



**Business Process Harmonization**  
**in**  
**Mergers & Acquisitions:**  
**An Operational and Cultural Perspective**

**DISSERTATION**

zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades  
Doktoringenieurin (Dr.-Ing.)

angenommen durch die Fakultät für Informatik  
der Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg

von M.Sc. **Faranak Yazdani**

geb. am 27.06.1988 in Teheran

Gutachter:

Prof. Dr. Hans-Knud Arndt

Prof. Dr. Matthias Schumann

Prof. Dr. Rainer Alt

Promotionskolloquium: Magdeburg, den 11.12.2025

## **Declaration**

Hereby, I certify that this dissertation is my own unaided original authorial work. All ideas, techniques, quotations, or any other materials from the work of other people, that are included in my thesis, are fully acknowledged. I declare that, to the best of my knowledge, my dissertation does not violate any proprietary rights nor infringe upon anyone's copyright. All literature and sources used in this thesis are properly cited and fully referenced in accordance with the standard referencing practices.

Faranak Yazdani

## Table of Contents

Declaration.....	I
Table of Contents.....	II
Table of Abbreviations .....	VII
Abstract.....	IX
Zusammenfassung .....	XIII
1. Introduction .....	1
1.1 Research Objectives and Contribution .....	5
1.2 Research Process and Methodology .....	7
1.2.1 Research Paradigm .....	8
1.2.2 Design Science Research Methodology .....	10
1.2.2.1 Problem Identification .....	12
1.2.2.2 Solution Design .....	13
1.2.2.3 Evaluation.....	13
1.2.3 Summary and Structure .....	14
2. Theoretical Background .....	17
2.1 St. Gallen Management Concept .....	18
2.1.1 The Classic St. Gallen Management Model .....	20
2.1.2 The New St. Gallen Management Model .....	21
2.2 Process Management and Process Science.....	22
2.2.1 From Function-Oriented to Process-Oriented .....	22

2.2.2	Process vs. Business Process .....	24
2.2.3	The Evolution of Business Management.....	27
2.2.3.1	Business Process Administration.....	28
2.2.3.2	Business Process Reengineering .....	32
2.2.3.3	Business Process Management.....	34
2.2.3.3.1	The ARIS House Model .....	36
2.2.3.3.2	Business Process Modeling .....	38
2.2.3.3.3	Interplay between BPM and IT .....	39
2.2.3.3.4	Standardization vs. Harmonization.....	41
2.2.3.3.5	Business Process Variability Modeling.....	45
2.2.3.4	Process Mining and Process Science.....	50
2.3	Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A).....	53
2.3.1	Mergers.....	55
2.3.2	Acquisitions .....	55
2.3.3	Phases of M&A Process .....	57
2.3.4	M&A Schools of Thought .....	61
2.3.4.1	Financial economics .....	62
2.3.4.2	Strategic management.....	64
2.3.4.3	Organizational behavior .....	65
2.3.4.4	Process perspective.....	66
2.3.5	The Primary Motive of M&A.....	68
2.3.6	Classifications of M&As and Integration Typologies.....	70

2.4	Understanding Culture.....	73
2.5	Summery and Transition .....	77
3.	Unveiling the Research Gap (Problem Identification) .....	80
3.1	Systematic Literature Review.....	81
3.1.1	Searching .....	81
3.1.2	Screening .....	83
3.1.3	Classifying.....	85
3.2	Gap Analysis.....	85
4.	Developing Process Harmonization Framework (Solution Design) .....	96
4.1	BPH Culture .....	99
4.2	BPH Organizational Structure .....	112
4.2.1	BPH Roles and Responsibilities.....	113
4.2.1.1	BPM Sponsor.....	114
4.2.1.2	BPM Center of Excellence .....	115
4.2.1.3	BPM Steering Committee.....	125
4.2.1.4	Process Owner .....	129
4.2.2	BPH Structural Maturity.....	132
4.3	Process Phase Model of BPH.....	134
4.3.1	Analysis – Operational and Cultural Diagnostics.....	135
4.3.1.1	Elicitation and Capturing the Available Process Variants.....	136
4.3.1.2	Consolidation of Existing Process Variants in a Main Process.....	137
4.3.1.3	Identifying the Variation Drivers and Assessing the Impact Factor .....	138

4.3.1.4	Creating a Variation Matrix.....	139
4.3.1.5	Assessing the Operational Similarity and Cultural Alignment .....	140
4.3.2	Conception – Designing Operations and Cultural Alignment.....	142
4.3.2.1	Decision Making on To-Be Process and Developing Process Trade-Offs.....	143
4.3.2.2	Modelling and Documenting the Process Trade-offs.....	146
4.3.2.3	Review for Finalization .....	148
4.3.3	Realization – Implementing Operations and Cultural Change .....	148
4.3.4	Verification – Assessing Operations and Cultural Sustainability .....	151
5.	Applying the Framework in a Merger (Evaluation) .....	154
5.1	Cultivating a BPH Culture in the Case Study Organization.....	156
5.1.1	Cultural Starting Point of the Merging Entities.....	156
5.1.2	Applying the BPH Cultural Program in Practice.....	156
5.2	Establishing a BPH Organizational Structure in the Case Study Organization .....	160
5.3	Operational Implementation of BPH in the Case Study Organization.....	164
5.3.1	Analysis .....	165
5.3.1.1	Elicitation and Capturing the Available Process Variants.....	166
5.3.1.2	Consolidation of Existing Process Variants in a Main Process.....	166
5.3.1.3	Identifying the Variation Drivers and Assessing the Impact Factor .....	168
5.3.1.4	Creating a Variation Matrix.....	169
5.3.1.5	Assessing the Operational Similarity and Cultural Alignment .....	169
5.3.2	Conception.....	170
5.3.2.1	Decision Making on To-Be Process and Developing Process Trade-Offs.....	171

5.3.2.2	Modelling and Documenting the Process Trade-offs .....	172
5.3.2.3	Review for Finalization .....	174
5.3.3	Realization .....	174
5.3.4	Verification .....	175
6.	Discussion and Conclusion.....	177
6.1	Theoretical Foundations of Business Process Harmonization in M&A.....	177
6.2	BPH Framework.....	178
6.3	Findings and Conclusion .....	180
6.4	Recommendations for Future Work .....	185
	References .....	189

## Table of Abbreviations

ADOM	Application-based domain modeling
ARIS	Architecture of Integrated Information Systems
BPFM	Business Process Family Model
BPH	Business Process Harmonization
BPM	Business Process Management
BPM CoE	Business Process Management Center of Excellence
BPMN	Business Process Model and Notation
BPR	Business Process Reengineering
BPS	Business Process Standardization
BPVM	Business Process Variability Modeling
CPO	Chief Process Officer
COM	Commercial
C-EPC	Configurable Event-driven Process Chain
DDM	Decomposition driven method
DFSS	Design for Six Sigma
DSR	Design Science Research

DSRM	Design Science Research Methodology
EPC	Event-driven Process Chain
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning
GPO	Global Process Owner
IND	Industrial
IS	Information System
IS	Information Systems
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
IT	Information Technology
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
M&A	Mergers and Acquisitions
PMI	Post-Merger Integration
Provop	Process Variants by Options
RPO	Regional Process Owner
SGMM	St. Gallen Management Model
TQM	Total Quality Management
UML	Unified Modelling Language

## **Abstract**

In today's digitally accelerated and highly competitive business landscape, organizations are increasingly focused on achieving operational excellence as a foundation for sustainable growth and innovation. Business Process Management (BPM) has established itself as a strategic discipline that empowers organizations to achieve these goals by systematically managing and improving their processes. As digital technologies become deeply embedded in core operations, the integration of BPM with Information Technology (IT) is not only advantageous but essential. BPM offers a structured approach to translating business requirements into IT-enabled solutions, fostering process transparency, automation, and adaptability. This strategic alignment is particularly critical in the context of Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A), where the seamless integration of business processes and IT systems plays a decisive role in realizing expected synergies, minimizing operational disruptions, and facilitating a coherent organizational transition.

Over recent decades, the phenomena of corporate restructuring, particularly mergers and acquisitions, have become prevalent and strategically significant for organizations seeking to expand and penetrate new markets. While corporate restructuring can present lucrative opportunities, navigating this transition is fraught with challenges. Among the various phases of the M&A lifecycle, the Post-Merger Integration (PMI) phase holds considerable importance, as it significantly influences the overall success of M&A transactions. PMI entails the consolidation of organizational assets from different corporate entities into a cohesive new whole, with the aim of creating synergies and maximizing value. The management of "Business Processes" during PMI requires special attention, as they constitute the operational lifeline of the business and its IT systems, ensuring seamless integration and continuity.

When companies merge, duplication of organizational assets, including business processes, is common. This redundancy can lead to several issues, such as elevated process and IT maintenance costs, diminished transparency, and reduced control within the merged organization. Hence, a key challenge during PMI is aligning business processes from distinct organizations,

each supported by different IT systems, as they need to be integrated while maintaining operational continuity. In this context, business process management plays a critical role in ensuring that the integration process is smooth and value-adding. BPM helps in mapping out the existing processes of both organizations and identifying redundancies and inefficiencies. By standardizing or harmonizing processes, companies can ensure a more seamless integration.

"Business Process Standardization" seeks to eliminate process inconsistencies by creating uniform procedures across the merged entities. However, practical experiences indicate that achieving complete uniformity and standardization of process variants originating from different organizational contexts is often impossible. This complexity raises the critical question of how merging companies can strike trade-offs and reconcile their disparate process variants effectively. In this context, "Business Process Harmonization" presents a promising solution. Process harmonization involves aligning and integrating different process variants to create a cohesive, efficient, and effective operational process without necessarily imposing complete uniformity. It allows organizations to retain the unique elements of their existing processes while ensuring a coherent and streamlined operational approach.

The subjects of mergers and acquisitions and business process management are well-investigated research domains with substantial academic and practical interest. Numerous studies have explored the impacts of M&A activities on organizational performance and have addressed the various challenges businesses encounter during post-merger integration. Additionally, there are significant research efforts in the fields of business process management, process standardization, and process harmonization. However, these two research areas have traditionally been investigated as completely separate domains, and there is hardly any connection between them in the existing literature. In response to this dilemma, this study aims to bring together the fields of mergers and acquisitions and business process management, an overlap that remains understudied in current literature.

Furthermore, according to the existing literature, the process of integrating resources during PMI is subdivided into two key sub-elements of "Task Integration" and "Human Integration". Task integration refers to the alignment and consolidation of the business processes, operations,

systems, and technologies between the merging organizations. Human integration, on the other hand, focuses on managing the people side of the merger or acquisition. This involves aligning the cultures, behaviors, and values of the merging organizations to foster collaboration and maintain employee engagement. Human integration is often seen as more complex than task integration, as it involves understanding human dynamics, managing resistance to change, and addressing the emotional aspects of the integration. During the task integration, it is crucial to also address the sub-element of human integration. However, the focus of available studies in the literature is predominantly one-dimensional. Research in the field of process harmonization tends to concentrate on the sub-element of task integration, often neglecting the sub-element of human integration and the cultural aspects that are critical during process harmonization projects.

To close this knowledge gaps, this study employs "Design Science Research" as its methodological approach to develop a comprehensive process harmonization framework to manage process diversity within the business context of M&A while addressing cultural aspects. The developed framework builds upon the principles of "Organizational Theory". Organizational theory examines the interrelation between three core elements of "culture," "structure," and "processes," to analyze their combined impact on achieving organizational goals. This research project investigates these three core elements of organizational theory in the context of process harmonization, with the aim of designing a three-tier concept. The first tier of the concept examines the cultural element, emphasizing the importance of aligning organizational culture with BPM objectives to facilitate smoother integration. The second tier focuses on the organizational structure that is necessary for implementing the process harmonization efforts. Finally, the third tier addresses the process element, detailing the steps for harmonizing business processes effectively.

By focusing on the overarching methodology, governance, and organizational aspects of business process harmonization, this research differentiates itself from studies that primarily emphasize the development of technical standards related to modeling languages. The present study seeks to address not only the operational aspects but also the critical governance, organizational, and cultural elements pivotal for successful integration.

To validate the proposed framework, this study applies it to a real-world case study, thereby assessing its practical applicability and effectiveness. The case study involves the merger of two prominent companies in Germany in the field of generator construction and energy contracting, each operating in distinct market segments. This case provides a rich context for examining the nuances and challenges associated with process harmonization in a merger scenario, offering insights into the practical implications of the proposed framework.

The study is intended for practitioners and companies involved in mergers, with an interest in all relevant activities surrounding process harmonization as well as the associated organizational and cultural challenges.

## **Zusammenfassung**

In dem heutigen, durch Digitalisierung und Wettbewerb geprägten Geschäftsumfeld konzentrieren sich Organisationen zunehmend auf die Erreichung operativer Exzellenz als Grundlage für nachhaltiges Wachstum und Innovation. Das Business Process Management (BPM) hat sich dabei als strategische Disziplin etabliert, die Unternehmen durch die systematische Steuerung und kontinuierliche Verbesserung ihrer Geschäftsprozesse in die Lage versetzt, diese Ziele zu erreichen. Durch die zunehmende Digitalisierung der Kernprozesse wird die Integration von BPM und Informationstechnologie (IT) immer wichtiger. BPM bietet einen strukturierten Ansatz, um geschäftliche Anforderungen in IT-gestützte Lösungen zu übersetzen, und fördert Prozesstransparenz, Automatisierung und Anpassungsfähigkeit. Diese strategische Ausrichtung ist insbesondere im Kontext von Mergers & Acquisitions (M&A) von entscheidender Bedeutung, da die nahtlose Integration von Geschäftsprozessen und IT-Systemen eine zentrale Rolle bei der Realisierung erwarteter Synergien, der Minimierung operativer Störungen und der Ermöglichung eines kohärenten organisatorischen Übergangs spielt.

In den letzten Jahrzehnten haben sich Unternehmensrestrukturierungen, insbesondere Fusionen und Übernahmen (Mergers and Acquisitions), als weit verbreitete und strategisch bedeutsame Maßnahmen für Organisationen etabliert, die eine Expansion und Marktdurchdringung anstreben. Obwohl solche Restrukturierungen lukrative Chancen bieten können, ist ihre Umsetzung mit erheblichen Herausforderungen verbunden. Innerhalb der verschiedenen Phasen des M&A-Lebenszyklus kommt der Post-Merger-Integration (PMI) eine besondere Bedeutung zu, da sie den Gesamterfolg von M&A-Transaktionen maßgeblich beeinflusst. Die PMI umfasst die Konsolidierung organisatorischer Ressourcen unterschiedlicher Unternehmen zu einer kohärenten neuen Einheit mit dem Ziel, Synergien zu schaffen und den Unternehmenswert zu maximieren. Die Steuerung der Geschäftsprozesse während der PMI erfordert besondere Aufmerksamkeit, da sie das operative Rückgrat des Unternehmens und seiner IT-Systeme darstellen und eine reibungslose Integration sowie Kontinuität sicherstellen müssen.

Bei Unternehmensfusionen kommt es häufig zu einer Duplizierung organisatorischer Ressourcen, einschließlich der Geschäftsprozesse. Diese Redundanz kann zu erhöhten Prozess- und IT-

Wartungskosten sowie zu verminderter Transparenz und eingeschränkter Kontrolle innerhalb der fusionierten Organisation führen. Eine zentrale Herausforderung während der PMI besteht daher darin, die Geschäftsprozesse der verschiedenen Organisationen, die jeweils durch unterschiedliche IT-Systeme unterstützt werden, zu harmonisieren und gleichzeitig die operative Kontinuität zu gewährleisten. In diesem Zusammenhang spielt das Business Process Management eine entscheidende Rolle, um eine reibungslose und wertschöpfende Integration sicherzustellen. BPM unterstützt die Kartierung der bestehenden Prozesse beider Organisationen und die Identifizierung von Redundanzen und Ineffizienzen. Durch Standardisierung oder Harmonisierung der Prozesse kann eine nahtlosere Integration gewährleistet werden.

Das Ziel der "Standardisierung von Geschäftsprozessen" besteht darin, Prozessinkonsistenzen durch die Schaffung einheitlicher Abläufe über die fusionierten Einheiten hinweg zu beseitigen. Praktische Erfahrungen zeigen jedoch, dass eine vollständige Vereinheitlichung und Standardisierung von Prozessvarianten aus unterschiedlichen organisatorischen Kontexten häufig nicht realisierbar ist. Diese Komplexität wirft die kritische Frage auf, wie fusionierende Unternehmen effektive Kompromisse finden und ihre unterschiedlichen Prozessvarianten erfolgreich miteinander in Einklang bringen können. In diesem Kontext bietet die "Harmonisierung von Geschäftsprozessen" eine vielversprechende Lösung. Prozessharmonisierung bedeutet, unterschiedliche Prozessvarianten so auszurichten und zu integrieren, dass ein kohärenter, effizienter und effektiver operativer Ablauf entsteht, ohne dabei vollständige Uniformität zu erzwingen. So können Organisationen die einzigartigen Elemente ihrer bestehenden Prozesse bewahren und gleichzeitig einen konsistenten und optimierten Betriebsansatz verfolgen.

Die Themenbereiche "Mergers & Acquisitions" und "Business Process Management" (BPM) sind gut erforschte Felder mit erheblichem akademischem und praktischem Interesse. Zahlreiche Studien haben die Auswirkungen von M&A-Aktivitäten auf die Unternehmensleistung untersucht und die vielfältigen Herausforderungen während der Post-Merger-Integration beleuchtet. Ebenso existieren umfangreiche Forschungsarbeiten zum Business Process Management, zur Prozessstandardisierung und zur Prozessharmonisierung. Allerdings wurden

diese beiden Forschungsfelder bislang weitgehend getrennt voneinander betrachtet und in der bestehenden Literatur finden sich kaum Verbindungen zwischen ihnen. Diese Studie zielt darauf ab, die Bereiche M&A und BPM zusammenzuführen und somit eine bislang nur unzureichend erforschte Schnittstelle zu erschließen.

In der bestehenden Literatur wird die Integration von Ressourcen während der Post-Merger-Integration darüber hinaus in zwei zentrale Subdimensionen unterteilt: "Task-Integration" und "Human-Integration". Task-Integration bezieht sich auf die Abstimmung und Konsolidierung von Geschäftsprozessen, Abläufen, Systemen und Technologien zwischen den fusionierenden Organisationen. Human-Integration fokussiert sich hingegen auf die Steuerung der menschlichen Dimension der Fusion oder Übernahme. Dies umfasst die Angleichung von Kulturen, Verhaltensweisen und Werten der beteiligten Organisationen, um die Zusammenarbeit zu fördern und das Mitarbeiterengagement zu erhalten. Die Human-Integration gilt als komplexer als die Task-Integration, da sie die Berücksichtigung menschlicher Dynamiken, den Umgang mit Widerstand gegen Veränderungen und die Bewältigung emotionaler Aspekte der Integration erfordert. Während der Task-Integration ist es daher entscheidend, auch die Subdimension der Human-Integration zu adressieren. Die vorhandene Literatur fokussiert sich jedoch überwiegend eindimensional auf die Task-Integration. Bei Forschungsarbeiten im Bereich der Prozessharmonisierung liegt der Fokus meist auf der technischen Ebene. Dabei werden die kulturellen Aspekte sowie die Human-Integration vernachlässigt, die für den Erfolg solcher Projekte von zentraler Bedeutung sind.

Zur Schließung dieser Forschungslücke verwendet die vorliegende Studie den methodischen Ansatz des "Design Science Research", um ein umfassendes Framework zur Prozessharmonisierung zu entwickeln. Dieses Framework adressiert die Prozessvielfalt im Kontext von M&A und berücksichtigt gleichzeitig kulturelle Aspekte. Das entwickelte Framework basiert auf den Prinzipien der "Organisationstheorie". Diese untersucht die Wechselwirkungen zwischen den drei Kernelementen "Kultur", "Struktur" und "Prozesse", um deren kombinierte Wirkung auf die Zielerreichung von Organisationen zu analysieren. In diesem Forschungsprojekt werden diese drei Kernelemente im Kontext der Prozessharmonisierung

untersucht, um ein dreistufiges Konzept zu entwerfen. Die erste Stufe des Frameworks beleuchtet das kulturelle Element und betont die Bedeutung der Ausrichtung der Unternehmenskultur auf die Ziele des BPM, um eine reibungslose Integration zu fördern. Die zweite Stufe fokussiert sich auf die für die Umsetzung der Harmonisierung erforderliche Organisationsstruktur. Die dritte Stufe behandelt das Prozesselement und beschreibt die Schritte zur effektiven Harmonisierung von Geschäftsprozessen.

Diese Studie unterscheidet sich von bestehenden Forschungsarbeiten, die primär technische Standards im Zusammenhang mit Modellierungssprachen entwickeln, indem sie Governance und organisatorische Aspekte der Prozessharmonisierung in einem übergeordneten Framework beleuchtet. Die vorliegende Arbeit behandelt nicht nur die operativen Aspekte, sondern auch die kritischen Governance-, organisatorischen und kulturellen Elemente, die für eine erfolgreiche Integration entscheidend sind.

Zur Validierung des vorgeschlagenen Rahmenwerks wird dieses in einer realen Fallstudie angewendet, um seine praktische Anwendbarkeit und Wirksamkeit zu bewerten. Gegenstand der Fallstudie ist die Fusion zweier deutscher Marktführer im Bereich Generatorenbau und Energiedienstleistungen, die jeweils in unterschiedlichen Marktsegmenten tätig sind. Die Fallstudie bietet einen reichhaltigen Kontext, um die Feinheiten und Herausforderungen der Prozessharmonisierung im Rahmen einer Fusion zu untersuchen, und liefert wertvolle Erkenntnisse zu den praktischen Implikationen des entwickelten Rahmenwerks.

Die Studie richtet sich an Praktiker:innen und Unternehmen, die in M&A-Prozesse involviert sind und sich für alle relevanten Aktivitäten rund um die Prozessharmonisierung sowie die damit verbundenen organisatorischen und kulturellen Herausforderungen interessieren.

## **1. Introduction**

In today's dynamic and increasingly interconnected business environment, organizations are under constant pressure to innovate, adapt, and remain competitive. To meet these demands, companies must operate with strategic coherence and process efficiency. At the core of this operational agility lies Business Process Management (BPM), a discipline that provides the methodologies, tools, and governance structures needed to design, analyze, optimize, and control business processes in alignment with strategic objectives. BPM enables organizations to respond to external market forces and internal performance requirements by ensuring that core activities are well-structured, customer-oriented, and adaptable to change.

BPM is not simply a set of technical methods. It is a comprehensive management approach that integrates strategic thinking with process execution. It aims to break down functional silos by promoting end-to-end process visibility, accountability, and continuous improvement. Organizations that successfully implement BPM tend to exhibit greater operational excellence, improved customer satisfaction, and higher levels of adaptability in volatile markets. Moreover, BPM supports organizational learning by providing a framework for feedback, innovation, and standardization. As a result, it plays a critical role in long-term strategic execution and organizational resilience.

The importance of BPM is even more pronounced during periods of significant organizational transformation. Among the most complex and high-stakes forms of transformation are Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A), where two or more organizations must integrate their structures, systems, and cultures into a unified operational whole. In such scenarios, BPM serves as a critical enabler of Post-Merger Integration (PMI) by providing structured mechanisms for aligning and harmonizing business processes. This integration is essential not only for achieving operational synergies but also for avoiding process duplication, inefficiencies, and fragmentation across the newly formed organization.

M&A transactions are widely used as corporate restructuring strategies intended to drive growth, increase efficiency, and create shareholder value. They offer the promise of economies of scale,

expanded market reach, and enhanced innovation capabilities. However, despite these theoretical advantages, empirical research suggests that a substantial proportion of M&A transactions fail to deliver their expected outcomes. A significant number do not meet their strategic objectives (Birkinshaw et al., 2000) or fall short of generating the anticipated value (Goold & Campbell, 1998; Dyer et al., 2004; Harrison, 2007; Deutsch & West, 2010). This persistent performance gap underscores the challenges associated with M&A and points to post-merger integration as the critical phase that determines the overall success or failure of the deal.

Post-merger integration is widely acknowledged as the most complex and unpredictable stage in the M&A lifecycle (Düsterhoff, 2018). It involves combining business units, consolidating IT infrastructures, unifying organizational cultures, and integrating human resources, financial systems, and customer interfaces. At the operational level, PMI often reveals redundant or misaligned processes inherited from the merging entities. These inconsistencies can lead to the existence of multiple "process variants" that are supported by incompatible or heterogeneous IT systems. If left unaddressed, such discrepancies may result in resource inefficiencies, quality issues, service disruptions, and ultimately a failure to achieve the synergies that justified the merger in the first place.

To overcome these challenges, organizations must adopt a systematic and deliberate approach to business process integration. This is where the principles of BPM become particularly valuable. Among the key strategies for managing process integration are Business Process Standardization (BPS) and Business Process Harmonization (BPH). BPS aims to unify business processes across units, departments, or regions by creating uniform process templates that can be consistently applied. While standardization offers the advantage of consistency and control, it can be difficult to implement fully, especially in multinational or cross-sectoral M&A contexts where regulatory environments, customer expectations, and organizational cultures differ significantly (Gottschalk et al., 2009).

In contrast, business process harmonization provides a more nuanced and flexible approach. BPH seeks to align business processes without necessarily enforcing full standardization. It allows for a degree of contextual adaptation while ensuring that core process objectives, metrics, and

controls are maintained across the organization. This balance between consistency and flexibility makes BPH particularly suitable for M&A scenarios, where cultural and operational diversity must be carefully managed. Harmonized processes can serve as the basis for shared best practices, streamlined IT architecture, and improved collaboration across the merged entities, while still respecting local or functional variations.

In addition to process alignment, successful PMI also depends on the effective integration of organizational culture. Culture encompasses the values, beliefs, behaviors, and social norms that influence how individuals and groups interact within an organization. Cultural differences are frequently cited as one of the main reasons for failed synergy realization in M&A transactions (Weber & Tarba, 2012). When cultural integration is neglected or poorly managed, the result is often confusion, resistance, low morale, and diminished productivity. Employees may struggle to align with new management expectations or feel alienated in the merged organization, leading to disengagement and voluntary turnover.

Scholars such as Birkinshaw et al. (2000) argue that successful PMI must address two interrelated dimensions: "Task Integration" and "Human Integration". Task Integration involves the alignment of business processes, systems, and resources, while Human Integration focuses on fostering interpersonal trust, shared identity, and cultural coherence (Blake & Mouton, 1985). These two dimensions are not independent. A well-executed task integration can enhance employees' confidence in the merger process, while effective human integration can reduce resistance to changes in processes and structures. Therefore, integration strategies must be comprehensive and sensitive to both operational and human factors.

The link between BPM and organizational culture is not limited to the M&A context. In general, the success of BPM initiatives depends heavily on the presence of a process-oriented culture. Such a culture is characterized by a commitment to continuous improvement, transparency, cross-functional collaboration, and alignment with strategic goals (Spanyi, 2003; Alibabaei et al., 2010). A process-oriented culture fosters accountability for outcomes, encourages innovation in working procedures, and supports the institutionalization of best practices. Several studies have emphasized that without this cultural foundation, BPM projects are likely to encounter resistance,

inconsistent execution, or superficial compliance (Rosemann & vom Brocke, 2014; Harmon & Trends, 2010; Kohlbacher et al., 2011; vom Brocke & Schmiedel, 2011).

In M&A scenarios, cultural differences can become a major barrier to establishing a unified process culture. The acquiring and acquired organizations may have different attitudes toward hierarchy, decision-making, communication, and risk. These differences influence how BPM is understood, adopted, and sustained across the organization. For example, a company with a highly decentralized culture may resist centralized process governance, while one with a history of informal processes may struggle with formalization. Therefore, BPM efforts during PMI must be tailored not only to technical and strategic needs but also to cultural realities.

The interplay between business process management, mergers and acquisitions, and organizational culture is therefore both complex and consequential. Process harmonization cannot be viewed solely as a technical exercise, nor can cultural integration be managed in isolation from operational changes. Organizations must adopt an integrated perspective that acknowledges these interdependencies and seeks to align them in a coherent manner. Only through such an approach can the full potential of BPM be realized in the context of M&A, and only then can the promised synergies be achieved in practice.

Despite the growing relevance of process harmonization in M&A, comprehensive studies that address both operational and cultural dimensions remain scarce. This gap highlights the need for robust theoretical frameworks and practical methodologies that can guide organizations through the complexities of post-merger integration.

To address this need, the present study develops a comprehensive framework for Business Process Harmonization in the context of M&A, with explicit consideration of operational and cultural aspects. The following section outlines the specific objectives that guide this study and articulates its anticipated contributions.

## 1.1 Research Objectives and Contribution

The scarcity of comprehensive studies on process harmonization suggests an urgent need for more robust theoretical frameworks and practical methodologies that consider both the operational and human aspects of integration. To address the existing gaps and research deficits in this area, this study undertakes the ambitious task of developing a comprehensive process harmonization framework designed to effectively manage process variability in the context of mergers and acquisitions, while simultaneously addressing cultural aspects. To achieve this goal, this study adopts the "Design Science Research Methodology" to develop a framework based on "organizational theory". Organizational theory, which explores the complex interplay between organizational "culture", "structure", and "processes", provides a lens through which the alignment of these elements can be analyzed to achieve organizational goals (Bakka et al., 2006). By examining the interrelations among these three core elements, this research seeks to design a robust framework and bears the following primary objective:

*“Developing a comprehensive framework for **Business Process Harmonization** in the context of **Mergers and Acquisitions**, with explicit consideration of **operational** and **cultural** aspects”*

To address this primary objective, the study will explore several key research questions:

- Which cultural aspects must be successfully addressed in order to implement BPH projects within a merger?
- What roles and working groups are essential for the successful implementation of process harmonization projects?
- What are the specific activities and phases involved in harmonizing business processes and managing process trade-offs?

To validate the proposed framework, the study applies it to a case study example, testing the plausibility and practicality of the developed approach in a real-world M&A context. This case study serves as an empirical examination of the framework's efficacy, providing insights into its strengths and limitations and demonstrating its potential for broader application in similar organizational settings.

The contributions of this thesis are both theoretical and practical as follows:

- From a theoretical perspective, the study makes a significant contribution to Design Science Research (DSR) within the IS discipline by developing an innovative IS artifact that addresses the challenges of business process harmonization in the context of M&A. The creation of this framework enriches the existing body of knowledge and provides a foundation for future research in this area.
- Moreover, the study initiates a deeper understanding of the dynamics of post-merger integration, aiming to systematically unravel the complexities associated with process harmonization during the PMI phase. By identifying the critical actions required for successful process harmonization, the research offers a more nuanced perspective on the interplay between task integration and human integration, , two sub-elements which are often considered separately in existing academic studies. This holistic approach ensures that both the operational and human dimensions of process harmonization are addressed, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes.
- In addition to its theoretical contributions, the study also offers practical guidance for strategic planning in process harmonization activities. The conceptualized approach provides concrete, trackable guidance that translates the abstraction of strategic objectives into executable operational actions. This guidance is crucial for organizations seeking to implement process harmonization in a structured and effective manner, ensuring that strategic goals are realized through precise and coordinated actions.
- Finally, the developed framework will undergo rigorous evaluation through the case study, allowing for a critical assessment of its practical applicability and effectiveness. This

evaluation will provide valuable feedback for refining the framework and enhancing its utility for practitioners.

