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A reference architecture for managing dynamic inter-organizational business processes

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ABSTRACT

For improving the efficiency and effectiveness of business collaboration, the need emerges to inter-organizationally match e-business services. Recent research activities show heightened attention into that direction with the ecosystems-emergence of service-oriented computing clouds. As this increases the business-, conceptual-, and technical governance complexity, a need exists for using a reference architecture to evaluate and design standard-, and concrete architectures for business-to-business (B2B) collaboration. In this paper, we fill that gap by presenting the eSourcing Reference Architecture (eSRA) that emerges from B2B-research projects and we check this with a scenario-based validation method. We demonstrate how eSRA enables a quick evaluation of not only research-based B2B-architectures but also of industry application suits. That way, we show the usability and applicability in that with the help of eSRA, system designers directly establish a comprehensive understanding of fundamental B2B concepts and develop higher-quality domain-specific architectures.

1. Introduction

Companies envision that inter-organizationally connecting their business processes allows them to transact in a faster and more cost-effective way with better quality of service. We define an inter-organizational business process as a B2B-composed flow of related activities that together create a customer value. This must happen in a dynamic way in that they are formed by the automatic integration of the sub-processes of the involved organizations. Thus, dynamic means that during the setup phase, collaborating organizations find each other by searching business-process marketplaces and match externally contractual-sphere processes of larger in-house processes.

Such collaboration between manufacturing companies in the B2B-domain is complex from a business, conceptual, and technological point of view. A need exists to develop business-collaboration systems according to a uniform vocabulary and template set of guidelines for achieving meaningfully automated business-interoperability for which a reference architecture serves as a suitable artifact. We define a reference architecture [31] as a template solution for an architecture of a particular domain such as service-driven enterprise architecture where the structures and respective elements and relations provide templates for standard-, or concrete architectures.

Recent research publications with relevant standard architectures exist, most notably the CrossWork architecture [49] and also further scientific proposals of business-collaboration architectures [27,62,67,106]. The main feature of a reference architecture is the design in a top-down fashion while standard architectures evolve in a bottom-up way abstracting from concrete architectures. Yet, a
standard architecture should be reference-architecture adhering. Similarly, concrete architectures for application systems facilitate the automation of inter-organizational business processes to different degrees. The most notable examples are SAPs Sourcing [95], ORACLEs Sourcing [83] application suits, or the Sourcing platform [56] from IASTA.

While these bottom-up emerged architectures above focus on specific aspects of inter-organizational business processes, they cannot serve as general guiding architectures. This paper fills the gap by investigating the following research question: how does one equip system designers with the means to rapidly establish a comprehension of the suitability, completeness and quality of inter-organizational business-process architectures and their application instantiations? To answer this question, we employ a required top-down development approach by choosing the suitable eSourcing concept [75,76] that results from studying best practices of B2B with the CrossWork industry partners from the automotive industry. eSourcing is a framework for harmonizing an external layer the intra-organizational business processes of a service consuming and one or many service providing organizations into a B2B supply-chain collaboration. Important elements of eSourcing are the support of different visibility layers of corporate process views for the collaborating counterpart and flexible mechanisms for service monitoring and information exchange.

The recognized notion of process views is essential to support sourcing [40,69] and the eSourcing concept is to the best of our knowledge the only one for supporting a consumer organization to find and connect to a service provider. Other approaches address the construction of process views [37,44], which is not specific to sourcing [51]. Most importantly, while the eSourcing concept enables diverse ways of process-view creation and matching, other approaches support only one way. Yet another class of approaches considers the problem of matching process descriptions of services [45,59,75] but does not relate this to the problem of projecting internal processes to process views. eSourcing is technology independent but feasible to realize with means of service-oriented cloud computing [103,107], the latter facilitating the creation of complex cloud-ecosystems. Ecosystems have business dimensions of varying semantics and ontologies, social dimension for different stakeholders, and architectural dimensions for platform engineering [39]. The adoption of a decentralized software ecosystem results in intra-organizational processes to behave in a dependable way [18] on a composed inter-organizational layer. Architectures are pivotal in that case for guiding the coordination-design across organizational system boundaries. As the interfaces of service-ecosystems affect coordination soundness, introducing new functionality triggers a reconciliation of the interface specifications [19,24]. Also [104] explains that an ecosystem of services and participants requires a governance structure for management of engaging in a partnership based on contracts as a commitment between legal entities.

The eSourcing Reference Architecture eSRA specifies the governance structure to facilitate the development of high quality ecosystems with means of service-oriented cloud computing. eSRA supports the instant understanding and communication between architecture designers of such ecosystems and is guiding for a fast evaluation of existing architectures. eSRA serves as a guiding reference architecture for the design of application systems with fundamental design principles and specifies high-quality functionalities for rapid application development. For this reason, we define a reference architecture [88] as a division of functionality with exchanged data flow mapped onto software elements that together implement the required functionality for a specific context and the business goals of the stakeholders. The method for designing eSRA is coherent and systematic in that it combines existing best practices from scenario-based evaluation methods [12], business-collaboration models [75,76], architecture styles [26,63,96] and design patterns [48].

The structure of this paper is as follows. First, Section 2 presents the conceptual context of inter-organizational business with a three-layer framework populated by a formal collaboration model. With that conceptual foundation, Section 3 infers a collaboration lifecycle from which we deduce a set of functional requirements. Furthermore, in accordance with literature studies, Section 3 also defines non-functional architecture requirements specified in accordance with the conceptual context and ends with a discussion about what scenario-based evaluation method to choose for eSRA. Next, Section 4 shows the scenario-method evaluated eSRA specification on three refinement levels that takes into account the conceptual business collaboration context and the sets of functional and non-functional requirements. The presentation of eSRA we textually present in a way that shows the implementation feasibility, i.e., the text comprises implementation suggestions, or pre-existing services that are candidates for an eSRA-implementation with means of Service-Oriented Cloud Computing (SOCC), or other concrete pre-existing technology. Section 5 gives the results of a second evaluation step for the reference architecture where we separately check eSRA-adherence to all functional- and non-functional requirements. This incorporates comparisons with existing architectures for business collaboration from research and industry. Finally, Section 6 presents related work and Section 7 gives conclusions and future work. The appendices show results of the ATAM-evaluation and subsequently conducted control-survey.

2. Features of inter-organizational business processes

The prerequisite for reference-architecture development is the study of best practice in industrial reality. For that purpose, we employ the CrossWork [70] case study stemming from a leading truck producer and suppliers from a cluster of small enterprises. A project objective is the sound formalization of inter-organizational business processes [76] to allow for feasible realization with SOCC. For reaching the latter target, a gap exists that eSRA fills. Thus, for reference-architecture development, this section deduces a set of functional- and non-functional requirements from the formalized collaboration model. Based on case studies conducted with industry partners in the CrossWork project [49], Section 2.1 explains the conceptual business-collaboration setting. Finally, Section 2.2 discusses a refined collaboration model within that framework.
2.1. Business-collaborations

Research about business collaboration in the EU research project CrossWork [49], reveals a scenario where an original equipment manufacturer (OEM) rests as a capstone on top of a collaboration-pyramid, is responsible for engineering a product and setting up the machinery and plant construction for production. Suppliers of standardized parts and raw materials are at the bottom of the business-collaboration pyramid.

In Fig. 1, the OEM is a service consumer and suppliers are service providers. A potential service provider must assure to varying degrees the capability of behavior mirroring. For inter-organizationally matching service-consumers and providers, the parties face conceptual-, methodological, and technological differences. Additionally, both parties keep competitive advantages and business secrets hidden from each other.

To manage the collaboration differences, a three-layer framework [50] is a suitable model. Translating this conceptual collaboration model into a formalization, Fig. 2 shows internal layers that comprise legacy systems belonging to the information infrastructure of a respective collaborating party. Organizing legacy systems as orchestrateable services on an internal layer caters towards a heterogeneous system environment.

At the conceptual layer of Fig. 2, business processes are mapped to their respective internal layer to orchestrate wrapped legacy systems. The external layer of Fig. 2 stretches across the domains of collaborating parties. Projected parts of conceptual processes are a subset on the external layer so that business secrets remain hidden internally. The parties first investigate the demands of service consumption and the ability of service provisioning while automatic and dynamic forging characterizes the process-based collaboration. Note that although Fig. 2 shows a bi-directional collaboration, the formalization scales to multiple parties, i.e., a service-consumer’s in-house process may comprise multiple consumer spheres that tie in multiple service providers via external-layer projected to and matched contractual spheres.

2.2. Dynamic process-view matching

We consider eSourcing [76] focuses on structurally harmonizing on an external layer the intra-organizational business processes of a service consuming and one or many service providing organizations into a business collaboration. Important elements of eSourcing are the support of different visibility layers of corporate process details for the collaborating counterpart and flexible mechanisms for service monitoring and information exchange. Note that differently to Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) [23,55,86] where legacy-system integration happens directly to the detriment of security, process-view matching hides legacy systems behind an internal-, conceptual- and an external inter-organizational system layer.

Starting with the domain of the service consumer in Fig. 2, an in-house process on the conceptual layer adheres to the properties of a Workflow net (WF-net) [4]. Informally, a WF-net has one unique start-state with one token, one unique end-state and all activities always lead to the unique end-state comprising one token while all other states are empty. The in-house process contains a subnet termed a consumer sphere that is visualized with a gray ellipse. At the border of the consumer sphere, interface-places are labeled passive nodes. Only one interface place is i-labeled and only one is o-labeled. The other interface places are either in or out-labeled to denote an exchange direction of business-critical information between the in-house process and its contained consumer sphere. Furthermore, the labeling implies whether an interface place has an input arc or an output arc in the sphere. If an interface place is i or in-labeled, it has one output arc to an active node in the sphere. If an interface place is o- or out-labeled, it has one input arc from an active node in the sphere.

The in-house process maps to the internal layer of Fig. 2 with legacy systems. The consumer sphere turns the external layer to a contractual sphere after a projection that a service provider enacts. For establishing a contractual consensus [13] between the collaborating parties, the projected contractual spheres must be isomorphic. A provider sphere with additional nodes on the conceptual layer, complements the contractual sphere. Hence, the refinement remains opaque for the collaborating counterpart and we refer to [76] for further details about the formal hierarchy relationships between the processes on the respective collaboration layers.

![Fig. 1. Supply-chain hierarchy in an enterprise collaboration.](image-url)
Finally, in Fig. 2, there exist referencing arcs connecting several passive nodes of the respective spheres. These referencing arcs establish a transitive relationship between the consumer sphere and the provider sphere that ensures a correct start and end of service provision during the enactment of an eSourcing configuration. The notations of these referencing arcs of Fig. 2 are part of so called monitorability patterns [77] that also cover the referencing of active nodes contained in the consumer sphere and the provider sphere. This way, a variable degree of enactment-progress monitoring is possible for a service consumer.

After giving a sound and scalable collaboration-model formalization [76] that results from a benchmark B2B industry-case [70], the foundation exists for the next step towards the eSRA reference architecture. Thus, we proceed to giving a set of collaboration-model deduced functional- and non-functional requirements for the eSRA specification.

3. Functional- and non-functional eSRA requirements

As eSourcing is a socio-technical collaboration framework, the requirements of eSRA must reflect this fact [85]. For this context, we follow the steps of requirement development, documentation, and validation. Functional requirements cover specific behavior of systems while non-functional requirements specify criteria for judging the operation of a system, rather than specific behaviors. According to [34,36], a set of characteristics exist for good requirements in system development. First, a requirement must be cohesive in that it addresses one issue only. Completeness refers to a requirement being fully stated without missing information. Consistency means a requirement is not contradictory in itself or in correlation to other requirements. A requirement must be atomic and without conjunctions.

![Fig. 2. eSourcing in a three-layer business-process framework and its verification [76].](image-url)
To satisfy the requirement characteristics for functional requirements in eSRA, we specify a discrete lifecycle for setting up an eSourcing-collaboration as depicted in Fig. 2. As the discrete steps of the setup lifecycle are cohesive and atomic, it serves as a means for deducing in Section 3.1 complete and consistent functional requirements. Based on studies of standard literature [20,99], carefully selected non-functional requirement specifications follow in Section 3.2. For documentation, we translate the requirements in the sequel into UML-component diagrams [46] and subsequently perform a validation with a scenario-based method [12].

3.1. Functional requirements

Based on the eSourcing-collaboration setup lifecycle of Fig. 3, we postulate for eSRA the functional requirements listed in the sequel. Note that the lifecycle assumes a broker [41,79] serves during setup time as a trusted third party between collaborating parties for depositing and matching in a negotiation process service-offers and service-requests. The lifecycle relates to the inter-organizational business-collaboration context of Fig. 2 as follows. For the latter depiction, we give a set of so-called setup-time interaction patterns in [75] for establishing in flexible ways an eSourcing configuration according to two category-dimensions. First, the assignment-dimension is static when the collaborating parties are known before setup, dynamic when an open set of collaborating parties bid in an anonymous market for service provision and/or consumption, and semi-dynamic when a limited number of collaborating parties engage in a setup phase. Second, the direction-dimension comprises categories for the eSourcing direction between the respective conceptual- and external layers of collaborating parties. Consequently, the categories are internal-to-external, in-sourcing, out-sourcing or external-to-internal. The setup lifecycle of Fig. 3 is the generalization of these interaction-dimensions with their respective categories.

