Facts and Stories

Peter Alons

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With special thanks to:
Rob Arntz, author of 'Model, reality, direct objects and reports' and 'Facts and Hypes'

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Foreword

In October 2010, I ended my foreword in the book *"About Facts and Things"* with the words:

"Peter still has plenty of ideas in his head … and will surely work them out in the near future. Peter, shall we make an appointment to write a sequel to this book in say ten years from now?"

Now, the year 2020 is upon us and here it is right in front of you; the second book. This time filled with columns that Peter has written during the last seven years, complemented by a couple of columns from my hand. The columns were previously published on Peter's website.

Much has changed in the intervening years. With us, with our professional field, and with the way we look at our professional field. But let me start with what has remained the same: Peter's enthusiasm to promote our philosophy in the form of a course.

Peter's retirement in 2010 from Atos heralded the beginning of PalCon. Over the years, Peter and I continued to give courses on *Hands-on Fact Oriented Modeling* (FOM) under the flag of PalCon. Particularly in recent years, the frequency of these courses has increased. Apparently, the interest for our philosophy is still growing. That this is so is not strange. Each second a massive amount of data becomes available electronically. In the last decade we began to call this phenomenon “Big Data”. But “Big Data” is pointless without interpretation, without semantics. Then we will be left with a huge amount of data but still won't have any information. And let our philosophy with the Information Management Frame just be exactly to add semantics. With that our philosophy still remains very much alive, even more than that: as we show in the last column of this book, *"Facts and Hypes"*, it becomes more relevant by the second.

While Peter's enthusiasm has been a constant factor over the past 10 years, there are of course also things that have changed. First of all in our private lives; Peter has passed the age of 70 and has become a proud grandfather of his grandson Stijn. I myself became father twice of Karlijn and Stijn.

Peter started – together with Marianne and his children – to enjoy his retirement more and more, and he gets a great deal of that pleasure also from what I would call “work”; giving courses and writing. This writing he has done in the form of the book “Jethro”, a fantasy novel. In addition to this, he used his pen to write the columns collected in this book. In a certain

sense, the moral of several of his columns runs parallel with the moral of the book Jethro.

De columns collected in this book have a relation with our professional field of business intelligence. But in fact – an appropriate term here – the scope of the columns is often wider than just the professional field. It shows beautifully how Peter looks at the world. In my eyes, the columns offer an assessment of the world around us worth reading.

By now I know what happens, if I predict in a foreword that over say ten years another book from Peter's hand will come out. So let me express the keen hope, that in ten years from now I will be allowed to write once again a foreword in the next book from Peter's hand.

I wish you lots of enjoyment reading this book.

Amersfoort, January 2020,

Rob Arntz

Introduction

The first edition of my book "*Over Feiten en Dingen*" was published in the fall of 2010. In 2013 a translation in English of this essay became available, "*About Facts and Things*", and in December 2019 entirely revised second editions of both the Dutch and English version were published as well. In the introduction of "*About Facts and Things*" I wrote, that the articles in that essay were partly based on two quotes from the literature. The first one is a quote by Ludwig Wittgenstein from 1923:

"Die Welt ist die Gesamtheit der Tatsachen, nicht der Dinge. Die Welt ist durch die Tatsachen bestimmt und dadurch, dass es alle Tatsachen sind. Denn, die Gesamtheit der Tatsachen bestimmt, was der Fall ist und auch, was alles nicht der Fall ist. Die Tatsachen im logischen Raum sind die Welt. Die Welt zerfällt in Tatsache"....
..."Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen." [1]

The second one could be found in 2002 on the website of Gartner:

"In spite of all modern vendor products, it is always necessary to obtain a clear-cut model – validated by the end users – of what the end users want to see in their BI-applications. Only from such a perspective one can look for an effective implementation of all necessary data-elements in the finally chosen technical environment for these BI-applications."

From 2010 to 2019 I worked on still another couple of Business Intelligence assignments at the Erasmus Medical Centre for the delivery of safety and quality indicators in Health Care, and together with Rob Arntz I was able to facilitate several successful performances of our course "*Hands-On Fact Oriented Modeling*", time and time again for groups of very enthusiastic participants.

In this period I came across yet another very appropriate quote, which reflects even shorter and more precise what should be the driver for any kind of investigation, whether it concerns medical work, police work, information modelling, or any kind of comparable analysis. This quote is widely

[1] *"The world is all that is the case. The world is the totality of facts, not of things. The world is determined by the facts, and by their being all the facts. For the totality of facts determines what is the case, and also whatever is not the case. The facts in the logical space are the world. The world divides into facts."…*
…"Of what we cannot speak, we must pass over in silence."