The present study is particularly relevant for practitioners involved in process harmonization projects and those seeking a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the management of process diversity in the context of Post-Merger Integration. The framework developed in this research is designed to contribute to the success of PMI by enabling company mergers to exploit economies of scale.

Building on the outlined research objectives and intended contributions, the following chapter introduces the research process and methodology that underpin this study.

## **1.2 Research Process and Methodology**

In the realm of academic literature, research is fundamentally defined as a systematic and methodical process employed to collect, analyze, and interpret data with the intent of gaining a deeper understanding of a particular issue or topic (Creswell, 2011; Bryman & Bell, 2011; Johnston, 2014). This process not only aims to elucidate the nature of the problem at hand but also contributes to the advancement of science and the enhancement of knowledge. In essence, a research endeavor seeks to answer pertinent questions that arise from the unknown, striving to bridge the gap between existing knowledge and the phenomena under investigation. The comprehensive "Research Process" comprises a series of sequential actions that are indispensable for the effective execution of research activities (Kothari, 2004). Within this research process, it is crucial for the researcher to adopt a systematic approach to addressing the identified research problem. The literature presents a variety of approaches for conducting research, each with its unique set of methodologies and techniques.

This systematic approach to research is particularly relevant in specialized fields such as information systems (IS) research, where the focus centers on understanding and improving complex organizational components that collect, process, and disseminate information (Laudon & Laudon, 2007). In this context, the concept of the "information systems artifact" is central to

framing research inquiries. Lyytinen and Newman (2008) emphasize that IS are designed to fulfill specific organizational objectives and enhance operational efficiency, making the study of these artifacts vital. According to March and Smith (1995), artifacts within the realm of IS research can be categorized into four distinct types: models (representations or abstractions of phenomena), methods (algorithms or procedural practices), constructs (conceptual frameworks, symbols or specialized vocabulary), and instantiations (implemented or prototype systems).

Given the multidisciplinary and expansive nature of the information systems field, selecting the appropriate research process for conducting IS research has long been a topic of debate among scholars and practitioners (Mingers, 2001; Choudrie & Dwivedi, 2005). Since the early 1980s, many scholarly efforts have been made to investigate, categorize, and refine various research approaches within the IS discipline (e.g., Galliers & Land, 1987; Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991; Galliers, 1992; Walsham, 1995; Mingers, 2001; Nandhakumar & Jones, 1997). A critical aspect of this debate lies in the philosophical foundations of research, as the process is inevitably influenced by the researcher's worldview, which is shaped by their beliefs, assumptions, and epistemological stance regarding the nature of knowledge and reality. This broader framework is known as the "Research Paradigm" (Hesse-Biber, 2009; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Schwandt, 2001). The topic of research paradigm will be further defined in the next section.

### **1.2.1 Research Paradigm**

The term "Paradigm" was first used by Thomas Kuhn (1962) in order to denote a generally accepted and the shared conceptual framework used by a group of researchers to examine problems and find solutions. According to Kuhn, the term paradigm refers to the research culture and a common set of beliefs, assumptions and values of a community of researchers, which impacts the way of conducting the research with respect to the nature of the research (Kuhn, 1977). Research paradigm is an all-encompassing interrelated system of thinking and practice, which defines the nature of enquiry along three dimensions of "Ontology", "Epistemology" and "Methodology". (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Ontology refers to the nature of being and nature of existence (Crotty, 1998). The ontology of a research is particularly concerned with what

the reality is and what its fundamental components and derivatives are. Epistemology, on the other hand, refers to the nature of knowledge (Crotty, 1998) and pertains to how knowledge can be obtained. Ontology and epistemology have a fundamental relationship and can be considered as the foundation upon that the research is built (Grix, 2004). The ontological and epistemological assumptions of the researcher contribute directly to the choice of the research methodology. Research methodology is a holistic and general term, which refers to “how” scientific research is conducted (Kothari, 2004). The research methodology involves explicit rules on which research is based and against which the research claims would be evaluated (Ojo, 2003).

IS research to date has primarily created knowledge through two distinct but complementary paradigms of "Behavioral Science" and "Design Science" (March & Smith, 1995; Hevner et al. 2008; Winter 2008; Hevner & Chatterjee 2010). The root of behavioral science lies in "Natural Science" whereas design science has its origin in engineering and the "Sciences of the Artificial" (Simon, 1996; Hevner et al., 2008). While the natural science involves a body of knowledge that deals with natural objects or phenomena and describes how these objects behave and interact with each other in the natural or social world, the Science of the artificial refers to a body of knowledge associated with artificial and man-made objects designed to bridge certain real-world knowledge gaps (Simon, 1996). Behavioral science research usually starts with a hypothesis and aims at finding the truth by data collection, to either prove or disprove the defined hypothesis (Hevner & Chatterjee, 2010). Design Science Research (DSR), on the other hand, positions itself as a problem-solving approach (Peppers et al. 2007) which aims at producing and designing man-made artifacts that must consequently be evaluated thoroughly (Ostrowski & Helfert 2012). To put it briefly, while the objective of behavioral science is to understand the reality and truth, Design Science focuses on creating "Artifacts" that address urgent problems and serve specific purposes. The term "Artifact" is used to refer to models (representations or abstractions), methods (algorithms or practices), constructs (symbols or vocabulary) or instantiations (implemented or prototype systems), which are constructed by humans and hence refers to something artificial that does not occur naturally (Simon 1996; March & Smith; 1995).

Design science is technology-oriented and process-oriented (March & Smith 1995) and hence, is one of the most appropriate approaches especially for research projects that are practice-related, which aim at developing tailor-made solutions. However, it is noticeable that the DSR does not contradict with other research paradigms and can hence be compatible with them. Some researchers suggest a twofold cycle for conducting IS research; consisting of the design of artifact as the first part and the complementary part which encompasses methods for testing the developed artifact based on behavioral science (March & Smith,1995; Hevner & March, 2003). According to this standpoint, while design science aims at designing and evaluating innovative IS artifacts to solve organizational problems, behavioral science seeks to develop or justify theories to predict or explain human and organizational phenomena (Gregor & Hevner, 2013).

As mentioned earlier, the research paradigm is an interconnected framework of thoughts across three fundamental aspects of ontology, epistemology, and methodology. The ontology of DSR considers exploring and investigating the alternative world-states, whereas the epistemology of DSR is based on the principle of knowing through making (Vaishnavi et al., 2004). Putting it concretely, design science research builds on two principles of contributing to organizational "problem-solving" in a specific field and "artifact creation" that aim at serving human needs in a specific environment.

These two above-mentioned principals of "problem-solving" and "artifact creation" contribute directly to the choice of the research methodology for conducting the DSR. The methodology of Design Science Research highlights the research procedure to develop artifacts that are intended to solve problems of the real-world and to contribute to the theory of the discipline or context, in which it is applied (Lukka, 2003). The DSR will be further investigated in the following section.

### **1.2.2 Design Science Research Methodology**

Research is defined as a systematic investigation and study of a topic to establish facts and derive new conclusions (Soanes & Stevenson, 2004). This broad definition encompasses a range of methodologies and procedures tailored to different disciplines and research objectives. The

diversity of research methods is essential for accommodating the unique requirements and challenges of various fields of inquiry. As discussed in the previous section, from an ontological and epistemological perspective, Design Science Research Methodology (DSRM) is considered particularly suitable for IS research and the design of innovative artifacts. DSRM pertains to methodologies associated with the design science paradigm, which emphasizes the creation and evaluation of artifacts designed to solve identified problems. The literature identifies several frameworks and procedures for conducting DSR (e.g., March & Smith, 1995; Hevner, 2007; Offermann et al., 2009), each contributing to a robust understanding of how to systematically pursue design-oriented research.

Among these frameworks, the three-phase DSR methodology proposed by Offermann et al. (2009) is especially noteworthy for its structured and comprehensive approach. Developed through a comparative analysis of six distinct research studies, this methodology delineates three critical phases in the DSR process: (1) problem identification, (2) solution design, and (3) evaluation. This sequential process ensures a structured and coherent approach to research, facilitating the systematic development and assessment of innovative solutions.

The problem identification phase involves a thorough examination of the research context to clearly define the problem that necessitates a design solution. This phase is crucial as it sets the foundation for all subsequent research activities. A well-defined problem statement guides the research direction and ensures that the efforts are aligned with the ultimate research objectives.

The solution design phase focuses on the conceptualization and creation of the artifact intended to address the identified problem. This phase draws on creativity and technical expertise, integrating theoretical knowledge with practical considerations. The designed solution must be innovative, feasible, and capable of being implemented in a real-world context.

The evaluation phase involves rigorous testing and assessment of the designed artifact to determine its effectiveness and efficiency in solving the identified problem. This phase is critical for validating the research outcomes and ensuring that the proposed solution meets the desired criteria. Evaluation methods may include empirical testing, simulations, and user feedback, among others.

Figure 1.1 provides an overview of the DSR methodology adopted for the current study and illustrates the research methods applied during each phase.

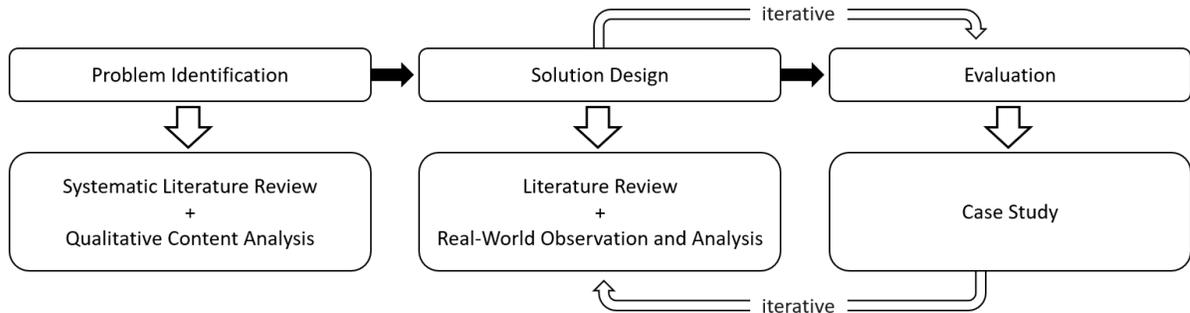


Fig. 1.1. Research methodology deployed for this study (source: own illustration)

The remainder of this chapter addresses the key aspects associated with each phase of the research process.

### 1.2.2.1 Problem Identification

The identification of a research problem constitutes the initial phase of the research process, ensuring that the phenomenon under investigation has practical relevance and merits scholarly inquiry (Benbasat & Zmud, 1999). This phase is crucial as it justifies the motivation behind the research and leads to the formulation of the research question (Peffer et al., 2007). A well-defined research problem guides the direction of the study, aligning it with both theoretical and practical needs.

In this phase, a comprehensive literature review is often conducted to identify gaps in existing knowledge and to substantiate the research problem (Offermann et al., 2009). Literature reviews are a common method for synthesizing research in management and organizational studies, providing a structured approach to understanding the current state of knowledge and identifying

areas for further investigation (Denyer et al., 2008). This method ensures that the research problem is grounded in existing literature and contributes to the ongoing academic discourse.

### **1.2.2.2 Solution Design**

After identifying the research problem and assessing its relevance, the next step involves the development of an artifact solution designed to address the identified issue. This phase is pivotal in the DSR methodology, as it transitions the focus from problem recognition to solution creation. The development of an artifact, which may include models, methods, constructs, or systems, must be undertaken with a commitment to research rigor and methodological precision (Hevner et al., 2008). Achieving rigor in the solution design phase requires a thorough review of the existing literature and related work within the specified context, allowing for the integration of prior knowledge while fostering innovation.

### **1.2.2.3 Evaluation**

The last phase of the DSR process comprises the evaluation of the designed artifact, which is of crucial importance (Hevner & Chatterjee, 2010; Sein et al., 2011; Peffers et al., 2012). The developed artifacts have to be evaluated based on implementation environment and requirements of their respective application context (Peffers et al. 2012). The evaluation phase is critical because it provides empirical evidence on the artifact's performance within its intended implementation environment and assesses whether it meets the requirements of its specific application context (Peffers et al., 2012). This phase not only confirms the artifact's theoretical soundness but also its practical applicability and relevance.

Evaluating the developed artifacts involves a rigorous process that examines how well the artifact performs in real-world scenarios. The criteria for evaluation are derived from the initial problem identification and the objectives set during the solution design phase. The evaluation phase must be meticulously planned and executed to ensure that the insights gained are reliable and can inform further development. This involves selecting appropriate evaluation methods, establishing clear metrics for success, and systematically collecting and analyzing data.

The evaluation phase in DSR is inherently iterative, allowing researchers to revisit and refine previous phases based on the findings. If the artifact does not meet the expected standards or fails to address the problem adequately, researchers can iterate back to the solution design phase or even re-examine the problem identification phase (Vaishnavi & Kuechler, 2004). This iterative nature ensures continuous improvement and refinement of the artifact, leading to more robust and effective solutions.

Several methods can be employed to evaluate the artifact, each providing different perspectives and insights (Offermann et al., 2009). Case studies and action research are particularly valuable for in-depth, context-rich evaluations. These methods allow researchers to observe the artifact in real-life settings, gather qualitative and quantitative data, and understand the contextual factors influencing its performance. Laboratory experiments and simulations offer controlled environments where specific variables can be manipulated to observe their effects on the artifact's performance. These methods provide rigorous and replicable results, contributing to the artifact's validity. Expert surveys involve soliciting feedback from domain experts, whose insights can highlight strengths and weaknesses of the artifact that may not be apparent through other evaluation methods.

### **1.2.3 Summary and Structure**

This chapter has provided an introduction and overview of the foundational research paradigms and methodological approaches relevant to information systems research. In particular, the chapter introduced key concepts from the philosophy of science, emphasizing the relevance of both design science and behavioral science paradigms in the field of Information Systems research. It also provided an overview of Design Science Research as a methodology especially suited for the development of innovative artifacts intended to solve complex, practice-oriented problems.

The present study draws upon both design science and behavioral science paradigms:

- The **design science** paradigm forms the foundational approach of this study, positioning process harmonization in the context of mergers and acquisitions as a so-called "wicked problem". A wicked problem is characterized by a lack of clarity in its aims and solutions (Rittel & Webber, 1973). Furthermore, such problems lack a definitive formulation and have no inherent logic to indicate when they are solved. Their solutions cannot be tested or denoted as true or false, but can only be evaluated as good or bad (Hevner et al., 2008; Kuechler & Vaishnavi, 2012). By focusing on "problem-solving" and "artifact creation" as two core tenets of Design Science Research, this research aims to deliver a utility-driven, innovative framework that supports organizations in aligning business processes during post-merger integration.
- Complementing this, the **behavioral science** paradigm contributes to understanding the human and organizational dynamics that affect the implementation of process harmonization. By incorporating behavioral perspectives, the study addresses how IS interact with organizational culture and change management practices during restructuring efforts. This dual-paradigm approach emphasizes the interplay between technology, people, and organizational context, and highlights the necessity of managing these interactions to ensure that IS initiatives meet their intended objectives.

To operationalize this research, the three-phase DSR methodology proposed by Offermann et al. (2009) has been adopted. This structured approach comprises (1) problem identification, (2) solution design, and (3) evaluation. Each phase provides a critical foundation for the systematic development and validation of the conceptual framework proposed in this study.

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical background necessary to contextualize the research and to anchor the framework in existing literature. The insights presented in the following chapter serve as the methodological and philosophical foundation for the remainder of the study. The upcoming chapters of 3, 4, and 5 are organized in alignment with the DSR methodology to ensure a coherent and rigorous progression of the research.

Chapter 3 will initiate the first phase by identifying the research problem and conducting a gap analysis. This will lead to the formulation of clear research objectives and the articulation of the study's motivation.

Chapter 4 will establish the theoretical grounding of the framework, defining key constructs and presenting the conceptual model that forms the study's main artifact.

Chapter 5 will proceed with the evaluation phase, testing the practical applicability and effectiveness of the proposed framework through a case study in a real-world M&A setting.

Chapter 6, while not part of the DSR cycle, will conclude the dissertation by synthesizing the findings, outlining both theoretical and practical contributions, and suggesting directions for future research. It will reflect on the broader implications of the developed framework and its relevance for practitioners involved in process harmonization and Post-Merger Integration.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

Understanding the multifaceted interdependencies between business process management, strategic transformation in the context of mergers and acquisitions, and organizational culture requires more than isolated theoretical perspectives. The integration of distinct organizational entities involves not only structural and operational alignment but also the harmonization of cultures, values, and managerial practices. These interactions are embedded within broader environmental, historical, and strategic contexts, which demand a holistic and systemic approach to analysis. Consequently, a robust theoretical foundation is essential for capturing the dynamic complexity of post-merger integration and for framing business process harmonization as both an operational and cultural undertaking.

The St. Gallen approach offers a comprehensive and integrative framework suited to this task. Originating from decades of research in systems theory, organizational design, and management science, the St. Gallen approach conceptualizes organizations as open and socially constructed systems. These systems operate within dynamic environments and are shaped by a continuous interplay between internal structures, strategic intent, cultural norms, and stakeholder expectations. The strength of the approach lies in its ability to synthesize the various dimensions of organizational life, including the strategic, cultural, operational and communicative, into a coherent analytical structure.

In the context of this research study, the St. Gallen approach serves as the meta-framework through which the key themes of business process management, mergers and acquisitions, and organizational culture are examined. The interrelationship among these domains is inherently complex. While BPM provides a structured methodology for aligning operational activities with strategic goals, its implementation during M&A is often contingent upon successful cultural integration. Cultural factors can either enable or obstruct the adoption of BPM principles and thus significantly influence the outcomes of post-merger integration. Likewise, M&A transactions can disrupt or redefine organizational identity, challenging existing process logic and cultural alignment. Addressing these interdependencies requires a theoretical lens that accommodates both technical and human dimensions of change.

The St. Gallen approach addresses this need by emphasizing the systemic nature of organizations and the interwoven nature of their constituent elements. It enables an exploration of how business processes are embedded within cultural and strategic contexts, and how these elements co-evolve in response to internal initiatives and external pressures. By doing so, the model facilitates a nuanced understanding of business process harmonization, not merely as a technical endeavor, but as a strategic and cultural process of organizational transformation.

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the theoretical groundwork for the subsequent empirical analysis. It begins with a detailed presentation of the St. Gallen Management Concept and its development into the St. Gallen Management Model (SGMM). Following this, the chapter explores the conceptual foundations and relevant literature on business process management, organizational culture, and mergers and acquisitions. Particular emphasis is placed on process orientation as a cultural trait and on the challenges of aligning process logic during integration. Together, these theoretical components form the intellectual basis for the dissertation's analytical framework and inform the interpretation of empirical findings in later chapters.

## **2.1 St. Gallen Management Concept**

The St. Gallen Management Concept originated in the 1960s at the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland. It was developed in response to growing complexity in organizational environments, particularly the need to understand and manage organizations not merely as static entities but as dynamic systems (Schreyögg & Koch, 2020). Influenced by cybernetics and systems theory, the model drew upon interdisciplinary insights from management science, system theory, and cultural studies. Pioneering scholars such as Ulrich and Krieg (1974) emphasized that effective management must address the multiple, interrelated subsystems of an organization, including the technical, social, and strategic. Rather than viewing management as a purely rational or decision-oriented function, the concept introduced a systemic and design-oriented view of management: one that aims to steer organizations through uncertainty by considering their embeddedness in broader societal, technological, and ecological systems. This systemic perspective not only reshaped how organizations are understood and managed but also

laid the groundwork for integrating broader organizational principles into the core of management thinking. Among these principles is “Governance,” which is an essential concept that addresses how organizations are directed, controlled, and held accountable. Governance encompasses the structures, processes, and relationships that ensure strategic alignment, ethical conduct, and operational effectiveness across all levels of the organization (Tricker, 2015). Governance is not merely a compliance mechanism but a dynamic capability that supports legitimacy, transparency, and long-term sustainability.

A key feature of St. Gallen Management Concept is its three-level architecture, which includes normative, strategic, and operative management. This structure interacts to shape and guide organizational behavior over time (Figure 2.1).

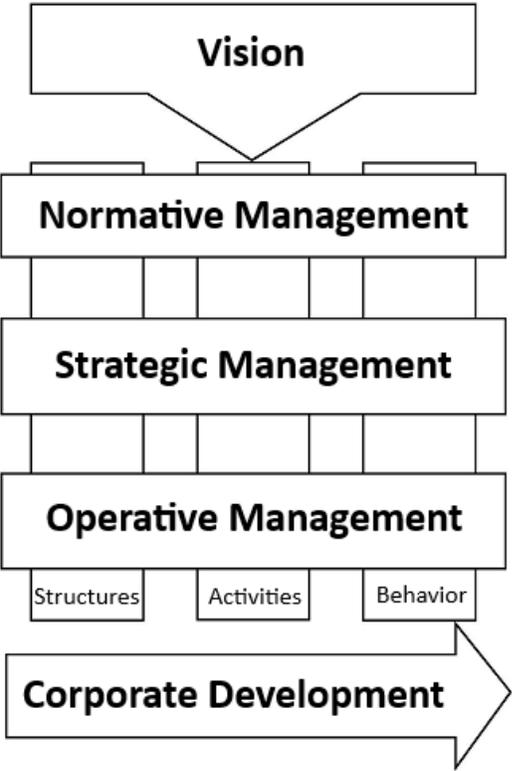


Fig. 2.1. St. Gallen Management Concept (in extension of Bleicher, 1999)

- **Normative management** is concerned with the core identity, values, and societal purpose of an organization. It defines why an organization exists and on what ethical and cultural foundations it builds its legitimacy.
- **Strategic management** focuses on goal setting, market positioning, and resource orchestration to secure the organization's long-term success.
- **Operative management** addresses short-term planning, resource allocation, and process implementation. It ensures the efficient execution of strategic decisions.

This distinction is useful, as it underscores the need for alignment not just at the operational level but also at strategic and cultural levels.

Building upon these early theoretical foundations, the classic St. Gallen Management Model further developed a structured, layered understanding of organizations and their processes.

### **2.1.1 The Classic St. Gallen Management Model**

The St. Gallen Management Model (SGMM) originated in the 1960s and has undergone multiple iterations to reflect the changing realities of management and organizations (Rüegg-Stürm & Grand, 2019). SGMM presents an integrative systems-based approach that considers organizations as complex social systems embedded within broader societal, environmental, and technological contexts.

Notable characteristics of the classical model included:

- The view of organizations as complex adaptive systems that maintain equilibrium through continuous interaction with their environments.
- A focus on interdependencies between internal subsystems such as leadership, structure, culture, and control mechanisms.

- The formal inclusion of environmental dynamics, acknowledging that external forces such as technological change, market volatility, and social shifts profoundly influence internal strategy and behavior.

In this version, the normative-strategic-operational levels remained central but were increasingly seen as part of a cybernetic management system, where feedback loops and goal adaptation played a critical role.

In response to changing business environments, a new version of the SGMM was introduced by Rüegg-Stürm (2003) and later refined with Grand (Rüegg-Stürm & Grand, 2019). While the classic model provides a solid structural understanding, the new SGMM introduces a more dynamic and communicative view that is essential in today's rapidly changing business landscape.

### **2.1.2 The New St. Gallen Management Model**

The new SGMM reorients the classic model by emphasizing a communication- and practice-based view of management. Organizations are now viewed as socially constructed systems, and management is conceived as a reflexive practice embedded in communication. The new SGMM focuses on the following key elements.

- **Organizations as Social Systems:** Emphasizes the interpretative processes through which meaning and legitimacy are generated.
- **Management as a Practice:** Focuses on everyday managerial practices embedded in communication, discourse, and social interaction.
- **Contextual Rationality:** Rejects universal rationality, acknowledging context-dependent decision-making.
- **Dynamic Interactions:** Continuous interaction between environment, stakeholders, and internal actors.

Shifting the emphasis from structures and functions to communication and reflexivity allows us to gain a more nuanced understanding of change, transformation and integration. This makes the St. Gallen Management Concept particularly well-suited to analyzing M&A scenarios, in which integration efforts must reconcile formal structures. The St. Gallen Management Concept provides a comprehensive, systemic foundation for analyzing the three central themes of this study: business process management, mergers and acquisitions, and organizational culture. The theoretical background of each will be elaborated on in the following sections.

## **2.2 Process Management and Process Science**

In today's business environment, operational efficiency and effectiveness are critical to success. At the heart of achieving these objectives lies the concept of business processes and their management. Business Process Management (BPM) is a strategic approach that enables organizations to align their strategic objectives with their operational goals, thereby enhancing effectiveness and efficiency within a dynamic business environment. The achievement of organizational objectives is contingent upon a series of business processes that require continuous improvement. BPM encompasses a set of practices aimed at fostering organizational value through the adoption of a process-oriented culture. This section examines the evolution of organizations from function-oriented to process-oriented, the fundamental definitions of business processes and business process management, traces the evolution of BPM, and examines the pivotal relationship between BPM and Information Technology (IT).

### **2.2.1 From Function-Oriented to Process-Oriented**

Organizational design has undergone significant transformations over the past century. The traditional function-oriented structure, characterized by compartmentalized departments and hierarchical decision-making, has gradually shifted toward a process-oriented model emphasizing horizontal integration, customer focus, and value creation.

The function-oriented model emerged during the industrial revolution, exemplified by Taylor's scientific management and Weber's bureaucratic theory (Taylor, 1911; Weber, 1922). Organizations were divided into specialized units such as marketing, finance, and operations, each with defined roles and hierarchical reporting structures. This model prioritized control, efficiency, and predictability, fostering deep expertise within functions but limiting collaboration across departments.

Although the function-oriented structure allowed organizations to optimize efficiency within specific departments, it often created operational silos and hindered communication across functions. This fragmentation led to delays, duplication of efforts, and limited responsiveness to customer needs. As markets became more volatile and customer expectations more dynamic, these limitations exposed the rigidity and inefficiency of traditional structures (Davenport, 1993).

In response to the limitations of functional models, the 1990s saw the rise of business process reengineering which emphasized the need for radical redesign of business processes to achieve substantial improvements in performance (Hammer & Champy, 2009). The process-oriented organization emerged from this movement, focusing on value creation through integrated working procedures that span across traditional functional boundaries. This model aligns organizational activities with end-to-end processes such as product development, customer service, or supply chain management.

Process-oriented organizations are distinguished by their emphasis on delivering value through coordinated, cross-functional working procedures. Unlike the function-based model, they organize work around processes that reflect customer journeys and operational outcomes. This structure encourages collaboration across departments and integrates diverse skills within teams focused on shared objectives. Performance measurement also shifts in process-oriented models, focusing on end-to-end outcomes rather than isolated departmental metrics. Information technology plays a vital role in enabling process visibility and integration, with systems such as enterprise resource planning facilitating coordination and data sharing across the organization (McCormack & Johnson, 2001; Davenport, 1993).

In order to have a better understanding of process-oriented organizational structure, one should know what actually a process is. In the next section, we go through the definition of the term process, business process and also the difference between these two terms.

### 2.2.2 Process vs. Business Process

Processes and business processes are fundamental concepts in organizational management and operations. While the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, they have distinct meanings and applications. Understanding the distinction between these two concepts is crucial for improving efficiency and optimizing organizational performance.

Processes are essential for the functioning of any system, whether in manufacturing, service delivery, or administrative functions. The term "process" was first introduced by Adam Smith (1776) as a series of actions or steps taken to achieve a specific outcome. Throughout the literature, numerous definitions have been proposed by scholars at different times. Davenport defines a process as a structured sequence of activities occurring within a specific temporal and spatial framework, characterized by a defined starting and ending point, as well as identifiable inputs and outputs (Davenport, 1993). According to Dumas et al. (2018), a process is a structured sequence of activities designed to produce a particular result. Glykas (2011) conceptualizes a process as a series of horizontally interconnected activities designed to achieve a specific outcome. McCormack and Johnson (2001) describe a process as a structured collection of activities and subordinate tasks that culminate in the delivery of a valuable service. Processes can be found in various fields, including engineering, healthcare, and education. They typically involve inputs, transformations, and outputs. ISO 9000:2015 defines a process as a "set of interacting or interrelated tasks and activities, which use inputs to deliver outputs and an intended result (ISO 9000:2015, clause 3.4.1). This definition underscores several key elements:

- **Interrelated Activities:** Processes consist of activities that are connected.
- **Transformation:** Inputs are converted into outputs through these activities.
- **Purpose:** Every process aims to achieve a specific outcome or result.

For example, the process of baking a cake includes gathering ingredients, mixing them, baking, and decorating. Or in a manufacturing setting, the process of assembling a product involves various stages such as component installation, quality checks, and packaging, all working cohesively to produce the final product.

Business processes, on the other hand, are a subset of processes that specifically relate to achieving business goals and delivering value to stakeholders (Hammer & Champy, 2009). Every organization can be conceived as a comprehensive system that creates value through its business processes (Rummler & Brache, 2012). According to Hammer and Champy (2009), a business process is a collection of related, structured activities or tasks that produce a specific service or product for a particular customer or customers. Davenport (1993) expands on this, describing a business process as a specific sequence of work activities arranged chronologically and spatially, with a defined start and finish, and clearly identified inputs and outputs. Examples include order processing, customer service, and supply chain management.

From another point of view, a business is generally understood as an activity that generates value for society while shaping the economic interactions among individuals (Williamson, 1985). Consequently, a business process can be defined as a set of logically related tasks that yield a specific outcome and contribute to an organization's economic profitability (Davenport & Short, 1990). In general and according to Hammer (1997), a business process consists of activities that produce a valuable output and can be conceptualized as a system that transforms inputs into higher-value outputs (Figure 2.2).

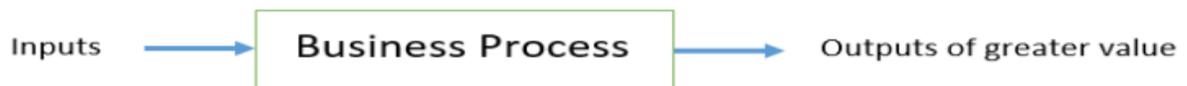


Fig. 2.2. General model of a business process (source: own illustration)

While ISO 9000:2015 provides a general definition of process, the term 'business process' is more specifically addressed in other ISO standards. ISO 10244:2010, which focuses on business process baselining and analysis, offers tools for organizations to identify and document their business processes in a standardized format. Although a precise definition is not explicitly stated, the standard implies that a business process encompasses:

- **Organizational Activities:** Tasks performed within a company or organization.
- **Systematic Sequence:** A defined order of activities or tasks.
- **Specific Business Outcome:** Aimed at achieving particular business objectives.

An analysis of the various definitions indicates that every business process fundamentally comprises three core elements: inputs, activities, and outputs. In other words, a business process is a collection of activities which take input(s) and create output(s) that is of value to the consumers and can be defined as a series of interrelated events that integrate human resources, technology, and information to generate valuable outputs and facilitate the fulfillment of an organization's mission.