The generalized lifecycle in Fig. 3 for the interaction pattern in [75], comprises transitional steps that we specify as follows.

a.) Support for the conceptual formulation of business processes and their accompanying rules.
   For the respective conceptual-layer processes of collaborating parties, modeling components must be available. In order to prevent a constant reinvention of business-process constructs, it should be possible to store in and retrieve from a database such conceptually formulated constructs.

b.) Mapping details from the conceptual layer business-process to the internal layer.
   In mapping, the tasks of a conceptual-layer process bind to the Web-service ports that wrap legacy systems so that an enactment-time orchestration of the latter is possible. During setup time, the mapping employs service types as preparation for replacement with full service implementations during runtime.

c.) Projecting from the conceptual layer business-process details to the external layer:
   For projecting, translation functions to different notation-formats must exist to cater for business-process heterogeneity, e.g., from BPEL on the conceptual layer to BPMN on the external layer.

d.) Brokering capability of projected business processes.
   Both the service consumer and the service provider must be able to place their projected business processes into a broker.
environment of a trusted third party service. This functionality is important for collaborations in an anonymous collaboration environment. Service offers and service requests must be searchable for potential business partners.

e.) Bidding capability for projected business processes.
   The bidding environment is part of a trusted third party service. The collaborating counter-party evaluates and chooses the subjectively best bid. Note that service-level agreements [98] support the decision of what constitutes the best option.

f.) Negotiation support for setting up a collaboration configuration with known collaborating parties.
   When collaborating parties have found each other, they need a trusted third party platform for starting the contracting negotiations on the external layer of a collaboration configuration. This negotiation involves the projection of business processes to the external layer until achieving a matching that establishes a consensus between the service provisioning and service consumption. Negotiation also involves an agreement on how many monitorability constructs to include for the collaboration configuration.

g.) Verifying perspectives of a collaboration configuration.
   From a dominant control-flow point of view, it is important to verify a collaboration configuration for correct termination [76]. A verification must ensure that a service provisioning internally adheres to the externally promised collaboration behavior. Verification must also cover other perspectives than control-flow, e.g., data-flow [72], resources, transactional properties, and so forth.

h.) Simulation of a collaboration configuration.
   Despite verification, errors may still occur during service enactment. Hence, a simulation component for business processes must be available for a-priori enactment simulation.

i.) Distribution of business processes.
   For distribution, components on the conceptual-layer interface as data translators between the internal- and external layers. Such ad-hoc configurable translating caters for heterogeneous collaboration situations.

j.) Shielding of business processes and legacy systems on concern-separating layers.
   Shielding must ensure the legacy systems that are Web-service wrapped and part of the internal layer, are safeguarded by data-monitoring functionality.

k.) Enactment of a ready collaboration configuration.
   After a completed setup phase, the enactment of a collaboration configuration commences. The actual enactment components must be present on an internal layer for orchestrating legacy systems. Additional enactment components on the external layer need to choreograph the internal components of the respective collaborating parties.

3.2. Non-functional requirements

After carefully studying non-functional requirements [20,99] for eSRA-contextual suitability, we choose a subset of suitable requirements based on the industry-partner cases in the CrossWork project [49] with the following distinction between a set of requirements discernible via execution of a system and those that are not. Again, the CrossWork case studies determine the specification-details of these requirements to the context of eSRA-specification.

Studying literature for harvesting eSRA-relevant non-functional requirements [30,99] for applicable requirements, in the discernible case we consider interoperability, performance, security, high automation, flexibility, and usability. In the non-discernible case, the requirements are modifiability and integrability. Finally, we consider requirements on the architecture, namely completeness, feasibility, scalability, and applicability. First, we specify requirements for eSRA that are not discernible at runtime. Their effectiveness is not investigatable during the setup time of a collaboration configuration. Note that we consider non-functional requirements for the abstraction layer of eSRA. Thus, requirements for less abstract architectures we don’t include below, e.g.: reliability, which means a system performs as intended over a period of time that is only applicable for eSRA implementations.

3.2.1. Modifiability
   An eSRA-compliant system changes and adapts during its lifecycle to the business context. Additionally, it harmonizes inter-organizationally heterogeneous system environments comprising of commercial software that undergoes regular updates.

3.2.2. Integrability
   An eSRA-compliant system consists of separately developed and integrated components for which the interface protocols between the components must match. Hence, integrability between the components of eSRA must be ensured in the reference architecture.

   Next, we specify the system requirements for eSRA that are discernible during runtime because their effectiveness is investigatable during the setup and enactment of collaboration configurations.

3.2.3. Interoperability
   An eSRA-compliant system must interoperate at runtime with information systems supporting other business functions, e.g., planning, logistics, production, external partner systems. Business-, conceptual-, and technical heterogeneity challenge dynamic interoperability.
3.2.4. Security
Refs to the ability of resisting unauthorized attempts at usage and denial of service while still providing to trusted users with good reputation. To address security, trust- and reputation problems, several architectural strategies are possible. An authentication server checks collaborating parties, monitors, inspects and logs network events. The communication of a system may reside behind a firewall, and so on.

3.2.5. High automation
Companies require systems that provide a high level of automation during the setup, enactment and post-enactment phases. Hence, eSRA-compliant systems must provide for possibilities of a high degree of meaningful collaboration automation that process tedious and repetitive work and allow humans to focus on the remaining action.

3.2.6. Flexibility
Electronic enterprise collaboration is a highly dynamic process that involves the enactment of diverse activities, the participation of diverse partners, and the exchange of diverse data [75]. Hence, an eSRA-compliant system must allow diverse collaboration scenarios and permit the inter-organizational harmonization of heterogeneous concepts and technologies, i.e., multiple collaboration models [75] between business parties.

3.2.7. Usability
Refs to an eSRA-compliant system being easy to use for business collaboration. This requirement we decompose into the following three areas [22]. Error avoidance is support to anticipate and prevent common errors that occur during a collaboration configuration. Closely related is error handling, to help with system support a user to recover from errors. Learnability refers to how quickly users master using the system. For an eSRA-compliant system, inter- and intra-organizational knowledge workers need automation support to conceptualize business processes and project them externally to business counterparts until a collaboration consensus comes into existence. During enactment, employees dynamically slip into specified roles to carry out assigned tasks. During the setup, enactment, and post-enactment phases, experienced parties such as administrators must intervene in cases of exception-handling escalations the system does not solve with specified exception handling and compensation.

Additionally, we consider requirements on architecture. Completeness is the quality of eSRA-compliant systems comprising the set of components for setting up and enacting a collaboration configuration. The requirement of feasibility means, an eSRA-compliant system is implementable within a limited time framework and work effort.

Scalability refers to the ability of eSRA-compliant systems to combine more than two collaborating parties into one configuration. Applicability states that eSRA is instrumental for guiding the design of business-collaboration systems.

Portability means, eSRA serves for instantiating business-collaborating systems independent of the industrial domain and collaboration heterogeneity with respect to business-, conceptual-, and technological system infrastructure. Hence, platform-specific considerations architecture layers encapsulate that enable portability with an abstract interface to the environment.

Performance means the computational and communicational strain is low in collaboration configurations for the setup-, and enactment phase. Hence, it is important to ensure that all phases of a collaboration are carried out within a desirable response time and without exponential need for computing power. However, for eSRA the latter two requirements are not meaningful since the reference architecture is aimed at describing functionalities for eSourcing and the design principles for an eSourcing system.

Next, we present the requirements-adhering eSRA-models and specifications.

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**Fig. 4.** (a) Top-down architecture-framework process (b) Bottom-up practitioner process.
4. Designing eSRA

The specification of eSRA we closely relate to the requirements of the earlier section. The architecture design is in accordance with the principle of functional decomposition of a system. This part–whole-principle decomposition is also known as "separation operation". Thus, at each refinement level of eSRA, the identified components provide functionalities that do not overlap with the remaining components located on the same layer. To achieve completeness, we design eSRA in a top-down way, i.e., the components on the first level comprise detailing components.

In [11], the provided classifications allow a positioning according to which eSRA evolves through sound development stages. Following an adaptation in Fig. 4(a), we use a top-down approach starting from a conceptually and formally explored collaboration model [45] to deduce the reference architecture's functional properties. On the other hand, styles and patterns assure the architecture adheres to non-functional goals. The injection of domain knowledge for standard architecture development based on findings from the CrossWork project [49] aims for high quality with equally applying architecture styles and design patterns. The benefit for system architects is they are able to rapidly deduce a concrete architecture instantiation by taking concrete application-context details into consideration. The practitioner way depicted in Fig. 4(b) shows a bottom-up approach where a user organization creates first a standard architecture out of multiple concrete-architecture experience that matures into a reference architecture. In the case of eSRA, the participants from industry and academia in the CrossWork project form the user group that we mature in this paper to a reference architecture for consideration by a standardization organization.

In this research, the first concrete-architecture specification [75] is a facilitator for multiple organizations from industry of the CrossWork-project to take advantage of research results for designing their own inter-organizational business-collaboration architectures. In this paper, we prove with an evaluation against commercial eSourcing systems in the sequel that eSRA is a reference architecture. After these workshop- and documentation-based evaluations, a survey sent to members of industry and academia ensures the validity of the evaluation and caters for final eSRA-specification adjustments. As future work, the latter is a proposal for a standardization organization to transform into a reference architecture.

Given the rise of service-oriented architectures (SOA) for business collaboration, we explain why eSRA is specified in technology-agnostic UML-component diagrams [46]. Strengths of SOA are that publicly accessible services promise increases in efficiency and effectiveness for setting up and enacting business collaborations. A weakness of SOA is that it does not consider internal realizations for services but it focuses on interfaces. Instead, to assure modifiability and loose coupling for eSRA-adhering business-collaboration systems that are heterogeneous in their realization, we use technology-independent architectural styles and design patterns. Thus, we specify a general reference architecture with conceptual refinements to permit the fast communication of essential design ideas, i.e., specific components for data exchanges along semantics.

The remainder of this section shows the three refinement levels of UML-component diagram specified eSRA-models.
4.1. First refinement level

The highest abstraction level in Fig. 5 shows two parties that contain the same set of components distributed across an external-, conceptual-, and internal layer [50] in accordance with Fig. 2. Note that although Fig. 5 shows a bilateral collaboration case, the architecture scales to more parties [76]. Thus, the package labels in Fig. 5 are service consumer and provider, or collaborator respectively for indicating two existing orthogonal collaboration directions. First is a master–client collaboration type [76] with one service consumer and one or many service providers whom themselves may slip into the role of service consumer if a supply chain has multiple tiers. The second orthogonal collaboration direction is peer-to-peer [64] where several collaborators hold parts of a process that they merge into one, e.g., when a set of small- or medium-sized enterprises who are by themselves too small to form one larger business process for a service consumer. The relationship cardinalities between respective components in Fig. 5 express this scalability.

The eSourcing_Middleware in Fig. 5 is part of the external layers of every respective collaborating party. This component is the main enabler of interoperability and direct information exchange exists between the eSourcing_Middleware components of each collaborating party to synchronize the respective components. Important functions of this component are on the one hand a protection from security breaches in communication by offering a façade to collaborating counter-parties that make the synchronization easier through one communication point in a loosely coupled way. Additionally, the eSourcing_Middleware comprises a contracting client that also evaluates the reputation of services or collaborating counter-parties and manages the identity of the latter. Finally, global engines for a coordinated enactment of workflows and rules synchronize through the façade.

Between the collaborating counterparts, a component termed Trusted_Third_Party exchanges business-relevant information with the eSourcing_Middleware. A Trusted_Third_Party is necessary for several reasons that result from satisfying the functional requirements d to g (see Section 3.1). Firstly, collaborating parties expose service requests or service offerings to the Trusted_Third_Party for public evaluation. Secondly, the Trusted_Third_Party performs a verification of services and checks quality features of eSourcing configurations before enactment to prevent collaborating parties from revealing business secrets. However, this component is not mandatory during setup when the parties already agree a priori to collaborate with specific services.

The conceptual layer of Fig. 5 depicts two components, namely the Translator and the eSourcing_Setup_Support. The first component exchanges information after a format transformation between the external- and internal layer for reconciling the business-, conceptual-, and technological complexity of systems involved. As different concepts and technologies exist on the external- and internal layer, bridging them by translation functionality facilitates heterogeneity management. The

![Fig. 6. External-layer collaboration with the eSourcing_Middleware.](image-url)
eSourcing_Setup_Support comprises components for modeling business rules and processes. Libraries with available pre-specified processes and rules speed up the design phase. Finally, a local verifier component checks the soundness of designed processes and rules.

The internal layer depicts a Legacy_Management component that interfaces with the Translator of the conceptual layer. Inside the former are coordinated local enactment engines for business processes and rules that coordinate via the conceptual layer with the enactment engines of the external layer. Databases deliver data to the respective enactment engines and the latter orchestrate the ports of service-wrapped legacy systems on the external layer.

