Message from the Workshop Chairs

To succeed in today’s highly competitive and customer-driven marketplaces, businesses must constantly transform their offerings, operations, and relationships in the face of competitive opportunities. In this context, recent research focuses on the concept of agility. Business agility can serve two business goals—speed and resilience. For some businesses, agility is mainly about being able to detect competitive market opportunities and seizing them with speed. For others, agility is mainly about being able to respond quickly to short-term changes in demand or supply and handle external disruptions smoothly. The need for providing IT support for Business Agility is recognized by many. For example, IBM positions its offerings to support on-demand business. Here, an on demand business is defined as a company whose business processes—integrated end-to-end across the company and with key partners, suppliers, and customers—can respond with flexibility and speed to any customer demand, market opportunity, or external threat.

Agility and its relation to other goals, such as efficiency and controllability, has been the object of research and practical design decision-making in a number of communities and on different levels of emergence for quite a while, e.g., in the areas of IT architecture, software engineering, business process management, and collaboration support.

The goal of this workshop is to bring together researchers from these areas to work towards a deeper understanding of the concept of Business Agility. The workshop papers reproduced in this volume provide the starting point for our workshop in which we revisit relevant research, examine practical experiences, and identify common mechanisms and principles that show how businesses can improve the agility of IT and through IT while satisfying the constraints of efficiency and controllability. Another important input will be the presentation by Bill Rouse (Georgia Tech, Tennenbaum Institute, Atlanta, USA). Our ultimate goal is to consolidate the outcomes into a more general theory of agility, similar to the idea of coordination theory. The result of this process will be documented as the seed for a “living” WIKIpedia page on Business Agility (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Business_Agility).