Business processes are integral to organizational operations because they outline how tasks are performed and ensure that these tasks are carried out in a consistent and repeatable manner. This repeatability is crucial for maintaining quality and efficiency in production and service delivery. Van der Aalst (2013) emphasizes the role of business processes in creating order and predictability within organizations. According to him, well-defined processes help in reducing variability and enhancing predictability, which is essential for achieving operational excellence. Similarly, Davenport (2013) highlights that business processes are the building blocks of organizational performance, as they transform inputs into outputs through systematic and controlled activities.

In summary, while all business processes are processes, not all processes are business processes. A process is a general concept that applies to various fields, whereas a business process specifically refers to activities that drive business value. Business processes are vital to the successful operation of organizations. They ensure that tasks are performed efficiently,

consistently, and in alignment with organizational goals. By streamlining operations, maintaining quality, ensuring compliance, and enabling scalability, business processes help organizations achieve their strategic objectives. Understanding the fundamental role of business processes sets the stage for exploring the concept of business management.

### **2.2.3 The Evolution of Business Management**

The field of business management has evolved significantly over the past century, adapting to changes in technology, globalization, and organizational complexity. Business management has undergone continuous change as organizations adapt to economic, technological, and societal shifts. From the early administrative theories of the late 19th and early 20th centuries to modern process-driven methodologies, businesses have increasingly focused on optimizing operations. The shift from traditional business management to modern process science represents a fundamental change in how organizations perceive work, focusing on processes rather than static structures (Chia, 1999). The origins of business management can be traced back to classical management theories developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Pioneering thinkers such as Frederick Taylor (1911), Henri Fayol (1916), and Max Weber (1922) laid the foundations of administrative principles and process optimization:

- **Scientific Management (Taylorism):** Frederick Taylor (1911) introduced the concept of scientific management, emphasizing efficiency through time and motion studies.
- **Administrative Theory:** Henri Fayol (1916) proposed administrative principles, including planning, organizing, leading, and controlling.
- **Bureaucratic Management:** Max Weber (1922) advocated for a structured, hierarchical approach to management, emphasizing rules and procedures.

These early theories provided the basis for business process administration, focusing on efficiency, structure, and organizational control.

### **2.2.3.1 Business Process Administration**

As businesses grew in complexity, the need for systematic business process administration became evident. Business process administration is a systematic approach to managing and improving an organization's working procedures to ensure optimal performance, efficiency, and customer satisfaction. As competition intensifies and customer expectations grow, organizations must continuously assess and adapt their internal processes. Over time, frameworks such as Total Quality Management (TQM), Lean Manufacturing, and Six Sigma have dominated the field, each bringing unique strengths and limitations.

**Total Quality Management (TQM)**, which is popularized in the 1950s, focuses on continuous process improvement and customer satisfaction (Deming, 1986). TQM represents a comprehensive approach to improving organizational quality. It stresses the importance of continuous improvement, customer satisfaction, and employee involvement throughout all levels of an organization. Rather than focusing narrowly on manufacturing or product quality, TQM advocates for a holistic integration of quality principles into every aspect of the business. This includes cross-functional collaboration, standardized practices, and data-driven decision-making processes (Oakland, 2014).

TQM's impact is seen in the adoption of tools such as statistical process control, quality circles, and benchmarking. These instruments empower teams to identify inefficiencies and develop strategies for improvement. The overall philosophy is evolutionary in nature, emphasizing the gradual enhancement of processes through persistent efforts and cultural transformation (Goetsch & Davis, 2016).

**Lean Manufacturing**, developed primarily through the Toyota Production System, is centered on eliminating waste and maximizing value from the customer's perspective. (Ohno, 1988).

Originating in Japan and gaining widespread attention through the work of Womack and Jones (1997), Lean Manufacturing identifies various forms of waste that reduce operational efficiency, including overproduction, waiting times, excess transportation, and defects. By targeting these inefficiencies, Lean aims to streamline production, enhance flow, and increase responsiveness.

Rather than merely reducing cost, Lean seeks to enhance value by ensuring that every step in the process contributes directly to customer satisfaction. Its implementation typically involves the reconfiguration of physical layouts, real-time monitoring of working procedures, and greater employee engagement in problem-solving. Though it began in manufacturing, Lean principles have been successfully applied across sectors including healthcare, finance, and logistics.

**Six Sigma** is a data-driven quality management methodology that originated in the manufacturing sector but has since expanded into various industries due to its strong focus on reducing process variation and improving performance. Over time, as industries and customer expectations evolved, Six Sigma also underwent a transformation, giving rise to several methodological variants. These variants emerged to address specific organizational challenges and to align Six Sigma with newer paradigms of operational agility, speed, and innovation.

Six Sigma was formally introduced by Motorola in 1986, largely in response to increasing product failure rates and intense competition from Japanese manufacturers known for their high-quality outputs. The approach was conceptualized by engineer Bill Smith and supported by then-CEO Bob Galvin, who envisioned a company-wide commitment to quality. Six Sigma, as a statistical concept, refers to a process that produces fewer than 3.4 defects per million opportunities, signifying a high level of process capability and performance (Harry & Schroeder, 2006).

The methodology gained widespread attention in the 1990s when General Electric, under the leadership of CEO Jack Welch, adopted Six Sigma and integrated it into all aspects of the company's operations. Welch's strategic emphasis on Six Sigma as a driver of productivity, customer satisfaction, and cost savings helped propel the methodology into a global standard for quality improvement (Pande et al., 2000). Initially focused on manufacturing, Six Sigma was soon extended to sectors such as healthcare, finance, and government services.

The fundamental framework of Six Sigma is embodied in the DMAIC cycle, which stands for Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, and Control. This structured approach facilitates the identification of root causes of process inefficiencies and enables the implementation of

sustainable improvements. The methodology relies heavily on statistical tools such as control charts, hypothesis testing, regression analysis, and design of experiments.

While traditional Six Sigma was highly effective in many contexts, organizations soon encountered situations where its rigid structure and data-heavy approach were not sufficient to address emerging operational challenges. This led to the evolution of several variants of Six Sigma, each developed to align the methodology with specific organizational goals, industry contexts, or cultural shifts. These adaptations, including Lean Six Sigma, Design for Six Sigma Agile Six Sigma, and Transactional Six Sigma, enable organizations to address unique challenges across sectors such as healthcare, finance, software development, and service operations. Each variant retains the core Six Sigma philosophy but incorporates complementary tools and approaches to enhance its effectiveness in specific environments:

- **Lean Six Sigma** is a hybrid methodology that integrates the principles of Lean Manufacturing with the statistical rigor of Six Sigma. While Six Sigma targets variation reduction, Lean focuses on eliminating waste (Womack & Jones, 1997). In other words, lean principles focus on the elimination of non-value-added activities, or waste, and emphasize flow, speed, and efficiency. Six Sigma, in contrast, concentrates on reducing process variation and improving quality.

The combination was born out of the recognition that while Six Sigma projects effectively reduced defects, they were often time-consuming and did not adequately address inefficiencies or customer wait times. Conversely, Lean initiatives improved process flow but lacked the statistical robustness needed to sustain improvements in complex systems. Lean Six Sigma was developed to bring the strengths of both methods into a single, synergistic framework (George, 2002).

This variant became particularly popular in service industries such as healthcare, banking, and logistics where both quality and speed are essential. For example, in hospitals, Lean Six Sigma has been used to reduce patient waiting times while ensuring error-free diagnosis and treatment.

- **Design for Six Sigma (DFSS)** was developed to extend the Six Sigma philosophy into the domain of product and process design. Traditional Six Sigma using DMAIC is reactive, typically applied to existing processes that already exhibit defects or inefficiencies. DFSS, by contrast, is proactive and aims to design new processes and products that meet Six Sigma standards from the outset.

This need arose particularly in high-tech, aerospace, and automotive industries where the cost of failure in product design is extremely high. DFSS incorporates tools such as Quality Function Deployment, Failure Modes and Effects Analysis, and Design of Experiments to ensure that the Voice of the Customer is fully integrated into the design process (Creveling et al., 2002).

The primary framework used in DFSS is DMADV, which stands for Define, Measure, Analyze, Design, and Verify. This approach, which is applied in designing new processes or products that meet Six Sigma quality levels (Pyzdek & Keller, 2014), enables organizations to create robust, customer-focused designs with high reliability and minimal need for post-launch corrections.

- **Agile Six Sigma** integrates the principles of Agile project management with Six Sigma methodologies, promoting adaptability and iterative improvements. This integration emerged as organizations, particularly in software development and digital services, sought to apply continuous improvement principles in fast-paced, dynamic environments. This variant is particularly suited for dynamic environments such as software development.
- **Transactional Six Sigma** has been adapted for use in service industries. It addresses inefficiencies in processes such as billing, customer service and supply chain management (Snee, 2010).

Traditional Six Sigma projects often require extensive data collection and analysis before implementation. In contrast, Agile methodologies emphasize speed, collaboration, and incremental delivery. Agile Six Sigma was developed to allow quality improvement initiatives to

align with Agile project cycles, enabling quicker feedback loops and adaptive planning (Salah et al., 2010).

Agile Six Sigma is especially useful in contexts where requirements change rapidly, such as information technology, customer experience design, and startup operations. It ensures that quality improvement does not hinder innovation or responsiveness but rather enhances them through better decision-making and continuous learning.

The evolution of Six Sigma into these variants was driven by a combination of internal organizational challenges and external environmental changes. Global competition, customer expectations for both speed and quality, and the rise of digital technologies demanded more adaptable and integrated process improvement approaches. Organizations found that traditional Six Sigma, while effective in stable manufacturing environments, needed to evolve to support broader strategic objectives.

Lean Six Sigma addressed the need for faster and more visible results in service and transactional environments. DFSS emerged to reduce the cost and risk associated with poor product design and to ensure that innovation met customer needs. Agile Six Sigma was introduced to maintain quality in highly volatile and creative fields without slowing down development cycles. Each variant represents an intentional adaptation of the original Six Sigma methodology to better fit new challenges and opportunities.

Over time, these frameworks and methodologies have dominated the field, each bringing unique strengths and limitations. However, as organizations encountered new challenges driven by globalization and technological innovation, many moved toward Business Process Reengineering (BPR), which emphasizes radical change rather than continuous incremental improvement (Dumas et al., 2018).

### **2.2.3.2 Business Process Reengineering**

Business Process Reengineering (BPR) gained prominence in the 1990s as a response to the limitations of incremental process improvements. Hammer and Champy (2009) defined BPR as the radical rethinking and redesign of business processes in order to achieve drastic

improvements. BPR seeks to improve organizational performance by fundamentally rethinking and radically redesigning core business processes. The emphasis on radical redesign implies that organizations must look beyond existing processes and instead consider how they would be structured if they were being designed from scratch. Unlike incremental improvement methods, BPR calls for dramatic changes that lead to substantial gains in efficiency, cost reduction, and customer satisfaction.

BPR emphasized breaking down hierarchical structures, eliminating non-value-adding activities, and leveraging information technology to enable process innovation. Unlike TQM or Lean, which focus on continuous and incremental improvement, BPR advocated for starting from a "blank slate" and reengineering business processes from the ground up.

Organizations implementing BPR typically focused on end-to-end processes rather than functional silos, aiming to reduce handoffs and delays while improving customer responsiveness. Information systems such as Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) often played a central role in BPR initiatives by automating working procedures and facilitating data integration across departments (Davenport, 1993).

BPR involves following key principles (Davenport, 1993):

- Focusing on customer needs rather than internal structures
- Using technology to enable process innovation
- Eliminating non-value-adding activities
- Encouraging cross-functional collaboration

During the 1990s, numerous organizations adopted BPR with the hope of achieving breakthrough performance. High-profile case studies, such as Ford Motor Company's reduction of procurement staff by reengineering its accounts payable process, demonstrated the potential of BPR to drive substantial cost savings and efficiency gains (Hammer & Champy, 2009).

However, BPR was not without its critics. A significant number of BPR initiatives failed to deliver the expected results. Reasons for failure included poor change management, lack of

employee engagement, insufficient understanding of existing processes, and overreliance on technology. The radical nature of BPR often led to organizational resistance, job losses, and cultural disruption (Hall & Rosenthal, 1993). Critics argued that while BPR promised transformation, its execution was frequently top-down and lacked the continuous improvement culture needed for sustained success.

Moreover, BPR's episodic and project-based nature made it difficult for organizations to adapt to ongoing changes in the business environment. Once a BPR project was completed, companies often reverted to old habits due to the absence of a structured mechanism for monitoring and evolving redesigned processes.

Furthermore, while BPR led to significant efficiency gains, its aggressive restructuring approach often faced resistance and implementation challenges (Al-Mashari & Zairi, 2000). These limitations paved the way for a more sustainable and adaptive approach of Business Process Management.

### **2.2.3.3 Business Process Management**

Business Process Management (BPM) has emerged as a critical discipline aimed at improving an organization's efficiency, effectiveness, and agility by optimizing the processes. Business process management is a management discipline focused on aligning business processes with organizational goals to improve effectiveness and efficiency (Hammer, 2014). BPM is a holistic approach that encompasses various techniques, methods, and instruments to support the design, configuration, enactment, and evaluation of business processes (Ko et al., 2009). Over the decades, BPM has evolved into a mature discipline that views business processes as critical assets. This perspective has enabled organizations to achieve operational excellence and enhance overall performance by systematically managing and optimizing their processes. Recognizing and overcoming common BPM pitfalls is essential for organizational growth, especially during mergers and acquisitions. BPM is a systematic approach to designing, modeling, executing, monitoring, and optimizing business processes to achieve organizational goals. BPM focuses on aligning processes with customer needs, reducing inefficiencies, and enhancing performance.

Dumas et al. (2018) defines BPM as a discipline, which provides structure to identify, analyze, and improve the business processes. BPM covers the entire lifecycle of processes, from their initial design through execution, monitoring, and continuous improvement. By focusing on improving business processes, BPM helps organizations enhance their competitiveness, increase customer satisfaction, and reduce operational costs (Harmon, 2019).

Organizations are traditionally structured through two primary organizational paradigms of "structural organization" and "process organization". While structural organization pertains to hierarchical structures and responsibilities, process organization focuses on task sequences.

Structural organization defines the hierarchical structure, reporting lines, and functional responsibilities within an enterprise (Mintzberg, 1993). It establishes authority, coordination mechanisms, and decision-making processes.

Process organization refers to the arrangement of working procedures, task sequences, and interdependencies within an organization (Becker et al., 2003). It determines how resources are allocated, how tasks are executed, and how efficiency is measured.

The integration of BPM with both process organization and structural organization is essential for organizational coherence. Process optimization efforts must align with structural elements to avoid inefficiencies and bottlenecks. BPM enables organizations to transition from rigid hierarchical models to more dynamic and process-oriented structures. For instance, agile BPM frameworks facilitate adaptive structures that respond to market changes rapidly (Rosemann & vom Brocke, 2014).

Empirical studies highlight how BPM enhances both process organization and structural organization. For example, companies implementing BPM in supply chain management have optimized process efficiency and improved cross-departmental collaboration (Mendling & vom Brocke, 2018). Similarly, digital transformation initiatives leveraging BPM have led to flatter organizational structures with more autonomous decision-making processes (Dijkman et al., 2011).

However, given the complexity and interconnectedness of modern organizational operations, the effective implementation of BPM requires more than just an abstract understanding of process improvement principles; robust methodologies and modelling tools are also needed to translate conceptual strategies into actionable designs. While BPM provides the overarching philosophy and lifecycle for managing processes, organizations need structured frameworks to analyze and redesign those processes in a coherent, comprehensive manner. To support BPM initiatives, organizations use various modeling tools and frameworks. One of the most prominent frameworks is the ARIS (Architecture of Integrated Information Systems) House Model, which offers a multidimensional approach to representing, analyzing and redesigning business processes. This will be investigated in the next section.

#### **2.2.3.3.1 The ARIS House Model**

The ARIS (Architecture of Integrated Information Systems) House Model developed by August-Wilhelm Scheer (1999) provides a foundational framework to support BPM by breaking down complex enterprise processes into five interrelated views (Figure 2.3):

- **Organization View** represents the static structure of the enterprise, such as roles, departments, and reporting hierarchies.
- **Data View** defines the information required and produced by business processes.
- **Function View** describes the functions or tasks performed within the enterprise.
- **Control View** integrates the other views by modeling the process flow and sequence.
- **Product/Service View** focuses on the products or services resulting from the process execution.

By using these dimensions, the ARIS House Model enables comprehensive modeling of both the structural and process perspectives of an organization. This holistic approach ensures that BPM efforts are not isolated to individual process automation but also embedded into the broader enterprise architecture. The ARIS model is particularly valuable in aligning IT implementation with organizational goals and BPM strategies. It ensures consistency across process modeling,

data management, and role definitions, thus enhancing traceability and accountability (Scheer & Nüttgens, 2002).

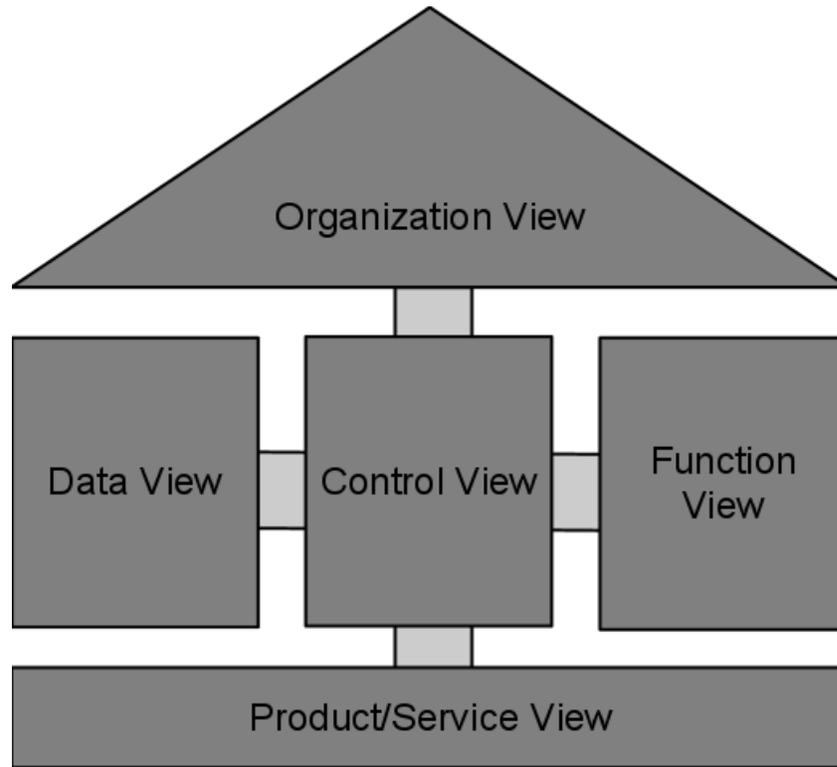


Fig. 2.3. ARIS House (Scheer, 1999)

While ARIS offers a robust framework for process architecture, its true value is realized when it is used to facilitate the practice of business process modeling. ARIS provides the methodology and modeling conventions necessary to accurately represent business logic, laying the groundwork for clear communication and analysis. The next section delves into the role of business process modeling and how it integrates with the ARIS framework.

### **2.2.3.3.2 Business Process Modeling**

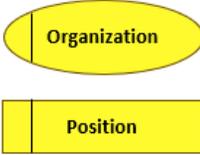
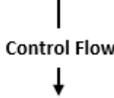
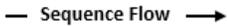
Business process modeling is a foundational element in the discipline of Business Process Management (BPM), enabling organizations to visualize, analyze, and optimize their operations. Early process modeling techniques, such as flowcharts and data flow diagrams, were relatively simple and lacked the formalization necessary for large-scale process management (Davenport, 1993). Among the early modeling approaches, the Event-driven Process Chain (EPC) emerged as a prominent method for documenting business logic within enterprise systems.

Over time, the need for more expressive and executable modeling standards led to the development and adoption of the Business Process Model and Notation (BPMN). BPMN provided a standardized graphical representation of business processes, enabling organizations to document, visualize, and communicate their processes more effectively (White & Miers, 2008).

In the context of ARIS, the Event-driven Process Chain was firstly developed as part of the framework (Scheer, 1999). EPC was designed to model business processes in a way that aligned closely with enterprise systems, especially SAP. ARIS, originally designed around EPC, has evolved to support BPMN as organizations demanded richer modeling capabilities. Within ARIS, users can model processes in EPC for conceptual clarity, and then transform them into BPMN for technical design and automation (Scheer, 1999). This flexibility allows different stakeholders to engage with models at different levels of abstraction.

EPC and BPMN differ in their modeling objectives, level of formality, and types of elements. EPC is optimized for business-level understanding and focuses on the logical flow of events and functions. Its primary elements include events, functions, organizational units, and information objects, connected using logical operators such as AND, OR, and XOR. In contrast, BPMN supports the detailed specification and automation of business processes, using a more extensive and formalized syntax. BPMN includes flow objects (events, activities, gateways), connecting objects (e.g. sequence flows), and swimlanes to represent participants and roles. A visual comparison of the notational key elements is provided in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Key elements of EPC vs. BPMN (source: own illustration)

Element	EPC	BPMN
Event		
Function		
Connectors / Gateways		
Organizational Aspects		
Flow		

To conclude, BPM serves as a bridge between process organization and structural organization, ensuring that process optimization aligns with structural organization. Furthermore, IT plays a crucial role in BPM by enabling IT implementations that align with organizational goals. The next section explores the interplay between BPM and IT.

### 2.2.3.3.3 Interplay between BPM and IT

In the modern business landscape, organizations are increasingly reliant on IT to manage and optimize their business processes. The relationship between BPM and IT is a dynamic and synergistic one. While BPM provides the strategic framework for improving business processes, IT provides the tools and technologies needed to execute, automate, and monitor those processes. BPM without IT can lead to fragmented processes that are difficult to manage and optimize,

while IT without BPM can result in the implementation of technologies that do not align with organizational objectives or contribute to process improvement. Hence, the successful integration of BPM and IT requires a clear alignment between the two. Organizations must ensure that their BPM initiatives are supported by appropriate IT infrastructure and tools that enable process automation, real-time monitoring, and data analysis. Additionally, IT professionals must work closely with process managers and business analysts to ensure that technology is implemented in a way that supports the organization's goals and objectives.

The relationship between IT and BPM reveals a symbiotic connection. Effective IT systems often rely on well-designed business processes, while successful BPM initiatives depend on robust IT support. BPM is fundamentally concerned with optimizing and managing business processes to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and adaptability. IT, in turn, provides the necessary tools and infrastructure to automate, monitor, and enhance these processes. Therefore, harmonizing IT and BPM is critical for achieving organizational objectives. The integration of IT and BPM enables organizations to respond more swiftly to market changes, improve customer satisfaction, and achieve competitive advantage.

One area in which this relationship becomes particularly significant is in the management of "process variant" within an organization. Process variants refer to different implementations of the same underlying business process, tailored to specific contexts, conditions, or systems while sharing similar goals and outputs (Dumas et al., 2018). As Van der Aalst (2013) notes, these variants may differ in procedural steps or execution paths due to varying configurations, local regulations, organizational units, or IT system requirements. Although such diversity may reflect legitimate operational needs, it often results in inefficiencies and increased complexity. These can include inconsistent process outcomes, higher development and maintenance costs for IT systems, the proliferation of redundant process models, and elevated training demands for employees (Tregear, 2010).

Consequently, organizations must develop strategies to effectively manage process diversity. Two prominent approaches in this regard are "Business Process Standardization" and "Business Process Harmonization". These concepts aim to address the challenges associated with process

variants by either unifying process execution or aligning multiple versions to a consistent strategic and operational framework. As vom Brocke and Rosemann (2014) suggest, such practices not only improve operational efficiency but also enhance strategic agility by enabling more coherent and responsive process architectures.

To establish a structured approach for managing process diversity, it is essential to differentiate between business process standardization and business process harmonization. In the subsequent discussion, we elucidate the distinctions between these two concepts. By providing precise definitions of these terms, we aim to establish a solid foundational understanding that will underpin the development of the process harmonization framework.

#### **2.2.3.3.4 Standardization vs. Harmonization**

Process standardization and process harmonization are integral to BPM activities, though they are often used interchangeably; they have distinct definitions and implications in the literature.

Business Process Standardization (BPS) refers to the unification and homogenization of business processes within an organization, aiming to create uniform procedures out of similar activities across different departments or units (Davenport, 2005). The primary objective of BPS is to ensure process uniformity throughout the value chain (Wüllenweber et al., 2009), thereby guaranteeing that identical tasks performed in various locations within the organization adhere to the same protocols and methodologies (Harmon & Trends, 2010). The central aims of BPS include enhancing collaboration, facilitating communication, and developing comparative performance metrics for business processes (Schäfermeyer et al., 2010).

The advantages of BPS are extensively documented in the academic literature. Notable benefits include reduced process execution costs and enhanced internal and external collaboration (Carmichael, 1997; Hammer & Stanton, 1999; Davenport, 2005). Additionally, BPS is associated with decreased costs and throughput times for business processes, along with improved quality and control mechanisms (Jayaram et al., 2000; Beimborn et al., 2009; Münstermann et al., 2010). Numerous studies have also examined the various factors influencing process standardization and its impact on business success (Schäfermeyer et al., 2010; Wüllenweber et al., 2009).

Despite the well-documented benefits of process standardization, achieving complete uniformity in business processes has proven to be highly challenging in practice. Moreover, the rigid enforcement of process standardization can provoke resistance from employees, disrupt operations, and negatively impact the overall performance of the newly merged organization (Kumar & Palvia, 2001). From this perspective, business process variability is recognized as inevitable and cannot be entirely eliminated (Frei et al., 1999) due to a variety of factors such as legislative requirements, local market demands, personal preferences, and the need for flexibility to address different customer types effectively (Hammer & Stanton, 1999; Manrodt & Vitasek, 2004; Tregear, 2010). Additionally, some business units may require a degree of autonomy to avoid micromanagement. These real-world observations have stimulated researchers to look for a more practicable approach that focuses on striking trade-offs between process variants (Tregear, 2010; Milani et al., 2016) instead of making the process variants uniform. The activity of deciding on and creating these trade-offs is known as Business Process Harmonization (BPH).

Business process harmonization involves striking trade-offs between the process variants to optimize performance and ensure operational coherence (Fernandez & Bhat, 2010; Girod & Bellin, 2011). According to Richen and Steinhorst (2005), process harmonization pertains to the practice of identifying and addressing differences among process variants by establishing limits on their degrees of variation, without necessitating complete uniformity among them. This approach diverges from the concept of striving for identical processes across all contexts. Most definitions of process harmonization highlight the goal of achieving consensus on process standards while accommodating necessary variations. For this study, we adopt a definition of process harmonization that synthesizes perspectives from the literature (e.g., Dyer & Singh, 1998; Van der Meer-Kooistra & Vosselman, 2000). Accordingly, process harmonization is defined as:

*The systematic activity of aligning and consolidating process variants by identifying commonalities and variations, without imposing uniformity across all instances, and ensuring that these adjustments do not adversely affect work conditions or operational efficiency.*

In the context of this thesis, we acknowledge that achieving complete uniformity through standardization is often impractical. Business processes frequently exhibit variations due to a range of internal and external contextual factors. These factors include, but are not limited to, differing legal requirements across countries, variations in IT infrastructure, and organizational and cultural differences. Therefore, we assert that process standardization should be considered as the primary approach in mergers, provided that such standardization is feasible and not hindered by legitimate constraints managed by top management. If this is not the case, it often necessitates the initiation of BPH activities. To further elucidate our approach, it is crucial to define the term "trade-off process" within the scope of this study. The trade-off process, as used in this thesis, refers to:

*The creation and implementation of a newly harmonized process developed during the integration phase. This process involves negotiating and balancing various process variants to achieve a compromise that accommodates the diverse requirements and constraints identified during the harmonization effort.*

The process of trade-off in business process harmonization involves several key steps. First, it requires a comprehensive analysis of existing process variants to determine their commonalities and differences. This step includes mapping out the processes, identifying critical components, and understanding the reasons behind the variations (Becker et al., 2003; Rosemann & vom Brocke, 2014). By thoroughly analyzing process variants, organizations can better understand the underlying factors contributing to process divergence. Second, stakeholders must engage in discussions to establish acceptable bounds for these variations, ensuring that the harmonized process aligns with organizational goals and constraints (Van der Meer-Kooistra & Vosselman, 2000). Effective stakeholder engagement is crucial for reaching a consensus on the extent of variation permissible and for aligning the harmonized process with broader organizational objectives. Third, the development of the new harmonized process must take into account the operational and cultural context of the organization, ensuring that the final process configuration does not disrupt existing working procedures or negatively impact employee performance.

(Davenport, 1993; Harmon, 2003). Considering the operational and cultural context helps mitigate potential resistance and ensures smoother implementation of the harmonized process. Additionally, the trade-off process necessitates continuous monitoring and feedback mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of the harmonized process. This includes evaluating performance metrics, gathering input from stakeholders, and making iterative adjustments as needed (Jeston, 2014; McCormack & Johnson, 2001). Continuous monitoring allows organizations to refine processes and ensure they meet performance expectations and organizational needs.

By adopting a flexible and iterative approach to process harmonization, organizations can better manage the complexities associated with process integration and achieve a balance between standardization and adaptation (Harmon & Trends, 2010). This approach facilitates effective integration while accommodating necessary variations, thereby enhancing overall process efficiency and organizational effectiveness.

The advantages of business process harmonization are widely recognized, particularly among industry practitioners. These advantages encompass a variety of organizational benefits, such as increased operational efficiency and reduced operational costs, which can streamline the integration of IT systems. This integration fosters greater transparency and enhanced internal controls, and facilitates improved interoperability between different organizations (Carmichael, 1997). The implementation of BPH significantly enhances organizational flexibility and agility, ensuring consistent and uniform customer experiences (Fernandez & Bhat, 2010). Additionally, BPH mitigates the risks associated with business process outsourcing, offering a more stable operational framework (Wullenweber & Weitzel, 2007). By reducing the number of process variants, BPH contributes to decreased process maintenance costs and enhances the organization's agility in adapting to process changes (Richen & Steinhorst, 2005).

In the context of Business Process Harmonization and IT system standardization, Business Process Modeling is a critical tool providing a structured approach for the integration of processes and IT systems. Process modeling's primary value during process harmonization projects lies in its ability to map out current business processes in a standardized format, enabling stakeholders to identify areas of overlap, redundancy, or inefficiency (Harmon, 2003).

Furthermore, the presence of business process variability within a business context of M&A necessitates the selection of suitable modeling techniques that can accurately represent and visualize the different process variants (Döhning et al., 2014). Business process variability modeling emerged as a way to manage and analyze these differences, offering organizations greater flexibility in adapting their processes to dynamic environments (Weske, 2024). These techniques are essential for maintaining clarity and coherence in business processes, thereby enabling better management and optimization of resources.

In the subsequent section, we delve into the topic of business process variability modeling, with a particular focus on their application in M&As during process harmonization activities.