4.2. Second refinement level

The subsequent UML-component diagrams refine the top-level of Fig. 5. The eSourcing_Middleware in Fig. 6 contains a Coordination_Interface that is a security façade for protecting a collaborating party from malformed or malicious input from attackers. Consequently, the Coordination_Interface comprises special screening routines that assume all input data is harmful until proven otherwise. With extra runtime processing, screenings for Binding_Exchange data (see Fig. 5) result not only in delays but exceptions occur when the screening does not result in a security clearance, e.g., for messages with XML-documents, attachments of other formats, and data for enactment, or events communication. Another function of the Coordination_Interface is to shield from disclosing internal business process-details or other information when an exception occurs such as data-screening failures. Finally, we infer that the Coordination_Interface is the sole communication channel to the counter-party and it prevents accessing the internal domain that may constitute an integrity compromise and violate the loose-coupling principle.

The Contracting_Client communicates Bid-, Process- and Verification_Exchange instances with the Trusted_Third_Party. The Contracting_Client component provides support for the management of an e-contracting process [13] and semi-automatically assembles business processes by using Process_Snippet instances from the corresponding database of the Trusted_Third_Party. The Contracting_Client poses the advantage for eSRA in that multiple contracts for one single service target a specific type of collaborating party respectively. Furthermore, contracts again support loose coupling to internal legacy systems and governance independence with the process views of the external layer being parents of the conceptual-layer processes. The ports at the bottom of the Contracting_Client in Fig. 6 interface with the Translator component.

Fig. 7. The Trusted_Third_Party component.
After specifying the collaboration configuration for enactment, the Global_WFMS enacts the contractual sphere Process of a respective party. Using a Global_WFMS realizes the management of a process abstraction for governance independence. This abstraction establishes loose coupling to the in-house processes and a flexible compositionality into an eSourcing service. The related Rule instances the Global_Rules_Engine processes and the Coordinator assures during enactment both components remain in sync by communicating event-, production-, and rules data. The Global_WFMS and Global_Rules_Engine also exchange production-, and event data with each other.

The Trusted_Third_Party component in Fig. 7, interacts with the eSourcing_Middleware through the contained Identity_Management component that uses the Reputation_Management component to prevent an exchange with parties who lack trustworthiness and reputation. That way, it is possible to verify credentials of a potential collaborating counter-party if lacking trust exists, or if the consumer requires access to multiple services. A positive effect is the cutting down of communication overhead by a Trusted_Third_Party compared to a scenario directly connecting to every single potential counter-party for the purpose of authentication and issuing a token for accessing the process. We refer to [13] for more details about trust management.

The bids and process proposals in Fig. 7 move to the Brokering_Service and Service_Broker respectively. The first coordinates the set of trading rules for the exchange of buying and selling services through bids and awarding a sale to the highest bidder. The latter arranges transactions between a buyer and a seller for a compensation that involves the matching of the contractual spheres of counter-parties. Depending on whether a collaborating party slips into the role of a service consumer or service provider, the contracting client submits or retrieves either service offers or service requests respectively from the service broker. The definition of a concerned party triggers the sending of a submission notification about a bid. The protocol between buyers and sellers follows a request for X (RFX) template comprising requests for information, bids, quotes, and proposal. Different types of RFX-protocols exist, e.g., a so-called English auction. As Fig. 6 shows a component for Auction_Manager embedded in the Contracting_Client, we infer the auctioning happens in a peer-to-peer way with support of the Trusted_Third_Party for storing bidding records.

The Validator in Fig. 7 caters for simulating and verifying on the one hand, processes for the service broker, on the other hand, the component checks the soundness [76] of an established collaboration configuration to prevent the disclosure of internal business secrets. For enhancing validation efficiency, an option is the abstraction from process details. For example in [43], a graph generated from the actual process-specifications formulated in BPEL allows for a rapid computing of control-flow similarity. Additionally, a partial validation equally enhances efficiency, e.g., an initial focus on the control-flow perspective for pre-screening,

Fig. 8. Translator components between external- and internal layer.
followed by yet another partial validation of the remaining process set with a focus on the data-flow perspective. Finally, the Process_Snippet_Manager stores process parts for rapid business-process assembly. We refer the reader to [7] for further details.

The contracting client sends process snippets and composed processes and contractual rules to the Translator. The latter component translates the process snippets and composed processes and contractual rules for the heterogeneous system environment that exists on lower internal layers of a collaborating party. The Global_WFMS and Global_Rules_Engine are both distributed systems that send data to the Translator component depicted as light gray shaded in Fig. 8. Examples for Global_WFMS exist, e.g., in [53], the architectural design of a distributed multi-engine workflow system addresses poor scalability and strong coupling between process management and business application using Web services. A distributed workflow in [35] targets redundancies in virtual enterprises in terms of carrying out the same operations, job, or functions. An example for a distributed Global_Rules_Engine in [74] named ViDRE manages dynamic business logic by separating the implementation logic with exposing rules as Web services. That way, distributed rules are accessible across various rule engines.

The Translator contains two main components for translating data between the external-, conceptual- and internal layer. Dedicated exchanger components for rules and processes bridge the respective translators. The Translator ensures proper and targeted transmission of events stemming from rules and processes that occur during enactment. Such transmission is important for ensuring that there is an inter-organizational synchronization between the collaborating domains. For that, a party subscribes to agreed upon monitorability constructs in the inter-organizational business process. As the system environment in eSourcing is very heterogeneous, this also holds for the used protocols of the collaborating parties. Thus, the Translator bridges these differing protocols between external- and internal layers with dedicated bridging logics that enhance the messaging reliability. The bridging logics not only transform data such as files or state-changes but also transform models of rules and processes that differ in the collaborating domains.

The CE_Translator component of Fig. 8 translates data from the internal-, conceptual- to the external layer and vice versa. The component connects to the rules and process modelers of the eSourcing_Setup_Support component. The relationships between the CE_Translator and components in the eSourcing_Middleware we explain above. Two components exchange data between the CE_Translator and CE_Translator, namely the Rules/R_Events_Data_Exchange and the Workflow/P_Events_Data_Exchange. The exchanged data includes information about the destination. For example, several instances of WFMS and Global_Rules_Engine instances on the external layer and WFMS with Local_Rules_Engine instances of the internal layer enact several instances of different eSourcing configurations. The CI_Translator component translates data between components of the conceptual- and internal layers. The data-exchanger components bi-directionally translate events-, rules-, and production data to the Local_WFMS and Local_Rules_Engine on the internal layer. Furthermore, the CI_Translator receives contractual rules from the rules modeler and business processes from the process modeler. These rules and processes are translated to the Local_WFMS and Local_Rules_Engine on the internal layer. We re-visit the local components in the sequel of this paper.

The eSourcing_Setup_Support component of Fig. 9 is part of the conceptual layer of eSRA. The component has two core functions, namely, modeling business rules, processes and composing workflows for simulation and verification for correct termination. The Rules_Modeler must allow for the specification of different rule types, namely integrity-, derivation-, reaction-, and deontic rules [10]. Integrity rules are assertions that the evolving states and state transitions must satisfy, e.g., a payment must not be higher than 1500. A derivation rule specifies how to obtain the value of an element of interest, e.g., the second phase of the research project completes with the submission of a deliverable. Reaction rules follow a pattern where first an event detection follows a condition evaluation after which follows the invocation of a rule, e.g., when a payment happens (event) that equates to 100 (condition), the service enactment happens (action). Deontic rules determine the assignments of powers, duties in that they indicate the rights, obligations, and prohibitions of a party, e.g., the order manager refuses requests under the price of 100. The Process_Modeler must provide recommendation systems at design time for assuring that the processes are sound and specification happens in a fast way.

![Fig. 9. eSourcing_Setup_Support functionality.](image-url)
The Rules_Modeler and the Process_Modeler support stem from a Pattern_Knowledge_Base. The latter component [78] stores conceptually formulated patterns organized in a taxonomy belonging to different perspectives [6] such as control-flow, data-flow, and exception management. The knowledge base also stores implementations of respective patterns in industry standards such as BPEL [59], BPMN [2], and so on. The Workflow_Composer composition uses process snippets or local processes from the Pattern_Knowledge_Base that the Rules_Modeler and Process_Modeler supply. The resulting composition unites the separated perspectives into one business process ready for local verification.

With respect to checks of control flow, the correct termination [105] is important, i.e., soundness [5] violating deadlocks or lack of synchronization. Lack of soundness results in unsatisfied customers, loss of time and money. Secondly, also other perspectives of processes must be correct, e.g., data-flow, resources such as humans or machines, business rules, and so on. Additionally, it is essential to simulate the in-house process of a service consumer and provider processes of an eSourcing configuration. Among other aspects, such a simulation is meaningful for testing how the different perspectives perform together for workflow enactment, e.g., the correct functioning of the Web-service orchestration by processes.

Fig. 10 visualizes a second-level refinement of the Legacy_Management component. For using legacy systems to be part of a larger service-based application system [38], loosely coupled services facilitate the establishment of highly dynamic business relations with means of service-oriented computing [84,42]. According to [108], Web-services are self-describing, logical manifestations of heterogeneous physical or software resources that include databases, applications, devices or humans. Processes group and compose Web-services into a set of actions an organization executes. Furthermore, Web-services connect to the internal network of an organization or to the Internet. Uniform Resource Identifiers (URI) identify Web-services and description standards exist such as Web Services Description Language (WSDL) [29], or Representational State Transfer (REST) [47], discovery (Universal Description Discovery and Integration (UDDI) [21]) and communication between Web-services with Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP) [25] on top of network and transport protocols such as Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP).

In Fig. 10, a Local_WFMS and Local_Rules_Engine constitute the core components. These components exchange data between each other and are instrumental for coordinating legacy systems. The business rules and processes that the Local_WFMS and Local_Rules_Engine enact, the CI_Translator translates between the internal- and external layer. For enactment, the Local_WFMS and Local_Rules_Engine use a Production_Data_Manager. Furthermore, to coordinate the enactment on an internal- and external layer, the Local_WFMS and Local_Rules_Engine communicate events, rules, and production data bi-directionally.

Examples for Local_WFMS exist from research and industry. A candidate example from research for a local WFMS is the SOA-system termed Yet Another Workflow System (YAWL) [80] that uses a Petri-net based [91,92] business-process modeling notation as a foundation. With such semantic clarity, it is possible to verify processes in advance before enactment for runtime soundness [3], i.e., one can check for control-flow issues such as deadlocks. In YAWL, workflow adaptations are possible through
so-called worklets [8] enactment in a dynamic way based on the evaluation result of Ripple-Down-Rules (RDR) trees. The now industrial AristaFlow system [90] is another example originating from research based on the former ADEPT flow system [89]. With the AristaFlow system, it is possible to verify the control flow before enactment. Additionally, the formal notation allows one to change the control flow of business processes at runtime if the enactment context requires that. Finally, examples for Local_WFMS from industry are WebSphere [57] and BizTalk [71]. The former WFMS enacts business processes specified in BPEL eBPEL2 that is an industry standard for composing Web-service orchestration. BizTalk enacts business processes formulated in XLANG [102] that is BPEL-compatible. For Local_Rules_Engine, again the earlier mentioned ViDRE [74] is a candidate stemming from research while there also exist several Java-based open-source projects such as Drools [87] or Mandarax [58].

4.3. Third refinement level

We continue refining the components from Section 4.2 according to the principles of functional decomposition. The refinement of the CE_Translator in Fig. 11 depicts a CE_Projector component that transfers data, rules, events, and processes between the conceptual- and external layers. To perform that function, the CE_Projector uses a rules database.

Fig. 11 shows several bidirectional arcs to the CE_Projector. The Rules_Modeler and Process_Modeler components exchange contractual rules and process snippets and composed processes via the CE_Projector with the contracting client on the external layer. The Global_Rules_Engine receives contractual rules from the CE_Projector through which rule- and event-data pass down to the Local_Rules_Engine on the internal layer.

More detailed exchanges between the CE_Projector and components of the Global_WFMS are the following. The Enactment_Engine receives a Process from the service consumer or provider respectively. During enactment, data exchanges take place between the Enactment_Monitor and the Conjointment_Monitor that we explain below based on depiction Fig. 12. The latter two components exchange events and production data via the CE_Projector and the Workflow/P_Events_Data_Exchanger down to the local Enactment_Monitor and Conjointment_Monitor on the internal layer of eSRA.

For realizing the translations of data-, events-, rules-, and process transfers, several technical realizations exist assuming that XML use dominates most transfers. First, for the translation of data, several options exist such as Hadoop [16] that is an open-source project for the processing of large and distributed data sets. The Hadoop Distributed File System provides high-throughput access to application-systems data and Hadoop MapReduce enables reliable parallel processing of largedata sets. Many additional open-source projects on top of Hadoop enhance the data-translation power, e.g., Hive [17], a data warehouse system for easy data summaries and ad-hoc queries in a SQL-like language called HiveQL to analyze large datasets. Also Impala [33] is an open source query engine for massively parallel data processing for Hadoop. Next, the open-source initiative Event Translator [82] comprises four features, namely first, an automated discovery of network services, secondly, receiving events from many different network protocols and also generate events combined with notification management, thirdly, monitoring of service-level agreement assurance with service monitors and finally, performance measures for thresholds or value changes. Assuming that rules- and process specifications use XML, transforming to other rules- and process-notations is possible with
versions of extensible stylesheet language transformations (XSLT) such as SAXON [60], Xalan [14], or Trax [15]. Finally, if content in rules and processes use XML for specifications, there exists an open-source XML content translator [81] called Nikse.

