewhat simplified compared with those developed in the project, they suffice to illustrate some features of this type of project plan:

- The definition of a common data model is crucial in both integration approaches, since most other activities are dependent on it. In the case study, the developers were explicit that this activity should not be rushed, and should involve the most experienced users as well as developers.
- Management is given a certain amount of freedom by not assigning strict dates to activities. Activities can be prioritized and reordered, and deliveries "spawned off" to meet business demands. More staff can be assigned to certain activities to increase parallelism and throughput. Based on which components would need to be included in a delivery, it is possible to define activities that produce these components; for example, if a delivery with functionality "X" is desired, the activity "Extend with functionality X" or "New functionality X" (for the two alternatives respectively) must be performed as well as all activities on which it is dependent. One strategy could be to aim at delivering a "vertical slice" of the system, incorporating the functionality that is most used first. In this way some users can begin using the new system, thus minimizing the need for maintenance and development of the existing systems (which will soon be retired).

- In the “code level” alternative, many activities are of the “transfer functionality” type. In this way, users of the Java system will only see the functionality grow rapidly, but the users of the other systems will experience a period when most of the functionality exists in both the system with which they are familiar and the new system. For the “data level” alternative, the activities are more of the kind “modify the existing systems”. The users would then continue using their familiar system but, when beginning to use the other systems, would have access to more functionality working on the same data. This type of reasoning impacts on long-term planning aspects such as the time at which existing systems can be phased out and retired.
- In the “code level” alternative, it was possible to identify more general components that would require an initial extra amount of effort and calendar-time but would eventually make the project cheaper and faster. In the “data level” alternative, only few such components were identified.
- Some development of totally new functionality demanded by users was already planned and could not be delayed until the systems integration efforts were completed. However, it was agreed that these activities should be delayed as long as possible – at least until one of the integration alternatives was chosen, and if possible, until the new data model had been defined, and even general components implemented in the case of the “code level” alternative. This was to avoid producing even more source code that would need to be modified during the integration.

a) Project schedule plan for "data level" alternative:



b) Project schedule plan for "code level" alternative:

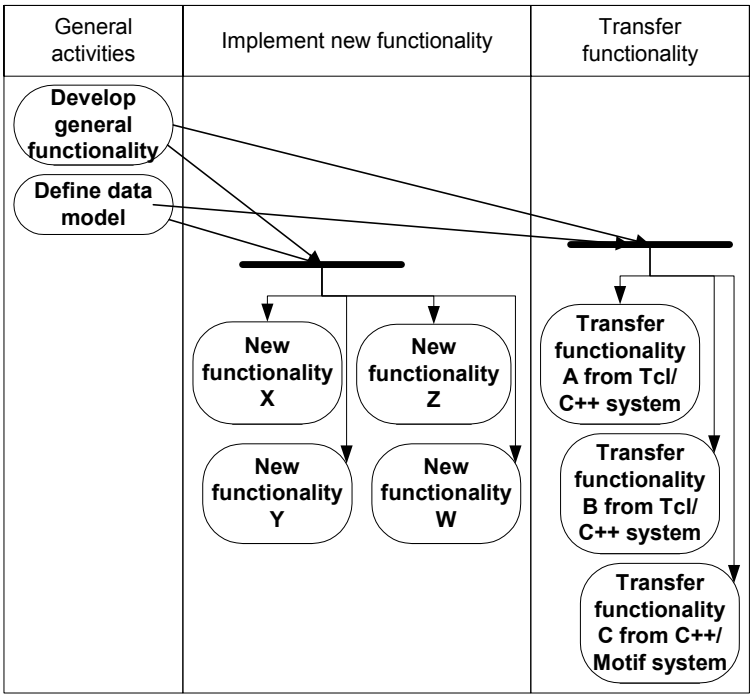


Figure 16: The outlined project plans.

The Decision

When the developers from the two sites had jointly produced these two alternatives and analyzed them, the management was to decide which alternative to choose. It was agreed that the "code level" alternative was considered to be superior to the "data level" alternative from virtually all points of view. The users would experience a more powerful, uniform and homogeneous system. It would also be easier (meaning less costly) to maintain. The analysis had shown that it would include a smaller code base as well as a smaller number of languages, third-party software, and other technologies. The languages and technologies used were more modern, implying that they would be supported by more tools, easier to use and more attractive to potential employees. Not least, the resulting product would be conceptually integrated. Regarding the choice between using Java and Tcl in the client, the management accepted that if the "code level" was decided upon, Tcl would be used since using Tcl implied a significantly smaller effort (due to a larger code base to reuse).

When management considered all this information, they judged the integration to be sufficiently beneficial to motivate the high cost. The benefits included, as we have indicated earlier, increased user efficiency, decreased maintenance costs (in the case of the "code level" alternative), as well as less tangible business advantages such as having an integrated system to offer customers. Also, the evolution scenarios for the existing systems if no integration was performed would be costly; for example, the European organization would probably replace in the near future, the proprietary object-oriented database with a commercial relational database for maintenance and performance reasons. The cost of implementing the "data level" and "code level" alternatives (when using Tcl in the client) had been estimated to differ insignificantly, and as the organization had to develop it with a limited number of staff, the estimated time to delivery would also be very similar, although the deliveries would be of different kinds due to the different natures of the activities needed for the two alternatives. The relation benefit vs. cost and time to delivery can therefore be visualized as Figure 17 illustrates (the "import/export interface" level was not analyzed, hence the parentheses).

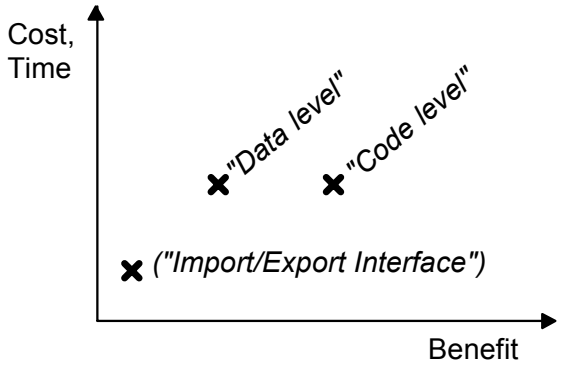


Figure 17: The estimated cost and time to delivery.

As became clear by now, it was less important to get as much benefit as possible for the cost than to decrease the risk as much as possible. No formal risk analysis was performed at this point, but the risk was judged to be higher for the "code level" alternative, since it involves rewriting code that already exists and works, i.e. risking overrunning schedule and budget and/or decreasing the quality of the product, but also a risk in terms of "commitment required" from the departments of two previously separate organizations, not yet close collaborators. By choosing the "data level" alternative, each system would still be functioning and include more functionality than before, should the integration be discontinued due to e.g. an unacceptable schedule and/or budget situation. This is discernible in the project plans of Figure 16. Management doubted that the cost of the two alternatives would really be similar; they intuitively assumed that the higher benefit, the more effort was required (cost and time), as was sketched in Figure 14. Still, they were explicit in that the *risk* was the decisive factor and not *cost*, when choosing the "data level" alternative.

6.5 Related Work

There are suggestions that project management during ordinary software development has much to gain from being "architecture-centric" [146]. We have shown some ways of pursuing the architecture-centric approach during integration also. The rest of this section will focus

on two related aspects of this, the literature relating to integration approaches, and methods and analysis techniques based on architectural descriptions.

Of the four integration approaches we have discussed, Enterprise Application Integration (EAI) seems to be the most documented [44,62,82,115,154]. This approach concerns in-house integration of the systems an enterprise *uses* rather than *produces*. Johnson [82] uses an architectural approach to analyze the integration of enterprise software systems. In spite of the difficulty of accurately describing the architecture of this type of system because the available documentation is inadequate, architectural analysis can be successfully applied to the design of enterprise systems integration. Johnson has also examined the limitations of architectural descriptions which one must be aware of, limitations that were also experienced in the case study.

None of the architectural methodologies available were completely feasible for the task. The *Architecture Trade-off Analysis Method* (ATAM) [34] and the *Software Architecture Analysis Method* (SAAM) [13,34] are based on stakeholder-generated scenarios. The ATAM requires business drivers and quality attributes to be specified in advance and more detailed architectural descriptions to be available. In the case study, all of this was done in a more iterative manner. Also, with limited resources, it would be impossible to evaluate and compare several alternatives, it being too time-consuming to investigate all combinations of quality attributes for all working alternatives. While both SAAM and ATAM use scenarios to evaluate maintainability, we used another, if less accurate measurement method, comparing the number of lines of code, third-party software, languages, and technologies used, assuming that the lower the number, the easier the maintenance. The *Active Reviews for Intermediate Designs* method (ARID) [34] builds on Active Design Reviews (ADR) and incorporates the idea of scenarios from SAAM and ATAM. It is intended for evaluating partial architectural descriptions, exactly that which was available during the project work. However, it is intended as a type of formal review involving more stakeholders and this was not possible because the project schedule was already fixed, and too tight for an ARID exercise. All of

these methodologies analyze functionality (which was relatively trivial in the case study as the integrated system would have the functionality of the three systems combined) and quality attributes such as performance and security (which are of course important for the product of the case study, but considered to be similar to the existing systems) – but none addresses cost, time to delivery, or risk, which were considered more important. The project therefore relied more on the analysts' experience and intuition in analyzing functionality and quality attributes (because of the project's limited resources), and cost, time to delivery, and risk (because there are no available lightweight methodologies for analyzing these properties from architecture sketches).