#### **2.2.3.3.5 Business Process Variability Modeling**

The coexistence of multiple process variants, which ultimately pursue the same goal, is a prevalent phenomenon in the context of company mergers. This phenomenon arises due to the integration of diverse organizational processes that, while aimed at achieving similar outcomes, exhibit significant variation. Managing and supporting the representation of such process variant families poses substantial challenges. Addressing these challenges has spurred considerable scholarly efforts over the past decades, resulting in the development of numerous approaches dedicated to Business Process Variability Modeling (BPVM). BPVM aims at managing process diversity within organizations using process modeling languages (Rosa et al., 2017; Ayora et al., 2015; Valença et al., 2013). The range of the developed approaches spans from modeling each process variant separately to visualizing all existing process variants as a single, consolidated process model.

The spectrum of BPVM is anchored by two principal methodologies of "fragmented-model approach" (Dumas, 2011); also known as "multi-model approach" (Hallerbach et al., 2010); and "consolidated-model approach" (Dumas, 2011); also known as "single-model approach" (Hallerbach et al., 2010). The fragmented-model approach involves creating distinct models for each process variant, which can lead to issues of redundancy and inconsistency. Conversely, the consolidated-model approach attempts to encapsulate all process variants within a single, unified

model, which can result in overly complex representations that are difficult to understand, analyze, and evolve.

Striking an optimal balance between these two extremes - maintaining each process variant as a separate model versus consolidating all variants into a single model - remains an unresolved issue and a focal point of ongoing research (Dumas, 2011). The quest for this balance has led to the emergence of various approaches aimed at addressing the intricacies of process variability modeling (e.g. Hallerbach et al., 2010; La Rosa et al., 2010; Rosemann et al., 2007). These approaches delve into both the technical aspects of modeling process variability and the management of business process variants from a technical standpoint. The fragmented-model approach, despite its drawbacks, allows for a more straightforward representation of individual process variants. Each variant can be tailored to specific operational contexts, enhancing clarity and ease of adaptation. However, this approach can lead to a proliferation of models, each requiring maintenance and updates, thereby increasing the risk of inconsistencies and redundancies across the process landscape. In contrast, the consolidated-model approach endeavors to provide a holistic view by integrating all process variants into a single model. This method aims to reduce redundancy and ensure consistency but often results in a model that is large and complex. Such complexity can hinder the model's comprehensibility and flexibility, posing challenges for stakeholders who need to interpret and modify the process model. To address these challenges, researchers have proposed hybrid approaches that seek to combine the benefits of both fragmented and consolidated models. In the following, we provide an overview of most popular and widely-used process variability modeling approaches.

### **Configurable Event-driven Process Chains (C-EPCs)**

Rosemann et al. proposed an extension of the Event-driven Process Chain modeling language, namely Configurable Event-driven Process Chain (C-EPC) for managing and visualizing process variants in reference models (Rosemann et al., 2007). C-EPC models represent the least common multiple of a set of process variants. Differences among these process variants are visualized by a set of so-called configurable nodes and configuration alternatives.

### **Configurative Process Modeling**

Becker et al. introduced the Configurative Process Modeling approach that relies on the principle of model projection; also known as configurative adaptation (Becker et al., 2004). Model projections are performed by customizing and modifying reference process models. Reference models are conceptual reusable process models that are constructed to be reused for designing process models for specific scenarios (Rosemann, 2003). This concept builds on the assumption that a reference process model contains information and typical elements of multiple scenarios. A projection of a reference model for a specific scenario is then obtained and constructed by fading out the elements which are not relevant for that specific scenario.

### **Application-based Domain Modeling (ADOM)**

Berger et al. introduced the Application-based Domain Modeling (ADOM) approach, whereby generic organizational reference models can be firstly created and can consequently be customized and specialized for different organizational units (Berger et al., 2009). ADOM proposes a three-level architecture. The first level; namely the language level, hosts the meta-models, which can be used to visualize process models by means of modelling languages, e.g. EPC. The second level refers to the domain level and hosts the customizable reference process models that serve as templates for a specific business domain, e.g. sales. Finally, the last level is the application level that hosts the customized business process models for particular companies or business units.

### **Business Process Family Model (BPFM)**

The Business Process Family Model (BPFM); developed by Moon et al. (2008), is an approach with a two-level architecture (Moon et al., 2008). BPFM uses an extended version of Activity Diagrams in Unified Modeling Language (UML). The first level of this approach deals with basic model customization, whereby an activity can be defined as mandatory or optional. The second level hosts more fine-grained customization of process models by marking activities as variation points and assigning process variants to these variation points.

### **Process Variants by Options (Provop)**

Process variants by options (Provop) is an operational approach for large collections of process variants to manage variability during the BPM lifecycle (Hallerbach et al., 2008). Provop proposes to derive variants of process models through restriction or extension of a base model. A base model is a business process model, which is annotated with adjustment points to allow customization. Process variants can be then created by adjusting a given base model to a given context.

There also exist various other approaches that investigate the topic of process variability modelling, such as Superimposed Variants (Czarnecki & Antkiewicz, 2005), Feature Model Composition (Acher et al., 2010), and Aggregated EPCs (Reijers et al. 2009) among others. These methodologies contribute to the rich tapestry of variability modelling techniques by offering diverse perspectives and solutions. However, it can be clearly inferred from a thorough literature review that the majority of BPVM approaches predominantly focus on technical implementation aspects. Critical questions such as how process harmonization can be conceptualized, the procedures to elicit variations in process models, and the methods to decide on process trade-offs have received relatively little attention (Milani et al., 2012).

Taking a step towards filling this gap, Milani et al. (2012) introduce the Decomposition Driven Method (DDM) for identifying and classifying drivers of variation in business processes. This method represents a significant advancement in addressing the conceptual aspects of process harmonization, which have been largely overlooked in prior research. In the following, we will provide a comprehensive overview of the DDM approach.

The DDM approach is a methodical framework that forms an integral part of the overall framework being developed in this research. Specifically, we integrate the relevant elements of DDM into our BPH framework to address the essential aspects of process harmonization during mergers and acquisitions (M&A) activities. The integration of DDM into our BPH framework is aimed at enhancing the process harmonization efforts during M&A activities. The DDM's emphasis on identifying variation drivers aligns with the need to understand the root causes of process differences, thereby facilitating more informed decision-making regarding process

harmonization. This integration ensures that the BPH framework not only addresses technical aspects but also provides a robust conceptual foundation for managing process variability.

In the following section, we provide detailed information on the Decomposition Driven Method to establish the theoretical foundation for the current study.

**Decomposition Driven Method (DDM)**

Milani et al. (2016) introduced the Decomposition Driven Method (DDM) for modeling families of process variants. This approach distinguishes itself from other BPVM methodologies by focusing not solely on the technical aspects of process modeling but also on systematically identifying the variation drivers of business processes. The DDM framework is structured around the Variation Drivers Framework (Figure 2.4), which posits that organizations establish a set of business processes (how) to deliver products or services (what) to a market (where) for customers (who), and occasionally adjust these processes in response to external conditions (when) to maintain efficiency across the value chain (Milani et al., 2016). These factors, collectively known as "variation drivers," are the primary sources of variations in business processes. In other words, the variation drivers framework is grounded in the logic that the root causes of variation in business processes can be classified into five categories: operational (how), product/service (what), customer (who), market (where), and time (when) drivers.

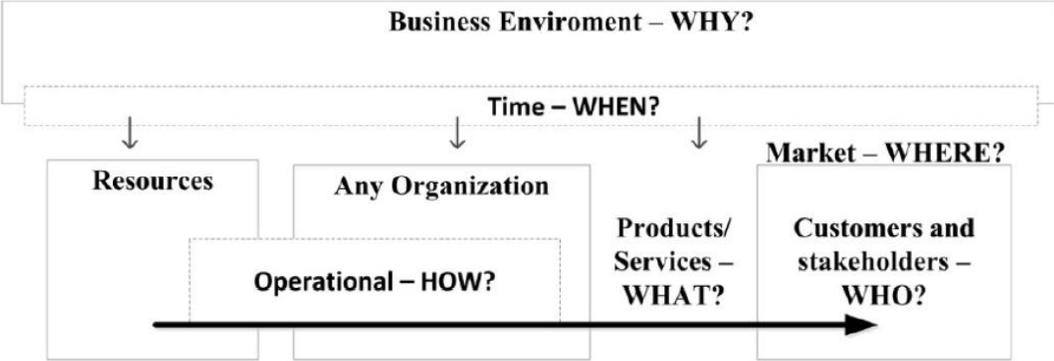


Fig. 2.4. Framework for classification of variation drivers (Milani et al., 2016)

The DDM approach's emphasis on identifying and classifying these variation drivers provides a comprehensive understanding of the underlying factors that cause process variations. This understanding is crucial for developing strategies to manage and harmonize process variants effectively. By systematically analyzing these drivers, organizations can better anticipate and respond to changes in their operating environment, thereby enhancing process efficiency and consistency.

Given that the DDM approach by Milani et al. delves into the root causes of process variation, our study aims to conceptualize a BPH Framework by leveraging the elements of the variation drivers framework. This conceptual framework will be instrumental in developing process trade-offs, which are essential for balancing the competing demands of maintaining distinct process variants while striving for operational harmony.

Building on the advancements in business process management, including the incorporation of process modeling and variability, the field is evolving toward a more data-driven and interdisciplinary approach. This evolution gives rise to the topics of "Process Mining" and "Process Science", research paradigms that integrate insights from computer science, organizational theory, and data analytics to study processes in their full complexity. In the next section, we will investigate the topics of process mining and process science, exploring how these approaches deepen our empirical understanding of process behavior and change over time.

#### **2.2.3.4 Process Mining and Process Science**

Contemporary business environments are increasingly characterized by volatility, complexity, and rapid transformation. While traditional business process management has provided effective tools for modeling, executing, and optimizing discrete business processes (Dumas et al., 2018), its scope is often limited when it comes to managing dynamic and multifactorial challenges. Over time, methods such as "Process Mining" have become an important analytical tool for revealing the actual behavior of organizational processes by analyzing digital event data. Originating in the field of computer science, process mining techniques allow for the extraction and visualization of

process flows from event logs recorded by information systems (van der Aalst et al., 2012). These methods enable organizations to gain a detailed understanding of how their processes are executed in practice, as opposed to how they are designed or assumed to operate.

By transforming raw data into structured process models, process mining makes it possible to identify deviations from expected working procedures, detect performance bottlenecks, and uncover process variants that may otherwise remain hidden. This approach is particularly valuable for organizations seeking to improve transparency, accountability, and operational efficiency (van der Aalst, 2016; Augusto et al., 2018). As interest in process mining has grown, the method has evolved beyond its technical roots, attracting attention from disciplines such as organizational studies and management research. Scholars have demonstrated its usefulness in revealing behavioral patterns, understanding organizational routines, and analyzing process evolution over time (Davenport & Spanyi, 2019; Grisold et al., 2020; Pentland et al., 2021).

In addition to technical diagnostics, process mining has proven effective in studying workplace practices and variations in task execution. It provides empirical evidence of how individuals and teams interact with digital systems, perform tasks, and adapt processes in response to internal and external conditions (Malinova et al., 2019). These insights contribute to a more grounded and evidence-based understanding of organizational functioning, which is essential for informed decision-making and continuous improvement.

While process mining offers a robust set of tools for capturing and analyzing real-time process behavior, its full potential is realized when embedded within a broader theoretical framework. This broader perspective is offered by the emerging field of "Process Science", which seeks to integrate empirical methods such as process mining with interdisciplinary theories that explain how and why processes unfold the way they do. Process science expands the scope of inquiry by moving beyond process description toward explanation and intervention.

Process science has emerged as an interdisciplinary domain that extends the core principles of BPM by incorporating theoretical and methodological contributions from organizational theory, sociology, cultural studies, and other related fields. It seeks to explain, analyze, and influence organizational processes as dynamic, evolving phenomena (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002).

Process science is guided by four central principles. First, it considers processes as the core unit of analysis in both research and practice. Second, it applies scientific methods to study how processes develop, interact, and change. Third, it embraces interdisciplinary collaboration by combining insights from fields such as organizational theory, sociology, information systems, and cognitive science. Fourth, it aims to design interventions that create tangible improvements in organizational outcomes (vom Brocke et al., 2024). These principles enable process science to address the complex and often ambiguous nature of processes in contemporary organizations.

One of the defining features of process science is its commitment to interdisciplinary integration. Rather than creating a separate academic discipline, process science provides a shared platform where researchers and practitioners from different fields can contribute complementary perspectives. This integration is essential for capturing the full complexity of processes, which often involve technical systems, human behavior, institutional rules, and cultural dynamics (vom Brocke et al., 2024). For example, insights from sociology can help explain how social norms influence process adherence, while theories from cognitive science may illuminate decision-making behaviors within processes.

However, integrating diverse disciplinary perspectives also presents important challenges. Different academic fields often operate with distinct assumptions, methods, and validation criteria. Information systems researchers may prioritize computational efficiency and automation, while organizational theorists may emphasize meaning-making, agency, and institutional context (Sydow & Schreyögg, 2013). Bridging these differences requires methodological openness, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to transparent reasoning. Process science addresses this by encouraging pluralism and by fostering communication across disciplinary boundaries.

In summary, the evolution from business process management to process mining and eventually to process science reflects a growing recognition of the need for data-driven, theory-informed, and context-sensitive approaches to process analysis. By integrating insights from fields such as organizational theory, information systems and cognitive science, process management and process science offer a more holistic and dynamic understanding of how processes function, evolve, and interact within complex organizational environments. This interdisciplinary

perspective is particularly valuable in contexts marked by structural transformation and high levels of operational uncertainty. One such context is mergers and acquisitions, where organizations are required to integrate heterogeneous processes, align divergent systems, and manage cultural and strategic differences. However, while process science offers a robust interdisciplinary framework that enriches traditional business process management through the integration of data-driven methods, organizational theory, and cognitive perspectives, its analytical depth and methodological granularity extend beyond the operational purview typically prioritized in mergers and acquisitions. In M&A contexts, the focus often shifts from the theoretical modeling and empirical generalization of processes to the pragmatic challenges of aligning, integrating, and streamlining distinct organizational systems and practices. Accordingly, while process science provides valuable conceptual tools for understanding process complexity, it is not the primary lens through which M&A activities are typically structured or executed.

The following chapter investigates the theoretical background of mergers and acquisitions, outlining their core concepts, phases, and challenges. Although the direct interplay between BPM and M&A will be addressed later in the solution design chapter, this foundational overview serves to contextualize the relevance and complexity of such corporate transformations

### **2.3 Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A)**

In today's competitive business environment, organizations increasingly view growth as a key indicator of success. Growth strategies are typically categorized into two primary types of "organic" and "inorganic" growth. Growth can be pursued through two primary avenues: organic growth, characterized by a gradual internal expansion of resources, or inorganic growth, which is achieved more rapidly through external means such as M&As (Capron & Mitchell, 2012).

Organic growth pertains to the expansion of a business through its own resources and internal mechanisms, resulting in an increase in capacity and the creation of new value within its existing operational framework (McKelvie et al., 2006). This form of growth is often driven by enhancing internal efficiencies, innovating products or services, and expanding market reach (Penrose,

2009). Organic growth is characterized by a gradual scaling of operations and is generally perceived as a more stable and sustainable approach to business expansion (Porter, 1985). In contrast, inorganic growth refers to the expansion achieved through external means, such as mergers, acquisitions, or strategic alliances. This growth strategy involves creating value through external linkages and combinations, including the purchase of a controlling interest in another company or the integration of external resources (Lockett et al., 2013; Shimizu et al., 2004). Inorganic growth strategies are often employed to rapidly scale operations, enter new markets, or acquire new technologies and capabilities. Among these, mergers and acquisitions represent the most prominent and frequently adopted inorganic growth strategies. M&A has gained prominence as a strategic option for organizations seeking to enter new markets, acquire new capabilities, and achieve competitive advantages. M&A activities are not only widespread but also characterized by their aggressive nature, aiming to achieve rapid growth and competitive advantages through the consolidation of firms (Weston et al., 1998; Perez-Batres & Eden, 2008; Gorton et al., 2009; Hyland et al., 2013).

From the 1980s through the turn of the millennium, M&A activities have increased globally, highlighting the growing importance of this strategy for businesses looking to expand rapidly and enhance their market reach (Gertsen et al., 1998; Appelbaum & Gandell, 2003; Buckley & Ghauri, 2002). In recent decades, M&A transactions have reached unprecedented levels, making them a preferred strategic choice for companies aiming to achieve scale, operational efficiency, and market dominance (Barkema & Schijven, 2008).

The conceptual distinction between "mergers" and "acquisitions" has become increasingly ambiguous, with these terms often used interchangeably or in combination. However, they represent distinct strategic actions within the domain of corporate restructuring. The following sections aim to define and differentiate these concepts and explain why they are often used in combination.

### **2.3.1 Mergers**

A "merger" is a strategic process and involves the combination of two or more companies into a single entity, where all but one of the participating organizations cease to exist (DePamphilis, 2019). The surviving entity retains its legal status and continues operations under its name, absorbing the assets and liabilities of the merged entities (Scott, 2003). The term merger has been defined differently by various scholars and researchers. According to Gaughan (2010), a merger refers to the process where two or more companies voluntarily combine to form a single entity, with the aim of achieving synergy and improving overall efficiency. Similarly, DePamphilis (2019) defines a merger as a strategic decision in which two companies integrate their resources, operations, and management structures to create a new, unified organization.

Cartwright and Cooper (1992) emphasize that a merger is characterized by mutual agreement between the participating firms, where the shareholders of both companies share ownership in the newly formed entity. This distinguishes mergers from acquisitions, where one company takes control over another. In the legal context, Sherman (2010) define a merger as a transaction in which two or more companies dissolve their separate legal identities to form a new corporation.

The primary objective of mergers is to create synergy, which refers to the enhanced value and efficiency that result from the combination of resources, expertise, and market presence. According to DePamphilis (2019), mergers also aim to achieve economies of scale, reduce operational costs, and expand market reach. Moreover, mergers enable companies to diversify their product portfolios, access new technologies, and improve customer satisfaction.

Despite the potential benefits, mergers often face several challenges. Cultural differences between the merging organizations, management conflicts, and regulatory barriers can hinder the success of a merger (Cartwright & Cooper, 1992).

### **2.3.2 Acquisitions**

An "acquisition" occurs when one company gains control over another firm, which may involve the purchase of the target company's assets or shares. According to Gaughan (2010), an

acquisition occurs when a larger company buys a smaller company, either through the purchase of shares or by acquiring its assets. In this context, the acquired company typically continues to operate as a subsidiary under the ownership of the acquiring firm (DePamphilis, 2019). Unlike mergers, acquisitions do not necessarily result in the dissolution of the acquired company; rather, it maintains its operational identity while being incorporated into the larger corporate structure.

Sherman (2010) describes an acquisition as a corporate strategy aimed at gaining market dominance, eliminating competition, or accessing new technologies and customer bases.

The primary motives behind acquisitions include gaining access to new markets, eliminating competitors, and achieving rapid growth. According to Gaughan (2010), acquisitions are often used to acquire innovative technologies, expand customer bases, and increase market power.

Acquisitions are often associated with high financial costs, employee resistance, and regulatory scrutiny. The failure of the acquisition of Nokia by Microsoft in 2014 highlights how poor strategic planning and cultural differences can lead to significant financial losses (DePamphilis, 2019).

Mergers and acquisitions are often discussed together because they serve complementary strategic purposes. While mergers focus on collaboration and synergy creation, acquisitions allow for rapid market entry and control over competitors. By combining these strategies, companies can achieve comprehensive growth and expand their global reach.

In conclusion, mergers and acquisitions are distinct yet interconnected strategies that enable companies to achieve strategic growth and competitive advantage. While mergers focus on collaboration and synergy creation, acquisitions offer immediate control over assets and market share. The combined use of these strategies allows companies to enhance efficiency, access new markets, and eliminate competition. However, successful execution requires careful planning, cultural integration, and compliance with regulatory frameworks.

For the purposes of this study, the term "Merger and Acquisition" is utilized as a unified concept that encompasses various forms of corporate combinations. This approach allows for a comprehensive examination of M&A activities as a collective phenomenon aimed at achieving

synergies and exploiting economies of scale. The focus is on understanding M&A as an overarching activity involving different forms of corporate consolidation and strategic realignment.

The following sub-sections of this chapter will provide an extensive review of the literature related to mergers and acquisitions. This review will emphasize significant themes and developments within this field, including the strategic motivations behind M&A, the integration processes, and the impacts on organizational performance and culture. Each sub-section will conclude with a detailed articulation of the study's contributions, highlighting how the research extends existing knowledge and addresses key gaps in the literature.

### **2.3.3 Phases of M&A Process**

The process of M&A represents a well-established and extensively researched domain. A comprehensive review of the literature reveals a considerable diversity in the classification of the phases that constitute the M&A process. This diversity reflects the varying theoretical frameworks and practical considerations that scholars have employed in their analyses of M&A activities. The classification of the M&A process into distinct phases is not only a matter of academic interest but also a practical necessity for practitioners who seek to navigate the complexities of mergers and acquisitions with greater precision and effectiveness.

One of the most commonly cited frameworks in the literature delineates the M&A process into three primary phases: pre-merger, transaction, and post-merger integration (e.g. Haspeslagh & Jermison, 1991; Lasserre, 2003; Angwin, 2007). These phases correspond to the planning, implementation, and integration stages of an M&A transaction (Picot, 2002). In addition to the widely recognized three-phase model, some researchers have proposed more granular categorizations of the M&A process. For example, Alam et al. (2014) introduce an inception phase that precedes the traditional pre-merger phase. This inception phase involves the initial strategic rationale for the M&A, including the formulation of the overarching strategic objectives and the initial feasibility analysis. According to this perspective, the M&A process begins even

before potential targets are identified, with a focus on the broader strategic context within which the M&A activity is situated. Similarly, Parenteau and Weston (2003) propose a four-phase model that includes strategic planning, candidate screening, due diligence, and post-integration. Their model emphasizes the importance of a systematic approach to identifying and evaluating potential M&A targets before moving into the due diligence and deal execution stages. This approach highlights the critical role of thorough preparation and analysis in ensuring the success of the subsequent phases of the M&A process. Galpin and Herndon (2000) offer yet another variation by breaking down the M&A process into five phases: formulation, location, investigation, negotiation, and integration. Their model underscores the iterative nature of the M&A process, where each phase builds upon the insights and outcomes of the previous one, ultimately culminating in the integration phase. According to Farley and Schwallie (1982), the process of M&A consists of six phases, including integration with strategic plan, intelligent screening, evaluation of targets, understanding value and price, anticipating the post-merger phase, and implementation. Kazemek and Grauman (1989) consider a M&A transaction as a seven-phase process, which includes assessment, planning the merger, analysis, selection the structure, securing approvals, final planning, and finally the implementation phase.

Despite the variations in these frameworks, the three-phase model of pre-merger, transaction, and post-merger integration remains widely accepted and provides a comprehensive overview of the M&A process. These three phases capture the essential elements of M&A activities and offer a useful structure for both academic analysis and practical application. For the purposes of this study, this three-phase framework will serve as the foundational structure for analyzing the M&A process, while acknowledging the additional insights offered by more granular models.

The pre-merger phase involves the identification, evaluation, and selection of potential candidates for merger or acquisition. This phase is critical as it lays the groundwork for the entire M&A process by establishing the strategic goals and objectives that the transaction is intended to achieve. According to Lasserre (2003), the pre-merger phase can be further divided into three key stages: the identification of value creation opportunities, the setting of goals and selection of business targets, and the execution of due diligence. During the identification stage, companies

explore various opportunities where value can be created through the merger or acquisition, such as market expansion, cost synergies, or technology acquisition. Following this, clear and specific goals are formulated, including the selection of potential business targets that align with these objectives. The final stage of the pre-merger phase involves conducting thorough due diligence to assess the financial, operational, and strategic fit of the selected targets. This stage is crucial for ensuring that the chosen candidates align with the strategic vision and that any potential risks are identified and mitigated before proceeding to the transaction phase (Lasserre, 2003). Setting clear criteria for the M&A process is imperative during the pre-merger phase, as it guides the decision-making process and ensures that all actions taken are aligned with the overall strategic objectives of the acquiring firm. Alam et al. (2014) emphasize the importance of defining what is expected from the M&A process at this early stage. This involves not only identifying specific targets but also articulating the strategic rationale behind the acquisition, such as entering new markets, acquiring new capabilities, or achieving economies of scale. By establishing these criteria, companies can more effectively screen potential candidates and focus their efforts on those that offer the greatest potential for value creation. Furthermore, this phase often involves preliminary negotiations and the establishment of a framework for how the deal will be structured, including considerations of financing, legal implications, and the integration process that will follow.

The transaction phase primarily revolves around the legal and financial formalization of the M&A deal. This phase is characterized by the drafting, negotiation, and finalization of the purchase agreement, which legally binds the involved parties and outlines the terms of the transaction. The transaction phase represents the culmination of the pre-merger activities and serves as the bridge between the planning and implementation phases of the M&A process. It is during this phase that the actual transfer of ownership takes place, and the firms involved begin the process of coming together under a unified structure. The transaction phase is pivotal as it marks the point at which the deal is officially sealed, and the firms move from the conceptual stage of the merger to the practical realities of integration (Lasserre, 2003). The successful completion of this phase requires careful legal and financial due diligence, as well as effective negotiation strategies to ensure that the interests of all parties are adequately protected.

Once the transaction phase is completed, the M&A process moves into the post-merger integration phase, which is widely regarded as the most complex and challenging aspect of the entire process. During this phase, the two or more formerly independent entities are combined to form a new, unified organization. This integration process is multifaceted, involving not only the merging of organizational structures and reconfiguration of business processes but also the integration of corporate cultures, management systems, and human resources. According to Epstein (2004), the PMI phase is where the real work of merging the organizations begins, as it involves aligning the strategies, operations, and cultures of the merging entities into a cohesive whole. Shrivastava (1986) further elaborates that the primary challenge of PMI lies in the effective integration of the companies into a single entity that can operate smoothly and achieve the intended synergies. The complexity of this phase is heightened by the need to balance the differing corporate cultures, reconcile operational differences, and manage the expectations of stakeholders across both organizations. The PMI phase is a dynamic and evolving process that extends well beyond the immediate aftermath of the merger or acquisition. Graebner et al. (2017) describe PMI as a process in which not only are the merging firms joined together to form a new organization, but also their various components—such as technologies, processes, and human resources—are combined in a way that generates synergies and creates value. This definition underscores the importance of PMI in realizing the strategic objectives of the M&A, as the success of this phase often determines whether the anticipated benefits of the merger, such as increased market share, cost savings, or enhanced capabilities, are fully realized. Researchers concur that the PMI phase is the key determinant of M&A success (Shearer et al., 2001; Appelbaum & Gandell, 2003; Huang & Kleiner, 2004), as it is during this phase that the actual value creation occurs (Haspelagh & Jemison, 1991). In other words, the integration process is where the potential synergies of the merger are unlocked, making it a critical focus for any M&A strategy.

The distinct phases of the M&A process, while interconnected, present different risk profiles and challenges. Research on M&A highlights that the pre-merger and transaction phases have the inherent advantage of being retractable in the event of insurmountable problems. For example, if

due diligence uncovers significant risks or if negotiations break down, the deal can be called off with relatively limited consequences. However, the PMI phase does not afford this same level of flexibility. Considering this fact, PMI is probably getting the most challenging phase in the lifecycle of M&A process to study, planning and managing of which poses an immense challenge to company mergers (Harrison, 2007). Once the merger has been completed and the integration process has begun, the firms are committed to seeing it through, making this phase the most challenging to manage. Frantz (2014) notes that the PMI phase is fraught with risks related to organizational integration, cultural clashes, and the realization of synergies, all of which can significantly impact the success of the merger. The complexities of PMI demand careful planning, meticulous execution, and ongoing management to ensure that the desired outcomes are achieved and that the merger creates value for all stakeholders involved.

As M&A continues to be a preferred strategy for corporate growth and expansion, the importance of effective post-merger integration cannot be overstated. The PMI phase has increasingly become the focal point of M&A strategies, as it is the stage where the long-term success of the merger is determined. Given its complexity and the significant challenges it poses, PMI requires a well-thought-out approach that takes into account the various aspects of integration, from operational alignment to cultural integration. The evolving nature of PMI, coupled with the need for flexibility and adaptability, makes it an open-ended process that can extend over several years.

#### **2.3.4 M&A Schools of Thought**

The field of merger and acquisition has garnered significant academic attention for several decades, reflecting its critical role in corporate strategy and economic development. The origins of M&A research can be traced back to the late 19th century, when the first major merger waves began to emerge. These waves, characterized by periods of intense merger activity, have been subject to extensive analysis, providing a rich historical context for understanding the evolution of M&A practices (Picot, 2002). Scholars like Cartwright (2005) have highlighted the enduring

relevance of M&A research, noting that the dynamics of mergers and acquisitions continue to challenge both practitioners and academics alike.

The study of M&A has been inherently interdisciplinary, drawing insights from a wide range of academic fields. This multidisciplinary approach reflects the complexity of M&A activities, which involve not only financial transactions but also strategic, organizational, and behavioral considerations. Historically, the research on M&A has been fragmented across various disciplines, each offering unique perspectives on the phenomena. To bring coherence to this vast and diverse body of work, Haspeslagh and Jemison (1991) proposed a classification framework that identifies four major schools of thought within M&A research: financial economics, strategic management, organizational behavior, and process perspective. Each of these schools offers distinct objectives, theoretical foundations, and central hypotheses that guide their inquiries into M&A activities and will be expounded in the following sections:

#### **2.3.4.1 Financial economics**

The financial economics perspective represents one of the earliest and most influential streams of research within the field of mergers and acquisitions. This approach, rooted in the principles of finance and economics, primarily focuses on the financial outcomes of M&A activities. Researchers in this domain are particularly concerned with how mergers and acquisitions affect shareholder value, market efficiency, and the broader economic implications of corporate consolidation. Historically, the financial economics school has been the dominant paradigm in M&A research, shaping much of the early discourse and theoretical development in the field. The financial economics school, often referred to as the "capital market school," centers on the premise that the primary objective of M&A transactions is to create financial value. The central criterion for evaluating the success of a merger or acquisition within this framework is its ability to generate net wealth for shareholders. This value creation is typically measured through metrics such as share price appreciation, dividend growth, and overall returns on investment. The fundamental hypothesis of this school is that M&A activities should lead to enhanced financial performance, either through cost synergies, revenue enhancements, or improved market positioning (Jensen & Ruback, 1983).

For much of the 20th century, this financial-centric view dominated M&A research, with a strong emphasis on quantitative analysis and empirical testing. Studies within this tradition have extensively explored the impact of M&A on stock prices, examining how markets react to merger announcements and how these reactions translate into shareholder wealth. The efficient market hypothesis has been a cornerstone of this research, positing that financial markets are efficient in processing information and that the true value of M&A transactions is reflected in the immediate stock price changes following the announcement (Fama, 1970). Accordingly, a positive market reaction is often interpreted as evidence of anticipated value creation, while a negative reaction suggests potential value destruction.