Fig. 12 depicts a refinement of the Global_WFMS component of the eSourcing_Middleware. It shows an Enactment_Engine for the collaborating party’s business processes that have the CE_Translator as a source. Dedicated databases cater for the retrieval of event- and production data during enactment. In order to support the concept of eSourcing, Fig. 12 shows an Enactment_Monitor and Conjoinment_Manager component. Concretely, the first is responsible for allowing the service consumer to monitor the enactment progress of service provisioning. Both components exchange production- and event data in the domain of the collaborating party via the coordination interface. Conjoinment [77] focuses on the exchange of business information between the domains of the collaborating parties and monitorability covers the way how nodes in the consumer’s and provider’s processes link to each other. Furthermore, the internal-layer communicates Production_Data and P_Event_Data via the CE_Translator to coordinate local components.

The refinement of the CE_Translator in Fig. 13 depicts a similar setup as for the CE_Translator. However, the information exchange to neighboring components differs. The CE_Translator contains a CE_Projector component that projects information between the conceptual- and internal layer. To do so, a Projection_Rules_Database exchanges rules with the CE_Projector that receives contractual rules from the Rules_Modeler, and business processes from the Process_Modeler.

The contractual rules are delivered to the local Global_Rules_Engine of the internal layer. Furthermore, the business-process specifications are also delivered to the internal layer where a process database stores them until the Local_WFMS loads the processes for enactment. To coordinate the Local_WFMS and Local_Rules_Engine with corresponding components on the external layer, the CI_Projector transfers production-, rules-, and events data between the internal- and external layers of eSRA.

The internal-layer refinement of Fig. 14 shows a setup that is comparable to the Global_WFMS of Fig. 12. The Local_WFMS contains an Enactment_Engine that receives business processes. Production_Data needed during process enactment is exchanged with the Production_Data_Database. P_Event_Data exchanges take place with the Local_Rules_Engine that carries out contractual rules. Furthermore, the Enactment_Engine exchanges data with ports for the orchestration of legacy systems. To coordinate the local enactment progress with the external layer, production data and event data are exchanged with the Conjoinment_Manager and the Enactment_Monitor respectively. The latter two components exchange events- and production data via the CI_Translator with the equally named components located on the external layer.

The Service_Broker refinement within the Trusted_Third_Party of Fig. 15 reveals a Service_Library_Manager that stores business processes of collaborating parties via the template search engine. The latter component exchanges business-process specifications with the Contracting_Client of the eSourcing_Middleware on the external layer of the collaborating parties. Furthermore, the Template_Search_Engine exchanges data with the Bid_Manger component of the Brokering_Service. The Notifier component checks business-process specifications stored in the Service_Library_Manager for data about a collaborating party that needs to be informed. If such facts exist, the Notifier informs the specified Contracting_Client of the respective parties about the submission of a

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Fig. 12. The Global_WFMS in detail.
projected consumer request or provider offer. Consequently, informed parties check the stored business-process specifications and either engage in a bidding procedure, or commit to the externalized business process by directly responding with committing a separate process to the Trusted Third Party. The functionality of an extended version of such a service broker [79] comprises a keyword-based search for services backed by ontologies and an ad-hoc generated mashup of information for background checking to evaluate service quality. Furthermore, automated matching [64] of service-offers with -requests accelerate the collaboration-setup phase.

The refined Bidding Service of the Trusted Third Party is depicted in Fig. 16. In the Brokering Service component, the contained Bid Library Manager stores committed bids for retrieval by a Bid Manager. This component communicates with the Contracting Client component that places and retrieves bids from the Bid Library Manager. As described earlier, the Bid Manager exchanges bid- and service data with the Template Search Engine component of the Service Broker. Business requests for bids, information, quote, and proposal are part of auctions of differing types. Many auction types exist and we next mention the most common. A so-called English auction [101] focuses on price discovery and is transparent in a sense that bidding buyers know about each other. Potential buyers
submit progressively increasing bids until nobody is willing to raise the price further. At that time, the auction closes and the highest bidder wins. In an English reverse auction [73], potential suppliers submit progressively decreasing bids, with the lowest bidder winning. In sealed bid auctions [97], buyers bid on an item without knowing the details such as price and quantity of each other’s bids. Bidders specify a quantity and a price, and the highest bids receive their quantities until no more units remain. In a sealed bid reverse auction [28], the owner is a buyer and participants are suppliers. Potential suppliers bid to sell the item to the owner, and the lowest bidder or bidders win. After the auction closes to bidders, a selection follows of winning bids based on a set of rules.

The last component of the Trusted Third Party in Fig. 17 is the Validator. The verifier architecture in [75] is suitable for the Trusted Third Party. In this architecture, the business processes of the collaborating parties are flattened to a P/T-net and consequently verified for correct termination and inheritance relations. In Fig. 17, a Process Communicator component receives a request from the Contracting Client belonging to the domain of a collaborating party to perform a verification of a created eSourcing configuration. The Process Communicator requests the conceptual-layer processes of all collaborating parties and the contractual spheres from the eSourcing Middleware. Next, the collected in-house process, the provider spheres, and the contractual spheres the Translator converts into a format the eSC_To_BW_Mapper component and Verifier can process. The first component delivers the resulting BW-net to a Collapsor that creates a net, a component verifies for soundness and projection inheritance. For the latter verification, a comparison follows of the in-house process with the flattened P/T-net. In [76], we give further details about P/T-net details. Finally, with a top-down specification of eSRA based on carefully collected requirements, we must assure in the sequel of the paper that eSRA guides the domain-focused development of standard- and concrete architecture.

5. Evaluation of eSRA

Since eSRA is a reference architecture, it represents a family of B2B-collaboration systems. We first evaluate to which extent eSRA meets the set of requirements stipulated in Section 3, compare eSRA against leading commercial reference architectures and finally, conduct a control-survey with experts from academia and industry. The former evaluation answers the question of...
whether eSRA does provide the required features, while the latter evaluation demonstrates eSRA as an improvement over the commercial reference architectures.

We performed the evaluation in two workshops with participants from industry and academia. During the first evaluation (see Appendix A), two of the evaluators’ backgrounds were software engineering and they were researchers and lecturers with an interest in software architecture. Of the two other reviewers, one was a professor with a background in distributed systems for collaborative and interoperable computing and the remaining reviewer had a similar competency background as a member of a research company that carries out applied research with industry. We met in four workshop sessions and collaboratively went through all ATAM-steps as explained below.

For the second evaluation workshop, the number of participants was approximately triple the amount compared to the first time. The participants were mostly from industry but also from public ICT organizations and university research departments for software engineering and socio-technical agent engineering. The workshop’s morning comprised an introduction into the ATAM methods and a presentation of the context for eSRA and the reference architecture itself. In the afternoon, the evaluation commenced in an interactive way as prescribed by the ATAM method. We refer the reader to Appendix B for details.

For eSRA, we consider several means to achieve an evaluation. In Section 5.1, we discuss a method for architecture evaluation and the completeness check of Section 5.2 shows that the specified components of eSRA cover all functional requirements. Next, in Sections 5.3–5.8 all non-functional requirements we separately address either with the results of applying the chosen modified scenario-based evaluation method, or we apply reasoning techniques such as exploring existing eSourcing systems from industry and research and a control-survery with members of industry and academia.

5.1. Scenario-based software architecture evaluation methods

For the specification and subsequent evaluation of eSRA, we use a modified version of a scenario-based method, namely, the Architecture Trade-Off Analysis Method (ATAM) [32,61]. The following discussion gives an overview for the adopted approach.

The Architecture Trade-Off Analysis Method (ATAM) [32,61] explores quality attributes on the interdependencies with evaluations in several workshop sessions. The initial workshop involves a presentation of the reference architecture together with its business aspects to a group of three to six expert evaluators who then elicit, concretize and prioritize the driving quality attribute requirements. Establishing a quality–attribute–utility tree [61] supports the workshop sessions to the level of scenario-creation, annotated with stimuli for architecture components and their responses, and prioritized scenario-listing. In a follow-up workshop, nine to fifteen related evaluators and project-related personnel evaluate the results from the first workshop with analyzing and specifying in detail the chosen scenarios. During this step, we identify the architectural risks, sensitivity points, and trade-off points. Risks are architectural decisions that have not yet been made. Sensitivity points are properties of one or more components in the reference architecture that are critical for achieving a particular quality attribute response. Trade-off points are properties that affect more than one attribute and that are sensitivity points for more than one attribute.

Note that it is important in ATAM to cover the quality attributes where possible with so-called attribute-based architecture styles [63] (ABAS). Architectural styles [26,96] describe component types and their topology, the design pattern of data and
control interaction among the components, and informally describe their benefits and drawbacks. Architectural styles differentiate classes of designs by offering experiential evidence of how each class has been used, along with qualitative reasoning to explain why each class has certain properties. We define a design pattern as conceptually formulated knowledge that is technology independent. A design pattern for software architecture [26] describes a particular recurring design problem that arises in specific design contexts and presents a well-proven generic scheme for its solution. Just as with architectural styles, in eSRA, we use design patterns for adhering to non-functional requirements.

We use an adjusted version of ATAM to specifically target the evaluation, e.g., emphasis on the establishment of a detailed requirement-attribute hierarchy, selection and communication of stakeholders, selection and usage of scenarios. The results of the ATAM-evaluation of eSRA we present below with summarizing the results for the functional attributes and we continue with non-functional requirements in the sequel. The results of the ATAM-evaluation show that usability is the most critical quality attribute of the attribute tree. Concretely, users must receive intuitively comprehensible verification results while setting up B2B-collaborations. That also comprises real-time setup-guidance with instantaneous notification of design faults and recommendations for corrections, including during run-time. The evaluation also shows that an instantaneous verification- and recommendation support must ensure there is no disclosure of internal details from the collaborating counter-party. Finally, an ad-hoc evaluation of potential collaborating counter-parties must allow for an estimation of trustworthiness and reputability.

5.2. Functional completeness check

In Table 1, we show the results of a paper-based evaluation for functional completeness. If all refining elements inside a respective component are necessary for requirement satisfaction then the table omits them. The eSRA-components in Table 1 are in rows together with supported functional requirement from Section 3.1 and the architectural refinement level in which the components reside. The alphabet in the left column of Table 1 corresponds to the alphabet of the functional requirements in Section 3.1 and it also corresponds to the paragraph alphabet below. Next, we explain how the eSRA-components cover the functional requirements.

5.2.1. Coverage of functional requirements by eSRA-components

With respect to supporting the conceptual formulation of business processes and their accompanying rules, the highest refinement of eSRA comprises the eSourcing_Setup_Support component on the conceptual layer. On the second refinement level of the eSourcing_Setup_Support, the Pattern_Knowledge_Base supplies building blocks for the conceptual formulation of business processes that the Rules_Modeler, Process_Modeler, Workflow_Composer create with the supporting databases.

The brokering capability of projected business processes in eSRA the Trusted_Third_Party realizes. On the second refinement level, the Service_Broker and its connected Process_Snipper_Manager allow collaborating parties to submit service requests and service offers. Contained in the Service_Broker, the Template_Search_Engine allows one to search the Service_Library_Manager.

Furthermore, the Notifier component actively informs a party if she is part of the specification in a service request or offer as a preferred collaboration candidate.

The bidding capability for projected business processes also the Trusted_Third_Party comprises with the Brokering_Service component. On the third refinement level of eSRA, the Brokering_Service allows the placement and retrieval of bids from the Bid_Library_Manager.

Table 1
Coverage of functional requirements by eSRA-components.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functional requirement</th>
<th>Refinement level</th>
<th>eSRA component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a 1</td>
<td>eSourcing setup support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b 1</td>
<td>Translator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c 2</td>
<td>CI projector</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d 2</td>
<td>CE projector</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e 1</td>
<td>Trusted third party</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f 2</td>
<td>Service broker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g 1</td>
<td>Bidding service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h 2</td>
<td>eSourcing middleware, trusted third party</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i 1</td>
<td>eSourcing, CE_translator, coordination interface</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j 2</td>
<td>Validator, Verifiers (external and internal), CE_Translator, CI_Translator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k 1</td>
<td>eSourcing, CE_Translator, CI_Translator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l 1</td>
<td>Legacy_Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m 1</td>
<td>eSourcing_Setup_Support, Legacy_Management, eSourcing_Middleware, Translator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The setup support of an electronic enterprise collaboration involves the eSourcing_Middleware and the Trusted_Third_Party. On the second refinement level, the Contracting_Client together with the Coordination_Interface forms a platform to negotiate the setup. We refer to [13] for details about a contracting-client refinement. From the CE_Translator component, the contained CE_Projector ensures a projection of conceptual-layer processes to the contracting client.