6.6 Conclusions

We have shown the central role of software architecture in a case study concerning the integration of three software systems after a company merger. Some important lessons we learned from this case study can be formulated as follows:

- There are at least four approaches available to a software integrator: Enterprise Application Integration (EAI), interoperability, data level integration, and source code integration. The choice between these is typically based on business or organizational considerations rather than technical.
- When the architectural descriptions of existing systems are not easily comparable, the first task is to construct similar architectural descriptions of these. The components of the existing systems can then be rearranged in different ways to form different alternatives. The working alternatives can be briefly analyzed, largely on the basis of known properties of architectural patterns of the existing systems.
- The functional requirements of an integrated system are typically a combination of the functionality of the existing systems, and are relatively easy to assess as compared with other quality attributes.

- The effort required to implement each component of the new system can be estimated in terms of how much can be reused from the existing systems and how much must be rewritten. The total cost of the system is easily calculated from these figures.
- According to the estimations performed in the case study, source code level integration is not necessarily more expensive than data level integration.
- Architectural analysis, as it was carried out in the project, fails to capture all business aspects important for decisions. All the information needed to produce a project schedule is not present in an architectural description. The *risk* associated with the alternatives was identified as the most important and least analyzed decision criteria.

There are a number of concerns that must be addressed during integration planning as well as during software activities in general. These include the process and time perspective (e.g. will the integration be carried out incrementally, enabling stepwise delivery and retirement of the existing systems?), the organizational issues (e.g. who are the stakeholders?), the cost and effort requirements (e.g. are only minimal additional efforts allowed?), etc. We have shown how a system's architecture can be used as a starting and central point for a systematic analysis of several features. To what extent can such concerns be addressed by architectural analysis? Perhaps the focus on the architecture, basically a technical artifact poses a risk to these other concerns? We have presented means of estimating cost and time of implementation based on architectural descriptions, including outlining project schedules. We have also shown that only the parts of such project schedules involving implementation of source code can be produced from the architectural descriptions, activities such as design or analysis must be added from other sources. We also showed that the risk of choosing one alternative or the other was not considered. We therefore propose that risk analysis be included in architectural analysis to make it more explicit (or the opposite, that architectural analysis be used in project risk analysis). This would make it possible to treat risk together with other quality properties and make a conscious trade-off between them. Research in this

area will presumably need to incorporate an organizational development and production process model – which would also provide a better basis for time and cost estimation.

7. PROCESS CHALLENGES IN INTEGRATION PROJECT

This chapter describes the same case study as chapters 6 and 8, but from a process perspective.

Original publication information:

Integration of Software Systems – Process Challenges [107]

Rikard Land, Ivica Crnkovic, Christina Wallin, Proceedings of Euromicro Conference*, 2003.*

Keywords: *Software Architecture, Software Evolution, Software Integration, Software Process Improvement.*

Abstract: *The assumptions, requirements, and goals of integrating existing software systems are different compared to other software activities such as maintenance and development, implying that the integration processes should be different. But where there are similarities, proven processes should be used.*

In this paper, we analyze the process used by a recently merged company, with the goal of deciding on an integration approach for three systems. We point out observations that illustrate key elements of such a process, as well as challenges for the future.

7.1 Introduction

Software integration as a special type of software evolution has become more and more important in recent years [115], but brings new challenges and complexities. There are many reasons for software integration; in many cases software integration is a result of company mergers. In this paper we describe such a case, which illustrates the challenges of the decision process involved in deciding the basic principles of the integration on the architectural level.

7.2 Case Study

Our case study concerns a large North-American industrial enterprise with thousands of employees that acquired a smaller (~800 employees) European company in the same, non-software, business area where software, mainly in-house developed, is used for simulations and management of simulation data, i.e. as tools for development and production of other products. The expected benefits of an integration were increased value for users (more functionality and all related data collected in the same system) as well as more efficient use of software development and maintenance resources. The first task was to make a decision on an architecture to choose for the integrated system. The present paper describes this decision process.

Figure 18 describes the architectures of the three existing systems in a high-level diagram blending an execution view with a code view [35]. The most modern system is built with a three-tier architecture in Java 2 Enterprise Edition (J2EE), while the two older systems are designed to run in a Unix environment with only a thin "X" client displaying the user interface (the "thin" client is denoted by a rectangle with zero height in the figure); they are written mostly in Tcl and C++, and C++ with the use of Motif. The Tcl/C++ system contains ~350 KLOC (thousands of lines of code), the C++/Motif system 140 KLOC, and the Java system 90 KLOC. The size of the rectangles in the figure indicates the relative sizes between the components of the systems (as measured in lines of code). The Tcl/C++ system uses a proprietary object-oriented database, implemented as files accessed through library functions,

while the two other systems, which were developed at the same site, share data in a common commercial relational database executing as a database server.

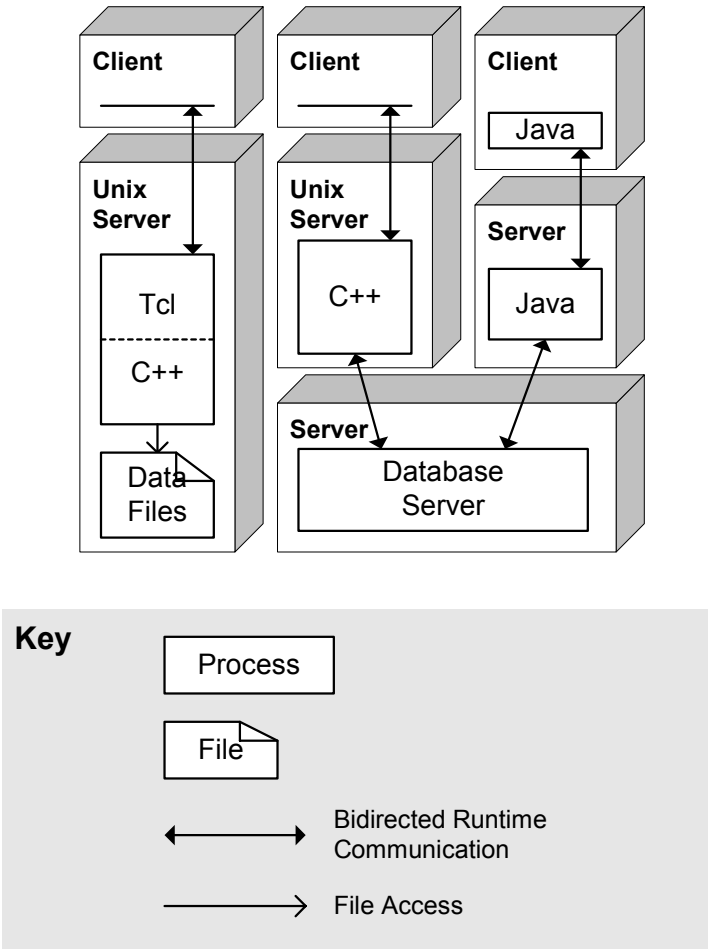


Figure 18. Today's three systems.

Since the two software development departments (the North American and the European) had cooperated only to a small extent beforehand, the natural starting point was simply to meet and discuss solutions. The managers of the software development departments accompanied by a few software developers met for about a week, outlined several high-level alternatives and discussed their implications both in terms of the integrated system's technical features

and the impact on the organization. Since the requirements for the integrated system was basically to provide the same functionality as the existing systems, with the additional benefits of having access to more and consistent data, user involvement at this early stage was considered superfluous. At this meeting, no formal decision was made, but the participants were optimistic afterwards – they had "almost" agreed. To reach an agreement, the same managers accompanied with software developers met again after two months and discussed the same alternatives (with only small variations) and, once again, "almost agreed". The same procedure was repeated a third time with the same result: the same alternatives were discussed, and no decision on an integrated architecture was made. By now, almost half a year had passed without arriving at a decision.

Higher management insisted on the integration and approved of a more ambitious project with the goal to arrive at a decision. Compared to the previous sets of meetings, it should contain more people and involve more effort, and be divided into three phases: "", "Design" , and "Decision", with different stakeholders participating in each; see Figure 19. First, the users were supposed to evaluate the existing systems from a functional point of view, and software developers from a technical point of view. Then, this information should be fed into the second phase, where software developers (basically the same as in phase one) should design a few alternatives of the architecture of an integrated system, analyze these, and recommended one. In the last phase, the managers concerned were to decide which architecture to use in the future (maybe, but not necessarily, the one recommended in phase 2). The first phase lasted for two weeks, while the second and third phases lasted for one week each.

Of course, this characterization is somewhat idealized – in reality, there were more informal interactions between the stakeholder groups and between the phases: briefings were held almost each day during the course of the meetings, to monitor progress, adjust the working groups' focus etc.

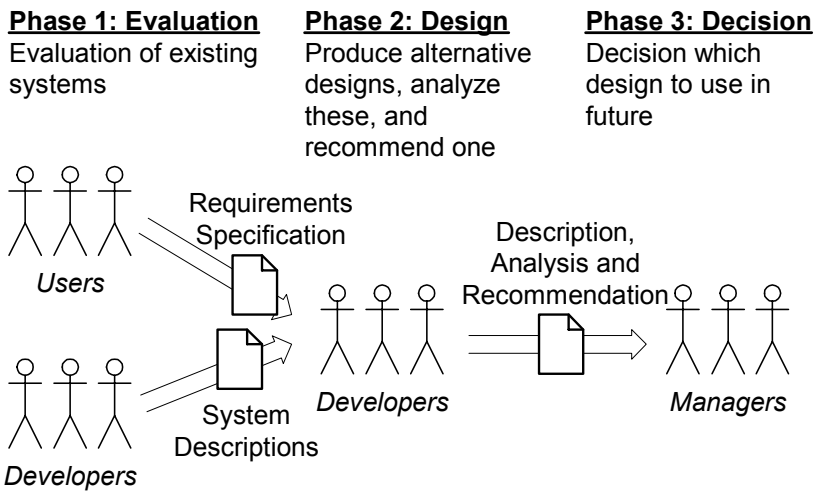


Figure 19. Project phases.