Over the past several decades, the financial economics perspective has provided robust insights into the conditions under which M&A transactions are likely to succeed or fail. For instance, it has been well-documented that mergers between firms with complementary resources or capabilities tend to produce more significant financial gains than those driven by diversification motives alone (Roll, 1986). Additionally, research within this stream has highlighted the importance of deal structure, financing methods, and the timing of transactions in determining the financial outcomes of M&A activities. The role of financial intermediaries, such as investment banks and advisory firms, has also been a focal point, with studies examining their influence on deal outcomes and the alignment of interests between different stakeholders (Servaes & Zenner, 1996).

Despite its dominance, the financial economics perspective began to face challenges approximately 35 years ago as other "softer" factors, such as human aspects, cultural issues, and organizational integration, increasingly demonstrated their relevance to M&A success (Cartwright & Schoenberg, 2006). Critics of the financial economics school argue that its narrow focus on quantitative metrics and short-term financial outcomes overlooks the complex, multidimensional nature of mergers and acquisitions. For example, while maximizing shareholder value remains a central goal (Birkinshaw et al., 2000), achieving this objective often requires addressing a broader array of factors, including employee morale, cultural fit, and the long-term strategic alignment between merging entities.

The shift towards recognizing these softer factors does not diminish the importance of financial economics in M&A research but rather highlights the need for a more holistic understanding of what drives successful mergers and acquisitions. As the field has evolved, there has been a growing recognition that financial value creation, while crucial, is not the sole determinant of M&A success. Instead, it must be considered alongside other dimensions, such as strategic rationale, organizational compatibility, and post-merger integration.

#### **2.3.4.2 Strategic management**

This school of thought posits that the primary focus of M&A activities should lie in the strategic fit of all entities involved in the transaction and the long-term value creation that is realized through achieving a competitive advantage at the individual firm level (Birkinshaw et al., 2000). This school views M&A not merely as a financial transaction but as a strategic maneuver that enables firms to fulfill broader objectives such as market expansion, diversification, and the attainment of competitive advantages. Grounded in the resource-based view of the firm, this perspective suggests that mergers and acquisitions are motivated by the desire to acquire resources, capabilities, and market positions that are challenging to develop internally (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984). The strategic management school thus places a significant emphasis on the long-term implications of M&A activities, particularly concerning a firm's competitive positioning and sustainable competitive advantage.

The strategic management school thoroughly examines the entire M&A process, from the initial deal phase to the complex integration process that follows (Birkinshaw et al., 2000). Researchers within this school also address a comprehensive range of success measures, including but not limited to sales growth, market share expansion, enhanced competitiveness, and overall profitability improvement (Weber, 2013). Central to this school of thought are the concepts of "strategic fit" and "relatedness" between the acquiring and target firms (Lubatkin, 1987; Larsson & Finkelstein, 1999; Seth, 1990). The degree of strategic fit, or the alignment between the strategic objectives and operational capabilities of the involved entities, is a crucial determinant of the success or failure of the M&A endeavor.

Scholars in this domain argue that the absence of strategic fit or relatedness between the target and acquiring firms often results in the failure to create value and realize anticipated synergies (Allred et al., 2005). Shelton (1988) articulates that strategic fit is achieved when the combined entities can generate value that neither could have achieved independently. Additionally, research within this school has explored the impact of pre-merger relatedness on post-merger performance (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991; Larsson & Finkelstein, 1999; Cartwright & Schoenberg, 2006; Chatterjee, 2009). The consensus among these scholars is that a higher degree of relatedness between the firms enhances post-merger performance, facilitating smoother integration and synergy realization (Lubatkin et al., 1997; Morosini et al., 1998; Shelton, 1988).

Underlying the emphasis on relatedness is the assumption that successful M&A transactions hinge on the acquiring firm's ability to identify and combine with a partner that offers an optimal strategic match. This assumption is rooted in the notion that complete integration and the realization of merger benefits are contingent upon finding a complementary partner with aligned objectives and compatible operational structures (Mirvis, 1985; Jemison & Sitkin, 1986; Angwin, 2001). When such strategic alignment is present, the similarities and relatedness between the firms can lead to the creation of synergies, which are essential for achieving the desired outcomes of the M&A process (Harrison et al., 1991).

The exploration of strategic fit and relatedness within the strategic management school underscores the importance of viewing M&A activities through a holistic and strategic lens. By considering the long-term implications of these transactions, firms can better navigate the complexities of post-merger integration, optimize value creation, and secure a sustainable competitive advantage.

#### **2.3.4.3 Organizational behavior**

This school of thought introduces a vital and nuanced dimension to the study of mergers and acquisitions by focusing on the human and cultural factors that significantly influence the success or failure of such transactions. Rooted in the disciplines of psychology and human resource management, this perspective seeks to explore how human dynamics impact the M&A process

and its ultimate outcomes (Birkinshaw et al., 2000; Bauer & Matzler, 2014). Unlike the more traditional approaches that emphasize financial, strategic, and operational considerations, the organizational behavior school places a strong emphasis on the human side of M&A, examining how employees, managers, and organizational cultures respond to the profound changes that mergers and acquisitions entail. This school of thought is particularly concerned with the interpersonal and cultural challenges that arise during the PMI phase, a critical period during which the combined entities must coalesce into a unified and functioning organization. Scholars in this domain argue that the success of M&A depends not only on strategic fit and financial synergies but also on the effective management of human aspects (Buono & Bowditch, 2003).

The organizational behavior school also highlights the role of employee perceptions and emotions in shaping the outcomes of M&A. Research has shown that employees often experience feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, and loss during mergers and acquisitions, which can negatively impact their performance and engagement (Bastien, 1987). Addressing these emotional responses through effective communication, support, and involvement in the change process is essential for maintaining morale and ensuring a smooth transition (Buono & Bowditch, 2003). Furthermore, the success of M&A depends on the extent to which employees from both organizations are able to integrate and work together effectively, which in turn is influenced by the degree of cultural compatibility and the quality of change management (Weber et al., 2012).

#### **2.3.4.4 Process perspective**

This school of thought represents a comprehensive and integrative approach that emphasizes the importance of understanding M&A as a dynamic and iterative sequence of activities. Unlike other schools of thought that focus primarily on strategic fit or cultural alignment, the process perspective views M&A as a multi-stage process that unfolds over time, with each phase critically influencing the final outcome. This school of thought is particularly concerned with the flow and management of activities across different stages, from the initial conception of the deal to the final post-merger integration and evaluation (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991). The process perspective underscores the complexity and uncertainty inherent in M&A transactions, arguing

that success depends not only on strategic and cultural considerations but also on the ability to manage the process effectively across all stages.

The theoretical foundations of the process perspective are deeply rooted in both strategic management and organizational behavior, drawing from and expanding upon these disciplines to form a more holistic view of M&A (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991). Central to this perspective is the idea that M&A is not merely a single event or transaction but rather a complex, iterative process that requires careful planning, execution, and continuous adjustment. Key concepts within this perspective include target selection, negotiation, due diligence, integration, and post-merger evaluation, each of which represents a critical stage in the M&A process. According to this view, the effectiveness with which each stage is managed can significantly impact the overall success of the transaction (Shrivastava, 1986; Hunt, 1990).

One of the primary contributions of the process perspective is its focus on the integration phase, which is widely recognized as the most challenging and decisive stage of the M&A process (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991). The integration phase involves the blending of organizational structures. The process perspective argues that the success of M&A is largely contingent on the ability to manage this phase effectively, with flexibility, adaptability, and continuous learning being essential for navigating the uncertainties and challenges that arise (Kitching, 1967; Greenwood et al., 1994).

The process perspective emphasizes the sequential and iterative nature of M&A activities, challenging the notion that M&A success is determined solely by pre-merger factors such as strategic fit. Instead, this school of thought argues that each stage of the M&A process is interdependent, with decisions and actions taken at one stage influencing the outcomes of subsequent stages (Jemison & Sitkin, 1986). Moreover, the process perspective advocates for a flexible and adaptive approach to managing M&A, recognizing that unexpected challenges and opportunities often arise during the course of the transaction. This flexibility is particularly important during the integration phase, where rigid plans and assumptions can lead to failures in synergy realization and value creation (Shrivastava, 1986; Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991).

A central argument of the process perspective is that the potential synergies identified during the strategic planning phase of an M&A can only be realized through effective process management during the integration phase (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991). Synergies, whether operational, financial, or strategic, are often the primary motivation for pursuing an M&A, yet they can remain elusive if the integration process is not managed effectively (Kitching, 1967; Hunt, 1990). The process perspective highlights the importance of aligning the integration strategy with the strategic objectives of the M&A, ensuring that the combined entity is positioned to capture the anticipated benefits. This alignment requires a deep understanding of the interdependencies between different stages of the M&A process and the ability to coordinate activities across the organization.

The process perspective also emphasizes the role of continuous learning and adaptation in achieving synergy realization. Given the inherent uncertainties and complexities of M&A, the ability to learn from ongoing experiences and to adjust strategies in response to emerging challenges is critical (Shrivastava, 1986). This iterative approach to process management allows organizations to navigate the complexities of M&A more effectively, increasing the likelihood of successful outcomes (Jemison & Sitkin, 1986; Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991).

While M&A schools of thought offer various perspectives on the strategies and approaches to Mergers and Acquisitions, they all ultimately aim to achieve the primary motive of M&A, which will be discussed in the next section.

### **2.3.5 The Primary Motive of M&A**

In light of the growing prominence of mergers and acquisitions within the global business landscape, a comprehensive understanding of the underlying motives driving these transactions is crucial for deciphering the determinants of their success or failure (Seth et al., 2002). The intricate nature of M&A activities has garnered extensive attention from scholars and practitioners alike, leading to the development of numerous theoretical frameworks aimed at elucidating the objectives and rationales behind these complex corporate maneuvers. Notably,

several prominent theories; such as the efficiency theory, the monopoly theory, and the hubris theory, have been advanced within the academic literature to provide a nuanced understanding of the motivations that propel firms to engage in M&A transactions (Roll, 1986; Trautwein, 1990; Berkovitch & Narayanan, 1993). Each of these theories offers distinct perspectives on the strategic considerations that inform M&A decisions, ranging from the pursuit of operational efficiencies and market power to the influence of managerial self-interest and overconfidence. However, it is important to note that certain motives, particularly those related to managerial self-interest and hubris, while extensively debated in the literature (Seth et al., 2000), fall beyond the scope of the present study and will not be the focus of further analysis.

Among the various motives identified, the pursuit of "Synergy" stands out as the predominant driving force behind M&A transactions. Synergy, in this context, refers to the enhanced value that arises from the combination and integration of two or more companies, resulting in a competitive advantage that would be unattainable if the entities operated independently (Porter, 1985). The concept of synergy is predicated on the idea that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts; that is, the collaborative effects generated by merging or acquiring firms can lead to superior outcomes compared to their standalone performance (Gaughan, 2010). These synergistic benefits often materialize through the augmentation of both tangible and intangible resources, thereby bolstering the organization's asset base and reinforcing its competitive positioning in the market. Within this framework, the array of organizational resources under a firm's control, including but not limited to, business processes, human resources, and the accompanying process knowledge, plays a pivotal role in achieving and sustaining competitive advantage.

A synergy-seeking organization is deemed effective insofar as it successfully leverages the knowledge and process know-how embedded within its workforce to optimize business operations and drive value creation. In particular, the transfer and integration of process know-how, which is defined as the practical expertise required to execute business processes effectively, are crucial for realizing the anticipated synergies post-merger. This process know-how, which is often tacit and resides within the individuals who perform specific business processes, must be carefully managed during PMI phase to ensure that the newly formed entity

can harness the full potential of the combined capabilities. Consequently, the success of a PMI effort is closely tied to the organization's ability to capture, transfer, and harmonize process know-how across the merged entities, thereby facilitating the achievement of synergistic outcomes.

To further explore the primary motive of synergy in M&A transactions, the subsequent section will consider the various types of mergers and acquisitions that firms may pursue, each characterized by different strategic objectives and levels of integration. The section will provide a detailed discussion of these integration typologies, offering insights into how companies can align their M&A strategies with their broader corporate goals and the specific challenges associated with different levels of integration. Through this analysis, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the strategic and operational dimensions of M&A, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on corporate growth and competitive advantage in the context of mergers and acquisitions.

### **2.3.6 Classifications of M&As and Integration Typologies**

The literature on mergers and acquisitions has extensively examined the classification of these transactions to construct a nuanced and detailed understanding of their dynamics. Over the decades since the 1890s, researchers have identified and analyzed various M&A waves through a framework that categorizes these deals into three principal types: horizontal, vertical, and conglomerate mergers (Ansoff, 1957; Rumelt, 1982; Cartwright & Cooper, 1996; Sherman, 2010; Gaughan, 2010).

**Horizontal integration** occurs when firms within the same industry sector or those competing in the same market merge. This type of merger is primarily driven by the objective of achieving economies of scale. Such economies arise from the reduction of costs, which can be realized through the elimination of redundant resources or the consolidation of operational activities. By merging, firms can benefit from enhanced efficiency, reduced operational redundancies, and improved market power, all of which contribute to cost savings and competitive advantages.

**Vertical integration**, on the other hand, involves mergers between firms that operate at different stages of the supply chain, specifically where there is a supplier-buyer relationship. This type of integration typically sees manufacturers merging with their suppliers or retailers. The strategic motivations behind vertical integration often include ensuring a stable supply of critical products, addressing resource shortages, or gaining greater control over production specifications for intermediate goods. By integrating vertically, companies can improve supply chain management, reduce transaction costs, and enhance their control over the production process.

**Conglomerate** mergers are distinct from both horizontal and vertical integrations, occurring between firms that operate in entirely different industries or unrelated business domains. These mergers are characterized by the lack of direct competitive or supply chain relationships between the merging entities. In essence, a conglomerate merger involves the combination of companies with diverse business activities and objectives, with the aim of achieving diversification and risk reduction rather than operational synergies or market consolidation.

The classification of mergers into horizontal, vertical, and conglomerate types serves as a crucial tool in selecting potential merger partners. It provides a framework for decision-making, helping to develop strategies that influence the business relationship between the acquiring and target firms. After strategic decisions have been made and pre-merger activities are completed, the emphasis should shift to the integration process. The literature on pre-merger typologies has notably focused on the strategic fit and relatedness of the businesses involved in an M&A transaction, underscoring the importance of aligning strategic objectives and operational compatibility to achieve successful integration (Ansoff, 1965; Kitching, 1967; Lubatkin, 1983; Salter & Weinhold, 1988; Shelton, 1988).

The limitations inherent in examining the pre-merger process from a solely one-dimensional perspective have catalyzed a significant shift in the field. This shift has given rise to a re-evaluation of post-merger integration typologies, emerging as a response to the inadequacies of pre-merger typologies in predicting and assessing performance outcomes associated with mergers and acquisitions. This evolution represents a fundamental change in focus from merely

identifying potential synergistic benefits to a deeper exploration of the mechanisms through which such synergy might be effectively realized.

The most influential and widely adopted framework in this domain is the integration typology proposed by Haspeslagh and Jemison (1991). According to this framework, the "Integration Strategy" becomes a pivotal element of discourse during the integration process, profoundly affecting business performance (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991; Gomes et al., 2013). The integration strategy addresses the balance between integration and autonomy across two key dimensions: "Strategic Interdependence" and "Organizational Autonomy" (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991; Graebner, 2004). Haspeslagh and Jemison's capability-based framework identifies four primary integration approaches based on the interplay of these dimensions: Preservation, Symbiotic, Holding, and Absorption (Figure 2.5).

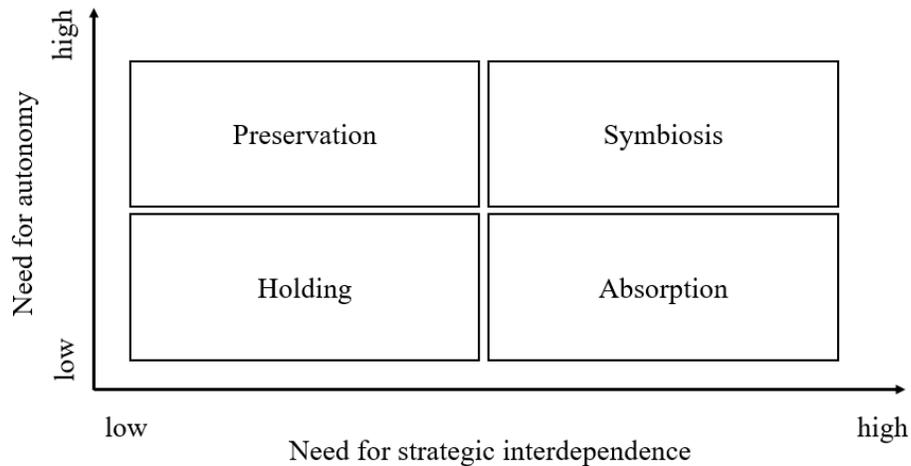


Fig. 2.5. Integration approaches matrix (Haspeslagh & Jemison,1991)

**Preservation:** this approach is characterized by low interdependence between the acquirer and acquired firm(s). High autonomy is granted the acquired firm(s), so that the acquired company is only integrated to a modest degree and preserves its old way of operating.

**Symbiotic:** this approach reflects high organizational autonomy and at the same time high interdependence. In an integration through symbiotic, the acquiring firm tries to establish a balance between two business models in a manner that the organizational autonomy of the acquired company not to be endangered by transferring strategic competences. In this approach, integration is a gradual process, which requires a degree of change in both companies to create a whole entity that reflects the leading practices and key competences of each firm.

**Holding:** Holding combines low organizational autonomy and low strategic interdependence. Hence, the holding type of acquisition does not entail any integration.

**Absorption:** This approach applies high level of integration and low autonomy for the acquired firm(s). In an absorption, the acquirer assimilates the acquired firm(s) into its own operation system and its culture and absorbs the firm(s) directly.

While the strategic and operational dimensions of mergers and acquisitions have been widely studied, it has become increasingly evident that structural integration alone is insufficient to ensure post-merger success. As merging organizations attempt to align systems, structures, and processes, they must also confront differences in values, norms, and underlying assumptions that shape employee behavior. Therefore, to fully understand the complexities of post-merger integration and to provide a more holistic foundation for this research effort, it is essential to examine the role of organizational culture. The following section turns to the theoretical foundations of organizational culture, exploring its definitions, dimensions, and implications.

## **2.4 Understanding Culture**

Culture is a multifaceted concept that influences various aspects of human interaction, including individual behaviors, social structures, and organizational operations. It is a complex and dynamic construct that encompasses the ideas, behaviors, customs, and social institutions of a particular group or society. According to Hofstede (2001), culture is the shared mental framework that shapes the beliefs and behaviors of a group, setting them apart from others. This

definition highlights the role of culture in shaping cognitive frameworks, attitudes, and social interactions.

Schein (2010) defines culture as a structured set of fundamental assumptions developed by a group through experiences of adapting to external challenges and maintaining internal cohesion. This definition emphasizes the adaptive nature of culture and its role in guiding collective behavior. Culture is transmitted across generations through language, symbols, rituals, and institutional structures, making it a foundational element of human societies.

Culture manifests in multiple forms, including:

- **National Culture:** The collective values and norms shared by individuals within a country, influencing behaviors, communication styles, and business practices (Hofstede, 2001).
- **Subcultures:** Distinct cultural groups within a larger culture, often shaped by profession, region, or interests (Martin, 2001).
- **Corporate Culture:** The shared beliefs, values, and practices within a company that influence decision-making and behavior (Schein, 2010).
- **Organizational Culture:** A specific subset of corporate culture that defines internal operations, leadership approaches, and employee engagement (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

While all forms of culture impact business operations, organizational culture has the most direct impact on how companies function internally and adapt to external changes (Schein, 2010). It shapes decision-making, interpersonal dynamics, and operational norms (Hofstede, 1993; Schein, 1996). As discussed earlier, within the context of organizational theory, the St. Gallen Management Model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the systemic interrelations within an organization. Organizational culture plays a central role in this model by influencing how organizations perceive their environment, structure their internal processes, and enact their strategic intentions. The SGMM identifies culture as one of the key contextual factors that shape the design and functioning of organizations (Rüegg-Stürm & Grand, 2019).

In this model, culture is not merely a background element but a dynamic force that informs normative orientations, communicative processes, and decision-making structures. It contributes to the formation of guiding values and norms, which are essential for the coordination of activities and for maintaining coherence between an organization's identity, its stakeholders, and its strategic goals. Thus, the St. Gallen approach situates organizational culture as both a product of historical development and a driver of future-oriented change within the systemic organization.

Since the 1930s, the linkage between the culture and functionality of social organizations has been extensively discussed in social sciences. Organizational culture is therefore regarded as a crucial criterion for shaping the actions of an organization (Mead, 1934). It comprises socially transmitted behavior patterns that connect human communities to their environment (Keesing, 1974). Scholars in the field of organizational culture, such as Hofstede (1984), continue to draw on these foundational understandings. By the turn of the century, the concept of organizational culture gained significant traction, particularly with the premise that certain organizational cultures contribute to greater financial success (Ogbonna & Harris, 2000). The core argument is that an organization's performance hinges on the extent to which its cultural values are pervasive and actively supported by employees. According to Denison (1996) organizational culture is an fundamental structure within organizations, rooted in the shared beliefs, values, and assumptions of its members. Schein (1990) further characterizes organizational culture as a set of basic assumptions that a group has discovered or developed while learning to cope with internal and external challenges. When these assumptions are validated, they are considered legitimate and communicated to new members of the group. Schein (1995) elucidates how and why cultures develop within organizations by describing the necessity for integration and meaning in the actions of the organization's members. This necessity fosters the evolution of shared elements among members, such as shared values, beliefs, and practices that prove effective and become entrenched over time. These values, beliefs, and practices are subsequently imparted to new members as part of the socialization process. The model of interdependent cultural levels by Schein (1995) is predicated on this explanation. Accordingly, organizational culture can be

analyzed on three levels: (1) artifacts, (2) norms and values, (3) basic assumptions and premises, each varying in their degree of visibility and consciousness (Figure 2.6).

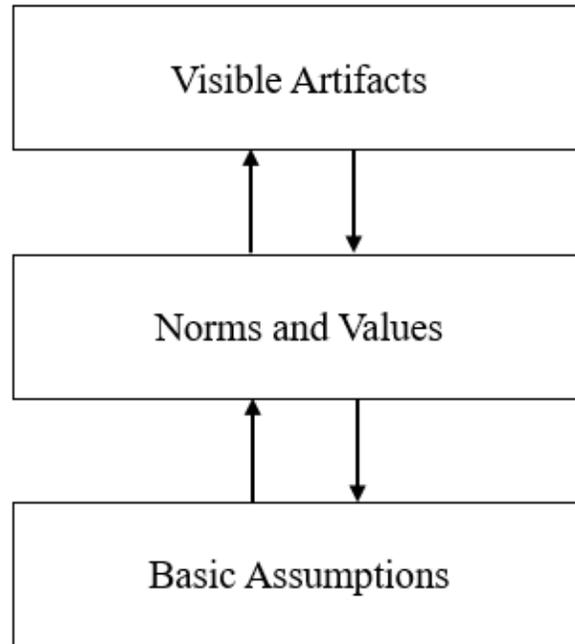


Fig. 2.6. Organizational culture model (Schein, 1995)

Artifacts, representing cultural phenomena at the surface level, encompass visible structures and processes within an organization. Although directly observable, they are challenging to interpret and include elements such as technologies, language, architectures, etc. The second cultural level comprises strategies, shared values, goals, and philosophies. Schein (1995) refers to these as beliefs and attitudes rooted in moral and ethical ideals, which convey notions of right and wrong. These values provide an orienting framework that guides the actions of organizational members. The third level consists of basic assumptions that refer to unconscious and taken-for-granted

conceptions, which serve as the foundational premises upon which all values and actions are based.

Schein's model and his definition of organizational culture make him the most frequently cited researcher in this domain, and his work is seminal for many scholars in the field. It is broadly accepted that organizational culture is a construct shared by members of the organization, presenting a form of confraternity and affiliation (Obenchain, 2002). Thus, the culture of an organization comprises the prevalent conventions, or the customary ways in which activities are conducted within the organization. It provides a sense of identity for the organization's members and encompasses implicit regulations on how members interact with each other (Maher, 2000). Organizational cultures are specific to each organization and are generally stable, though not immutable or unchangeable (Beugelsdijk et al., 2006). This understanding of organizational culture aligns with the broader view of organizational dynamics, which emphasizes the interplay between culture and other key organizational elements. In other words, organizational culture is seen not as an isolated element but as an integral part of the broader system of an organization, interacting dynamically with other components like leadership, structure, and processes (Doleski, 2015).

In light of this systemic view, it becomes essential to examine how organizational culture interacts with key organizational components in specific applied contexts. Two such areas where this dynamic interplay becomes especially critical are BPM and M&A. In the following sections, we investigate these two topics in relation to organizational culture because they are particularly relevant to the purpose of this study, which aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of its strategic importance in complex organizational transformations.

## **2.5 Summery and Transition**

This chapter has laid the theoretical groundwork for the study by exploring three critical domains of Business Process Management, Mergers and Acquisitions, and Organizational Culture. Each of these fields offers distinct yet complementary perspectives that are essential for understanding organizational transformation. Their inclusion reflects an integrative view of management,

consistent with the modern St. Gallen Management Model, which conceptualizes organizations as dynamic systems shaped by continuous interactions between strategic, structural, and cultural dimensions. This systems-based approach highlights the importance of addressing multiple perspectives when studying change in complex organizational settings.

The first section focused on business process management, which has emerged as a critical discipline for achieving operational efficiency, standardization, and continuous improvement within organizations. The literature in this field has evolved significantly, shifting from an initial emphasis on automation and technological tools toward a broader understanding of BPM as an integrative management approach. This includes attention to strategy alignment, organizational learning, and cross-functional collaboration. Establishing a solid theoretical background in BPM is essential for this study, as process management plays a foundational role in enabling consistency and performance across complex organizational systems.

The second section addressed mergers and acquisitions as major strategic decisions that frequently lead to large-scale organizational change. M&A activities are not only driven by financial and market-based motives but also bring substantial challenges related to integration, governance, and operational alignment. The academic literature on M&A has highlighted the high rate of failure associated with these transactions, often attributed to inadequate planning, misalignment of goals, and challenges in managing the integration process. Understanding the key concepts and debates in M&A literature is therefore crucial for contextualizing the organizational transformations that this study seeks to investigate.

The third section examined organizational culture, a topic that continues to receive growing attention across disciplines. Organizational culture refers to the shared values, assumptions, and practices that shape behavior and influence how work is carried out within a given context. Culture has a profound impact on employee engagement, leadership, decision-making, and change management. In organizational transformations such as mergers and acquisitions, cultural factors often become particularly salient, as employees from different backgrounds must navigate and adapt to new expectations and norms. A thorough understanding of cultural theory is therefore indispensable to any analysis of post-merger integration or process harmonization.

Although each of these domains was considered independently, they are inherently interconnected. BPM influences how organizations structure and coordinate work; M&A often trigger fundamental changes in that structure; and culture shapes how these changes are interpreted and enacted by individuals. Together, they form a comprehensive theoretical base that supports the study of complex organizational change from multiple angles.

This chapter has set the theoretical foundation for this research study. As mentioned before, The three upcoming chapters are structured according to the design science research methodology, which unfolds in three critical phases: (1) problem identification, (2) solution design, and (3) evaluation. These phases provide a coherent framework for addressing the operational and cultural challenges of business process harmonization in M&A contexts.

### **3. Unveiling the Research Gap (Problem Identification)**

In the dynamic and often volatile landscape of mergers and acquisitions, the effective integration of business operations stands as a critical determinant of success. Among the various dimensions of post-merger integration, business process harmonization, as a subfield of business process management, has emerged as a strategic imperative for organizations seeking to consolidate operations, eliminate redundancies, and realize anticipated synergies. However, despite its significance, process harmonization remains a challenging and underexplored endeavor, particularly within the complex and multidimensional context of M&A. The convergence of different organizational processes, IT systems, and operational philosophies frequently leads to inconsistencies, inefficiencies, and integration bottlenecks. Moreover, these technical and procedural challenges are further compounded by the cultural dynamics inherent in combining organizations with distinct identities, values, and management styles.

Furthermore, cultural incompatibility is often cited as a key reason for M&A failure, yet it is rarely given due consideration in process alignment efforts. This study addresses this critical gap by examining business process harmonization not only as a technical or structural challenge, but as an inherently socio-organizational one. It investigates how cultural aspects influence the harmonization of business processes in M&A contexts, and how organizations can navigate these cultural intricacies to achieve more effective integration. By doing so, this research contributes to the broader field of BPM, offering new insights into how process harmonization strategies can be designed and implemented in culturally diverse M&A environments.

This chapter aims to elucidate the essential facets and underlying motivations for the present study. It begins with a systematic literature review to identify existing knowledge gaps that the research seeks to address. Following this, the chapter delineates the primary objectives of the study, emphasizing its contribution to the academic literature and practical implications for industry practitioners.

### **3.1 Systematic Literature Review**

For the purpose of this study and in order to identify the research problem, we adopted a systematic, concept-centric approach to conduct the literature review, as recommended by Webster and Watson (2002). This approach involves a meticulous analysis of the scientific relevance of the research topic, defining the scope of the problem, and elucidating the motivation behind the study. The literature review was carried out following a systematic procedure, which includes the stages of (1) searching, (2) screening, and (3) classifying extant studies (Petersen et al., 2015). Each step of this procedure will be elaborated in the subsequent sections to provide a clear understanding of the process and its significance.

#### **3.1.1 Searching**

The aim of this phase is to identify relevant literature and its contribution to the topic of research. For the purpose of this study, the searching phase has been conducted in three sub-phases, including the pre-search, systematic search and the cross-reference phase.

- **Pre-Search**

Considering the fact that the topic of the research is not yet academically mature, Google Scholar was initially used as the search engine in the pre-search phase. This was done to assess the current state of the literature and determine relevant keywords for further investigation. A search using the keyword "Process Harmonization" yielded a limited number of articles. It was observed that the terms "Harmonization" and "Standardization" are often used interchangeably in the context of business process management. Therefore, the keyword "Process Standardization" was also included for the pre-search. To further refine the search results, the keyword "Merger and Acquisition" was later added. Finally, in order to further narrow down the search results, the keyword "culture" has been also included. After conducting a search for the keyword combinations of "culture" AND "process harmonization" and "culture" AND "process standardization", which did not yield any results, we refined our search by optimizing the keyword combination to "business process management" AND "culture". This adjustment was

made considering the fact that Process Standardization and Harmonization activities fall under the purview of BPM.

- **Systematic Search**

As a result of the pre-search phase, three search engines of Emerald, ScienceDirect, and SpringerLink were identified to conduct a systematic search, using the combination of keywords that were identified in the first phase (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1. Keywords combinations used for searching literature (source: own illustration)

process harmonization
business process harmonization
harmonization of processes
harmonization of business processes
harmonization AND business process
harmonize AND business processes
process standardization
business process standardization
standardization of processes
standardization of business processes
standardization AND business process
standardize AND business processes
process variability modeling
mergers and acquisitions AND process harmonization
mergers and acquisitions AND process standardization
culture AND process harmonization
culture AND process standardization
culture AND business process management

- **Cross-Reference**

After performing the systematic search, the cross-reference search is conducted using the backward tracing method. During this phase the reference lists of retrieved articles were examined to identify additional literature which was not included in the search results.