For avoiding the direct linking of business processes and legacy systems, eSRA provides components on the external-, conceptual-, and internal layer. Hence, on the first refinement level of eSRA, the eSourcing_Middleware and Legacy_Management cover this functionality requirement. Avoiding direct process linking involves from the second eSRA-level the Global_WFMS, Global_Rules_Engine, and the Coordination_Interface of the eSourcing_Middleware while legacy management requires the Local_WFMS and Local_Rules_Engine. The coordination interface interacts with the Global_Rules_Engine and Global_WFMS of collaborating parties.

The verification and simulation of electronic enterprise collaboration eSRA caters for with the eSourcing_Setup_Support and the Trusted_Third_Party. In the first case, internal Verifier- and Simulator-components allow a local checking of conceptual business processes. When these business processes match inter-organizationally, the Verifier of the Trusted_Third_Party allows a checking of the overall process without forcing the collaborating parties into revealing business secrets to each other.

For the enactment of a ready collaboration configuration, eSRA provides components from the eSourcing_Setup_Support, Legacy_Management, eSourcing_Middleware, and Translator. Hence, from the eSourcing_Setup_Support, the components termed Global_Rules_Engine, Global_WFMS, and Coordination_Interface support enactment. Furthermore, the CE_Translator, CI_Translator, and both data exchangers of the Translator ensure a functioning link between the external- and internal layer during enactment. From the Legacy_Management, the Local_WFMS and the Local_Rules_Engine components orchestrate the service-wrapped legacy systems.

5.3. Applicability — eSRA comparison with existing leading reference architectures

By comparing eSRA with the functionalities of existing leading commercial applications in the domain of eSourcing, we show the applicability of the reference architecture. The chosen commercial applications are the biggest and most complete systems available, namely the Sourcing platform from SAP [95] and the Sourcing platform from ORACLE [83]. The third commercial application is the SmartSource platform from IASTA [56] that is less complete as the eSRA-comparison shows in the sequel. As the purpose of eSRA is to achieve for system designers a quick understanding of other B2B-collaboration systems in a paper-based form on the one hand, or also to provide guidelines for creating standard- and concrete architectures (see Fig. 4) We use system documentation about the chosen commercial applications for checking eSRA-applicability.

In a SAP context, Sourcing is a Web-based process used to formally select one or several suppliers that provide services. SAP Sourcing encompasses the online process of purchase-expenditure analysis, supplier identification, negotiation events such as requests for Sourcing proposals, or reverse auctioning in which service consumers collect and evaluate price- and bid information of suppliers, supplier-record management, and contract management.

Secondly, we consider the Sourcing application of ORACLE. Sourcing supports online collaboration and negotiation for procurement professionals, business experts, and suppliers from multiple organizations with functionality to electronically exchange information. Furthermore, Sourcing supports bidding and auction processes, and the creation and implementation agreements that reduce sourcing cycle time and create a complete audit trail of supplier commitments.

Finally, the SmartSource platform from IASTA enables companies to communicate with buyers, suppliers and other stakeholders through integrating components for sourcing products and services using request for information, proposal or quotation; survey or auction functionality. With the SmartSource platform, it is possible to perform quick optimization and analyze different award scenarios; track, follow and manage sourcing contracts, and manage supplier relationships.

In Table 2, the cells show to which degree functionalities present in eSRA are part of the chosen commercial applications. The rows list the results for respective commercial applications while the letters in the columns correspond to Section 3.1 that lists the functional requirements for eSRA. For the cells, a plus sign indicates full functionality support while a minus sign indicates no support and both signs in a cell indicate partial support. Next follows an evaluation discussion for the respective commercial applications.

5.3.1. SAP Sourcing and eSRA

In comparison [95], the eSourcing concept (see Section 2.2) matches with SAP Sourcing while the first stresses the importance of the structural harmonization of inter-organizational business processes. eSourcing also puts special emphasis on hiding business internals from the collaboration counterpart that is equally not stressed by SmartSource.

### Table 2

| Functional requirements adherence of commercial applications. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Functional requirements | a | b | c | d | e | f | g | h | i | j | k |
| SAP Sourcing | + | + | − | ± | ± | − | − | − | − | − | ± |
| ORACLE Sourcing | + | + | − | + | + | − | − | − | ± | + |
| IASTA SmartSourcing | − | − | − | ± | ± | − | − | − | − | − | − |
5.3.3. IASTA SmartSource and eSRA

Sourcing, a fully developed enactment environment exists.

5.4. Usability of eSRA

platform from IASTA requires a combination of traditional ERP-systems to satisfy more functional requirements than brokering, bidding and negotiation. Thus, the SmartSource is impossible because of lacking support of inter-organizational business process and rules design and management. Instead, of business processes and legacy systems, and the enactment of ready collaboration configurations.

business processes and rules, mapping and projecting business processes between collaboration layers, distribution and shielding exist that manage business processes and rules. The evaluation result shows a lack of support for conceptually formulating accumulating and aggregating data of suppliers to support external-layer collaboration setup. Consequently, no database stores requirements. The explanation for that is the lack of business-process and rule support as SmartSource is a platform that caters for power-, proxy-, and surrogate bidding. However, there is no explicit projection of process views. Consequently, bidding capabilities are fully present with functionality for power-, proxy-, and surrogate bidding.

Negotiation support is not business-process based but the ORACLE suites try to reduce cycle time with automating the structuring of consolidation requirements, amendments, responses and notifications. On the other hand, no validation functionality exists as a default part of ORACLE Sourcing for shielding distributed legacy systems, Sourcing provides an external collaboration layer for negotiated contract establishment backed by an internal business-process design. The process-supporting legacy systems within the domains of collaborating parties support process activities wrapped into Web-services. Finally, the ORACLE SaaS suite backs Sourcing, a fully developed enactment environment exists.

5.3.2. ORACLE Sourcing and eSRA

The evaluation [83] reveals a conformance with the eSourcing definition put forward earlier. Besides relying on powerful database support such as from ORACLE 12c, versatility support of ORACLE Sourcing stems from the openness to a vast spectrum of other ORACLE applications from the Oracle Advanced Procurement suite.4

With the openness of the ORACLE suite it is possible to design conceptually processes in a language like BPMN [110] with support for automatic translation into enactable BPEL-code. For projecting and mapping, the same holds as for SAP. Brokering capability ORACLE supports as a component exists between collaborating parties for requesting proposals and quotations. However, there is no explicit projection of process views. Consequently, bidding capabilities are fully present with functionality for power-, proxy-, and surrogate bidding.

Negotiation support is not business-process based but the ORACLE suites try to reduce cycle time with automating the structuring of consolidation requirements, amendments, responses and notifications. On the other hand, no validation functionality exists as a default part of ORACLE Sourcing for shielding distributed legacy systems, Sourcing provides an external collaboration layer for negotiated contract establishment backed by an internal business-process design. The process-supporting legacy systems within the domains of collaborating parties support process activities wrapped into Web-services. Finally, the ORACLE SaaS suite backs Sourcing, a fully developed enactment environment exists.

5.3.3. IASTA SmartSource and eSRA

Compared [56] to eSourcing, Table 2 reveals that IASTA’s SmartSource platform provides support for a subset of functional requirements. The explanation for that is the lack of business-process and rule support as SmartSource is a platform that caters for accumulating and aggregating data of suppliers to support external-layer collaboration setup. Consequently, no database stores exist that manage business processes and rules. The evaluation result shows a lack of support for conceptually formulating business processes and rules, mapping and projecting business processes between collaboration layers, distribution and shielding of business processes and legacy systems, and the enactment of ready collaboration configurations.

Partial requirement support of the SmartSource platform exists for brokering, bidding and negotiation. However, full support is impossible because of lacking support of inter-organizational business process and rules design and management. Instead, brokering, bidding and negotiation is driven by requests for information, proposal, tender and quotation. Thus, the SmartSource platform from IASTA requires a combination of traditional ERP-systems to satisfy more functional requirements than brokering, bidding and negotiation.

5.4. Usability of eSRA

For performing the scenario-based evaluation method in Section 5.1, we present eSRA in workshops to experts from industry and academia. Communicating the principles of eSourcing and explain the purpose of eSRA-components on respective refinement levels is simple. The specification detail of eSRA is satisfactory and the terminology comprehensible. Furthermore, as Section 5.2 shows, eSRA is a means for enabling a quick checking of existing eSourcing system features in a paper-based form. This is not

possible without quickly understanding the underlying concept, naming conventions, notations and structure of eSRA and being able to compare those to other systems.

5.5. Feasibility of eSRA

The first feasibility property of buildability is provable with the existence of application systems as in Section 5.3. One eSRA-component is an exception, namely, the contracting client in Fig. 6 that is partially realized. In [13], the reader finds detailed explanations about the contracting client. A scientific prototype implementation [49] of an eSRA-compliant proof-of-concept application exists from the CrossWork-project.

The second feasibility property of coherent design and clear structure in eSRA we achieve by employing architectural styles and design patterns that connect on the one hand the reference architecture to the non-functional requirements and on the other hand, the styles and patterns facilitate a quick design of an eSRA-adhering system instantiation.

In eSRA, a layering style [20,26], i.e., we use three concern-separating layers for the domains of a service consumer and service provider because it helps to structure the components of eSRA into groups at a particular level of abstraction. For eSRA, these abstraction levels are the external collaboration layer, the conceptual layer, and the internal layer for managing and orchestrating legacy systems. In eSRA, a layer only communicates with an adjacent layer while a whole-part pattern [26] complements the layering style to aggregate the parts of a business collaboration. Finally, on the conceptual layer of eSRA, a pipes-and-filters pattern [26] facilitates establishing communication channels between the external and the internal layer via the conceptual layer. The latter design pattern structures the processing streams of data while filter components encapsulate each processing step. Hence, data passes through pipes between adjacent filters from the external layer to the internal layer and vice versa.

5.6. High automation in eSRA

Although it is desirable for efficiency and effectiveness to have a total automation support for eSourcing, reality shows this is not realistic. Typically, an eSourcing scenario is semi-automated by an application system to a point where the users retain control they consider vital for success in real-life business collaborations. Although, such human control requires graphical user interfaces (GUI), eSRA does not explicitly specify them for the reason that the degree of desired human control versus automation degree for an eSourcing-compliant system may vary depending on the business-collaboration domain and situation. The following areas of user involvement may be desirable depending on the context, e.g., for modeling business processes and rules, negotiating a consensus in the contracting phase of an eSourcing collaboration, reasoning about verification results, performing decisions during the enactment phase such as what form of exception handling and compensation to carry out when errors occur, and so on.

5.7. Modifiability, integrability, interoperability, security, flexibility, portability, performance and scalability of eSRA

To check the non-functional requirements of concern, we employ the modified version of ATAM-evaluation method (see Section 5.1). We refer the reader to the appendices of this paper for details about the conducted scenario-based evaluation. The remainder of this subsection first lists eSRA-improvements, followed by results of the structured eSRA-analysis where we relate in a summary architectural decisions and qualities, and the required qualities and conclusions on eSRA-strengths and -weaknesses.

5.7.1. Qualities and architectural decisions

The investigated architectural styles and patterns present in eSRA connect on the one hand, the reference architecture to the non-functional requirements and on the other hand, the patterns help to quickly design an eSRA-adhering business-collaboration systems. However, it is not possible to check all non-functional requirements with the style- and pattern discussion. The adherence of eSRA to the remaining set of non-functional requirements we check in the sequel by evaluating eSRA-adherence of existing business-collaboration systems from research and industry.

Architectural styles [26,96] describe component types and their topology, the design pattern of data and control interaction among the components, and informally describe their benefits and drawbacks. Architectural styles differentiate classes of designs by offering experiential evidence for how to use each class, along with qualitative reasoning to explain why each class has certain properties. A design pattern for software architecture [26] describes a particular recurring design problem that arises in specific design contexts and presents a well-proven generic scheme for its solution. Just as with architectural styles, in eSRA, we use design patterns for adhering to non-functional requirements.

Table 3 gives an overview of the non-functional eSRA-requirements. The top row lists the architectural styles and patterns that are present in eSRA. In Table 3, a plus sign means a particular style or pattern supports a non-functional requirement. A minus sign means that a style or pattern does not support a requirement. Both signs we assign based on the specifications about architectural styles and pattern literature [26,96] that indicate what non-functional requirements they cover.

In eSRA, a layering style [20,26] for the domains of a service consumer and service provider structures components into groups at a particular level of abstraction. For eSRA, these abstraction layers are the external collaboration layer, the conceptual layer, and the internal layer to manage and orchestrate legacy systems. In eSRA, the layers assure that there is only communication with each adjacent layer. By using a layering style, eSRA supports the requirements of modifiability, portability, and integrability. Most
importantly interoperability prevents collaborating parties from having to link their legacy systems directly. As a trade-off, a layering style results in extra communication overhead that does not support performance.