Phase 1: Evaluation. Six users experienced with either of the three systems had hands-on tutorials and explored all the existing systems, guided by an expert user. They produced a high-level requirements specification with references to what was good and less good in the existing systems. In general they were content with the existing systems and were explicit in that it was not necessary to make the user interface more homogeneous; they would be able to work in the three existing user interfaces, although very dissimilar. The user evaluation would therefore not affect the choice of architecture.

The developers found that although the existing systems' documentation included overall system descriptions, they were of an informal and intuitive kind (for example, none of them used UML), which meant that the descriptions were not readily comparable, making the development of architectural alternatives difficult. During the first phase, the developers were therefore to produce high-level descriptions of the existing systems that would be easily comparable and "merge-able".

Phase 2: Design. In phase 2, the software developers tried several ways of "merging" these architectural descriptions. Their experience and knowledge of the existing systems was the

most important asset. Two main alternatives were developed, a “data level” integration (preserving the differences between today’s systems but adapting them to use the same database, see Figure 20a), and the “code level” integration alternative (using the three-tiered architecture of the existing Java system, see Figure 20b). The architectural descriptions were analyzed briefly regarding functionality and extra-functional properties such as performance, maintainability, and portability, and project plans for the implementation of the two alternatives were outlined. The developers recommended the “code level” alternative due to its many perceived advantages: it would be simpler to maintain, bring the users more value, be perceived by users as a homogeneous system, while not being more expensive in terms of effort to implement (according to the estimations, that is).

Phase 3: Decision. All written documentation (architectural descriptions, project plans for their implementation, and other analyses) was forwarded to the third phase. The managers concerned had a meeting for about a week when they discussed costs, risks, business implications, organizational impact, etc. of the two alternatives. It was decided that the systems should be integrated according to the “data level” alternative, since this solution was considered to be associated with a lower risk than the “code level” alternative; risk meaning the probability of overrunning budget and/or schedule, producing a product of poor quality, or fail altogether with the integration. The risk parameters are not only those related to technical problems (such as those involved with writing new code), but also the risk of successful collaboration (in terms of “commitment required” from departments of two previously separate organizations, not yet so close collaborators).

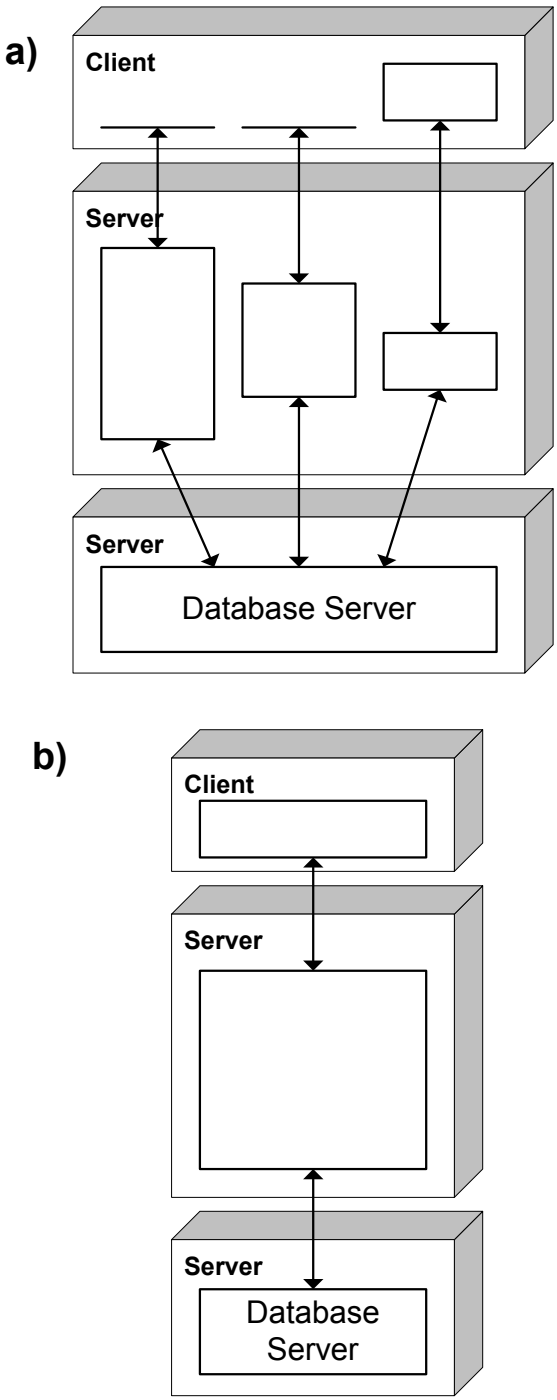


Figure 20. The two main integration alternatives.

7.3 Analysis

While a handful of alternatives were discussed during the first meetings, there were only two alternatives produced in the design phase of the three-phase project. The alternatives themselves were not new – the developers almost indignantly said that they discussed the same alternatives and issues as they had done for six months. It was rather the ability to agree on discarding some alternatives with a certain amount of confidence that was an improvement as compared to the first sets of meetings. Assuming that the developers were correct in that the discarded alternatives were inferior, this reduction of the numbers of alternatives was arguably an improvement compared to the first sets of meetings. The managers in the third phase had "only" to choose between these two alternatives, and as we described, the users did not favor any of these, which made it possible for the managers to base the decision on a smaller set of concerns.

In the rest of this section, the features of the process that enabled these improvements are discussed. We highlight what we believe to be good practices in general during software integration as well as challenges for the future. These conclusions are partly based on a questionnaire responded to by (some of) the participants of the projects.

Early meetings. In a newly merged organization, the "people aspect" of software integration needs to be addressed, and meeting in person to discuss integration in general, and even particular alternatives, is the most important means to build the trust and confidence needed. This should not be seen as a replacement for a more structured project, however.

Several-phase process. By dividing the stakeholders into different activities with specific tasks, the discussions become more focused and efficient. At the same time, more interaction that only forwarding deliverables is needed; in the project, briefings were held almost every day involving people concerned, to monitor progress and adjust focus if needed. The scheme used does not differ from already documented good practices in other software activities, such as development and maintenance.

User involvement. Performing a user evaluation of existing systems prior to integration is crucial. If the outcome does not affect the choice of architecture, this is good news for the decision process – the choice can be made based on other concerns. Moreover, any issues found during the user evaluation are important inputs to subsequent phases, during actual implementation. Since the user evaluation did not affect the choice in the case study however, it did not really fulfill the developers' expectations. We therefore suggest that in an integration process the expectations should be clearly articulated. If the goal of the user involvement at this early stage is to assess whether they have any preferences that affects the choice of architecture, the type of evaluation performed in the case study seems reasonable – enough users must be given time to understand the systems in enough depth to achieve a certain amount of confidence in the analysis results. However, if the goal is to take the opportunity of improving the existing systems significantly when integrating them, the situation reminds of development of new software, and established requirements engineering, more heavily involving users and other stakeholders, should then be applied [95]. The existing systems can be thought of as a requirement specification or prototype in evolutionary or spiral development [17]. A cheap, initial investigation involving users may indicate that a more thorough evaluation is needed.

Separating Stakeholders. This should be no surprise – it does not make sense to bring all stakeholders together for all meetings during the process. We have showed a three-phase process where the separation of stakeholders made the meetings more efficient and focused. The discussions were kept at a level detailed and technical enough to enable fruitful discussions since the participants had similar background and roles. By assigning different tasks to the different phases, the responsibilities became clearer. The developers could first concentrate on evaluating the existing systems, and only later bother about their integration. The managers were reduced to "only" making a decision, basically by choosing between two alternatives with certain properties.

Active upper management. Upper management insisted that the systems should be integrated: implicitly, since they once again started a project with the same goal, and more explicitly by deciding on a date when there had to be a decision. There was an integration coordinator, responsible for all integration activities resulting from the company merger, who actively showed interest in the project.

Architecture-centric process. During many software activities, the process can benefit from being oriented around the architecture of the system being built [146]. How the architecture was used in this particular case study has been described in more detail elsewhere [105,106].

Different people. Although there were developers and managers participating in each project execution the people participating in each meeting or in the final project were not identical. Perhaps the mix of people in the successful project was a successful blend of open minds, while in the previous meetings this was not the case? According to the questionnaire data, this might be the case.

It will take time. Eight months passed from the initial meetings to the decision. This means that the project members and the managers had got to know each other better on a personal level, and overcome cultural differences between the two countries and formerly separate organizations [29]. When a decision is dependent on people collaborating for the first time, especially when they have different cultural backgrounds (as is the case after mergers, especially international ones), it must be expected that the process will take more time than a project executed completely within either of the departments – and possibly also a higher amount of disagreement and frustration. With this in mind, it is likely that the actual integration also will take time, and that an integration project in the context of a company merger will face more obstacles in terms of cultural differences and priority clashes than a project within either of two collaborating departments would do.