### **3.1.2 Screening**

In order to be able to assess the relevance of the retrieved literature, screening criteria should have been set and inclusion/exclusion factors should be identified (Fink, 2019). For the purpose of this research, the following questions have been formulated as screening criteria to assess the relevance of retrieved results:

- Does the study aim at conceptualizing a framework for process harmonization or standardization? (BPH)
- Does the study explore the concept of process harmonization/standardization in the context of mergers and acquisitions? (M&A)
- Does the study focus on human-side aspects of process harmonization/standardization and investigate the organizational cultural dimensions during process harmonization or standardization activities? (Culture)

After establishing the inclusion/exclusion criteria, the abstracts of the collected articles were screened, and where necessary, the full texts were reviewed. From an initial pool of 164 articles, duplicates were removed and each entry was assessed using the defined criteria. A total of 7 articles were found to satisfy at least two of the inclusion criteria (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2. Literature with relevance to the study (source: own illustration)

Research Focus	Source	Key Findings	Relevance to Current Study		
			BPH	M&A	Culture
Process harmonization phase model in post-merger integration	Schönreiter, (2016)	A high-level framework for process harmonization	yes	yes	no
Harmonization of procurement process in merger context	Surakka, (2018)	Importance of cross-functional collaboration and communication during harmonization	yes	yes	no
Global process harmonization complexities	Fernandez & Bhat, (2010)	A global framework for process harmonization	yes	partially	no
M&A integration and performance.	Caiazza & Volpe, (2015)	Importance of operational and cultural integration	no	yes	partially
IT landscape strategy in M&A	Eckert et al., (2012)	Decision support framework for IT-related process harmonization decisions	partially	yes	no
IS/IT integration in M&A	Toppenberg, G. (2015)	Challenges regarding harmonization of IS/IT in M&A	partially	yes	no
Role of external/internal factors in process harmonization	Romero, (2014)	Organizational factors influence harmonization success	partially	no	partially

### **3.1.3 Classifying**

During the classification phase, we categorized all of the found articles according to the inclusion/exclusion criteria described above and grouped along two analytical dimensions:

- Papers addressing the topic business process harmonization in the context of mergers & acquisitions
- Papers elaborating on the role of organizational culture in the context of business process management

As none of the reviewed articles met all three criteria simultaneously, relevant thematic elements from the selected literature were integrated into the development of a holistic framework within this study.

The findings from this literature review revealed a clear research gap. Existing literature largely fails to simultaneously address both the operational and cultural dimensions of business process harmonization within the context of mergers and acquisitions. This gap forms the foundation for the present research and will be elaborated upon in detail in the following section.

## **3.2 Gap Analysis**

As the frequency of business mergers continues to rise, the study of various dimensions of this strategic path has become an increasingly prominent domain in academic research. Foundational works in this field argue that the bulk of value generation in M&A deals occurs not at the point of transaction, but rather during the PMI phase, where the integration of the merged entities takes place (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991). From this perspective, the failure of M&A deals is frequently attributed to inadequacies in the PMI process, positioning it as the critical determinant of an M&A's ultimate success or failure (Marks & Mirvis, 2001). Hence, within the M&A lifecycle, the PMI phase is often identified as the most challenging stage, posing substantial difficulties for organizations attempting to achieve a successful merger (Harrison, 2007).

Previous studies have approached PMI through varying theoretical and methodological lenses. Some have adopted a content-based perspective, which concentrates on the tangible outcomes of integration such as cost savings, financial performance, and operational improvements. Others have employed a process-based approach, focusing on the sequences of managerial decisions, actions, and adaptations that shape the integration journey (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991; Greenwood et al., 1994). This bifurcation has contributed to a broader appreciation of PMI as both an outcome-oriented and a dynamically evolving phenomenon. A notable effort to reconcile these perspectives is provided by Birkinshaw et al. (2000), who propose a dual-dimensional framework that distinguishes between "task integration" and "human integration" (Figure 3.1).

Task integration refers to the strategic and operational coordination required to achieve synergies and create value through the unification of resources, capabilities, and business processes. It encompasses activities such as aligning operational procedures, consolidating IT systems, and integrating supply chain practices. Successful task integration is considered essential for achieving the financial and competitive objectives underlying most mergers and acquisitions.

In contrast, human integration encompasses the psychological and sociocultural challenges faced by employees during the integration process. This includes the alignment of organizational values, the development of mutual trust, and the establishment of a shared identity among individuals from previously separate corporate cultures. Research in this area underscores that cultural mismatches, communication barriers, and resistance to change are among the most common causes of post-merger difficulties (Sales & Mirvis, 1984; Buono et al., 1985; Cartwright & Cooper, 1992). Furthermore, scholars argue that successful integration requires not only careful planning but also the ability to adapt to evolving circumstances and to manage the human and organizational complexities that arise during the process (Kitching, 1967; Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991). This requires a deep understanding of both the strategic objectives of the M&A and the organizational dynamics at play, as well as the ability to foster collaboration and communication across the combined entity. The importance of leadership and change management is also emphasized, with effective leaders being those who can guide the

organization through the integration process while maintaining employee engagement and commitment (Jemison & Sitkin, 1986; Hunt, 1990).

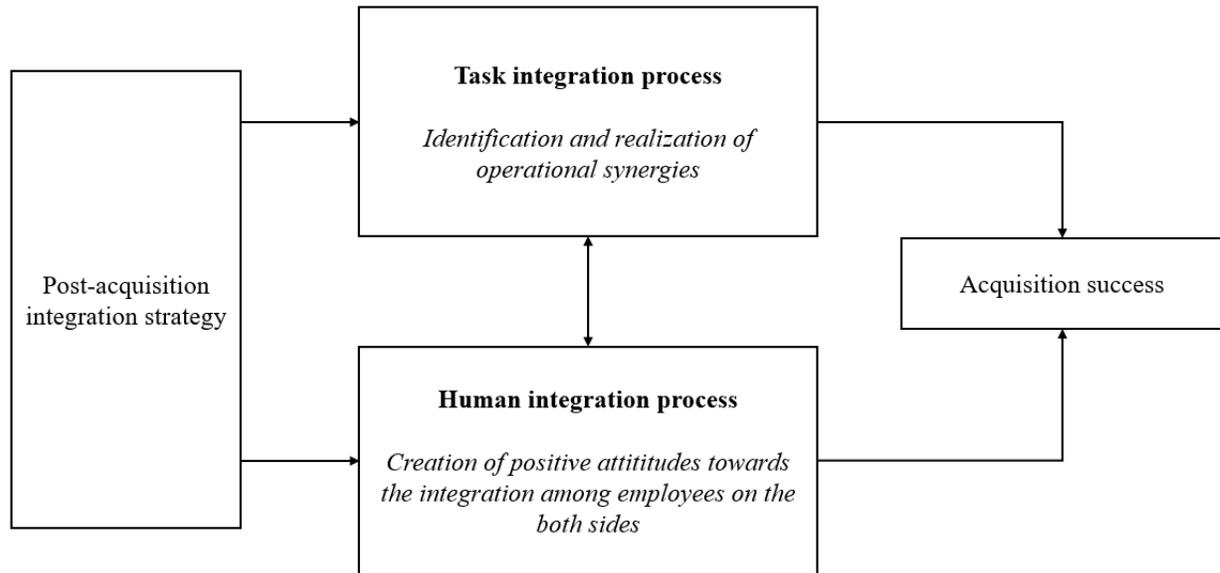


Fig. 3.1. Framework for integration management (Birkinshaw et al., 2000)

This conceptual framework provides valuable insights into the complexities of PMI by emphasizing the interconnectedness of task and human integration. It suggests that successful PMI requires a balanced approach that gives equal weight to both the operational and human dimensions of the process. This balance is necessary because the failure to adequately address either dimension can undermine the overall success of the merger or acquisition. For instance, a focus on task integration at the expense of human integration may lead to operational efficiencies but can result in high employee turnover, low morale, and cultural conflicts that ultimately erode the benefits of the merger. Conversely, an overemphasis on human integration without sufficient attention to task integration may lead to a harmonious but inefficient organization that struggles to achieve its strategic objectives.

According to this framework, the successful completion of both task integration and human integration is essential for achieving a successful post-merger integration. Although these two sub-elements are conceptually distinct, addressing different aspects of the integration process, they are not entirely independent of one another (Blake & Mouton, 1985). Rather, there is a significant degree of interdependence between them, wherein the success in one area can directly influence and enhance outcomes in the other. For instance, elements of human integration, such as ensuring high levels of employee satisfaction and fostering a shared organizational identity, can facilitate the smoother transfer and integration of capabilities and resources, which are key components of task integration. Conversely, a well-executed task integration, which is characterized by the effective alignment of business processes, systems, and operational strategies, can contribute to improving employee morale and satisfaction, thus reinforcing the human integration efforts.

The distinct yet interrelated nature of task and human integration necessitates different management actions and strategic focus. Task integration typically requires a rigorous approach to process alignment, resource allocation, and the realization of operational synergies. This involves activities such as streamlining business processes, standardizing information systems, and optimizing resource utilization to achieve the desired efficiencies and strategic goals of the merger or acquisition. Human integration, on the other hand, focuses on more intangible elements, such as managing cultural differences, building trust and communication channels among employees, and ensuring leadership alignment. These efforts are critical for maintaining workforce stability, minimizing resistance to change, and fostering a unified corporate culture.

Although different objectives and management approaches are required for task and human integration, the success of PMI depends on the effective functioning and alignment of both sub-elements (Birkinshaw et al., 2000). This interdependency highlights the importance of a holistic approach to integration, where process harmonization plays a pivotal role. Process harmonization, as an essential component of task integration, involves the alignment and unification of business processes across the merging entities. This harmonization process often overlaps with certain aspects of human integration, particularly when it comes to reconciling

cultural differences and managing organizational change. In mergers and acquisitions where a high level of integration is desired, differences in organizational culture can present significant challenges. These cultural differences can manifest in various forms, such as divergent management styles, differing attitudes towards risk and innovation, or contrasting approaches to decision-making and problem-solving.

Despite the conceptual clarity provided by the dual framework proposed by Birkinshaw et al. (2000), empirical studies have continued to focus on either the task or the human dimension in isolation. Moreover, although the interdisciplinary field of M&A boasts an extensive body of literature (Sherman, 2010; Gaughan 2010), the systematic literature review conducted in the previous section revealed significant gaps in knowledge, particularly in the area of business process management and process harmonization within the context of corporate restructuring, and more specifically, mergers and acquisitions (Schönreiter, 2018). Much of the existing research on M&As has predominantly focused on financial and strategic considerations, often neglecting the critical aspect of operational integration (Birkinshaw et al., 2000). However, recent studies underscore the potential of BPM to significantly improve M&A outcomes by offering a structured framework for integrating processes and systems effectively (Harmon, 2003). For instance, Davenport (2013) posits that BPM can play a crucial role in mitigating the risks associated with M&A by ensuring that process changes are systematically managed and communicated. Additionally, Jeston (2014) provides practical insights into the application of BPM in identifying and realizing synergies, arguing that a methodical approach to BPM can substantially enhance the likelihood of achieving positive M&A outcomes. Statistical evidence indicates that many mergers still struggle with the effective integration of their operational processes, resulting in suboptimal outcomes (Srbinska, 2016).

Additionally, while process harmonization has been widely explored from a technical standpoint, the influence of cultural and behavioral dynamics on its effectiveness is rarely examined in this field. This is a significant limitation, as cultural misalignment can directly undermine the intended benefits of process harmonization by fostering employee resistance, lowering morale,

and impeding cooperation across organizational boundaries (Chatterjee et al., 1992; Larsson, 1993; Gertsen et al., 1998; Vaara, 2000).

Some research has examined contextual factors influencing process harmonization (Romero, 2014), determinants of process standardization levels and their impact on business performance (Romero et al., 2012; Romero et al., 2015), and IT and information system integration during PMI (Toppenberg & Henningsson, 2014; Toppenberg, 2015). A significant contribution in this area is the phase model for process harmonization (Figure 3.2.) by Schönreiter (2016), which integrates various existing approaches into a cohesive framework. This phased approach offers a systematic lens through which the integration process can be examined, enabling a clear differentiation between the preparatory assessment of existing processes and cultures (analysis), the development of harmonization strategies (conception), the implementation of those strategies (realization), and the subsequent evaluation of integration outcomes (verification).

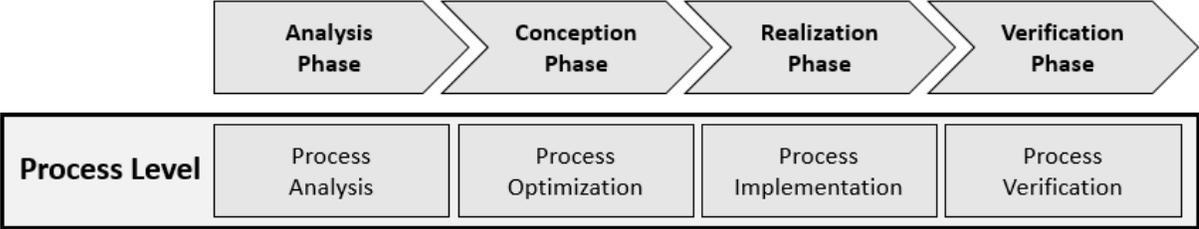


Fig. 3.2. Process harmonization phase model (adapted from Schönreiter, 2016)

However, this framework remains highly abstract and lacks detailed guidelines for managing process variants.

Several real-world examples from literature illustrate the consequences of underestimating the cultural aspects and neglecting process harmonization during M&As, leading to failed integrations and unrealized synergies:

- **Daimler-Chrysler Merger (1998):** The highly publicized Daimler-Benz and Chrysler merger is a classic example of how cultural and process misalignment can lead to failure. The merger between Germany's Daimler-Benz and America's Chrysler Corporation was presented as a "merger of equals," aimed at creating a global automotive powerhouse. Daimler-Benz brought with it a reputation for engineering excellence and a highly structured, hierarchical corporate culture. Chrysler, in contrast, was known for its innovative, risk-taking culture and more informal management style (Badrtalei & Bates, 2007). Despite the optimistic rhetoric, the integration quickly revealed deep-seated organizational incompatibilities.

One of the most significant factors contributing to the merger's failure was the inadequate focus on process harmonization. Effective integration requires aligning core business functions such as supply chain management, manufacturing practices, information systems, and decision-making processes. Daimler-Benz adhered to a process-oriented operational model with rigid controls, while Chrysler thrived on agility and informal decision-making structures. The absence of a unified approach to business processes led to inefficiencies, miscommunications, and duplicated efforts. For example, joint product development initiatives were hampered by conflicting engineering standards and project management methodologies (Appelbaum et al., 1998). This misalignment eroded anticipated synergies and undermined operational efficiency.

Furthermore, the integration suffered from significant challenges due to differences in organizational culture. Daimler-Benz operated with a structured, hierarchical, and process-oriented approach, while Chrysler had a more flexible and informal business culture. Cultural integration is often cited as a key determinant of M&A success or failure. The cultural divide between Daimler and Chrysler was pronounced. Daimler's German management style emphasized hierarchy, precision, and long-term planning, while Chrysler valued creativity, speed, and informal collaboration (Rottig, 2007). These differences resulted in managerial

tensions, employee dissatisfaction, and declining morale. Chrysler employees often felt marginalized in the new organizational structure, perceiving Daimler's practices as domineering and incompatible with their own values. Communication breakdowns and lack of trust further exacerbated integration issues, leading to talent attrition and internal resistance to change (Cartwright & Schoenberg, 2006).

The failure to harmonize business processes and align cultural aspects led to operational inefficiencies, employee dissatisfaction, and an inability to leverage anticipated synergies (Badrtalei & Bates, 2007). Eventually, Daimler had to sell Chrysler in 2007, marking the failure of the merger.

- **HP-Compaq Merger (2002):** The merger between Hewlett-Packard (HP) and Compaq was one of the most high-profile and controversial mergers in the technology industry. Despite the strategic intent to strengthen market position against competitors like IBM and Dell, the merger faced significant challenges stemming from inadequate process harmonization and underestimated cultural differences. Announced in 2001 and finalized in 2002, the \$25 billion HP-Compaq merger was designed to create a formidable competitor in the personal computing and enterprise solutions markets. The merger faced immediate resistance from shareholders and industry analysts, many of whom questioned the strategic logic and cultural fit between the two companies (Mehta & Hirschheim, 2007). While HP brought a strong brand legacy and engineering excellence, Compaq offered a more aggressive sales-driven model and supply chain efficiency. Despite complementary product lines, the integration proved problematic due to fundamental differences in operations and culture

One of the most critical failings of the merger was the lack of effective process harmonization. HP and Compaq had developed distinct approaches to core operations such as IT systems, sales processes, and supply chain management. HP's decentralized and engineering-driven decision-making process clashed with Compaq's centralized and cost-optimized supply chain structure (Stachowicz-Stanusch, 2009). Post-merger, integration teams struggled to unify disparate IT platforms and operational systems. For instance, mismatched customer relationship management systems and incompatible inventory tracking

tools led to delays, data inconsistencies, and disruptions in service delivery. These inefficiencies translated into increased operational costs and missed revenue opportunities (Mehta & Hirschheim, 2007).

Beyond process-related issues, the cultural divide between HP and Compaq further complicated integration efforts. HP's organizational identity was deeply rooted in its founders' "HP Way", namely a culture of innovation, respect for individuals, and consensus-driven decision-making. In contrast, Compaq operated with a performance-focused, sales-oriented culture characterized by aggressive targets and fast-paced execution (Stachowicz-Stanusch, 2009).

This clash in values led to employee dissatisfaction, turnover among key talent, and fragmented leadership. Attempts to enforce uniform standards and practices without adequately addressing cultural sensitivities generated internal resistance and morale issues. These frictions prevented the merged entity from fully leveraging its combined human capital and undermined strategic alignment.

The combined effects of process misalignment and cultural conflict had a tangible impact on the financial performance of the merged company. Although the merger aimed to create \$2.5 billion in cost synergies, these were offset by operational disruptions, declining employee engagement, and delays in product delivery. In the years following the merger, HP faced criticism for underperformance in its core business segments and struggled to realize the anticipated benefits. Subsequent leadership changes and strategic pivots—including the eventual spin-off of HP's PC and printer business—reflected the long-term instability introduced by the flawed integration (Mehta & Hirschheim, 2007).

- **BNP Paribas and Fortis Merger (2008):** In the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis, BNP Paribas acquired a controlling stake in the troubled Belgian-Dutch financial group Fortis. The transaction, finalized in October 2008, was part of a broader restructuring effort to stabilize the European banking system. Fortis, having suffered from liquidity pressures and exposure to toxic assets, was partially nationalized by the Belgian government and then sold to BNP Paribas to restore confidence and continuity in banking services. Although the merger

was strategically positioned to create one of Europe's largest retail and investment banking networks, the speed and scale of the acquisition exacerbated existing integration risks. Disparities in regulatory compliance procedures, IT infrastructures, and customer-facing processes between the two banks were significant but insufficiently addressed (DePamphilis, 2011).

A major shortfall in the BNP Paribas–Fortis merger was the failure to adequately harmonize core operational and technological processes. BNP Paribas operated with a centralized, process-optimized IT architecture, whereas Fortis had regionally fragmented and less standardized systems. The integration of legacy systems—particularly in transaction processing, customer relationship management, and regulatory reporting—led to severe inefficiencies and increased operational risk (DePamphilis, 2011). The lack of process alignment also impacted customer service delivery. Differences in service protocols, back-office support, and digital banking interfaces created confusion for clients and increased service response times. Instead of creating a unified service experience, the merger disrupted customer interactions and led to dissatisfaction and attrition. Moreover, regulatory compliance was complicated by differences in legal frameworks between the two banks' operating geographies. Misaligned anti-money laundering procedures and risk assessment models required additional investment in compliance realignment—diverting resources away from strategic growth initiatives.

Alongside operational disjunctions, the integration was further impaired by contrasting organizational cultures. BNP Paribas maintained a highly structured, efficiency-driven culture with strong emphasis on compliance and formalized processes. Fortis, by contrast, had a more flexible and localized approach to business operations, shaped by national regulations and customer preferences in Belgium and the Netherlands. This divergence led to conflicts in management style, miscommunication among departments, and friction between legacy employees. BNP Paribas's top-down integration strategy failed to engage Fortis personnel in co-creating shared processes, resulting in weak cultural buy-in and reduced employee morale (Schweiger & Goulet, 2000).

The merger's operational shortcomings had direct financial and strategic repercussions. System incompatibilities delayed product rollouts and increased IT overhead, while customer dissatisfaction weakened market share, especially in the competitive retail banking segment. BNP Paribas's brand image in Belgium temporarily suffered due to perceptions of foreign mismanagement and loss of local identity. While the bank eventually stabilized operations, the initial years of integration were marked by missed performance targets and underutilized assets. The failure to realize the full synergy potential of the merger underscores the strategic cost of neglecting process harmonization and cultural alignment.

The above examples demonstrate that underestimating the role of culture and neglecting process harmonization can significantly contribute to M&A failures. While the extant literature recognizes the importance of both operational alignment and cultural integration, these aspects have not been sufficiently studied in tandem. A comprehensive understanding of PMI necessitates a research approach that captures the dynamic interaction between task and human integration, particularly in relation to the harmonization of business processes. This interaction is crucial not only for achieving efficiency and strategic fit but also for ensuring employee commitment, cultural cohesion, and long-term organizational stability.

Having identified the existing gaps in the existing body of literature and building upon the key challenges identified in this chapter, the next step is to design a comprehensive framework for process harmonization, which serves as the proposed solution to address the identified issues.

#### **4. Developing Process Harmonization Framework (Solution Design)**

As corporate mergers increasingly influence the global economic landscape, the strategic relevance of post-merger integration has become a central concern in the execution of mergers and acquisitions. Within this context, the harmonization of business processes and operational systems represents a critical success factor. It is intended to establish procedural consistency, improve operational performance, and enhance overall efficiency across the newly formed organization. Business process harmonization refers to the systematic alignment and integration of essential operational activities between merging entities. It functions as a foundational mechanism for capturing synergies and achieving the strategic objectives of the transaction.

The implementation of process harmonization is associated with considerable complexity. One of the primary challenges involves the integration of diverse process variants that are embedded in incompatible information technology infrastructures. Legacy systems are frequently designed to support workflows and business logic that are specific to the original organizational context. These systems are often tightly coupled with internal processes, which leads to structural misalignments and operational inefficiencies during integration. As a result, harmonization efforts require comprehensive system redesigns, carefully planned data migration strategies, and the consolidation of architectural frameworks. These measures must be aligned with the target operating model of the post-merger organization to ensure strategic coherence and operational sustainability.

Beyond technical integration, cultural alignment emerges as a decisive determinant of post-merger success. Merging organizations typically possess distinct cultural identities that are shaped by their historical development, value systems, and leadership practices. These cultural differences can result in divergent expectations and behavioral patterns, which may obstruct the implementation of standardized business processes. Addressing this issue requires the deliberate development of a process-oriented organizational culture. Such a culture emphasizes procedural standardization, continuous improvement, and cross-functional collaboration. Establishing this cultural orientation across the workforce facilitates the transition to integrated systems and workflows and contributes to long-term adaptability and organizational performance.

Furthermore, shifting organizational structures may be essential in order to support harmonized processes and facilitate effective governance. When business units from the merging organizations operate under divergent structures, integration efforts may be impeded by conflicting lines of authority or inconsistent decision-making practices. Therefore, organizational restructuring should be guided by the strategic goals of the merger and the design of the integrated processes. Clearly defined roles, streamlined reporting lines, and aligned accountability structures contribute to smoother transitions and improved operational performance.

In light of these considerations, it becomes evident that successful post-merger integration requires a holistic and multidimensional approach. This approach must simultaneously address the technical, cultural, and structural dimensions of integration. Business process harmonization must be conducted in a manner that respects socio-cultural diversity while promoting a shared sense of purpose and organizational identity. As emphasized by Maire and Collette (2011), adopting a comprehensive and integrative perspective significantly enhances the likelihood of capturing both operational synergies and human capital value.

Building upon these insights, we propose a comprehensive conceptual framework that delineates the culturally aligned process harmonization steps and organizational structuring activities essential for post-merger success (Figure 4.1). This framework is grounded in the principles of organizational theory and is structured around three core elements (Bakka et al., 2006), each of which contributes to the effective realization of business process harmonization:

- Fostering a **BPH Culture**: This component focuses on cultivating a culture that emphasizes process efficiency, continuous improvement, and innovation. A process-oriented culture encourages employees to engage in proactive problem-solving and to seek opportunities for optimizing processes. It also involves the implementation of targeted training and development programs designed to equip employees with the requisite skills and knowledge in business process management. By embedding these cultural values across the organization, firms can create an environment conducive to sustained performance enhancement and strategic agility.

- Developing a **BPH Organizational Structure**: This element entails the establishment of a clear and coherent organizational structure that supports process harmonization initiatives. Defining roles and responsibilities is critical for ensuring accountability, facilitating coordination, and enabling effective communication among stakeholders. The structure should articulate the hierarchy, delineate decision-making processes, and allocate tasks in a manner that supports a systematic and disciplined approach to integration. Such structural clarity is vital for maintaining momentum and achieving the desired outcomes of the harmonization process.
- Conceptualizing a **BPH Process Phase Model**: This component provides a detailed blueprint for the harmonization efforts, outlining the specific tasks, milestones, methodologies, and tools required for successful implementation and developing process trade-offs. The phase model includes the identification and analysis of processes, the setting of clear objectives, the establishment of performance metrics, and the continuous monitoring of progress. By adhering to this structured approach, organizations can ensure that harmonization goals are met in a timely and effective manner, thereby maximizing the value derived from the merger.

The integration of these three elements forms the backbone of a comprehensive post-merger harmonization strategy. However, the successful operationalization of this framework requires more than structural alignment and procedural clarity. It demands a dynamic and iterative implementation methodology that is responsive to organizational feedback, stakeholder engagement, and evolving strategic priorities. By addressing cultural, structural, and procedural dimensions in a coherent and strategic manner, the framework enhances the capacity of organizations to navigate the complexities of mergers and acquisitions. It provides a roadmap for achieving operational excellence, strategic alignment, and sustainable value creation in the post-merger environment.

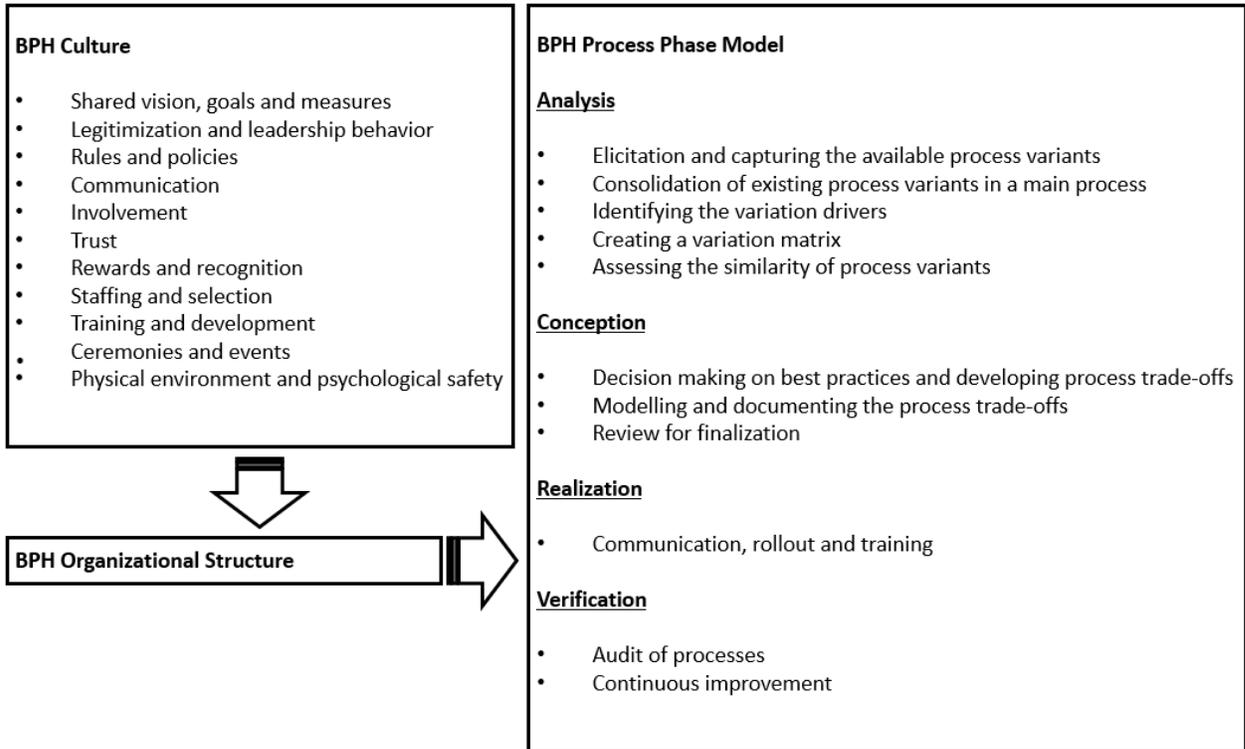


Figure 4.1. Process harmonization framework (source: own illustration)

The remainder of this chapter provides an in-depth examination of each tier of the proposed framework, elucidating the critical components, interdependencies, and implementation considerations necessary for effective post-merger integration.

## 4.1 BPH Culture

Earlier approaches to mergers and acquisitions have predominantly emphasized financial synergies as the primary objective. However, this perspective overlooks the critical importance of business process and operational excellence in achieving sustainable value creation. The integration of distinct organizational entities requires more than structural consolidation; it demands a coherent and unified approach to process design, execution, and continuous improvement. Therefore, business process management and, more specifically, business process harmonization must be recognized as central pillars of post-merger integration.

Initially, BPM was conceived as a technology-driven and IT-centric discipline, with early frameworks focusing on automation and IT infrastructure as the main levers for process optimization (van der Aalst et al., 2003). Although organizational dimensions were later introduced (Zairi, 1997; Armistead & Machin, 1997), it was only through subsequent contributions that BPM evolved into a comprehensive management discipline (Box & Platts, 2005; Hung, 2006; Harmon, 2010). This evolution underscores the necessity of integrating cultural transformation into BPM design and implementation, particularly in the context of post-merger harmonization.

Cultural integration is a decisive factor in determining the success of M&A initiatives. Despite widespread acknowledgment of its importance (Cartwright & Cooper, 1996), integration strategies have often prioritized financial metrics while neglecting cultural and human dimensions. This imbalance has repeatedly led to failed integrations, characterized by employee disengagement, ineffective communication, and unresolved cultural tensions (Marks, 1982; Bastien, 1987; Buono & Bowditch, 2003; Cartwright, 2005; Marks & Mirvis, 2010; Weber et al., 2012). These failures are frequently attributed to cultural clashes, resistance to change, and inadequate change management (Sales & Mirvis, 1984; Buono et al., 1985; Chatterjee et al., 1992; Cartwright & Cooper, 1993; Larsson, 1993; Gertsen et al., 1998; Vaara, 2000).