The trusted third party of eSRA uses a publish/subscribe style [63] in which the data producers are publishers and the consumers are subscribers. When a publisher submits new data, all subscribers receive a notification and automatically have data delivered. In the trusted third party component, the notifier forms the central component of a star topology where the publishers and subscribers are the leaves. The advantage of this style in a multi-party collaboration environment with large numbers of potential service consumers and service providers, is enhanced system performance because of reduced communication overhead and an enhancement of flexibility and integrability of eSRA.

For the remaining way of data management, eSRA employs an abstract-data-repository style [63]. This style keeps the producers and consumers of shared data from having knowledge of each other’s existence and the details of their implementations. In the case of eSRA, using a layering style and by interposing an intermediary protocol between the producer and consumers of shared data items also realizes the abstract data repository style. Note, that all domains of collaborating parties replicate the external layer of eSRA and are only accessible through the coordination-interface component. Furthermore, the abstract data repository style requires an abstract interface to the data repository that further reduces the coupling between the data producers and consumers. With this architecture style, eSRA supports the requirements flexibility, modifiability, integrability, and portability.

A whole-part pattern [26] aggregates the parts of a business collaboration. In eSRA, dedicated components exist on the external- and internal layer in the form of the global and local WFMS and rules engine. Additionally, the conceptual layer differentiates modeling support for business processes and business rules. The global and local WFMS comprise components termed enactment monitor, conjoinment manager, and enactment manager. By using the whole-part pattern, eSRA supports modifiability, flexibility and integrability through modularization while this is detrimental to performance.

The broker pattern [26] in eSRA the trusted-third-party component realizes between the domains of collaborating parties. A broker is a separate component that interacts with the remainder of the architecture. Its purpose is the redirection and bundling of communicating with many collaborating parties. Hence, since the broker pattern stops parties from having to find, contact and investigate every potential collaborating party separately, it affects performance positively. Instead, the broker pattern centrally offers searchable information about collaborating parties and detects the best candidate for service consumption or service provision. In eSRA, collaborating parties may use the trusted third party for submitting service requests and service offers that are centrally searchable and for which it is possible to place bids. Using the broker pattern in eSRA enhances scalability as it simplifies the task for service providers and service consumers to collaborate with each other. Most importantly, placing a decoupled component between business domains with which they must register and that enhances the trust between collaborating parties, supports the security requirement.

The already mentioned, coordination-interface component on the external layer of eSRA realizes the façade pattern [48]. That way, a unified interface offers to a collaborating counterpart access to a set of interfaces of a subsystem, namely the replicated components of the external layer. Hence, this supports the interoperability between business parties and enhances the security in a collaboration as it shields the legacy systems behind the façade of the coordination interface.

On the conceptual layer of eSRA, a pipes-and-filters pattern [26] facilitates establishing communication channels between the external- and internal layer via the conceptual layer. This pattern provides a structure for processing streams of data while filter components encapsulate each processing step. Hence, data passes through pipes between adjacent filters from the external layer to the internal layer and vice versa. With the pipe- and filter pattern, eSRA supports flexibility, modifiability, integrability, and portability. However, pipes and filters for data passing have a negative effect on collaboration performance.

5.7.2. Sensitivity, tradeoff points and risks

The detected risks, sensitivity and tradeoff points that result from the eSRA evaluation, for usability focus on supporting the user during the setup and enactment phase of an electronic business collaboration. Simultaneously it is important that business internals remain opaque from the counter-party. The same visibility problem exists for components that verify different perspectives of a business collaboration.

| Table 3 |
| Coverage of non-functional requirements by architectural styles and patterns. |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Category | Quality | Styles | Patterns | |
| | | Layering | Publish/subscribe | Abstract-data-repository | Whole-part | Broker | Facade | Pipes-and-filters |
| System Design time | Modifiability | + | + | | + | | | |
| Portability | + | | + | | | | | |
| Integrability | + | | + | | | | | |
| Runtime Interoperability | + | | | | | | | |
| Performance | – | + | – | + | – | | |
| Security | Flexibility | + | + | | | | |
| Scalability | + | + | | | | |

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For trust management, the risks and sensitivity points revealed during the first evaluation (see Appendix A) reveal a lack in the initial eSRA-specification [75] of components for collecting trust-related information about collaboration parties that also include information about reputation and conflict resolution. Fig. 6 of the eSRA specification depicts these additional components in the contracting client and the trusted third party. The components represent a minimum in eSRA for covering trust management [94] for which more mechanisms exist. However, for a complete trust-management coverage it is essential to also consider the way how collaborating parties agree on forming a temporary relationship in which the behavior rules and constraints are set. Such a relationship between collaboration parties has a lifecycle with the stages of an initiation, a set of stages characterized by events such as a party being eliminated or leaving and to be replaced by alternative parties, changes of behavior rules and constraints, and so on. Eventually, the temporary business relationship reaches the end of its lifecycle when there is no further need to carry out new eSourcing transactions.

With respect to tradeoff points, the first ATAM-evaluation concludes that during the development of eSRA-complying systems, primarily the relationship between the performance, usability, and modifiability matter. Performance is important because users need an acceptable response time in an electronic business collaboration. However, elaborate components that ensure the usability of an eSRA-compliant system, negatively affect performance. Also modifiability ensured by patterns as a layer architecture, whole-part decomposition, pipes and filters, or abstract data repositories, results in an overhead that is detrimental for performance.

5.7.3. Evaluation results

Out of the four chosen highest ranked scenarios the first evaluation yield in the utility tree (see Appendix A), three are related to the usability and one to the security requirement of eSRA-complying systems. The amount of chosen scenarios for usability shows the importance for adoption of eSRA-compliant systems by users, i.e., usability is essential for setting up and enacting B2B-collaborations. Concretely, the utility tree in Appendix A shows that usability scenarios comprise the sub-factor error avoidance, error handling, and verification. Their importance stems from the need to check B2B-collaborations for soundness before enactment and to have component-support available during enactment to avoid unsatisfied customers, loss of time and money, and so on.

The fourth highly ranked scenario focuses on security and addresses specifically the sub-factor of security termed trust management. In B2B-collaboration, this sub-factor is important because a party desires to estimate in such anonymous markets how trustworthy a potential collaboration party is. Hence, it is important to have mechanisms and components available that on the one hand, permit an evaluation of potential business partners before engaging in a collaboration, and on the other hand, keep track of the performance of individual business partners during setup and enactment time.

The second evaluation of eSRA (see Appendix B) does not result in further change requests to the architecture specification. The highest ranked scenario of collaboration-configuration verification and -simulation is in line with the result from the first evaluation although now listed as a performance issue. The second evaluation yields different sensitivity-, tradeoff points, risks, and non-risk (see Appendix). The risks suggest that the use of socio-technical software agents [100] in system instantiation are a means for quickly matching collaborating parties and also for supporting the setup of different collaboration directions that the collaboration lifecycle in [65] supports.

The sensitivity points show that brokering is essential and also important for availability to enable the setup phase. Changing collaboration directions requires additional brokering involvement that is sensitive to availability again. Failing databases for, e.g., stores of prepared business rules and -processes, are sensitive to modifiability. Large collaboration configurations may pose a challenge to performance during verification and simulation. Finally, elaborate background checking of counterparties, services, persons is sensitive to performance and availability when employing very large data sets.

The tradeoff points include brokering in that quick matching is perceived by the workshop participants as detrimental to security when less diligent background checks happen. Modifying large numbers of business rules is detrimental to performance as tools must verify for conflicts with respect to other rules and processes. Finally, the non-risks of the second eSRA-evaluation confirm specification maturity and we refer to the Appendix B for further details.

5.8. eSRA-improvements after evaluation

The evaluation of the initial eSRA-specification [75] shows that the highest level (see Fig. 5) is sound. However, the ATAM-evaluation reveals a need to adjust the second refinement level (see Section 4.2). The risks and sensitivity points lead to an extension with components for collecting information about the trustworthiness and reputation of collaboration parties. Concretely, we introduce additional components for reputation and identity management (see Fig. 6) for covering trust management [94]. Additionally, we introduce a new Coordinator component between the Global_Rules_Engine and the Global_WFMS (see Fig. 6) and the Local_Rules_Engine and Local_WFMS (see Fig. 10). The third refinement level of the initial eSRA-specification remains unaffected by results of the evaluation.

For implementing eSRA-compliant application systems, the risks, sensitivity- and tradeoff points resulting from the eSRA-evaluation, reveal that the development of suitable graphical user interfaces (GUI) are essential to facilitate the adoption process by collaborating companies. Furthermore, verification and simulation components must ensure the soundness of an eSourcing-configuration before the enactment phase. It is important that such verification- and simulation components are not computationally expensive to the point where it affects the performance of eSRA-compliant system.
6. Related work

Several research projects have investigated inter-organizational business processes. In the WISE project [9, 66], a software platform for process-based B2B electronic commerce focuses on supporting a network of small and medium-sized enterprises. WISE employs a central workflow engine to control cross-organizational virtual business processes. In WISE, a virtual business process consists of a number of linked black-box services in a workflow process [9]. An organization offers a service that is part of a WWW catalog of business processes under the control of local workflow-management systems. Although the WISE project succeeds in orchestrating workflows of different collaborating organizations, it does not cater for a flexible degree of mutual visibility of business-process details as eSourcing does. Hence, eSRA is specified in accordance with the requirement of catering for flexible visibility degrees. Differently to WISE, eSRA includes components for collaborating parties to negotiate varying degrees of observability during the enactment phase.

In the CrossFlow project [93], dynamic outsourcing realizes the formation of virtual enterprises. While CrossFlow relies on cooperating pairs of autonomous workflow systems with a peer-to-peer relation, a service matchmaker fits together service offerings and service requests. The resulting electronic contract establishes dynamically a service enactment infrastructure [54] that employs workflow technology. CrossFlow has an external layer that spans across organizational domains in which the process is part of a contract specification. The workflow-specification language of the workflow-management system IBM MQSeries Workflow [1], forms the internal process layer. Different from eSourcing, the shortcoming of CrossFlow is that the service provider is not able to insert tasks that are not a lower process-level refinement, but that extend the business process on the highest level. At the same time a verification-component must ensure that a refinement by inserted tasks does not violate the perceived service behavior a consumer demands. eSRA comprises components for the verification and simulation of B2B-collaborations.

An overview of interoperability principles, concepts, and methods in [106], discusses why earlier electronic-business-collaboration approaches failed and what requirements are important for building eSRA-compliant systems. Key elements for success are the conceptualization of business processes and policies and automating the interoperability with a service-oriented approach.

Additional business-collaboration architectures are available in literature that lend themselves to a check with eSRA of this paper. In [27], the historical development of architectures for enterprise collaboration gives an overview that shows all approaches use multiple layers for shielding the internal legacy systems, for conceptual process formulation and an external inter-organizational collaboration-layer. Accordingly, the approaches bridge the local syntactic features determined by heterogeneous data and technology with a semantic abstraction layer to achieve a common denominator for the inter-organizational collaboration layer governing business pragmatics.

A security architecture for virtual organizations [62], uses Web-services for supporting inter-organizational business applications and policies to ensure collaboration security. The architecture overlaps with eSRA in that an inter-organizational layer exists for the management of virtual organizations. Just as for eSRA, the participating organizations retain their internal autonomy and exchange with each other only as much as necessary. In summary, the focus of this approach lies on a heavy use of policies for ensuring a secure access to the control flow run by distributed workflows.

In [67], a service-oriented multi-channel architecture also uses multiple layers for protecting the internal legacy-applications that are wrapped as services and integrated in an interaction layer. The latter consists of portals and enterprise-resource planning interfaces. The top layer is for enabling collaboration between organizations. However, there is no explicit discussion about conceptualizing business processes and policies that only show necessary details for establishing collaboration.

Earlier efforts in facilitating B2B-integration include ebXML and RosettaNet. ebXML is a family of XML-based interoperability standards for ensuring smooth flow of electronic information across enterprises in a B2B-integration setting. ebXML can be incorporated into our reference architecture as a standard for message exchanges between the Coordination Interface modules of the eSourcing Middleware components of each collaborating party as depicted in Fig. 5. RosettaNet is a non-profit organization establishing standard business processes for sharing B2B-information. To that end, RosettaNet defines a set of Partner Interface Processes (PIPs) that collaborating parties implement for interaction and exchanging information. The PIPs are composed within the Workflow Composer module of our eSourcing Setup Support component of Fig. 9.