7.4 Summary

After a company merger, an organization typically wants to integrate its software tools. In this paper, we investigated a case study illustrating how this can be done, and pointed out some key features of such a process that can be summarized as early meetings, several-phase process, user involvement, separating stakeholders, active upper management, architecture-centric process, different people, and not least: it will take time.

8. APPLYING IEEE 1471-2000 TO INTEGRATION PROJECT

This chapter describes the case study of systems integration case study of chapters 6 and 7, here from the point of view of how the IEEE 1471-2000 [76] was applied.

Original publication information:

> **Applying the IEEE 1471-2000 Recommended Practice to a Software Integration Project [105]**
>
> *Rikard Land, Proceedings of International Conference on Software Engineering Research and Practice (SERP'03), CSREA Press, Las Vegas, Nevada, June 2003*
>
> **Keywords:** *Architectural Description, IEEE 1471-2000, Recommended Practice, Software Architecture, Software Integration.*
>
> **Abstract:** *This paper describes an application of the IEEE Standard 1471-2000, "Recommended practice for architectural description of software-intensive system" in a software integration project. The recommended practice was introduced in a project without affecting its schedule and adding very little extra costs, but still providing benefits. Due to this "lightweight" introduction it is dubious whether it will be continually used within the organization.*

8.1 Introduction

The software field is developing rapidly. New areas of practice and research are emerging with an ever-increasing speed. Each one claims to be crucial to the success of software: web technologies, security, software processes, or, as in our case, software architecture. There is clearly a difficult tradeoff to solve for companies between making profit in the relative short term and investing time in the study of new techniques and practices. To spread awareness of new concepts and techniques, it is not enough for the research community to publish results, researchers must also more actively meet practitioners in their current situation; if Mohammed cannot come to the mountain, the mountain has to come to Mohammed. We believe that standards and recommended practices are an important means of bridging this gap between research and practice.

There are standards a company has to be aware of concerning the products it produces (e.g. network protocols or programming languages). There is also a class of standards named "recommended practices", which describe good work practices that are believed to yield high-quality products in a cost effective manner. Recommended practices are aimed at practitioners, but to our experience "recommended practices" are not used as much as they deserve. With this paper we would like to increase the interest for recommended practices in general and the IEEE Standard 1471-2000 [76] in particular, by describing an application of the latter. In doing this, we address the following questions:

There is typically very little extra time available for introducing a "recommended practice"; can it be beneficially introduced at a very low cost?

What criteria should be used to evaluate whether such an application is successful or not?

With the support of a case study, presented in section 8.2, we show in section 8.3 that a very lightweight introduction of the recommended practice can be beneficial using some evaluation criteria. In section 8.4 we describe related work. In section 8.5 we present our conclusions.

8.2 The Case Study

The case study concerns Westinghouse, a US-based industrial enterprise with thousands of employees operating in the nuclear business domain, which acquired the Swedish company ABB Atom (~800 employees) in late 2000. The software developed in the (formerly) two organizations overlapped to some extent, and three systems were identified that should be integrated. A project was launched with the aim of arriving at a decision on the architecture for an integrated system. In this paper, we will focus on how the use of a recommended practice was used in this process.

Background

The project was divided into three phases, each containing different stakeholders: evaluation of existing systems, design and analysis of future system alternatives, and decision of which design alternative to use. Each phase had to include people representing the existing systems as well as the two sites. There were three internal deliverables defined: a draft requirements specification, descriptions of the three existing systems, and one or more alternative descriptions of a new integrated system. See Figure 21.

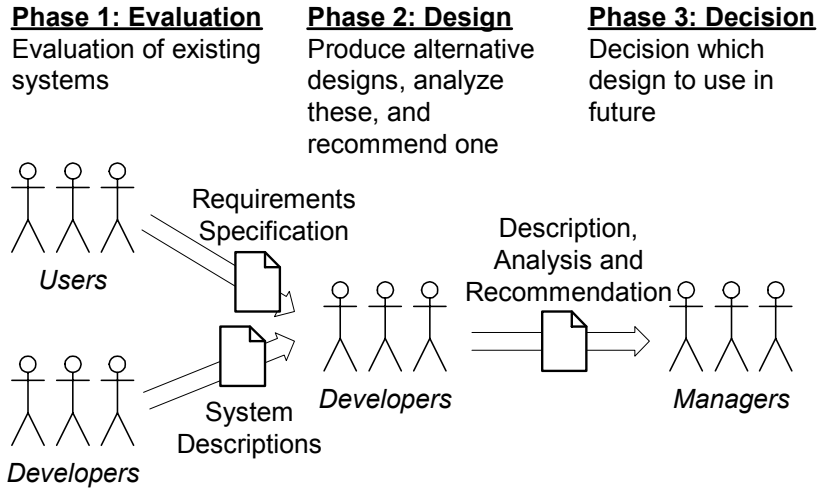


Figure 21. Project phases .

The role of the author was that of an active member of the developers group and the responsibility of documenting the outcome of the meetings as well as to prepare documentation for the different project phases. The author believed it to be beneficial for the project to introduce to the developers and architects the concepts of software architecture [12,20,34,35,71,76]. Given very limited preparation time by the other project participants, he decided to use the IEEE Standard 1471-2000, "Recommended practice for architectural description of software-intensive systems" [76].

Previously, a number of meetings had been held characterized by "brain-storming", during which no decisions were reached. Thus, there is an indication that the changes made in the project design (including the use of the recommended practice) were beneficial. We will in the following describe the project and argue how the changes were improvements, which eventually enabled a well-founded decision on which architectural alternative to use for an integrated system.

The Recommended Practice

The recommended practice contains a framework of concepts but does not mandate any particular architectural description language or set of viewpoints to use. The following key terms are defined [76]:

Architecture. "The fundamental organization of a system embodied in its components, their relationships to each other, and to the environment, and the principles guiding its design and evolution."

Architectural Description (AD)). "A collection of products to document an architecture."

View. "A representation of a whole system from the perspective of a related set of concerns."

Viewpoint. "A specification of the conventions for constructing and using a view. A pattern or template from which to develop individual views by establishing the purposes and audience for a view and the techniques for its creation and analysis."

System stakeholder. "An individual, team, or organization (or classes thereof) with interests in, or concerns relative to, a system."

Concern. "Each stakeholder typically has interests in, or concerns relative to, that system. Concerns are those interests which pertain to the system 's development, its operation or any other aspects that are critical or otherwise important to one or more stakeholders. Concerns include system considerations such as performance, reliability, security, distribution, and evolvability."

To summarize the terminology: the *architecture* of a system should be described (as an *architectural description*, AD) in several *views*, each of which should adhere to a *viewpoint*. The documentation of the AD in each view must have a rationale; i.e. it must address the *concerns* of one (or more) *stakeholder*.

Project Preparations

In advance of the first project phase, the author condensed the most relevant parts of the recommended practice into a five-page summary, which was sent together with other project information to the participants one week in advance. The summary was focused on two parts of the recommended practice:

The technical concepts. Some of the concepts of software architecture were explained, to provide a basis for descriptions, discussions, and analysis. The concepts of architecture, component, connector, view, viewpoint, stakeholder, and concern were used.

Focus on concerns. According to the recommended practice, all activities and artifacts should focus on addressing stakeholders' concerns. By using the concept of "concerns" explicitly, the discussions should be less likely to drift away too far from the essentials. A preliminary list of concerns perceived as important by the author or communicated in advance was included, intended to be further refined as new concerns appeared in the discussions.

The participants were expected to prepare themselves by spending one day (eight hours) studying the project documentation. At the time of the first meeting, only one participant out

of three (apart from the researcher-secretary himself, who prepared this document) had studied it in advance. The recommended practice summary was therefore briefly presented.

Phase One

In phase one, the task was to understand the three systems as detailed as time allowed and forward this information to the second phase. The existing documentation of the systems was of quite different kinds. Although all had overall system descriptions, they were of an informal and intuitive kind (for example, none of them used UML [19,183]), and none consisted of an explicit architectural description using the terminology established in the software architecture field (e.g. separated into views), which meant that the descriptions were not readily comparable. One of the purposes of the first phase was therefore to produce an architectural description of each of the systems, in as similar manner as possible, to be able to use as an input in the second phase. As time was limited, the intention was to maintain a balance between the following elements:

Addressing concerns. Every important concern was dealt with to some extent. This means that sometimes the participants shifted focus to another concern, although the first one was not completely addressed – it was considered better to deal with every concern on the list at a high level than to analyze only some at a detailed level (it is better to be "somewhat" sure about maintainability and performance than being very sure about only performance).

Architectural refinement. Within a view, based on a concern that needed to be clarified, the description was refined (a component "zoomed in"). But at some point, further refinement was of less practical interest compared to dealing with another concern or refinement within another view.

Annotations of components and connectors. The components and connectors were annotated with relevant information (templates were provided).

As the meeting proceeded, two viewpoints were found to reveal the most about how the systems addressed the concerns of the stakeholders: a code structure view and a runtime view.

UML was used, although in a somewhat informal manner during the meeting. The components and connectors were annotated with information on e.g. programming language and size. At the end of the meeting, there were three comparable architectural descriptions.