The complexity of merging distinct organizational cultures lies in the tacit assumptions and deeply rooted values that shape employee responses to change (Buono & Bowditch, 2003; Cameron & Quinn, 2006; Lok & Crawford, 2004). Cultural adaptation is essential for implementing meaningful change, especially within BPM initiatives (Lee & Dale, 1998; Armistead & Machin, 1997; Zucchi & Edwards, 1999; Grugulis & Wilkinson, 2002; Zhao, 2004). Although inherently complex, this adaptation is necessary to align process initiatives with organizational realities (Lewis, 1996; Abraham et al., 1997; Pool, 2000; Kekäle et al., 2004).

This research introduces a novel conceptualization of business process harmonization as a culturally contingent process. Rather than viewing BPH as a purely technical or structural endeavor, it is defined here as the alignment and integration of operational activities across merging entities, aimed at achieving efficiency, consistency, and compliance within a unified

organizational framework. This perspective is supported by empirical findings that highlight the decisive influence of cultural factors on post-merger outcomes (Marks, 1997; Nahavandi & Malekzadeh, 1988; Mehta & Hirschheim, 2007). These studies confirm that cultural alignment is not a peripheral concern but a central prerequisite for sustainable harmonization.

To facilitate this alignment, the concept of "Business Process Harmonization Culture" is introduced as a strategic framework for embedding cultural coherence into process integration. BPH Culture is characterized by a process-oriented mindset, which is essential for the successful alignment and integration of business processes in post-merger contexts. This orientation fosters the principles of holistic thinking, continuous improvement and cross-functional collaboration, which are indispensable for BPH success (Kohlbacher & Gruenwald, 2011; Ravesteyn & Batenburg, 2010; Sidorova & Isik, 2010; Jeston, 2014).

The proposed conceptual model asserts that the successful integration of business processes in M&A requires the intentional cultivation of a process-oriented culture. This culture emphasizes end-to-end thinking, continuous improvement, and collaborative accountability. As business processes are embedded within organizational cultures, unmanaged cultural differences can obstruct harmonization by triggering resistance, miscommunication, and operational friction (Buono & Bowditch, 2003). Additionally, variations in organizational approaches to hierarchy, risk, and collaboration introduce further complexity into integration efforts (Hofstede et al., 2010; Sarala et al., 2019).

A process-oriented culture is defined by systematic thinking, standardized practices, performance metrics, and a focus on customer value (Hammer, 2014; Rosemann & vom Brocke, 2014). While this culture provides a robust foundation for integration, its implementation must be sensitive to legacy structures. Hierarchical or siloed cultures may resist horizontal process flows and collaborative accountability. If introduced without cultural sensitivity, a process-oriented model may be perceived as authoritarian, thereby intensifying resistance and undermining transformation efforts (Schein, 2010; Rosemann & vom Brocke, 2014).

To mitigate these risks, this framework advocates a culturally embedded approach to BPM. Rather than imposing BPM principles externally, it calls for their integration within the

prevailing organizational culture. This requires identifying cultural values compatible with BPM and developing tailored strategies to align methodologies accordingly. By fostering cultural coherence and employee buy-in, this approach enables more effective and durable process harmonization.

While some have proposed implementing a neutral process-oriented culture independent of legacy identities, such an approach is neither feasible nor desirable. Organizational cultures are deeply embedded in collective identities and cannot be replaced through top-down mandates. Instead, the concept of cultural convergence is introduced as a more viable strategy. This involves overlaying a process-oriented culture onto shared values and practices from both merging organizations. Such an approach respects legacy identities while aligning them with strategic integration goals and enhancing employee engagement (Stahl & Voigt, 2008).

This contribution advances the literature by articulating process-oriented culture as a distinct subcultural layer within the broader organizational culture. While previous research has acknowledged culture as an enabler of BPM (Schmiedel et al., 2014), this framework consolidates those insights into a coherent model that treats culture as both a designable and actionable element of post-merger integration. Traits previously associated with superior process performance, such as customer orientation, accountability, and communication (Vom Brocke & Sinnl, 2011; Schmiedel et al., 2014), are redefined here as foundational features of BPH culture.

The theoretical integration is operationalized in the proposed framework through three interrelated constructs:

- **Organizational Culture:** The overarching system of values, beliefs, and behavioral norms within which BPM initiatives must operate, inclusive of dominant and subcultural variations.
- **Process Culture:** A purposefully cultivated cultural orientation toward process excellence, rooted in shared values and collective behaviors that support BPH objectives.
- **Cultural Program:** A deliberate, structured initiative aimed at embedding the BPH culture into the broader organizational fabric. This program functions as a strategic mechanism for aligning BPM goals with existing cultural realities, thereby enhancing integration outcomes.

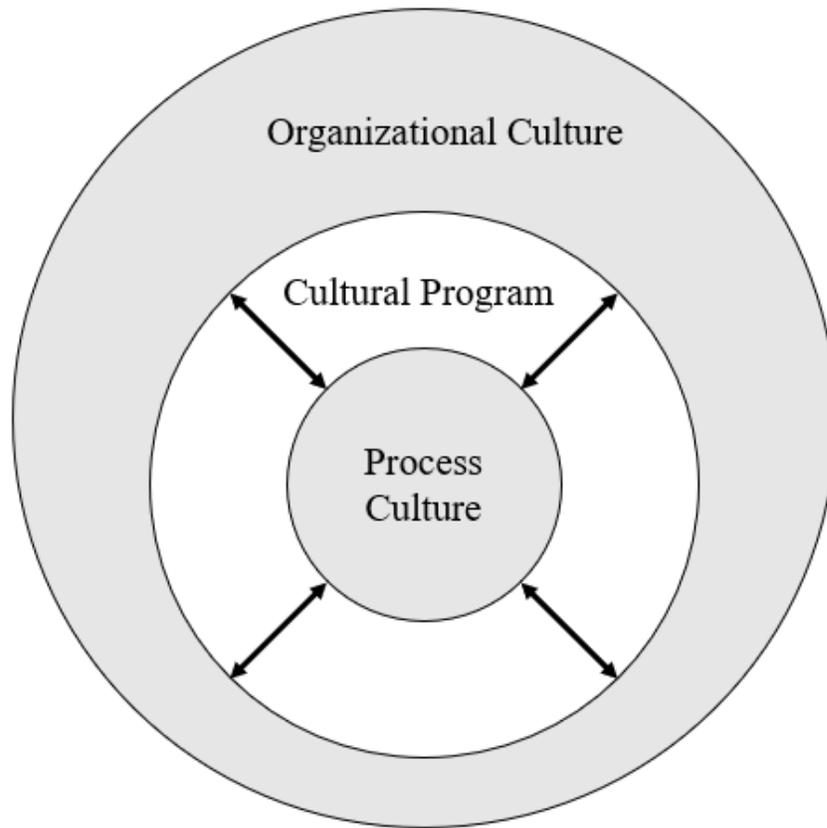


Fig. 4.2. Cultivating BPH culture (source: own illustration)

Within this framework, the concept of BPH culture is introduced as a complementary cultural layer specifically designed to facilitate process harmonization in mergers and acquisitions. Unlike approaches that seek to override or homogenize legacy cultures, BPH culture is conceived to coexist with and enhance existing cultural frameworks. This perspective aligns with the understanding that organizational culture is inherently multi-layered and includes subcultures that can operate synergistically within the broader cultural narrative (Schein, 1995; Martin, 2001). Accordingly, a process-oriented culture is not imposed but cultivated as a deliberate subculture, thereby promoting operational alignment without compromising cultural diversity.

This conceptualization challenges the conventional assumption that cultural transformation in M&A must entail wholesale assimilation. Instead, it advocates for cultural pluralism, wherein the BPH subculture functions as a unifying layer that supports BPM principles while preserving the unique cultural identities of the merging entities. The objective is not to eliminate differences but to foster a shared understanding of process orientation that enables process harmonization and facilitate integration.

The cultural program proposed here refers to the extent to which a process-oriented culture can be embedded into the organizational milieu without triggering cultural resistance or fragmentation. While cultural alignment is a necessary condition for successful BPM implementation (Rosemann & vom Brocke, 2014; van Looy & Devos, 2019), it is insufficient in isolation. Effective integration also requires complementary structural and behavioral initiatives that reinforce the values and practices of BPH Culture.

To operationalize this integration, a structured cultural program is introduced. Its purpose is to develop, disseminate, and sustain BPH values across the merged organization. This program must be adaptive to the specific characteristics of the involved entities, fostering alignment while honoring cultural heritage. Rather than relying on cultural imposition, the program promotes a form of integration that is inclusive, strategic, and operationally grounded.

Accordingly, this study proposes a multi-element cultural program that offers a systematic approach to cultural change in organizational transformations. This framework is developed based on empirical observations and a comprehensive review of the literature on post-merger integration and business process harmonization. The need for such a program arises from the inherent complexity of cultural transformation, particularly in the context of mergers and acquisitions. Cultural resistance, fragmentation, and disengagement frequently undermine integration efforts when cultural dynamics are not strategically addressed. To instill a new culture within an organization, a structured and context-sensitive program is essential. However, there is no universally applicable framework that can be adopted across all organizations seeking cultural change (Cartwright & Cooper, 1996). Each organization requires a tailored approach that reflects

its specific values, strategic objectives, and internal dynamics, making cultural transformation a highly individualized endeavor.

This cultural program is designed to address the foundational elements of organizational culture that are critical for sustainable transformation. It is grounded in the understanding that successful cultural integration must go beyond symbolic gestures and instead engage with the structural and behavioral dimensions of the organization. The framework draws support from Galpin & Herndon's (2000) cultural model, which identifies core areas that shape organizational culture. These areas provide a practical foundation for embedding process-oriented values and behaviors into the merged organization. By aligning these cultural dimensions with BPM principles, the program facilitates the development of a shared overlay culture that respects legacy identities while enabling strategic harmonization. In the following, these elements are outlined and adapted to the specific requirements of business process harmonization:

**Shared vision, goals and measures:** Establishment of a shared vision is essential for successful cultural integration in a merged entity. Mergers are most successful when the newly formed organization has a coherent, unifying vision that resonates with all members (Appelbaum et al., 2000). According to Nguyen and Kleiner (2003), without a shared vision, the future appears directionless, which can lead to ambiguity, confusion, and a lack of purpose among employees. When employees lack a clear understanding of the merger's objectives and future direction, they often become distracted, diverting their focus from their primary responsibilities in search of information about the merger's implications for their roles and careers (Appelbaum et al., 2000). By providing a clear, inspiring vision, leadership can unify employees, aligning them with the new organizational goals and mitigating the stress often associated with major organizational change.

Furthermore, establishing clear goals and performance measures that align with the cultural transformation objectives is essential to maintain momentum and track progress. Cultural goals should be specific, actionable, and closely tied to operational realities, rather than abstract or purely financial goals. Operational goals are particularly effective as they allow employees to see a direct connection between their actions and the broader cultural objectives, enhancing their

commitment to change. Developing actionable metrics not only supports the shift in behavior but also ensures that employees understand and are accountable for their roles in the cultural transformation.

M&A integration efforts frequently focus on financial KPIs, overlooking the operational metrics necessary to support cultural transformation. A process-oriented culture requires process performance indicators, such as cycle time, process cost, or customer satisfaction, to be established as shared goals. During integration, aligning both legacy firms around common process KPIs facilitates harmonization, reduces misalignment, and reinforces BPM as a unifying operational paradigm.

**Legitimization and leadership behavior:** Leaders play a critical role in embodying and modeling the desired culture. Leadership training programs that focus on cultivating behaviors aligned with the new culture are essential in preparing leaders to guide their teams through the change process. By modeling desired behaviors and reinforcing cultural goals through their actions, leaders set an example for employees and establish expectations for conduct. Leadership commitment to cultural transformation is crucial, as it signals the importance of the change to the rest of the organization.

Moreover, legitimization is critical in managing cultural transformation, as it establishes the change's necessity and value. For cultural change to take root, managers with authority must articulate clearly why existing practices and beliefs no longer align with the organization's strategic direction. This includes explaining how the new cultural orientation will contribute to success and why certain outdated practices need to be replaced (Bijlsma-Frankema, 2001). By legitimizing the cultural transformation through transparent and specific communication, managers can foster trustworthiness and strengthen their authority. When employees understand that the change is driven by necessity rather than arbitrary decisions, they are more likely to view the transformation as credible and beneficial, which enhances buy-in and reduces resistance.

In M&A, leadership often changes, which presents a unique opportunity to set the tone for cultural renewal. Leaders must model process-centric behaviors by actively engaging in integration projects, supporting BPM initiatives, and communicating cross-functional goals.

Their visible commitment to process orientation signals to employees that the new culture is not just rhetoric but a core strategic focus

**Rules and policies:** Rules and policies serve as formal expressions of an organization's values and operational standards. To promote the desired cultural transformation, organizations must implement rules that encourage specific behaviors and eliminate policies that hinder integration and performance. The removal or replacement of restrictive policies allows for greater alignment between employee actions and the organization's cultural vision.

In the context of M&A, post-merger environments often inherit incompatible policies from the legacy firms. To support BPM, policies must be rewritten to encourage collaboration, transparency, and process thinking. For example, a rule that previously prioritized departmental performance should be modified to promote shared accountability across business processes, ensuring that employees understand that success now depends on integrated process outcomes rather than isolated functional performance.

**Communication:** Open and effective communication is a fundamental aspect of any organizational change initiative, particularly in the context of M&A (Galpin & Herndon, 2000). Organizational culture, although deeply rooted and resistant to change, can be reshaped with a well-executed communication strategy that shares the merger's vision, the process of integration, and expected timelines for critical decisions (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Nguyen & Kleiner, 2003). A robust communication plan provides employees with information about the integration, reducing uncertainty and anxiety. Effective communication must be continuous, multidirectional, and inclusive, giving employees opportunities to ask questions, provide feedback, and understand the rationale behind the changes. Transparent communication can also serve to unify employees from merging entities by creating a shared language and understanding, which helps bridge cultural gaps.

Effective communication is vital in resolving ambiguity during M&A and promoting BPM. Organizations should establish dedicated integration communication channels; such as process-focused newsletters, BPM dashboards, or integration town halls, to ensure transparency. Two-

way communication, including feedback loops, empowers employees to voice concerns and suggest improvements, enhancing commitment to the process culture.

**Involvement:** Active employee involvement is essential during cultural integration, as it fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to the new organization. Research indicates that employees are more likely to commit to organizational changes when they actively participate in the change process and understand the reasons for the adjustments (Cartwright & Cooper, 1996). Engaging employees in decision-making and inviting input on key cultural initiatives demonstrates that their opinions are valued, which strengthens their loyalty to the organization (Shearer et al., 2001). Moreover, involving operational staff early in the development of integration ideas can identify potential obstacles, harness the employees' energy, and build momentum toward achieving cultural alignment (Nguyen & Kleiner, 2003). This approach not only empowers employees but also reduces resistance by enabling them to see themselves as contributors to the organizational transformation.

Employee involvement is particularly critical in M&A, where job security concerns and identity shifts are common. Engaging employees from both legacy organizations in process harmonization workshops and decision-making forums promotes ownership of the new culture. In BPM, this ensures that process improvements are grounded in operational reality, and it reduces resistance by giving employees a stake in the integration

**Trust:** Trust is a cornerstone of successful integration, especially in environments characterized by cultural diversity and change. When employees trust each other and their leaders, they are more inclined to view differences positively, seeing them as opportunities to broaden perspectives and deepen understanding (Bijlsma-Frankema, 2001). Trust between merging organizations fosters openness and collaboration, enabling employees to embrace new ideas and build cooperative relationships with colleagues from the other entity. Trust is cultivated through transparency, consistency, and fairness, which together create a cohesive organizational culture that supports both individual and collective success.

Without trust, neither cultural integration nor BPM can succeed. Trust must be intentionally cultivated during M&A by ensuring consistency in messaging, fairness in decision-making, and

transparency in integration steps. Trust facilitates openness to new processes and ideas, encouraging employees from both entities to engage in joint BPM initiatives and to view the cultural transformation as credible and beneficial.

**Rewards and recognition:** Rewards and recognition are powerful tools in reinforcing the values of a new culture. By revising reward structures to prioritize behaviors that align with the new organizational culture, companies can motivate employees to adopt desired practices. Rewards for collaborative efforts, innovative thinking, and commitment to organizational values reinforce the new strategy, while traditional rewards that perpetuate outdated behaviors should be phased out. Such changes in the rewards system demonstrate the organization's commitment to the cultural shift, providing employees with tangible incentives to embrace the transformation.

In a newly merged organization, legacy reward systems may conflict, promoting behaviors misaligned with process orientation. To embed BPM values, the reward system should prioritize team-based achievements, process innovation, and collaboration across business units. Recognizing integration teams that successfully harmonize processes or reduce process redundancies incentivizes behaviors critical for both cultural integration and BPM success.

**Staffing and selection:** The staffing and selection process plays a crucial role in reinforcing cultural changes. Hiring and promoting individuals who exemplify the new organizational values ensures that the culture is sustained and strengthened over time. Recruitment criteria that prioritize alignment with the organization's mission, vision, and values help create a workforce that is naturally inclined to support the intended culture. As new hires embody the corporate strategy, they act as role models for others, helping to embed the new culture at all levels of the organization.

M&A presents opportunities for realignment in personnel. Staffing decisions should focus on individuals who demonstrate process thinking and cultural adaptability. Hiring or promoting individuals based on their ability to lead cross-functional initiatives or streamline operations supports BPM. These individuals act as cultural carriers, helping instill a unified process orientation in the merged workforce.

**Training and development:** Continuous training and development programs enable employees to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to operate effectively within the new cultural framework. Just-in-time training, in particular, allows employees to apply new competencies immediately, reinforcing the intended changes. Comprehensive training ensures that employees not only understand the desired culture but are also equipped to participate fully in its realization, thereby bridging the gap between cultural ideals and day-to-day operations.

In M&A environments, training should go beyond technical BPM tools to include cultural onboarding programs that articulate the values of process orientation. Just-in-time training can be used to support harmonization projects, ensuring employees are equipped to participate effectively in reengineering initiatives that cut across legacy systems and functions.

**Ceremonies and events:** Ceremonies and events act as symbolic reinforcements of the new culture, providing opportunities for employees to connect with and celebrate the organization's values. Events such as recognition ceremonies, team-building exercises, and company-wide meetings serve as reminders of the shared goals and reinforce the sense of community. These gatherings help employees internalize the cultural vision, transforming it from an abstract concept into a tangible aspect of their work life.

Cultural rituals can be powerful symbols in post-merger environments. Hosting joint events that celebrate process excellence—such as a "Process Innovation Day" or cross-functional team showcases—helps to create a shared identity grounded in BPM values. These events help bridge cultural divides by fostering shared experiences and reinforcing the cultural overlay rather than emphasizing legacy differences.

**Physical environment and psychological safety:** The physical environment serves as an immediate, visible representation of organizational culture. Modifying the workspace to reflect the desired cultural changes, such as creating open office spaces that encourage collaboration or utilizing telecommunication technologies to support remote work, helps employees internalize the new cultural norms. By aligning the physical workspace with the organization's values, companies create an environment that reinforces cultural expectations.

The physical and digital environment should reinforce process thinking. In M&A, harmonizing workplaces presents an opportunity to design collaborative spaces that reflect BPM values. Open-plan offices, shared integration centers, and virtual collaboration platforms can dismantle legacy boundaries and support cross-entity process work, making cultural and operational integration visible and tangible.

Furthermore, psychological safety is fundamental in facilitating cultural changes, as it encourages employees to embrace new approaches without fear of punishment or job insecurity. Employees must feel safe to experiment and make mistakes during the transition without repercussions, which fosters a culture of innovation and adaptability (Bijlsma-Frankema, 2001). Managers should prioritize building trust with employees, assuring them that initial missteps will be handled constructively rather than punitively. Creating an environment of psychological safety allows employees to fully engage with the transformation process, contributing ideas and innovations that support the organization's new direction.

While establishing a cultural program that promotes a process-oriented mindset is essential for the success of process harmonization in mergers and acquisitions, culture alone cannot drive sustainable change. Organizational culture and structure are deeply interdependent; the way an organization is designed either reinforces or hinders the desired cultural shifts (Burton et al., 2015). Without an appropriate structural foundation that is characterized by clear roles and responsibilities, the cultivation of a process-oriented culture may lack the necessary support mechanisms to thrive. Therefore, to successfully implement and sustain process harmonization initiatives, it is crucial to examine the organizational structures that best support the development of the intended cultural environment. Since organizational structure plays a central role in embedding and sustaining cultural change (Burns & Stalker, 1994), the following section develops an appropriate structural model tailored to the context of mergers and acquisitions during BPH initiatives, aiming to effectively integrate this element into our framework.

## 4.2 BPH Organizational Structure

The effective harmonization of business processes in mergers and acquisitions requires the deliberate establishment of a dedicated organizational structure that is specifically designed to support integration across fragmented systems, roles, and strategic priorities. This study argues that business process harmonization is not merely a procedural or technical challenge but fundamentally a structural one. Its success depends on the intentional design of governance mechanisms, clearly defined roles, and institutionalized cultural alignment.

Drawing on real-world observations, best practice implementations, and a comprehensive review of the literature, this study contends that the structural configuration of organizational resources, including human, cognitive, and institutional components, is a decisive factor in the success or failure of BPH initiatives. While earlier research has emphasized the importance of organizational resources in building capabilities (Grant, 1991), this framework advances the argument that it is the structural orchestration of these resources that enables effective harmonization. In post-merger environments characterized by complexity, uncertainty, and operational disintegration, harmonization efforts frequently falter in the absence of a purpose-built structural foundation. Structural voids lead to blurred accountabilities, fragmented decision-making, and a lack of coordination across organizational boundaries.

At the core of this framework is the proposition that structure and culture function as mutually reinforcing enablers of successful process transformation. To institutionalize process-centric thinking, organizations must embed structural mechanisms such as the assignment of process owners and the formation of cross-functional teams. These mechanisms establish end-to-end accountability and foster a unified operational perspective. Empirical evidence supports this view. For example, Becker et al. (2003) demonstrate that structural configurations significantly influence the effectiveness of process management.

Contrary to perspectives that treat structure as a passive contextual variable, this study conceptualizes organizational structure as an active and foundational condition for process harmonization. Structure is not incidental; it is enabling. It embodies the organization's capacity to coordinate and strategically deploy resources (Helfat & Peteraf, 2003). This view directly

informs the structural model proposed here, which includes roles such as global process owners, harmonization sponsors, and governance bodies. Without these structural anchors, organizations lack the capability to resolve process conflicts, align integration priorities, and steer harmonization at scale.

The need for such a structural response is particularly acute in mergers and acquisitions, which often involve legacy IT systems, conflicting business models, and decentralized decision-making. The approach developed in this study addresses these challenges by proposing a dedicated governance architecture that is explicitly designed to support BPH. This governance model fosters cross-organizational coordination and mitigates the fragmentation that typically characterizes post-merger scenarios. The necessity of such structural design is echoed by Smart et al. (2009), who highlight the risks of incoherent and siloed process efforts when structural integration is lacking.

Equally critical is the cultivation of a process-oriented culture that is characterized by cross-functional collaboration, transparency, continuous improvement, and end-to-end process visibility. In post-merger settings, such a culture does not emerge organically. It must be systematically constructed through structural enablers. These include formalized communication channels, alignment of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with harmonization goals, and incentive systems that reinforce process accountability. This structural and cultural interdependence is further supported by Hammer (2014), who argues that process culture only achieves practical traction when embedded in institutional frameworks.

In response to these structural and cultural requirements, the next section proposes a framework of roles and working groups that are essential for operationalizing business process harmonization.

#### **4.2.1 BPH Roles and Responsibilities**

The concept to BPH organizational structure proposed in this study is derived from the observed limitations of unstructured integration efforts in real-world post-merger environments, where the

absence of clearly defined responsibilities and governance mechanisms often leads to misalignment, inefficiency, and cultural resistance. The proposed structure is designed to anchor ownership, facilitate transparency, and ensure knowledge-driven process design throughout the integration lifecycle. It reflects the insight that harmonization cannot be achieved through ad hoc coordination or informal collaboration alone. Instead, it requires a formalized system of roles and responsibilities that institutionalizes process accountability and enables cross-functional alignment. This approach is further supported by empirical research and best practice models, which emphasize the importance of structural clarity and governance in driving successful process transformation (Becker et al., 2003; Helfat & Peteraf, 2003; Smart et al., 2009; Hammer, 2014). The following sections outlines the specific roles and responsibilities that constitute the backbone of this organizational structure.

#### **4.2.1.1 BPM Sponsor**

The role of the BPM sponsor is pivotal in ensuring the successful initiation and execution of BPM initiatives within organizations. Before embarking on any BPM endeavor, it is crucial to secure the unwavering commitment of top management, as their support is a significant determinant of the project's success (Trkman, 2010). This commitment is embodied by the BPM sponsor, who must occupy a senior management position and possess the authority and influence necessary to champion BPM projects. The BPM sponsor is responsible for initiating, funding, and driving the BPM initiatives, ensuring they align with the organization's strategic objectives and gain the requisite internal support.

The BPM sponsor serves as the primary advocate for BPM within the organization. This role involves not only providing the initial impetus for BPM projects but also sustaining momentum throughout their lifecycle. The sponsor must effectively market BPM initiatives internally, highlighting their potential benefits and strategic importance to garner widespread support and participation across the organization. Without a committed BPM sponsor at the top management level, BPM projects are at risk of languishing due to a lack of visibility and insufficient prioritization, which can ultimately lead to their failure (Scheer & Hoffmann, 2014).

The BPM sponsor's responsibilities extend beyond mere advocacy; they include securing and allocating the necessary resources, both financial and human, to support BPM activities. Furthermore, the BPM sponsor must ensure that a dedicated function group with the requisite BPM knowledge and expertise is established within the organization. This group, often referred to as a BPM Center of Excellence (CoE), plays a critical role in standardizing BPM practices, providing ongoing support, and facilitating continuous improvement efforts.

#### **4.2.1.2 BPM Center of Excellence**

To achieve effective BPM initiatives, it is essential for organizations to foster a strong foundation of BPM capabilities, often stemming from top-level strategic directives aimed at cultivating a process-oriented culture. This organizational shift typically requires substantial investment in human capital, technological infrastructure, and the accumulation of experiential knowledge. Research underscores the importance of grounding BPM efforts in an organization that not only understands BPM but is also aligned with the underlying values that support its success. Effective BPM initiatives rely on widespread awareness of BPM's strategic advantages and a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities across the organizational structure to ensure a collaborative and committed approach to BPM initiatives (Melenovsky & Hill, 2006).

Establishing a process-oriented culture goes beyond mere technical implementation; it requires engagement from individuals who exhibit a genuine commitment to process improvement and are capable of instilling a process-oriented mindset throughout the organization. As Rosemann (2014) highlights, advocates of BPM should be equipped with both the passion and the influence needed to persuade executives and other stakeholders of the strategic benefits associated with BPM. These BPM champions play a critical role in bridging the gap between high-level BPM strategies and their operationalization, providing the motivational and intellectual support necessary to drive BPM acceptance and adoption throughout the organization. Without such dedicated individuals, BPM initiatives may fail to gain traction, as enthusiasm for process improvement is essential to foster alignment with BPM's core objectives.

A holistic BPM approach necessitates the establishment of specialized structures within the organization to manage and guide BPM-related activities effectively. One such structure commonly recommended is the BPM Center of Excellence (CoE), a centralized function that acts as the nucleus of BPM expertise, governance, and oversight (Zollo & Winter, 2002; Franz & Kirchmer, 2012). The BPM CoE is integral to the successful deployment of BPM strategies, as it consolidates BPM knowledge, defines roles and responsibilities, and provides a structured framework for BPM implementation. The BPM CoE serves as both a repository of expertise and a governance body that establishes policies, procedures, and standards for BPM activities across the organization, thereby facilitating consistency and alignment with organizational goals.

The primary responsibilities of a BPM CoE encompass a range of critical activities that contribute to the development and sustainability of BPM practices within the organization. These responsibilities emphasize the strategic role of the BPM CoE as a central pillar for BPM governance. By aligning BPM activities with corporate strategy, the CoE not only articulates a unified BPM vision but also establishes mechanisms to oversee and manage business processes effectively across the organization (Tregear, 2014). Additionally, the BPM CoE is instrumental in developing BPM competencies, which includes identifying and nurturing the specific skill sets required for BPM roles and responsibilities. This strategic focus on skills development ensures that the organization has the internal expertise needed to sustain BPM initiatives and achieve long-term success.

The BPM CoE's comprehensive mandate enables it to drive BPM as a core capability within the organization, embedding process management practices into the organizational culture and fostering a sustainable BPM ecosystem. Through its structured approach to governance, training, and coordination, the CoE transforms BPM from a series of isolated projects into a cohesive organizational strategy, resulting in improved operational efficiency, enhanced agility, and the ability to consistently deliver value through optimized business processes. Thus, the BPM CoE serves as the foundation for fostering a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring that BPM remains a strategic asset for the organization in a constantly evolving business environment.

Following roles are the typical positions within a BPM Center of Excellence:

- **Chief Process Officer**

The position of the Chief Process Officer (CPO) is increasingly recognized as a pivotal role in modern organizations, particularly those that prioritize business process management as a core strategic initiative (Franz & Kirchmer, 2012). The emergence of the CPO as the leader of the BPM CoE reflects a broader trend toward establishing a process-focused leadership role dedicated to overseeing, standardizing, and optimizing BPM practices across organizational levels. The appointment of a CPO signals a strong commitment by top management to embed process thinking within the organization's strategic framework, further illustrating the need for high-level executive support to sustain BPM efforts in complex, decentralized environments.

In organizations that already exhibit a well-established process-oriented culture, the evolution of a BPM Sponsor into the CPO role represents a natural progression in BPM governance. Traditionally, the BPM Sponsor serves as an executive advocate for BPM initiatives, championing the integration of process-based approaches within the organization's operational and strategic practices. However, with the formalization of the CPO role, the responsibilities of the BPM Sponsor are elevated, placing this individual at the helm of BPM initiatives organization-wide. This role expansion allows the CPO to not only act as an advocate but also as a direct supervisor and strategist, driving BPM projects, coordinating resources, and ensuring alignment between BPM objectives and broader organizational goals.

The primary responsibilities of the CPO encompass a broad range of strategic, managerial, and operational tasks. At the strategic level, the CPO is responsible for setting the overall direction for BPM initiatives, developing a unified BPM vision, and integrating BPM objectives into the organization's corporate strategy. This integration requires the CPO to work closely with other senior leaders to ensure that BPM efforts align with corporate priorities and contribute to overarching business objectives. By managing BPM activities at both the group and regional levels, the CPO enables a cohesive approach to BPM, ensuring that BPM practices are applied consistently across different business units and geographic locations. Additionally, the CPO

plays a critical role in resource allocation, coordinating the distribution of BPM expertise and support across the organization to maximize the effectiveness of BPM initiatives.