In [68], the discussion for developing industry-wide reference architectures for ultra-large ecosystems show that eSRA adheres to the stated characteristics. First, the expected decentralization of data, development, evolution and operational control eSRA adheres to with employing the eSourcing concept [75, 76] for deducing the functional architecture specification. For the processes the parties develop independently, enactment is distributed and collaboration loosely coupled. Control through monitorability and conjoinment ensures loose coupling and configuration flexibility. Secondly, inherently conflicting requirements where parties want complexity to reside in the domains of counterparties of the overall system and want information to be shared, but do not want to share their own information eSRA satisfies with adopting a three-layer framework. Conflicting requirements may be resolved on conceptual-, or internal layers while intersecting requirements can be addressed on the external layer. The three-layer framework also supports a continuous evolution with heterogeneous elements where the whole ecosystem cannot be stopped and re-engineered. Furthermore, adopting workflow concepts allows for cleanly managing the boundaries between people- and system boundaries. As eSRA employs external-layer process views [45], collaborating parties have an option to
influence each other’s behavior. Still, the conceptual-layer refinement options limit the possible control. When a black-box process-view projection takes place with limited conjoinment and monitorability, the service interfaces are minimal. Collaboration metadata and -context in service contracts eSRA supports with comprising an explicit contracting component on the external layer. The expected semantic alignment of eSRA we ensure with the formally defined properties of the eSourcing framework. Finally, intermediaries should not be mandatory during a B2B-collaboration. In eSRA that is possible under the assumption that a set of parties already decided a priori to collaborate exclusively with each other and therefore no need exists for a trusted-third-party component to discover services of unknown parties.

Finally, other reference architectures are enclosable in eSRA. The Workflow Reference Model [109] and the reference architecture for Workflow Management Systems [52] are part of the global and local eSRA workflow management systems. The E-Contracting reference architecture [13] populates the contracting client in the eSourcing middleware.

7. Conclusion and future work

In this paper, we evaluate the eSourcing reference architecture for the development and assessment of enterprise-collaborations. A set of functional and non-functional requirements for eSRA result from carefully studied enterprise-collaboration features. From the functional requirements we deduce the reference architecture that comprises components on three refinement levels and their information exchanges. As the appendices confirm in terms of usability and applicability, the eSRA-specification enables designers to efficiently and effectively assess the quality and comprehensiveness of existing systems.

During the validation of eSRA, the discovered risks and sensitivity points from both evaluation sessions we sum up in the appendices, reveal the importance of verification- and simulation components for electronic business collaboration. Such components serve several collaboration perspectives, e.g., control flow, data flow, resource management, transaction management. These components must have user support that allows an instantaneous detection of errors while not revealing business secrets to the collaborating counterpart.

The anonymizing environment of an eSRA-complying system requires the adoption of components for trust management. The collaborating parties must be able to protect their business secrets and the overall performance of an eSRA-compliant system must not impede business collaboration. Besides the need for verification components, the layer architecture, pipes and filters, and whole-part decompositions result in potential performance bottlenecks in eSRA-compliant systems.

Several directions for future work exist. In addition to the already adopted trust-management components, this is an ongoing research issue. We aim for a complete trust solution via the integration with other collaboration concepts. In ongoing research about e-business transactions for electronic business collaboration, we explore the handling of exceptions and compensation as an integral part of enactment. The feasibility of matching service requests with service offers, requires full- or semi-automation. For service matching, different methods characterize themselves with different levels of computational expenses and matching quality. Hence, we investigate suitable and complete methods for different stages of service matching. An integral part of eSRA is the trusted-third-party component that reduces the communicational overhead between collaborating parties and ensures scalability. For the cloud-computing domain, the development of a stack for a cloud ecosystem is ongoing. Thus, we explore how to integrate eSRA into the cloud stack for enabling business collaboration in this setting.

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Appendix A. First ATAM-Evaluation Results

The tables below show the first set of results from applying the ATAM-evaluation method. The initial group of five participants had either a full-, or applied research background from the Department of Computer Science at the University of Helsinki or the Finnish applied-research organization VTT that matches the top-down eSRA-development process starting from a conceptual- and formal collaboration-model foundation. The workshop results in a refinement of the eSourcing architecture’s (eSRA) quality attributes with specific sub-factors. The latter factors create a utility tree together with accompanying expert-ranked scenarios. Further refinements of the top-ranked scenarios incorporate sensitivity points, tradeoff points, risks, and non risks, as the tables below show.

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8 http://www.cloudsoftwareprogram.org/.
A.1. Attribute-characterizing questions

The initial task of the workshop sessions with experts is to clarify the utility requirement of eSRA that expresses the overall “goodness” of the system. Hence, the posed questions establish a better understanding of earlier determined quality attributes.

In Table 4, quality attributes on the left side cluster sets of assigned questions in combination with an additional qualification if they represent for eSRA an external stimuli, an architectural decision, or a response. External stimuli are events that cause eSRA to respond or change. Architectural decisions are the aspects of eSRA that have a direct impact on achieving attribute responses. Finally, responses are measurable or observable quantities.

A.2. Utility tree

All the quality attributes and further specifying sub-factors organize and prioritize the goals for eSRA in a utility tree. The latter is instrumental for a sub-factor assigned creation of scenarios. Next, the perceived difficulty and priority for eSRA determines the ranking of these scenarios.

The left side of Table 5 mentions the most important system requirement, namely the utility. Further refining quality attributes for utility are a subset of the non-functional requirements in Section 3.2. The subset of attributes results from a discussion with the expert group about what to consider for further questionings, as Table 4 shows. Quality attributes for which the experts cannot find questions are not considered in the ATAM-evaluation as it implied that eSRA provides coverage. Next, we deduce the sub-factors in Table 5 from the questions in Table 4 and refine the quality attributes. In effect, the sub-factors tell a deeper probing of eSRA must take place.

The scenarios to the right of sub-factors carry identification numbers. At the very right-hand of Table 5, the scenarios-assessment uses their perceived difficulty and the priority to realize. The gray shaded rows contain scenarios that score highly in both categories and require further investigation. Tables 6–8, give justifications for the ranking of scenarios.

Table 4
Attribute-characterizing questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality attributes</th>
<th>Stimuli</th>
<th>Architectural decision</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High automation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Is it possible to define examples that state what is automatic or not automatic?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Is manual interaction required?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Does the legacy system influence decision (special input required)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Is it possible to perform a highly automated bidding (Agents involved, or humans involved)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>What is the target degree of automation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>How can the degree of automation be controlled?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usability</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Does the system cover also operational time observability and breach detection?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Is there a discrepancy detection during bidding involved?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>How about handling errors during enactment phase?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Is it possible to test run the entire eSourcing configuration?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Based on which information is the decision made to eSource?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>When a system provides an eSourcing configuration, how much interoperability does that guarantee?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifiability</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Are three levels enough or are more needed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>What are the expected rules of expressing yourself in each level (structuring rules)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>What happens when the modeling languages are changed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>What happens when a totally new component with new functionality is added?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scalability</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Does only one trusted third party component turn into a bottle neck?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Is it possible to have multiple collaborating parties in an eSourcing configuration?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Can multiple modeling languages be used on different levels?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>How many enactment parties are anticipated?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Does replication imply effects on the protocols?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Are dedicated components required to support replication?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>How does scalability affect performance?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Is verification a bottleneck during the setup phase?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>How does the system ensure the response time is acceptable during enactment?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>To what extent does system facilitate different contracting protocols?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Is multi-phase contracting supported?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Is iterative contracting supported?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>How does eSRA respond when a trusted-third parties are replicated?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>How does eSRA respond when a contracting component is replicated?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrability</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Which components are envisaged that need to be integrated?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>How is trust management realized in eSRA?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>How are the legacy systems shielded from denial of service attacks?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>How is sensitive data exchange shielded?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>How are process details hidden from collaborating parties?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>What are the different trust levels between different eSRA integration options?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality attributes</td>
<td>Sub–factors</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>Scenarios</td>
<td>Difficulty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifiability</td>
<td>Adding new components</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>A fourth collaboration–level is added for enabling inter–organizational e–business transaction management without triggering modifications to components contained in other eSourcing levels.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adding functionalities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>An existing component is extended, e.g., the global WFMS, with additional functionality without triggering knock–on modification that goes further than immediately bordering components. These knock–on modifications are localized to the same collaboration level where the component is embedded that is extended with more functionality.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>adding new SW–versions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>The global rules engine is updated to a new version without triggering update requirements to the local rules engines of respective collaborating parties.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usability</td>
<td>Response time</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>When a task is accepted on the service–provider side, that change is propagated within 5 s through to the side of the service consumer and visible on the enactment–progress monitor.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Error avoidance</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>For a modeled eSourcing configuration, tools are available that detect control–flow errors in a way that enable respective parties to perform an internal modification of the process model without revealing business secrets to the counterparts.</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learnability</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Users are able to setup an eSourcing configuration after 1month of training.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Error handling</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>An error that occurs during the enactment of an eSourcing configuration is caught and managed without requiring stopping the enactment.</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verification</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>eSA provides the components required to verify the perspectives of data–flow, control–flow, resource management before enactment.</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interoperability</td>
<td>Legacy–system integration</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>A SAP inventory management system can be integrated in the selling up of an eSourcing configuration.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between systems of participating parties</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>An eSourcing configuration allows an ORACLE and SAP accounting system to exchange securely monetary transaction data.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heterogeneous business functions</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Provided one collaborating party internally uses BPMN and the counterpart uses EPC, it is still possible to set up an eSourcing configuration.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>Verification</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>The control–flow verification of an eSourcing configuration completes in less than 1 h.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Response time during enactment</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>The reaction of an eSA–based system never requires more than 5 s for responding to a user interaction.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scalability</td>
<td>Broker</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>The eSA domain of a collaborating party allows the integration of several service brokers for different industrial domains, e.g., a broker for telecom industry, a different broker for forest industry.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bidding</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>A reasonably high number of service providers may bid for a particular request from a service consumer.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enactment</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>eSA–based systems support the integration of more than one service provider into the enactment of one eSourcing configuration.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Legacy system</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>The integration of an ORACLE resource–management system does not endanger its operation.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data exchange</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Data that is exchanged in an eSourcing configuration does not originate from and is not diverted to an unauthorized destination.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trust management</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>A collaboration does so badly that it is not desirable any more to repeat the collaboration.</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business–process details</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Internal business–process details of a collaborating party are not revealed during the setup and enactment of an eSourcing configuration unless they are projected to an external level.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trusted third party</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>IA denial–of–service attack is launched against the broker which does not result in accessibility problems.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6
Justifying the ranking of scenarios (part 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Justification</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Since eSRA comprise a part-whole pattern and a layered architecture, adding new components is not difficult. As an example for an open extension issue in eSRA that is not trivial, e-business transaction (eBT) management is required to safeguard B2B collaboration. For now eBT is an ongoing research topic and evolving.</td>
<td>Low Difficulty Medium Priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Although component changes should remain isolated, it is realistic that minor changes need to propagate to surrounding components. Given the inclusion of a layer style and a whole/part pattern, sufficient provisions are in place to not consider adding functionality as a challenge that requires high priority.</td>
<td>Low Difficulty Low Priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>No challenge, provided the update does not result in the adoption of rule-types that are not understood by the local rule engines. Same justification as for Scenario 2.</td>
<td>Low Priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>No challenge, provided the hardware infrastructure and the legacy systems are responding well. Since it is assumed that powerful and modern hard- and software and well designed legacy systems are applied, response time is considered assured.</td>
<td>Low Difficulty Low Priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tool support for error avoidance implies a considerable research effort for powerful algorithms that support users in error avoidance. Creating a suitable GUI for pinpointing mistakes in a collaboration model is not trivial. Without the ability of verifying and evaluating the correctness of an electronic B2B collaboration the success of the enactment phase cannot be assured. Most likely the enactment will run into problems that are followed by penalty payments, unsatisfied customers, and so on because of unintended contractual violations.</td>
<td>High Difficulty High Priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Provided the users have a background that unites business, IS, and computer-science knowledge, applying an eSRA-compliant system can be learned in an acceptable time. A highly skilled consultant would be required to back up a ‘regular’ user. If the system is so complicated that layman users cannot set up and enact an electronic B2B collaboration despite the help of an assisting consultant, the adoption of eSRA-compliant systems is in doubt.</td>
<td>Medium Difficulty Medium Priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The question is not answered how inter-organizational enactment errors should be handled in electronic B2B collaborations. Since enactment-error management should also comprise advanced inter-organizational e-business transaction management concepts that are only now scientifically investigated. Mechanisms must be in place that contribute as far as possible and feasibly to a successful completion of the enactment phase.</td>
<td>High Difficulty High Priority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7
Justifying the ranking of scenarios (part 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Justification</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Same reason as with Scenario 7. As many perspectives of an electronic B2B-collaboration must be verifiable before enactment, control-flow, data-flow, resource perspective are a minimum.</td>
<td>High Difficulty High Priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Any legacy system can easily be integrated if it is wrapped as a service that can be orchestrated by local WFMS and rules engines. It is essential that all legacy systems can be integrated in an electronic B2B-collaboration. Otherwise the purpose of an eSRA-compliant systems is defeated.</td>
<td>Low Difficulty High Priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>On the external level the exchange of data between opposing collaborating parties is managed by a coordination-interface component that represents a facade pattern. Hence, the coordination interface can ensure secure data-transmission. Extra security is given since the legacy systems of opposing collaborating parties are only indirectly linked in an electronic B2B-collaboration. The data exchanges between legacy systems in an electronic B2B-collaboration must never be compromised in any situation. Any data format must be exchangeable.</td>
<td>Low Difficulty High Priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Different business-collaboration formulation languages are used on separate eSRA levels, which allows the projection of one language to another language on the external level. The real problem is the extent to which different business-collaboration formulation languages share semantically similar language constructs. It cannot be assumed collaborating parties use identical concepts, notations, technologies. It is very important the differences can be inter-organizationally reconciled by an eSRA-compliant system.</td>
<td>Low Difficulty High Priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>E.g., tools for control-flow checking require much time and computing power. With heuristics, the verification of control-flow, Data-flow, resource management, transaction management, and so on, will be within an acceptable limit. If verification is computationally too expensive, the results of the setup phase cannot be checked and the enactment phase is in doubt before it even starts. Also ad-hoc verifications during enactment time are impossible if that is too expensive.</td>
<td>Medium Difficulty Medium Priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Given the three levels of eSRA and the multiple components involved that may be geographically dispersed, a 5 second response time might be challenging. Essential for supporting the adoption of eSRA-compliant systems by corporations. However, with powerful, modern hardware and technology and the use of well designed legacy systems, response time is not a problem.</td>
<td>Medium Difficulty Medium Priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Broker scalability merely requires separate instantiations of the broker. Additionally, the trusted-third-party component of eSRA-compliant systems must be designed in a way to handle several brokers. Broker scalability is a relevant scenario that enhances the adoption of eSRA-compliant systems, however, it is easy to achieve due to the modularity of eSRA.</td>
<td>Low Difficulty Medium Priority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
constitute so-called sensitivity or tradeoff points, risks or non-risks (see [61] for details). Table 9 lists the sensitivity- and tradeoff scenarios for further refinement. In the case of this evaluation, the highest ranked scenarios of Figs. 18 to 21 fall into the category under understanding without agreeing on academic definitions and many questions address concrete application-system instantiations.