Phase Two

In the second phase, the task was to create a design for the new, integrated system. By having created the architectural descriptions in the first phase it was possible to discuss similarities and differences in a structured way, both at a structural level and component-by-component. By having the components separated into two different views, runtime components (processes or threads) could not be confused e.g. with code components (modules such as general libraries or specific programs). Moreover, the discussion was guided by the list of stakeholder concerns, which was extended or modified from time to time as the discussions revealed additional concerns.

It was relatively easily to use the existing descriptions and "merge" them into a new system. The difficulties experienced in this process lay no longer in the actual analysis but in agreeing on the best way of solving tradeoffs, given the estimated properties. After some compromises two alternatives were left.

Phase Three

In phase three, the use of the recommended practice was less apparent. Still, the architectural descriptions of alternative solutions created in phase two, and the analyses of them, were used as a basis for the decision. The managers participating in the last phase needed some help from the developers to be able to understand the architectural descriptions, and when translated to plain English it was possible to understand it.

The actual decision on which alternative to use for the integrated system was ultimately based primarily on organizational concerns rather than technical ones – but concerns of a stakeholder nevertheless. This emphasizes the sense of using the concept of "concerns" explicitly, both in the project and in the recommended practice itself.

8.3 Measurable Benefits

Similar sets of meetings had been carried out before, without using the recommended practice. These meetings had a more "brainstorming" character, and the participants were not able to agree on an integration solution. There is thus some scientific support for the hypothesis that the introduction of the recommended practice was an improvement (although there were other changes in the project design as well, which we intend to publish elsewhere).

Changes

The use of the recommended practice changed the way the architectural alternatives were prepared in several ways, arguably improvements:

Similar Descriptions. The existing documentation was too different from system to system to be readily compared. The systems were described in a more uniform way through the adoption of certain concepts: views, components, and connectors. When designing a new, integrated system, it was easier than during the previous (failed) sets of meetings to combine components from the three systems and be confident in the informal analyses made.

Relevant discussions. By focusing on stakeholder concerns, the focus of the discussions stayed on relevant issues. Sometimes a discussion had to be interrupted either because it was digging into some irrelevant detail or in order for another concern to be addressed; but sometimes the discussion was indeed relevant and it was the list of concerns that had to be modified.

Less number of alternatives. In the second phase, the developers were able to agree on two main alternatives and discard several alternative architectures that were discussed in the previous meetings.

Confidence in analysis. Not only was it easier than before to merge the systems, the developers also had greater confidence in their estimates of its properties than they had had in the previous series of meetings.

The two parts of the recommended practice that the researcher had intended to focus on (the technical concepts and stakeholder concerns) thus lifted the discussions from the previous "brainstorming" level to a more structured one.

How To Evaluate Success

How successful was the implementation of the recommended practice? The case study illustrates that the measure of success depends on the evaluation criteria used – do we mean that a single *project* was more efficient than otherwise, or that it is used throughout an *organization* in a consistent manner? The concepts were not the most prominent during the project discussions; the concepts of viewpoints and connectors were not fully understood by all participants; it is unknown if the recommended practice will be used in the *organization* in the future. It could therefore be argued that the use of the recommended practice was unsuccessful. But from the perspective of the outcome of the *project*, the concepts provided a tool that improved the discussions to some degree, which should be considered a (partial) success: the discussions were kept more focused, and the architectural descriptions produced were similar enough to enable comparison. This made the participants more confident in the results and their analysis.

8.4 Related Work

Our case study emphasizes the importance of documenting and evaluating the architecture of a software system. UML [19,183] and the framework provided by the recommended practice [76] were used explicitly. Elaboration on documentation issues in general can be found in [35,71]. Which views to use are discussed in e.g. [35,71,98]. The importance of architecture in the software process is discussed by e.g. [71,146]. The IEEE Architecture Group's resource page on the IEEE 1471-2000 [76] may be found at: http://www.pithecanthropus.com/~awg/public_html, but this web page currently does not list any successful applications of the recommended practice.

While there are processes and methodologies described that could have been used, none of them were completely feasible for the task. The rest of this section will briefly discuss the arguably most widely known and explain why none of those were chosen.

The *Architecture Trade-off Analysis Method* (ATAM) [34,89] builds on stakeholder-generated scenarios and has been reported useful in practice [34,87]. Several of the methods nine steps would not be possible to carry out within the case study project: in step 2 the business drivers should be presented, but these were not well defined (it was e.g. discussed throughout the project whether the system would be used only in-house or also deployed to external customers); in step 5, quality attributes are to be organized, but these were not specified in advance but found during the project. Of course, it would have been possible to reorganize the project so as to define business drivers and important quality attributes in a separate phase beforehand. In many senses, it would even have been beneficial. But, and this is our point in this paper, it would require efforts of an organizational kind that one cannot expect to be carried out.

The *Software Architecture Analysis Method* (SAAM) [12,34,88] is a predecessor of ATAM and has also been reported useful in practice [12,34,103]. Given an architectural description, it supports the analysis of virtually any system property, as defined by scenarios, but is oriented towards analyzing functionality and maintainability [34]. In the case study, it would have been too time-consuming to analyze the concerns in detail. There were several architectural alternatives, a large number of concerns to analyze (originally 13), and as said above, the exact properties or scenarios to analyze were not defined in advance. Therefore the project relied more on the analysts' experience and intuition – for good and bad.

The description of the *quality attribute-oriented software architecture design method* (QASAR) [20] includes numerous case studies where it has been used. According to this methodology, one should first design an architecture that fulfills the functional requirements (which the three existing system do) and then refine the architecture until the quality attributes are satisfactory. In the case study, this was what actually happened to some extent,

but with more intuition than formality in the analyses (as said, the actual attributes and evaluation criteria were not fixed in advance, and there was not enough time for more thorough analyses). One difference between the case study and the methodology description was that there were several alternatives in development simultaneously, on direct orders from management.

The *Active Reviews for Intermediate Designs* method (ARID) [34] builds on Active Design Reviews (ADR) and incorporates the idea of scenarios from SAAM and ATAM. It is intended for evaluating partial architectural descriptions, which is exactly what was available during the project work. However, it is intended as a type of formal review involving more stakeholders, which was not possible because the project schedule was already fixed, and too tight for an ARID exercise.

The basic reason for not using any of these methodologies is that when new practices are to be introduced "on the fly" in an industrial project, it is not possible to adjust the project. It is the practices to be introduced that have to be adjusted so as to make a minimal negative impact on the project, while having at least some positive impact.

8.5 Conclusion

As a participant in the project, it was possible to introduce new concepts and use them in the actual work even though there was very little time for the participants of the project to study and adopt new concepts. The most important artifact used was a recommended practice, the IEEE "Recommended practice for architectural description of software-intensive systems" [76]. The case study shows how a recommended practice can be beneficially introduced into a *project* without affecting its schedule negatively, although it is unsure whether the *organization* has adopted it and will use it in the future. To make a long-lasting impact on an organization, the implementation of these practices requires a champion within the organization to promote their use. The practices were used on the Westinghouse software integration project due to the efforts of the present author and would likely be used in the

future if a motivated individual within Westinghouse is indoctrinated in the IEEE 1471-2000 methodology.

Based on the case study, we suggest that a recommended practice be introduced in the manner we have described due to its low cost. If this first, perhaps partial, application to a *project* is successful, and the first users gain insight, experience and confidence in it, it might be more widely used throughout the *organization*, thus making future projects more efficient.

A number of objections can be raised concerning how the project was performed – the participants were insufficiently prepared, no established methodology was used, the evaluation relied heavily on intuition and experience, the evaluation criteria were not clear, etc. The purpose of this paper is not to evaluate the project or the organization as such, but to describe how a recommended practice can be used to improve it without requiring changes to a project that already has a tight schedule and limited resources. In this respect, we believe we have shown that a recommended practice with little effort can be used to introduce new concepts and arguably improve the outcome of a project to some extent. Still, we must bear in mind that our conclusions are weakened by the fact that there were other changes in the project design which we also intend to publish, factors we consider to be at least equally important factors for the success of the project (as compared to the previous meetings).

Although we have argued that the application of the recommended practice was beneficial in the project presented, one important remaining question is whether the recommended practice, and the concepts embodied in it, will remain in the minds of the project participants and increase the state of practice in the organization. Other ways of introducing it may prove more successful in making a longer-lasting impact, and we are looking forward to more reports on applications of the recommended practice.

9. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we discuss our findings and outline answers to our research questions.

9.1 Assumptions and Limitations

This section describes the assumptions we have made and the limitations to our conclusions we have identified. We will describe the system environment and the organizational context. Limitations involved in using case studies were discussed in section 1.2.

System Environment

The presented case studies concern information systems in an office environment. In the case studies there were no extreme demands with respect to availability or response times – but these properties should of course not be neglected by the design. Neither is scalability of performance of particularly importance since the number of simultaneous users is at the very most some dozens; but resource bottlenecks should naturally be avoided. Requirements are higher when it comes to the volume of data handled by the systems, and the integrity of the data. The degree of reliability of the systems' end results of the system redesign case study and the systems integration case study must be very high, as the results are used in the design of nuclear power plants. This requires e.g. both accurate simulation models and user-friendly data presentation. But these issues are of no concern in these case studies: for example, the actual simulation models used are not considered at the architectural level, and architectural modeling does not include the actual graphical layout. All extra-functional properties with development cost implications are also important to the developing organization; in the systems integration case study one such concern was maintainability.

There is reason to believe that other technical domains would require approaches different from those we present in the present thesis. For example, although embedded and safety-critical software are likely to have an architecture which evolves in the manner we have described in the case studies, the availability, reliability, correctness, and real-time response times of such software would need to be addressed much more thoroughly than was done in

the case studies. There, the only really stringent requirement was that the data should be correct and consistent at all times. On the architectural level, the systems of the case studies use commercial databases to ensure this, and we have found no other means of assessing this property at the architectural level.

Thus, there are arguably some differences in how the evolution of software depends on its technical domain and environment. We have found in our case studies that a lightweight evaluation can be suitable for non-critical requirements.

Organizational Context

The system described in the system redesign case study is one single product developed by the same department and the organizational context is therefore relatively simple. There are certain things worth pointing out however which limit the generality of the conclusions. The part being redesigned was never used as a tool in commercial delivery projects since it was considered too unreliable by the developers. Maybe the evolution scenario would be different if the system had been more widely used. Maybe it would be more complicated to redesign a part of a system after it had been released. Maybe practical usage of the particular system part would have forced repairs and patches that would have improved it to such a degree that redesign would not be considered worth the effort. We can only speculate and encourage others attempting to repeat our work to consider thoroughly the state of the system's life cycle and the implications of this.

In the systems integration case study the integration was necessary because of a company merger. After a company merger, the two cooperating partners have the same overall goal and have access to all information, such as source code and documentation, making any level of integration possible. However, when a company is newly merged, the old company cultures and established processes will not easily be replaced and will initially constitute cooperation obstacles [29,84]. In other business relationships, the integrating organization does not have the same degree of freedom. For example, Enterprise Application Integration (EAI) occurs in a context in which the integrating organization has acquired software systems from many

diverse sources; some systems may have been developed in-house while others have been acquired from other sources [44,82,115,116,132,154]. When source code is not available (or the existing systems are otherwise not well understood, which makes it very difficult to modify them), it may be necessary to use other kinds of solutions than those used in the case study. Enterprise Application Integration also typically concerns the software systems used to run an enterprise (such as systems managing staff or product data) while in the case study, the software to be integrated are tools used internally as well as, to a limited extent, products manufactured by the company. Loose coupling, which is generally thought to facilitate maintenance [13] but may cause the resulting system to appear less homogeneous to customers and users, is the only option available in an EAI context.

In these two case studies, the interest in the software systems is limited to users in a very specific domain. The systems are used internally at the company as tools for performing consulting work, and customers only acquire a system when they intend to perform the work themselves. In this case, the system is installed at the customer's site and the company is responsive to individual customers' error reports and change requests. If the software is developed for a larger market, the business processes and considerations may be very different from those of the case studies. Time to market becomes crucial and a development plan requiring several years before the first delivery may not be acceptable; alternatively, the existing systems must be maintained and delivered with new features in the meantime.

Although one should try to minimize the number of versions in simultaneous use, all customers and users cannot be expected to always upgrade and use the newest version. Typically, several versions of any system will therefore be in use simultaneously, and must be supported and maintained in parallel. This complexity becomes particularly emphasized during large system changes, such as systems integration, when it becomes extremely difficult to maintain compatibility between versions – compatibility in database format, file formats, functionality, user interface, etc.

In some domains, governmental certification is needed to use certain programs. What if an organization wants to integrate or redesign such a system? One can assume that such a project would be more conservative, and rewriting strictly limited. If the purpose of a redesign is to improve some extra-functional attributes of the system (such as its maintainability or performance), one can expect the architecture to be changed while the code performing the core functionality remains unchanged. This is reminiscent of the system redesign case study (chapter 4), although the code mandated to be reused unmodified should be identified beforehand (which clearly limits the freedom of the system architect). There may also be requirements for backward compatibility, which further restrict the designer's possibilities. Integration aiming at achieving more powerful functionality may also require the integration of code pieces performing the core functionality (i.e. merging components), and the result is arguably a completely new program. This is reminiscent of the systems integration case study (chapters 6 through 8), including the difficulties resulting from the use of different languages and technologies as well as different underlying data models. In both cases though, the applicability of the work should be considered.

9.2 Research Questions Revisited

Let us repeat the research questions we set out to answer in the introduction:

How can the concepts of architecture and components be beneficially used to assess a software system's properties during its evolution? **(Q1)**

Is it possible to beneficially use the concepts of architecture and components when integrating existing software systems, and how can this be done? **(Q2)**

How are architectural analyses and decisions related to organizational and business goals during system evolution? **(Q3)**

How does the architecture of an existing system restrict or facilitate its evolution? **(Q4)**

The rest of this chapter is organized on the basis of these questions, and we will use the material presented earlier in the thesis – our case studies and the literature survey – to argue for possible answers.

Q1: How can the concepts of architecture and components be beneficially used to assess a software system's properties during its evolution?

Before making major changes in a piece of software, the impact of the change should be investigated. The expense of a complete analysis may not be justifiable and the challenge is to strike a balance between effort invested and confidence in the analysis. We explored ways of performing such lightweight analyses in the system redesign case study and the systems integration case study. In these projects, the work performed to achieve this can be described as a flexible, iterative, informal, and rapid architecture- and component-based approach. The approach can be described as follows (the words in italics are used as defined in the IEEE 1471-2000 [76]). First, identify the *stakeholders* of the *system*, and identify their *concerns* regarding the system; such concerns may be extra-functional system properties and time to implement, total cost, or other more intangible business goals. Second, some basic architectural alternatives should be constructed and the *architectural description* should contain descriptions in several *views*, prepared preferably in a sketchy way at first. Different alternatives of this can be derived, or totally different architectures can be constructed. Third, each stakeholder concern should be analyzed for each alternative architecture, balancing the need to address all concerns to some extent, spending more time on those more important and/or difficult to analyze. Fourth, if the architectural description does not reveal enough detail to permit analysis of a particular concern, the architectural description should be refined, to enable analyses of how the system deals with the concern in question. The components to choose for further subdivision are those believed to reveal as much as possible about the concern, according to the developers' intuition and experience. Fifth, it is possible to iterate back and forth; if for example a performance deficiency is found, the system should be redesigned immediately, after which the analysis can be resumed.

Within a procedure such as that outlined above, some of our findings should be emphasized.

- For each concern to be investigated, it is possible to choose an analysis approach: one can use an established analysis method if there is one (in the system redesign case study, SAAM was used), or use a very brief estimation (appropriate when obvious and convincing, and when there are no very high requirements on this particular concern), or merely rely on the developers' statements (appropriate when they are very experienced in how this particular concern can be addressed in this particular context).
- We also found in the case studies, an important characteristic concerning software evolution, as opposed to new development: it is possible to analyze an existing implementation to find out what worked well and what did not in relation to the requirements. When a system is redesigned this should be well known after working with the development of the previous version, and in systems integration many requirements are inherited from either (or several) of the systems to integrate. The suitability of the existing architectural choices can therefore be evaluated based on an actual implementation. This knowledge is an important input when developing new architectural alternatives, which will most likely include some or all of the components of the existing system(s) plus perhaps some new. The existing components may be restructured and modified to e.g. apply different styles or patterns.

Some experienced benefits with this approach as compared to a more unstructured approach are that similar descriptions are produced, discussions can be kept relevant, the number of alternatives to choose between can be decreased, and confidence in the analysis is increased. It is an iterative approach, so that at each point in time there are preliminary results which may be further refined, or the analysis interrupted (even if some time must be spent in packaging the analysis results in an appealing form). The analysis can thus begin without advance knowledge of exactly how much time will be allocated, and conclude e.g. when there is sufficient confidence in the results or when there is simply no more time. If a tradeoff decision is needed, we suggest the performance of a more detailed analysis. It is possible to

apply some more thorough analysis, such as ATAM (see page 36f) or ALMA (see page 52f) to the final alternative. As for the architectural reasoning, the IEEE standard 1471-2000, "Recommended Practice for Architectural Description of Software-Intensive Systems" [76] can be used. The IEEE 1471-2000 does not mandate any particular procedures, tools, views, languages, etc. which makes it easy to introduce in a project already defined with no time for further efforts.

We have found that several alternatives can be rapidly analyzed and the choice perceived as well founded. The benefit of this approach is the relatively high confidence/effort ratio, which may be sufficient when more confidence (in an absolute sense) is not necessary. The disadvantage is that the results are dependent on individuals making the right choices and consequently the results are not completely reproducible. The confidence in the results is less than with a more formal approach. It is impossible to prove that the alternative ultimately chosen is the optimal one, but the approach seems to provide good heuristics. This type of analysis should be suitable when the available resources are limited or the requirements not known in advance. It is also suitable when the developers' experience can be trusted, as in the systems integration case study, where they knew the existing systems very well and the new system was to be a combination of these.

Maintainability was one important aspect of the new system to evaluate in both case studies. Two approaches were tried: first, estimating the number of lines of code (LOC), technologies, and languages used in the final, integrated system, as a measure of its conceptual integrity; and second, SAAM analysis. Both approaches gave a certain amount of confidence, but we can only know the accuracy of the estimations when the systems enter the maintenance phase, and even then we cannot know whether the architecture chosen was indeed a better choice than the other alternatives.

We have provided an answer to Q1 by showing one way of using lightweight architectural analysis when redesigning and integrating systems, based on the IEEE 1471-2000 [76]. We

also touched on the differences between evolution and new development, to the advantage of evolution activities.

Q2: Is it possible to beneficially use the concepts of architecture and components when integrating existing software systems, and how can this be done?