In the case of standard-, or concrete architectures (see Fig. 4). Note that the participants gave the quality attributes with an intuitive understanding without agreeing on academic definitions and many questions address concrete application-system instantiations.

A.3. Scenario specification

Since there is limited time available in an ATAM-evaluation, the workshop participants scrutinize only the highest ranked scenarios for further refinement. In the case of this evaluation, the highest ranked scenarios of Figs. 18 to 21 fall into the category of use cases, i.e., they describe the user’s intended interaction with the completed, running system.

All the scenarios in Figs. 18 to 21 use the same template for their specification. A relevant part of the specifications are the architectural decisions in eSRA for dealing with the scenarios. The left side lists the decisions and to the right whether they constitute so-called sensitivity or tradeoff points, risks or non-risks (see [61] for details). Table 9 lists the sensitivity- and tradeoff points, risks and non-risks.

Appendix B. Second ATAM-evaluation results

In this round of ATAM-workshop, the group of seventeen participants comprises primarily practitioners from industry. Five members from the Estonian branch of Kuehne&Nagel have a background in system-architecture development and software engineering. The same or similar background have the two participants from the Estonian telecom provider Elion, two from the Estonian Information Systems Authority, two from the startup firm IceFire and one from the startup firm IoT. Additionally, two PhD-candidates participate from the Tallinn University Department of Computer Science and the Tallinn University of Technology Department of Informatics, respectively. Finally, from the latter department also one professor is a participant with a research focus in software agents and business-process management.

The agenda of this second ATAM-workshop commences with an introduction to ATAM, followed by a presentation of the eSourcing framework that is the top-down input for developing the reference architecture. Next, the eSRA-specification is coupled with an explanation of the results from the first workshop that the participants acknowledge and approve. In the second part, the actual eSRA-evaluation takes place with first deciding on a user perspective for the meta-goals of the utility tree.

B.1. Second attribute-characterizing questions

After the presentations in the morning, the afternoon session is interactive with the participants actively engaging in discussions and generating contributions. Table 10 sums up the attribute-characterizing questions posed to the workshop coordinator that is a means for participants to understand eSRA in detail. We provide a discussion that reflects the given answers to the listed questions that are mostly qualitative in nature as a reference architecture is not domain-, or context specific as in the case of standard-, or concrete architectures (see Fig. 4). Note that the participants gave the quality attributes with an intuitive understanding without agreeing on academic definitions and many questions address concrete application-system instantiations.
**B.1.1. Reliability**
Yields three questions of which the first one is answered in an architectural-decision way. Consequently, a reliability goal of the trusted third party is to provide the components for validating collaboration configurations. The maximum downtime as a response requires zero tolerance as the trusted third party is essential for the setup phase. Downtime itself may be total when the entire third party fails or partial when, e.g., the collapsing- or, validation-component fails while service-search is still possible.

**B.1.2. Maintainability**
We understand this quality factor as who maintains eSRA in its documentation depending on various application domains and instantiation contexts. eSRA is ideally standardized comparable to the workflow management reference architecture [52] and maintained by a standardization coalition.\(^9\) Rules and processes are part of the setup face as they are either specified or chosen from available libraries for re-use. During the enactment phase the rules and business processes are carried out and participating organizations of a collaboration configurations. As specifications for rules and business processes are machine readable, many change adjustments are possible with specification changes. With adopting a layering style and whole-part decomposition pattern in eSRA, changes to the components are easy to introduce.

**B.1.3. Performance**
Predictable bottlenecks of eSRA-compliant systems are the trusted third party component as it is essential during collaboration setup. Also the verifications before enactment are potentially computationally expensive, e.g., if verification tools use Petri-net mappings with large state spaces. eSRA as a reference architecture performs in that it allows quick paper-based assessments of other architectures and system-instantiations.

\(^9\) [www.wfmc.org](http://www.wfmc.org).
Scenario 7:
An error that occurs during the enactment of an eSourcing configuration is caught and managed without requiring stopping the enactment.

Attribute(s) usability (error handling)

Environment eSRA-compliant system

Stimulus data-flow: wrong data sent

Response
Depending on the severity of the error, either exception handling follows till system recovery, or inter-organizational business-process compensation is started.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Architectural decisions</th>
<th>Sensitivity</th>
<th>Tradeoff</th>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Non risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global versus local WFMS and Rules Engines.</td>
<td>S2</td>
<td></td>
<td>R2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A reliable coordination component.</td>
<td></td>
<td>T2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributed WFMS and rules engines.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level architecture and global WFMS and rules engine replication.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasoning
Errors and compensations have several aspects, which can be grouped as business, conceptual, and technological. These different groups should be handled on different eSRA levels to achieve a separation of concerns that reduces complexity. For example, the WFMS and rules engine on the external level are concerned with business and conceptual exceptions and compensations, while the internal WFMS and rules engines deal with conceptual and technical exceptions and compensations.

Architectural diagram
See global and local WMFS and rules engines in Figure 6 and Figure 10 of this paper.

Fig. 19. Specification of highly ranked Scenario 7.

Scenario 8:
eSRA provides the components required to verify the perspectives of data-flow, control-flow, resource management before enactment.

Attribute(s) usability (verification)

Environment eSRA-compliant system

Stimulus Ready modeled eSourcing configuration

Response
Results of the verification, i.e., either errors are detected or there are no errors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Architectural decisions</th>
<th>Sensitivity</th>
<th>Tradeoff</th>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Nonrisk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Localize verification as far as possible. Idem.</td>
<td>S3</td>
<td>T3</td>
<td>R3</td>
<td>N3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An evaluation component is part of eSRA.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verification components on conceptual level.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasoning
It is important that an eSourcing configuration is thoroughly verified in all perspectives to ensure a correct enactment phase. When enactment fails, penalty payment must follow, customers are unsatisfied, etc., which is all undesirable.

Architectural diagram
Figure 9 and Figure 17 of this paper.

Fig. 20. Specification of highly ranked Scenario 8.
B.1.4. Usability

As eSRA is based on pre-existing peer-reviewed scientific literature about collaboration models, users of eSRA save time when they either assess other collaboration systems or need to develop their own standard- or concrete architecture. This paper with detailed eSRA assessment and the pre-existing literature facilitates the guidance of use. Complexity removal by eSRA use happens as the core concepts are explained and how they map to the architecture.

B.1.5. Security

Security breaches eSRA tackles with a coordination-interface component on the external-layer of collaborating parties. This component serves as a façade to protect internal details and filter out events and data that are obscure. Additionally, the

---

**Scenario 19:**

An electronic business collaboration experiences an exception, e.g., business-rule violation. Consequently, it is not desirable to continue the collaboration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute(s)</th>
<th>security (trust management)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>eSRA-compliant system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulus</td>
<td>A business party detects deviating business-collaboration behavior compared to what has been agreed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
<td>Update of the reputation record about badly collaborating counterparts and possibly exception handling and compensation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architectural decisions</td>
<td>Sensitivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate additional trust components in trusted third party. Integrate appropriate components.</td>
<td>S4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reasoning**

In an anonymized electronic collaboration environment, it is necessary to integrate mechanisms for evaluating the reputation and trustworthiness of potential collaboration counterparts.

**Architectural diagram**

In Figure 6&7 of this paper, components for identity- and reputation management are part of the eSourcing middleware and trusted third party.

![Fig. 21. Specification of highly ranked Scenario 19.](image)
three-layered architecture secures the internal legacy systems behind a conceptual- and external layer. Trust management eSRA caters for by comprising components for reputation-, identity- and trust management. Once trust-breach happens, the committing party must demonstrate trustworthy conduct over time to statistically repair reputation and trust. Additionally, each breach of trust requires checks as a business rule can force a collaborating party into behavior perceived as not trustworthy without involving malintent. Legal compliance is best assured with the specification of business rules and processes.

B.1.6. Integrity

For the trusted third party, the assumption is to be independent as privacy compromises occur when one collaborating party holds that component in his domain.

B.1.7. Flexibility

Changes in the business context again the machine-readable specifications of business rules and processes address while the management of service-level agreements happens on the external layer and in the trusted third party. Business requirement changes are domain- and context specific that do not affect the reference-architecture level. The same holds for predictions in

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality attributes</th>
<th>Stimuli</th>
<th>Architectural decisions</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintainability</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Usability</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Security</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Observability</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interoperability</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality attributes</th>
<th>Sub-factors</th>
<th>Nr</th>
<th>Scenarios</th>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utility</td>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Balanced elimination of livelocks and deadlocks.</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Validation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Quick matching with collaborating counterparty.</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brokering</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20 new rules are created in a week per party</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Of rules</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Collaborators move from M/C- to P2P-collaboration.</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Of business context</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Failing DB must be replaced on the fly.</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Downtime</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sound termination of the collaboration transaction.</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uptime</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Public IP-address cannot be determined.</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trust creation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Trust-relevant factors captured and feasible to process</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thinkable is a concrete architecture instantiation in CPN\(^\text{10}\) for carrying out laboratory-type tests on data-volume distribution. System architects are candidates for evolving an instantiation of eSRA.

### B.1.8. Observability

The translator- and monitorability components of eSRA allow for are aware of collaboration progress. Additionally, flexible observability the underlying collaboration model permits with adjustable monitorability-specifications.

### B.1.9. Privacy

The three-layer style of eSRA allows for using process views that are subsets of the conceptual-layer business processes. With the trusted-third-party component in the middle, collaborating parties have the option to remain very anonymous. Also the coordination-interface component of the external layer allows for obscuring internet addresses.

### B.1.10. Interoperability

Ontology-relating decisions are relevant for concrete architectures, or system instantiations and not relevant for a reference-architecture level. Finally, peer-to-peer collaboration models versus the standard assumed master-client collaboration are possible with the same eSourcing framework if the roles of elements involved change. Thus, for peer-to-peer collaboration, the service consumer’s in-house process does not exist but is replaced with a business-network model [64] that serves as an eCommunity collaboration blueprint. The trusted third party [79] extends in that it manages the business-network models too. The latter comprise service types instead of sourcing spheres that collaborating parties match with service offers on the external layer.

### B.2. Second utility tree

A user perspective the workshop participants adopt for the utility tree in Table 11 by focusing on the non-functional eSRA goals of performance, modifiability, availability and security. The sub-factors result from a discussion of the workshop-participants and the approach taken follows the procedure from the first round of ATAM-evaluation.

The results in Table 11 show that the validation of collaboration configurations is a critical factor performance. The workshop participants consider it essential to eliminate faults before the enactment phase and realize this is a hard problem to solve for all perspectives. Furthermore, modifiability of collaborations from traditional master-client towards peer-to-peer is also of high importance but not perceived as a challenge as the collaboration model [45] that is input for deducing eSRA also scales to a peer-to-peer direction, as we explain above. A sound termination of collaborations is also of high importance and relates to the highest rated validation goal. Finally, the capturing and meaningful processing of trust-relevant factors is important as an eSRA-compliant system brings together potentially unknown organizations, services and persons into the same collaboration.

### B.3. Sensitivity- and tradeoff points, risks and non-risks

As the scenarios of the second ATAM-evaluation yields a similar top-ranked scenario as in the first round while being this time under the non-functional goal of performance instead of usability, we omit re-specifying scenarios as in Fig. 18. Instead, we give the set of collected sensitivity- and tradeoff Points, risks and non-risks. Note, the first column in Table 12 list the scenario numbers from Table 11.

References

[22] J. Ebert, G. Engels, Observable or invocable behaviour you have to choose! Leiden University, Technical report 94.
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