To enable a cost efficient system integration, the fundamental approach would be to try to preserve the existing systems to the greatest extent possible and avoid for example, rewriting parts that already work satisfactorily. In practice there are many types of possible technical differences between the systems: different languages, technologies, assumptions regarding the environment and architectural patterns. Therefore, either different types of adapters and wrappers must be built, or the existing components must be more fundamentally changed (implying modifying source code). This would make any integration attempt expensive. Even though it is not possible in practice to do so, viewing the systems as sets of components can be an advantageous way to decide upon an integration approach, as will be elaborated upon in this section.

We have discerned four approaches to integration for information systems: interoperability through import and export facilities, Enterprise Application Integration (EAI), integration on data level, and integration on source code level. Depending on the type of systems, the goals for the integration, and the resources available, any of these approaches may be feasible. For example, interoperability through import and export facilities enables exchange of data but a high degree of data consistency, automation of tasks, decreased maintainability costs and an integrated user environment cannot be expected. Given certain specified goals of an integration, we have described how architectural analysis can be used to find a suitable technical solution.

For Enterprise Application Integration (EAI), we presented an integration framework. Integrated in the framework, systems will continue to have their own user interface and database, but the framework defines and enforces a strong architecture, ensuring e.g. data consistency between the integrated systems. The framework makes possible, by means of

added effort, a higher level of integration, making the integrated system more homogeneous as perceived by the users. Thanks to this characteristic, rapid integration becomes possible, with the further possibility of raising the level of integration by subsequently spending more effort.

The rest of our answer to Q2 concerns the situation in which source code is available for modification. The documentations of the existing systems are likely to be dissimilar (due to e.g. different corporate documentation standards and improved documentation practices as time has passed). In this case, a certain amount of preparation is required to describe the existing systems in a similar manner according to current good architectural documentation practice. In the resulting documentation the existing systems should be described in several architectural views (the same for all systems), using the same visual language (for example UML) and the same granularity. The architectural components of these architectural models can then be reconfigured and combined (using e.g. a suitable software tool or simply paper and pencil), to arrive at descriptions of several alternative architectures for a new system. These alternatives can then be evaluated in the manner described in the answer to Q1 above and compared.

In a comparison of the data level and source code level integration alternatives, the data level alternative was considered technically inferior to the source code level alternative from all points of view considered. The reason is the architectural mismatch between the existing systems, which can take many forms (see e.g. the start of this section and answer to Q4 on page 151ff). It is likely that the existing systems use different technologies, implement different architectural patterns and styles, and are written in different languages. There may be a choice between wrapping and bridging existing code on one hand, which preserves and even may increase the number of languages and technologies used in the system, and rewriting large parts to integrate component by component on the other. When the components of an existing system are used as building blocks, they are most often similar in certain ways but different in others (they may e.g. present the same type of functionality, such

as database access, but be implemented in different languages), which makes integration component by component difficult. The perceived solutions to component by component integration in the code level alternative are to either extend an existing component with the functionality of the other, thus rewriting large parts, or to use both components basically untouched and write glue code (which may require the same amount of effort, if not more). Both alternatives would involve integration of the underlying data model, which must be implemented in the database, and the source code must be modified accordingly. One could make use of the opportunity to create a new data model which incorporates the best of the existing systems, or one could try to find a cheaper solution. Both alternatives are costly, and the initial choice must be pursued until integration is complete, which requires a high degree of long-term commitment and is therefore a risk to the integrating organization and the integration project.

The answer to research question Q2 must therefore be that it is possible to beneficially use the concepts of architecture and components to decide on a type of integration. The actual integration seems however to be expensive, and improvement in that area remains as a future project.

Q3: How are architectural analyses and decisions related to organizational and business goals during system evolution?

We believe that there is no strict border between organizational or business concerns on the one hand and technical concerns on the other. It may even be fair to say that all concerns are ultimately organizational or business related: for example, the computing resource requirement for a system is not merely a technical concern but affect the type of hardware needed (and therefore the system's attractiveness), and properties such as maintainability, testability, and reusability affect costs, immediately or in the future. We considered that some of the more specific business and organizational concerns called for investigation. This section will elaborate on our findings in the case studies concerning these: cost of

implementation, time to delivery, and risk of implementation. Most of the discussion is based on the systems integration case study.

To estimate the cost of implementation as well as to outline an implementation schedule, one can use the source code view of the architecture as a basis and map components of the *product* to activities in a *project*. In a project plan, activities are dependent on each other, and each activity is associated with a cost, and we have shown how an architectural description can be used as a basis for determining dependencies and to create more confidence in the cost estimations. In the source code view, the dependencies between source code modules can be mapped to dependencies between project activities. For cost estimation, it is relative straightforward for an experienced developer (i.e. experienced in the system at hand, the languages and technologies used, etc.) to estimate the effort required to implement a single code module. Other views (apart from the source code view) must complement this reasoning; e.g. the interactions in runtime are also important to determine parts of the system which must be included in a delivery.

Within the constraints imposed by the dependencies, it is then possible to parallelize and serialize activities depending on the available resources at a given time. To the extent allowed by the dependencies, a subset of the system can be implemented at first – so called "vertical slices" of the system can thus be delivered, making stepwise delivery possible. Different contents can be included in different deliveries depending on how the activities are ordered, which in turn affects the organization in several ways. For example, it is possible to determine when which functionality would be available and when existing systems could be retired. When the implementation of different parts of a source code component is assigned to several activities (to enable stepwise delivery), it is possible to ensure that the activity diagram and the source code view of the system are consistent – the costs of the source code components in the architectural model should of course equal that of the activities in the project schedule.

The mapping between the components of the architectural description and the activities of the project plan cannot be automated but requires human intervention. The components contain

no information as to how they can be partitioned and assigned to different activities and certain components may not lend themselves to partitioning at all, or may not result in any functionality as perceived by the users (such as infrastructure components which must be in place for the system to work). It should not be forgotten that there are other activities which must be accounted for, that do not include implementation in source code and are therefore not directly discernible from the source code view. Nevertheless, the architectural description as a whole helps in identifying such activities. For example, in the systems integration case study, the discussions repeatedly returned to the design of a common data model. It should also be remembered that the "man-months" of this type of rapid cost estimations are idealized to some extent, the actual cost also depending on e.g. the skills of the person actually assigned to a task.

Based on a cost estimation such as this, we found that even though it is easy to intuitively perceive a technically more advanced alternative as more costly, this is not necessarily true. Depending on the circumstances, the technically inferior alternative, although seemingly simple and straightforward, may be as costly as other alternatives. This can happen, for example, when a change in a database ripples through most of the source code.

The *risk* of choosing one alternative or the other can be a more important consideration than cost or time of implementation; risk meaning the probability of overrunning budget and/or schedule, producing a product of poor quality, or failing altogether with the integration. The risk parameters are not only those related to technical problems (such as those involved in writing new code), but also the risk of unsuccessful collaboration (in terms of "commitment required" from departments of two previously separate organizations, not yet close collaborators). Architecture represents software structure, and the relation between this structure and that of the developing organization may be a good starting point for such research. Risk analysis might include first identifying risk parameters of interest, modeling the organization, and analyzing the impact of an architectural description on such a model.

We have provided some answers to research question Q3, by showing how architectural descriptions can be used to estimate cost of implementation and to outline an implementation schedule including a delivery plan. We also recognized the importance of the risk to the organization of choosing one alternative or another – in one of our case studies it was the single most important factor affecting the decision. Estimations of cost, time of implementation, and risk at the architectural level require more research.

Q4: How does the architecture of an existing system restrict or facilitate its evolution?

When a system part is to be redesigned and rewritten, the design of the existing system constrains the possibilities for system evolution in numerous ways. When the types of nodes available are already determined, the possibilities of choosing the runtime structure are restricted. The existing code should be reused to as large an extent as possible. Existing interfaces, both those of the existing system that are used by others, and the interfaces of external programs (which may have been adapted to work smoothly with the existing system) must be recognized. During systems integration, we also found numerous ways in which existing systems can architecturally mismatch: architectural structures (in terms of styles and patterns used), languages used, protocols and connectors used, and third party software and tools used. These differences become even more emphasized when the systems have been developed during different eras, each reflecting the state of practice of its time.

But when the existing components overlap functionally, keeping them separate for (short-term) cost reasons results in functionality being duplicated in several places, introducing a maintenance nightmare. Both code level integration and data level integration would involve a large amount of effort, according to the evaluation in the systems integration case study. There seems to be no inexpensive solution to integrating such dissimilar systems: either much code must be completely replaced to ensure that one single component has the complete responsibility for a particular functionality, or much code must be modified and bridging solutions introduced. However, in integration, the best ideas from several systems can be

adopted. The systems integration case study suggests that in the long term, integrating source code is superior to integrating the data level only, from all technical points of views considered. It represents one set of design decisions, contains significantly less lines of code, involves a more scalable architecture, and utilizes fewer but more modern and powerful technologies and third-party software.

However, we felt it misleading to draw attention only to the constraints of existing design choices – these also present possibilities. For example, the use of a particular programming language can suggest both simple but effective architectural solutions and enable rapid implementation through the reuse of existing code, as the system redesign case study illustrates. It would therefore be irrational and inefficient to discard the existing design and begin from scratch; this was discussed in more detail in the answer to Q1 (page 143ff). Some of the so-called restrictions described in the previous paragraph could be seen as features enabling more rapid redesign than beginning again from the beginning. The existing architecture could be seen as a prototype for proving the feasibility of certain architectural choices and revealing the limitations of others, and good ideas embedded in the architecture of the existing system part should be inherited by the next version, while its limitations should be eliminated through redesign.

When systems are integrated within a framework as "black box" components, it is possible to ignore their internal structure. In a sense, the possibilities of integration within such a framework are not restricted by the existing systems' architectures; on the other hand, the failure to utilize knowledge about the systems could be seen as a restriction in the framework itself. The framework described in the integration framework case study combines the advantages of both approaches. It illustrates how it is possible, from an initial "black box" view of the systems, to integrate them tighter into the framework if they display certain features. There might be some API or the application may have a rich set of command line arguments that can be utilized. The framework makes it possible to connect to most relational databases directly, and the user interface and business logic can be shortcut; this may be

feasible if the user interface and business logic are not very complicated. If source code is available, it is of course possible to extend the system in any of these ways, thus enabling a tighter integration. If none of these options are available, the integration will remain at a minimum level. How to design and analyze the system resulting from integration within the framework e.g. to make it maintainable has not been investigated, it is also too early to be able to observe evolution of the framework itself or the meta-systems integrated within the framework.

The answer to Q4 is that the architecture of an existing system restricts its evolution in several ways. The surrounding parts assume a certain behavior from a part being redesigned. When integrating systems the existing software components may mismatch architecturally. The case studies give at hand that integration is more complicated than ordinary evolution of a single system, due to the often very dissimilar architectures of the systems to be integrated. But an existing architecture also facilitates certain types of evolution activities: at least some of the requirements are implemented in the architecture of the existing system, which can be seen as a prototype, and should be reused.

9.3 Lessons Learned

Based on the case studies and the literature survey, we would like to highlight the following the following two features of software systems evolution and integration:

- **Integration is organizationally more complicated than the redesign of an existing system.** When organizational mergers result in software integration, the process involves more people, will take more time, and presents a higher risk than a redesign project of a comparable size. Until two separate organizations really consider themselves one organization, it is reasonable to believe that inter-organizational obstacles will be encountered.
- **Technical factors are subordinate to business factors.** Cost in short and long term, time to delivery, and the risk involved, are some of the factors that weigh more heavily than

e.g. how portable a system is. Architectural analysis can provide a basis for both technical decisions and more business-oriented decisions.

And finally, let us return to our research hypothesis. Based on the case studies and the literature survey, we have demonstrated that conceptually separating software into components, and reasoning about the relationships between these components – the system's architecture – are useful means to manage software evolution in large complex software systems in a cost efficient manner.

9.4 Related Work

This section describes similar approaches to managing software evolution and integration at the architectural level, already described in chapters 2 and 3, and outlines how the present thesis distinguishes itself from these. We relate our work to evaluation techniques, integration approaches, and formal approaches to architecture.

SAAM (and its successor ATAM) has been validated and used in many case studies [13,32,34,86-89,94]. These case studies typically emphasize the benefits of the methods when analyzing extra-functional properties of an architecture, partly since the purpose of some of these case studies has been to validate the methods as such. SAAM has also been used during system evolution, by using scenarios as a means to discover deficiencies or flaws in the current architecture [119]. The present thesis emphasizes how SAAM can be used together with other, more lightweight analyses, to rapidly deliver an overall, convincing result of the analysis of several extra-functional properties. Bengtsson describes a formula used to estimate the modifiability on the architectural level, used in the *Architecture-Level Modifiability Analysis* (ALMA) method, also a scenario-based method supported by case studies [16]. As noted, we have used scenarios to a certain extent, but also suggest other measures for evaluating modifiability to enable a more rapid evaluation of more extra-functional attributes.

By predicting future changes, or at least identifying changes believed to be likely, it becomes possible to choose an architecture in which these changes are supported or easy to introduce. This approach is adopted e.g. through the notion of change scenarios in SAAM (see above),

the use of certain architectural patterns that support certain expected changes**,** as well as the construction of mechanisms for variability at well-chosen points in a product line [178]. The present thesis focuses on how to actually evolve existing systems that were not consciously designed for the type of evolution actually occurring – it is e.g. practically impossible to design for integration with other, unknown, systems.

Johnson approaches Enterprise Application Integration (EAI) with the concepts and tools of software architecture [82]. Using Johnson's terminology, the present thesis deal with *monarchical* integration, when an organization has full control over the source code, as opposed to *oligarchical* or *anarchical* integration contexts. We discuss three levels of integration available for such an organization, and describe how two of these were analyzed architecturally in the systems integration case study.

There are formal approaches to software architecture in general [2,7,56,58,117,126,163,165,174] and evolution in particular [125,143]. Clustering techniques do not encompass the design choices and non-technical tradeoffs involved in evolving complex software systems, but rather aim at optimizing certain attributes of a system [118,130,160,193]. For all formal approaches the architecture must be well specified in a formal language; in the present thesis the problem addressed is to use dissimilar and incomplete descriptions with the aid of developers' knowledge. We investigated how existing software systems, not formally specified, can be evolved with limited resources in complex industrial projects, something we have not seen accomplished via formal approaches.

There are approaches to reengineering source code to find a system's structure, either with the purpose of extracting the system's architecture (e.g. in case of non-existing documentation) or to find violations of design decisions [13,22,30,61,157]. This was not necessary in the case studies since the designs of the systems of the case studies were available in the form of documentation supplemented with developers' knowledge; neither were we interested in finding possible exceptional violations of the overall design decisions, but rather in discussing the basic design decisions and their rationale.

It has been suggested that software development activities can and should be guided by the architecture of the product being developed [31,146]. This is very much in line with our work, and the present thesis contributes to this direction of thought by describing some of the details of what, how, and why, particularly in the context of evolution and integration activities.

9.5 Future Work

This section identifies issues not solved, or encountered in our case studies, issues left for future research:

- **Further refinement.** The findings of the case studies should be tested in further case studies, preferably in new environments before they can be used as predictors. This includes:
  - The measures used to estimate maintainability in the systems integration case study should be verified.
  - Using patterns with known characteristics as a basis for architectural analysis, or even as a substitute, would give the lightweight approach we have outlined greater credibility .
- **Integration of business concerns into architectural analysis.** We have shown how the cost of integration can be estimated on the basis of estimations of the effort involved in individual code components. Approaches to achieving more accurate cost predictions could include the use of additional architectural views. We also showed how a schedule could be outlined. Its accuracy would be dependent on the cost estimations but could also be improved by taking more views into account. Finally, we demonstrated that the risks of integration are not included in architectural analysis. An approach to achieve this could be to integrate an architectural model with an organizational model.
- **Maintainability in different contexts.** The issue of maintenance is important in new systems, old systems, integrated systems, etc. But perhaps different kinds of systems

require different ways of addressing this issue, perhaps different methods during different life cycle phases? Open issues closely related to the present thesis are:

  - How should an integrated system be built to be maintainable within the framework of the integration framework case study, when both the integrated system and the framework itself will evolve in the future?
  - Is the perceived difference between data level integration and source code integration from a maintenance point of view correct?

- **The role of requirements engineering during software evolution**. Even if there seem to be no new requirements, the reasons for evolving, redesigning, or integrating software systems may imply additions to both functionality and extra-functional requirements such as usability, scalability, performance, and maintainability, all of which need to be carefully considered and understood. How should requirements engineering be performed during system evolution and integration? Which types of requirements can remain from existing systems and which can be new? Which stakeholders should be involved, and when? These questions are touched upon in the thesis, but obtaining the answers remains for future work.

10. SUMMARY

In the present thesis we have shown that conceptually separating software into components, and reasoning about the relationships between these components – the system's architecture – are useful means to manage software evolution in large complex software systems in a cost efficient manner. We have done so by surveying literature describing the concepts of component-based software, software architecture, and existing approaches to software maintenance, evolution, and integration, and described three case studies that provided further insight into these issues. The following four questions were addressed in particular:

- Q1: How can the concepts of architecture and components be beneficially used to assess a software system's properties during its evolution?
- Q2: Is it possible to beneficially use the concepts of architecture and components when integrating existing software systems, and how can this be done?
- Q3: How are architectural analyses and decisions related to organizational and business goals during system evolution?
- Q4: How does the architecture of an existing system restrict or facilitate its evolution?

The systems in two of our case studies were information systems developed in-house used for managing and manipulating business-critical data. There were no extreme requirements on extra-functional properties such as performance or scalability, and so these systems are representative for a large set of existing systems in industry. The third case study concerned an integration framework in which systems can be integrated without modification.

We presented an approach to developing architectural alternatives for a new system during redesign and integration, based on the existing systems. We described how stakeholders' concerns could be rapidly analyzed given architectural descriptions, to make it possible to distinguish and choose between the alternatives. In particular, we have described how maintainability, cost of implementation, and time of implementation can be addressed. This type of analysis is suitable when resources are few, developers experienced, and the accuracy

of the analysis is less important than the time and resources spent on the analysis. We also presented four different integration approaches and discussed when either of these may be feasible: Enterprise Application Integration (EAI), interoperability through import and export facilities, integration at data level, and integration at source code level. We outlined how a system's architecture can be used when analyzing how a system will fulfill the developing organization's organizational and business goals; in particular cost, time of implementation, and risk of implementation were investigated. We have also shown how an existing system's architecture can both facilitate and restrict its evolution: the existing architecture may reflect insufficient design decisions and an outdated state of practice, but it can and should also be seen as a prototype revealing strengths that should be preserved and weaknesses that should be addressed during redesign.

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