A crucial aspect of the CPO's role involves managing a team of BPM experts dispersed across the organization. This team typically includes process architects, BPM analysts, and regional BPM coordinators who are responsible for the execution of BPM activities within their respective domains. The CPO acts as a central point of guidance and support for this team, providing strategic direction, performance management, and ongoing professional development opportunities. Through effective leadership, the CPO fosters a collaborative environment in which BPM experts can share insights, troubleshoot challenges, and contribute to the continuous refinement of BPM practices. This network of BPM professionals serves as the backbone of the organization's BPM capabilities, facilitating knowledge sharing and promoting a unified approach to process management across departments and regions.

For the CPO to be effective, it is essential that this individual is not only technically proficient in BPM methodologies but also possesses a comprehensive understanding of the organization's business processes and strategic priorities. The CPO's process knowledge enables informed decision-making, allowing them to identify process improvement opportunities that align with organizational goals and deliver tangible business value. Moreover, the CPO must be well-versed in BPM methodologies, including process modeling, performance measurement, and continuous improvement frameworks, to guide the development and implementation of BPM standards across the organization.

Beyond technical expertise, the CPO requires strong interpersonal and negotiation skills to gain buy-in from both top management and individual business units. As the CPO's authority extends across multiple divisions and potentially diverse regional operations, it is essential that they establish credibility and build trust among stakeholders. This credibility is achieved through transparent communication, demonstrated expertise, and an ability to balance organizational objectives with the unique needs of individual business units. The CPO must also possess negotiation skills to navigate conflicts that may arise between BPM goals and the priorities of various business units, as well as to mediate any resistance to BPM initiatives.

The acceptance and endorsement of the CPO by individual business units are critical to the success of BPM initiatives. The CPO must foster strong working relationships with key stakeholders across the organization, including business unit leaders, department heads, and regional managers. By engaging these stakeholders in BPM discussions, the CPO can better understand their unique challenges, address concerns, and customize BPM approaches to align with local needs. Such collaboration fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to BPM initiatives among business unit leaders, increasing the likelihood of successful BPM implementation and long-term sustainability.

Furthermore, the CPO's success is closely linked to their capacity to communicate the value of BPM to both executive leadership and employees throughout the organization. To achieve this, the CPO must be adept at articulating the benefits of BPM in terms that resonate with diverse audiences, highlighting how BPM initiatives contribute to enhanced efficiency, operational agility, and competitive advantage. This communication effort is essential for securing executive sponsorship, which in turn facilitates access to the necessary resources for BPM initiatives and reinforces the strategic importance of BPM within the organization.

In summary, the role of the CPO is instrumental in establishing and maintaining a process-oriented culture that permeates all levels of the organization. Through strategic oversight, cross-functional collaboration, and a focus on continuous improvement, the CPO enables the organization to derive maximum value from its BPM efforts. As the head of the BPM CoE, the CPO not only drives BPM strategy but also serves as a champion for process excellence, inspiring commitment to BPM principles and ensuring that BPM remains an integral component of the organization's strategic framework. In an era where adaptability and operational efficiency are paramount, the CPO provides the leadership necessary to embed BPM into the organization's DNA, thereby positioning it for sustained success in a competitive and dynamic business environment.

- **BPM Experts**

BPM Experts, who are under the strategic leadership of the CPO, serve as essential internal consultants tasked with implementing and advancing BPM initiatives across the organization. Acting as catalysts for BPM expertise, these professionals play a pivotal role in the dissemination of process management knowledge and the promotion of process-oriented values throughout the corporate environment (Scheer & Hoffmann, 2014). The structured and organization-wide rollout of BPM methodologies and principles facilitated by BPM Experts is vital for embedding a consistent process management culture, enhancing operational efficiency, and enabling continuous improvement. Their role involves not only educating various organizational stakeholders on BPM but also reinforcing the strategic importance of processes, cultivating a mindset that views processes as key assets in achieving organizational goals and maintaining competitive advantage.

BPM Experts typically encompass roles such as process consultants and business analysts. These professionals are distinguished by their deep understanding of BPM-related tools, methodologies, and best practices. This specialized knowledge allows BPM Experts to provide invaluable insights and guidance in BPM projects, addressing complex process challenges and identifying opportunities for improvement across diverse functions. Process consultants and business analysts possess technical skills in BPM software, process modeling, and performance measurement, enabling them to apply structured approaches to diagnose inefficiencies, streamline working , and implement standards that facilitate repeatable, scalable processes. Their expertise allows them to support the CPO's vision by transforming BPM strategies into actionable plans, thus translating high-level objectives into practical, measurable outcomes at the operational level.

A significant responsibility of BPM Experts is to support process owners in various stages of process management, which includes the analysis, definition, documentation, measurement, and improvement of business processes (Lohmann & zur Muehlen, 2015). This comprehensive involvement ensures that BPM initiatives are not only well-defined but also systematically executed and aligned with organizational objectives. In the analysis phase, BPM Experts

collaborate with process owners to thoroughly examine existing processes, identifying bottlenecks, redundancies, and other inefficiencies that hinder performance. This diagnostic work is essential for understanding current state processes, as it provides a foundation for developing targeted improvement strategies. BPM Experts utilize a range of analytic techniques, including root cause analysis, process mapping, and data-driven performance assessments, to produce a detailed overview of process performance.

In addition to their technical and analytical responsibilities, BPM Experts also act as ambassadors for BPM principles within the organization. They play a key role in cultivating a process-oriented mindset by promoting BPM values, such as customer focus, efficiency, and innovation, throughout the organization. BPM Experts frequently conduct workshops, training sessions, and seminars to educate employees on BPM tools and techniques. These educational efforts aim to empower employees at all levels to recognize the importance of processes in their daily tasks and to contribute actively to process improvement initiatives. By fostering a shared understanding of BPM principles, BPM Experts help to build a cohesive, process-driven culture where employees view process optimization as an integral part of their roles.

Moreover, BPM Experts collaborate with cross-functional teams to ensure that BPM initiatives are aligned with the broader objectives of the organization. They serve as liaisons between the BPM CoE and individual business units, facilitating communication and ensuring that BPM efforts are integrated seamlessly into the organization's operations. This collaboration is essential for achieving buy-in from diverse departments and for tailoring BPM solutions to meet the unique needs of each functional area. By acting as a bridge between the CoE and various departments, BPM Experts foster a collaborative environment that enables the organization to implement BPM solutions in a way that is both effective and sustainable.

In summary, BPM Experts are indispensable to the successful implementation of BPM initiatives within organizations. Under the guidance of the CPO, they operate as internal consultants, leveraging their BPM knowledge to drive process improvements, educate stakeholders, and promote a culture of continuous improvement. Their role encompasses a wide range of responsibilities, from technical process analysis and documentation to educational outreach and

cross-functional collaboration. Through their work, BPM Experts not only enhance process efficiency but also contribute to the creation of an organization-wide commitment to process excellence, thereby positioning the organization for long-term success in an increasingly competitive business environment. The strategic impact of BPM Experts is profound, as they enable organizations to optimize processes, reduce operational costs, and adapt to the dynamic challenges of the modern business landscape.

- **Process Modeler**

Process modelers hold an essential position within the BPM framework, as they play a central role in the design, development, and refinement of business process models that serve as the blueprint for an organization's operational working procedures. These individuals possess specialized skills in process modeling techniques, methodologies, and BPM tools, enabling them to create detailed representations of business processes that facilitate understanding, analysis, and improvement across various organizational units. In addition to their technical expertise, Process Modelers are also tasked with disseminating BPM knowledge, promoting adherence to BPM methodologies, and cultivating modeling skills throughout the organization. By imparting process knowledge and fostering modeling competencies, they contribute to building a process-oriented culture that supports the organization's overall strategic objectives (Scheer & Hoffmann, 2014).

Process Modelers operate within a defined BPM framework established by the BPM CoE, which sets standards and guidelines for all BPM activities within the organization. These standards ensure that process models are developed in a consistent and structured manner, adhering to best practices and facilitating comparability across different processes. Process Modelers are responsible for ensuring compliance with these BPM standards, which include modeling conventions, process naming standards, and the use of specific modeling tools or notations. This compliance is critical for maintaining the quality and accuracy of process models, as well as for enabling effective process analysis, optimization, and alignment with corporate goals. By adhering to the standards defined by the BPM CoE, Process modelers ensure that process models

are not only accurate representations of business processes but also valuable assets for organizational learning and continuous improvement.

The role of process modelers extends beyond mere technical modeling tasks; they also function as advocates for BPM principles and practices within the organization. Their responsibility to promote BPM methodologies and modeling skills requires them to engage actively with stakeholders across different levels of the organization, including managers, team leaders, and front-line employees. Through workshops, training sessions, and collaborative modeling exercises, process modelers enhance the BPM knowledge of employees, helping them understand the purpose and benefits of process modeling and how it aligns with their daily responsibilities. This educational role fosters a shared understanding of BPM principles and increases buy-in for BPM initiatives, as employees become more aware of how process management contributes to the organization's overall efficiency, agility, and adaptability in a competitive market.

In conclusion, process modelers serve a crucial function within the BPM framework, contributing both technical expertise and advocacy for process management practices across the organization. As integral members of the BPM CoE, they ensure that process models are accurate, compliant with established standards, and aligned with corporate strategy. Their role in promoting BPM methodologies and modeling skills supports the organization's goal of cultivating a process-oriented culture, where employees at all levels recognize the importance of process management in achieving operational excellence.

The structural organization of BPM within an enterprise sometimes necessitates a multi-level approach, particularly in larger corporations where operational complexity and geographic diversity are pronounced. Depending on the size, scope, and strategic orientation of the organization, a hierarchical BPM structure involving both global and regional entities is frequently implemented. This approach, supported by literature and industry best practices, reflects the need for scalability, adaptability, and coherence across dispersed organizational units while maintaining alignment with overarching corporate objectives (Scheer & Hoffmann, 2014).

In a typical multi-level BPM structure, the primary governance body, often referred to as the Global BPM CoE, operates at the organizational level. Its role encompasses the establishment of

universal standards, policies, and methodologies that guide BPM activities across the entire enterprise. This Global CoE serves as the central authority responsible for developing the BPM strategy in line with the corporation's long-term goals, thus ensuring uniformity and consistency in BPM practices. This centralization of BPM functions is essential for establishing a cohesive BPM framework that aligns with corporate vision and values, fostering a process-centric culture that permeates all levels of the organization. By creating a unified approach to BPM, the Global CoE provides a foundational basis for operational standardization, enabling the organization to leverage synergies, reduce redundancies, and streamline processes on a large scale.

In contrast, regional BPM Centers of Excellence are typically established to manage BPM functions within specific geographic regions, business units, or functional areas. These regional entities act as extensions of the Global BPM CoE, adapting the global BPM standards to the unique regulatory, cultural, and market dynamics of their respective locales. This regionalization enables BPM to be responsive to local requirements, as regional CoEs can implement and modify processes in ways that cater to region-specific needs while maintaining alignment with the core standards set by the Global CoE. By allowing for this degree of localization, organizations can ensure that BPM initiatives remain relevant and effective across diverse operational landscapes, supporting both global consistency and local flexibility (Scheer & Hoffmann, 2014). The Regional CoEs, therefore, serve as strategic partners to the Global CoE, translating high-level BPM goals into actionable plans that address the distinctive challenges and opportunities present within each region.

The division of responsibilities between global and regional BPM CoEs is carefully delineated to ensure clarity of roles, minimize duplication of effort, and promote efficiency. The Global CoE is generally tasked with high-level responsibilities, such as formulating the BPM vision, defining process governance structures, setting organization-wide standards, and overseeing the development of BPM competencies. It also takes the lead in identifying global process improvement opportunities, often leveraging insights from data analytics, benchmarking, and cross-functional collaboration. In doing so, the Global CoE provides a strategic roadmap for

BPM that aligns with corporate priorities and supports the organization's competitive positioning.

Conversely, the regional CoEs assume more tactical responsibilities, focusing on the implementation, monitoring, and continuous improvement of BPM activities within their respective regions. Their tasks often include adapting BPM methodologies to local regulatory standards, ensuring that process models are compliant with regional requirements, and facilitating the deployment of BPM tools and technologies suited to the specific needs of their operational environments. Additionally, regional CoEs may work closely with local business leaders and process owners to identify and address region-specific process challenges, thereby ensuring that BPM initiatives resonate with local priorities and contribute to regional performance metrics. This balance of strategic oversight and regional adaptability enables organizations to harness the benefits of a centralized BPM approach while remaining attuned to the complexities of regional units.

#### **4.2.1.3 BPM Steering Committee**

The BPM Steering Committee plays an instrumental role in the governance and strategic direction of BPM within an organization, serving as the primary body responsible for the establishment, guidance, and oversight of the BPM strategy. This committee functions as a high-level, decision-making body within the BPM framework, enabling effective coordination of BPM initiatives across all operational levels and ensuring alignment with the organization's overarching objectives. At its core, the BPM Steering Committee is tasked with setting the strategic BPM agenda, directing resources and activities to support this agenda, and continuously monitoring progress to ensure the achievement of BPM goals. Through these responsibilities, the committee plays a pivotal role in embedding a process-oriented culture that supports the organization's pursuit of operational excellence, agility, and continuous improvement (Scheer & Hoffmann, 2014).

Chaired by the CPO, the BPM Steering Committee is composed of senior leaders and stakeholders from various functional areas, reflecting the cross-functional nature of BPM. The

inclusion of the BPM Sponsor—who is typically a member of top management with authority and influence across the organization—further strengthens the committee’s capacity to drive BPM initiatives at the highest levels. The composition of the committee is flexible and may include other BPM experts or domain-specific leaders depending on the current scope and focus of BPM activities. This adaptability allows the committee to address diverse BPM challenges and objectives, from process optimization in specific business units to organization-wide process transformation efforts. By involving individuals with specialized BPM knowledge, as well as those with a deep understanding of business operations, the BPM Steering Committee ensures that BPM strategies are both technically sound and operationally relevant.

The primary responsibilities of the BPM Steering Committee can be categorized into three main areas: strategic oversight, decision-making, and monitoring and evaluation. Firstly, in terms of strategic oversight, the committee is responsible for defining the organization’s BPM vision, goals, and strategic priorities. This involves identifying key areas for process improvement, setting targets for BPM initiatives, and ensuring that these targets align with the organization’s long-term goals. The committee works closely with the Global and Regional BPM CoEs to translate these strategic objectives into actionable plans, providing the necessary resources and support to facilitate their implementation. Additionally, the committee oversees the development and refinement of the BPM roadmap, a comprehensive plan that outlines the sequence, scope, and expected outcomes of BPM projects over a specified timeframe. This roadmap serves as a guide for BPM practitioners, helping to coordinate efforts and maintain momentum toward achieving BPM objectives.

Secondly, the BPM Steering Committee is charged with decision-making responsibilities, particularly in situations that require escalation or in cases of ambiguity and complexity. The committee acts as the final authority on critical BPM decisions, such as resource allocation, prioritization of projects, and conflict resolution among different business units. In practice, this means that the committee must evaluate proposals from the Global and Regional CoEs, assess the feasibility and potential impact of BPM initiatives, and make informed decisions regarding their approval or modification. This decision-making role is essential for maintaining coherence

and consistency within the BPM framework, as it ensures that BPM activities are not only aligned with corporate strategy but also responsive to emerging organizational needs and challenges. In cases of uncertainty, the committee leverages the expertise of its members to conduct a thorough assessment, considering factors such as risk, resource availability, and potential outcomes before arriving at a consensus.

The third primary responsibility of the BPM Steering Committee is the continuous monitoring and evaluation of all BPM-related activities within the organization. This involves establishing key performance indicators (KPIs) and metrics that allow the committee to assess the effectiveness of BPM initiatives and track progress against established goals. By reviewing performance data on a regular basis, the committee gains insights into the efficiency, impact, and alignment of BPM activities with corporate objectives. This monitoring process enables the committee to identify potential bottlenecks, address deviations from the BPM roadmap, and make adjustments to ensure that BPM efforts remain on course. Additionally, the committee uses evaluation findings to inform future BPM strategies, identifying best practices and lessons learned that can be applied to subsequent BPM projects. This continuous improvement cycle reinforces the organization's commitment to BPM as a dynamic and adaptive discipline, where feedback is systematically used to refine and enhance process management practices.

In its role as the strategic guiding body for BPM, the BPM Steering Committee collaborates extensively with other governance bodies, such as the executive leadership team and the BPM CoEs, to ensure that BPM activities are fully integrated into the organization's operational framework. This collaborative approach is particularly crucial for addressing cross-functional dependencies, as BPM initiatives often involve multiple departments and require coordinated efforts. By fostering open communication and alignment between different governance entities, the Steering Committee helps to break down organizational silos, promote knowledge sharing, and facilitate the smooth execution of BPM initiatives. Moreover, the committee actively engages with stakeholders across the organization to foster buy-in and support for BPM, as employee engagement and commitment are critical to the successful implementation of process changes. Through this stakeholder engagement, the Steering Committee helps to cultivate a

culture of process ownership and accountability, where employees at all levels recognize the value of BPM and contribute to its success.

The committee's leadership in BPM also extends to risk management and change management, both of which are integral to the successful execution of BPM projects. In terms of risk management, the committee is responsible for identifying potential risks associated with BPM initiatives, such as operational disruptions, resource constraints, or resistance to change. By proactively addressing these risks, the committee ensures that BPM projects are resilient and adaptable, capable of withstanding unforeseen challenges. Change management, on the other hand, involves guiding the organization through the transitions associated with BPM initiatives, from changes in processes to shifts in organizational culture. The Steering Committee, with its strategic oversight and influence, plays a key role in orchestrating these transitions, working with change management teams to develop communication plans, training programs, and support mechanisms that facilitate a smooth adoption of BPM practices.

In summary, the BPM Steering Committee is the cornerstone of BPM governance within an organization, providing the strategic direction, decision-making authority, and oversight necessary to drive BPM initiatives to success. Chaired by the Chief Process Officer and supported by senior leaders and BPM experts, the committee is responsible for setting the BPM agenda, making critical decisions in complex situations, and monitoring the progress of BPM activities to ensure alignment with corporate goals. Through its multifaceted responsibilities, the committee not only steers the organization's BPM strategy but also fosters a culture of continuous improvement, risk mitigation, and adaptability. This governance structure enables the organization to leverage BPM as a strategic asset, enhancing operational efficiency, promoting innovation, and positioning the organization for sustained success in a rapidly changing business landscape.

#### **4.2.1.4 Process Owner**

In contemporary organizational studies, the establishment of a process-oriented organization is increasingly recognized as essential for achieving strategic goals and enhancing overall efficiency. Within this context, researchers underscore the pivotal role of the process owner, an individual charged with the comprehensive planning, management, and control of specific business processes within the organization (Nesheim, 2011). The Process Owner not only oversees a dedicated core process but also possesses the requisite technical competencies necessary for effective process management. This role is integral to ensuring that business processes align with organizational objectives and respond effectively to both internal and external demands.

The responsibilities of a process owner are extensive and multifaceted. Primarily, process owners are tasked with the identification, formalization, and documentation of business processes. This entails not only mapping out existing processes but also analyzing them to uncover inefficiencies or areas for improvement. Additionally, Process Owners are responsible for setting performance goals, allocating resources effectively, and ensuring the implementation of processes in a manner that promotes operational excellence (Nesheim, 2011). Furthermore, it is crucial for Process Owners to maintain a comprehensive understanding of their processes, enabling them to make informed decisions that positively impact process performance.

To execute their responsibilities effectively, process owners must occupy a relatively high position within the organizational hierarchy, thereby granting them ultimate authority over the operations of the processes they manage (Žabjek et al., 2008). This authority is essential for facilitating the necessary changes and improvements that drive process performance. Moreover, process owners are accountable for the performance and continuous improvement of the processes they oversee, requiring a commitment to ongoing evaluation and adaptation. In larger organizations, process owners may operate at different levels, encompassing both global and regional dimensions. This study delineates the roles of the Global Process Owner (GPO) and the Regional Process Owner (RPO) to clarify how these positions function within the broader organizational structure.

- **Global Process Owner**

The role of the Global Process Owner is particularly critical in the context of standardization and harmonization projects within organizations. According to the literature, such initiatives typically commence with the appointment of an organization-wide process owner who is accountable for defining and coordinating a business process across the entire organization (Manrodt & Vitasek, 2004; Nesheim, 2011). For the purposes of this study, the term "Global Process Owner" is applied to denote this crucial position. The GPO holds overarching responsibility for a designated business process and may be selected from among existing process owners of variant processes based on predefined criteria or may be recruited externally.

The responsibilities of the GPO encompass the global design and end-to-end deployment of a specific business process. This role is essential for enabling the organization to meet, and ideally exceed, its established performance targets. To accomplish this objective, the GPO collaborates closely with local owners of process variants, ensuring that the process strategy is aligned with the overarching business strategy. This collaborative approach involves identifying key problems, deploying the process effectively, and ensuring that the global process fulfills the requirements of all stakeholders involved. Notably, the GPO possesses the authority to permit regional variations from the established global process, thereby allowing for adaptations that better fit local circumstances (Hammer & Stanton, 1999; Hammer, 2002; Harmon, 2003; Palmberg, 2009). This flexibility is essential in recognizing and accommodating the diverse operational contexts that exist across different geographical locations or market segments.

- **Regional Process Owner**

In parallel with the role of the GPO, the Regional Process Owner (RPO) serves as the counterpart responsible for overseeing specific process variants at the local level. The RPO plays a crucial role in managing the operational aspects of the business process, thereby ensuring its effectiveness in a specific regional context. This position is vital for facilitating communication between local and global process management, as the RPO is responsible for addressing local issues and requirements that may arise during process implementation.

To effectively fulfill their role, RPOs must engage in proactive communication with the GPO, raising and discussing local challenges and requirements. This dialogue is essential for identifying potential conflicts between global and regional processes, enabling the RPO to find an appropriate balance that accommodates both global standards and regional needs. By doing so, the RPO facilitates the adaptation of global processes to meet local circumstances, thereby enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of the processes in diverse operational environments. Consequently, the RPO bears the responsibility for implementing localized variants of the specific business process, ensuring that these adaptations align with both global directives and the specific demands of the local market.

The distinction between the roles of the Global Process Owner and the Regional Process Owner is crucial for the successful execution of business process management initiatives within organizations.

By clearly defining these roles and their respective responsibilities, organizations can foster a more efficient and effective approach to process management. This clarity not only streamlines communication and collaboration between different levels of process ownership but also enhances the overall performance and adaptability of the organization's processes in a dynamic business environment. However, the successful implementation of these roles is not solely a matter of design. Their effectiveness is closely tied to the structural maturity of the organizations involved. Without a foundational level of structural readiness, even the most well-defined roles may remain symbolic rather than operational. Therefore, it is essential to assess the structural maturity of the merging entities to determine the feasibility and depth of BPH implementation.

This role-based structure provides the operational backbone for business process harmonization by ensuring that responsibilities are clearly distributed and that governance mechanisms are in place to support integration efforts. However, the ability to implement and sustain such a structure is not uniform across all merger scenarios. It depends heavily on the structural maturity of the organizations involved, particularly their existing process infrastructure and governance capabilities. Understanding the degree of structural readiness is therefore essential for tailoring the harmonization strategy to the specific context of the merger.

The following section introduces a structural maturity model that categorizes typical configurations encountered in M&A settings. This model serves as a diagnostic tool to assess the starting conditions of the merging entities and to guide the design of appropriate structural interventions for effective BPH implementation.

#### **4.2.2 BPH Structural Maturity**

The establishment of an effective BPH organizational structure depends significantly on the structural maturity of the merging organizations, particularly regarding their process orientation. Based on integration challenges observed in practice and supported by literature, this study identifies three distinct scenarios of process-oriented cultural maturity that shape the structural design and implementation of harmonization strategies. These scenarios reflect varying degrees of readiness and capability for process integration, each requiring a tailored approach to governance, role definition, and change management. By recognizing and responding to these maturity levels, organizations can better anticipate structural challenges, allocate resources strategically, and design interventions that are both operationally sound and culturally coherent. There are three distinct scenarios of process-oriented structural maturity in M&A contexts:

- **Scenario 1:** Both organizations have established process-oriented Structures:

When both organizations already possess mature, process-oriented structures with clearly defined roles such as process owners, governance bodies, and BPM centers of excellence, the integration effort can leverage these strengths by:

- Merging or aligning governance frameworks to create a unified BPH organization.
- Establishing cross-organizational process councils to oversee harmonization.
- Sharing resources and knowledge across entities to facilitate seamless integration.

This scenario enables faster implementation with reduced structural ambiguity and greater clarity in decision-making.

- **Scenario 2:** Only one organization has a process-oriented structure:

Here, structural asymmetry presents a challenge:

- The more mature organization's BPM structure can serve as a model for integration.
- A transition plan is required to gradually extend process-oriented roles and governance to the less mature organization.
- Integration teams must actively manage structural change through communication, training, and governance alignment.

This scenario necessitates deliberate structural redesign and capacity building to avoid fragmentation and role confusion.

- **Scenario 3:** Neither organization has a process-oriented structure:

In the absence of existing BPM structures:

- A dedicated BPH organizational entity must be created from scratch.
- Key roles such as BPM sponsor, process owners, and centers of excellence must be formally established.
- Governance mechanisms and clear accountability frameworks need to be implemented to guide harmonization efforts.
- Incremental pilots may be necessary to demonstrate value and build momentum.

This scenario is the most resource-intensive and requires comprehensive change management focusing on both structure and culture.

In summary, the establishment of an effective BPH organizational structure is essential for driving organizational performance and ensuring the successful implementation of BPH initiatives. If the above-mentioned roles and responsibilities are in place, BPM projects can run efficiently within an organization (Scheer & Hoffmann, 2014). However, the definition of the organizational structure is just one of the other crucial factors that should be addressed when initiating BPH projects. In addition to creating a suitable cultural environment and establishing

an appropriate organizational structure, the main phases of the desired BPH project and the BPH process itself should be outlined. This will be the focus of the next section.

### **4.3 Process Phase Model of BPH**

In our study, we advance the concept that process harmonization is not merely a procedural task but a strategic integration capability. It must be explicitly structured and methodologically governed in order to achieve successful post-merger integration. Within the context of mergers and acquisitions, process harmonization plays a foundational role in aligning the operational core of the newly combined organization. The approach developed in this study conceptualizes process harmonization as a systematic, phased intervention that addresses both organizational and technical fragmentation. Its objective is to promote efficiency, consistency, and strategic cohesion across the reconfigured enterprise landscape.

At the center of this approach lies the assertion that effective process harmonization enables more than operational cost savings and efficiency gains. It also facilitates strategic integration by allowing the merged organization to reduce complexity, improve responsiveness, and realize the synergies that underpin the rationale for the transaction. These outcomes are corroborated by Romero et al. (2012), who emphasize that harmonized processes not only lower operational costs and enhance internal control, but also support the integration of disparate IT systems. Such integration outcomes are fundamental to achieving the strategic and financial goals of M&A activity.

However, we contend that these benefits cannot be realized unless harmonization is approached through a clearly defined and structurally embedded methodology. Process harmonization is inherently complex due to the simultaneous presence of multiple process variants, each shaped by distinct business logics, legacy systems, and culturally embedded practices. Without a systematic approach to analyzing and reconciling these differences, organizations risk process misalignment, inefficiencies, and ultimately, integration failure.

While the existing literature recognizes the strategic importance of process harmonization in M&A contexts, it often remains limited to conceptual or high-level guidance. What distinguishes the present study is its detailed operationalization of harmonization into four interdependent phases: analysis, conception, realization, and verification. This structure, based on but extending beyond the framework proposed by Schönreiter (2016), offers an actionable roadmap that directly addresses the practical challenges encountered in post-merger integration settings. Each phase is enriched with cultural integration mechanisms that support the development of a process-oriented culture and ensure that harmonization is both technically sound and culturally sustainable.

#### **4.3.1 Analysis – Operational and Cultural Diagnostics**

The analysis phase, as conceptualized in this study, serves as the empirical foundation for all subsequent harmonization activities. Its primary objective is to develop a comprehensive understanding of the existing process landscape within the merging organizations. This involves systematically identifying, mapping, and contextualizing the process variants that have evolved independently over time in different functional areas, business units, or regions.

This approach does not view process variation as mere inefficiency. Instead, it treats variation as an essential source of insight for strategic harmonization decisions. By capturing the full scope of existing processes, organizations are better positioned to evaluate which elements can be standardized, which should be adapted, and where strategic alignment is most urgently required.

In parallel with process mapping, this phase must include cultural diagnostics to uncover how processes are shaped by organizational values, norms, and behaviors. For example, analyzing the approval process in a merger between a hierarchical manufacturing firm and a flat-structured company may reveal that one entity requires three hierarchical sign-offs while the other allows for peer-level approvals. These differences would not only reflect procedural variation but also reveal underlying cultural values related to authority, trust, and autonomy. Therefore, cultural

diagnostics such as interviews and surveys should be conducted to uncover how these values influence process behavior and to anticipate potential resistance to harmonization.

The operational validity of the analysis phase is reinforced by Milani et al. (2016), who introduce the Decomposition Driven Method as a structured tool for eliciting and documenting process variants. Their findings support the central claim of this study, that a clear and detailed understanding of the current state is a prerequisite for successful harmonization. The key activities described in the following subchapters are emphasized within this phase.

#### **4.3.1.1 Elicitation and Capturing the Available Process Variants**

The initial step in the analysis phase is the elicitation and documentation of all process variants across the merging organizations. This process involves gathering existing process information from all entities involved in the merger, as well as any relevant stakeholders, to develop a comprehensive understanding of how similar business processes are carried out across different organizational units. Milani et al. (2016) emphasize that capturing these variations is critical, as it serves as the basis for comparing and harmonizing processes. In this step, it is essential to involve a diverse group of stakeholders from each organization to ensure that all existing variations are documented accurately, as stakeholders possess unique insights into their respective processes that may not be captured in formal documentation alone.

The process of eliciting information begins with reviewing existing documentation stored within each organization's management systems. This can include process descriptions, standard operating procedures, process diagrams, and any digital or manual records that detail how specific business functions are performed. For organizations with established and up-to-date process documentation, this task is relatively straightforward, allowing analysts to directly compare process variants and identify commonalities and differences. However, if one or both merging entities lack such documentation, the task becomes significantly more intensive, requiring alternative data-gathering methods such as conducting interviews and workshops with key personnel. This approach helps to fill any gaps in formal documentation, allowing analysts to

gather valuable, experience-based insights directly from those involved in executing the processes on a daily basis.

Moreover, when documentation is scarce or incomplete, the analysis phase may involve the creation of new process models from scratch, which can be both time-consuming and resource-intensive. In such cases, the focus shifts to reconstructing the current process landscape through a series of interviews and observations. This qualitative approach, while labor-intensive, is often necessary to achieve a full understanding of process variants. Additionally, involving stakeholders in the process-mapping exercise not only ensures the accuracy of the captured information but also fosters a sense of ownership and commitment among employees, which is essential for the eventual acceptance and adoption of harmonized processes.

#### **4.3.1.2 Consolidation of Existing Process Variants in a Main Process**

Following the elicitation and documentation of all available process variants, the next step in the analysis phase is the consolidation of these variants into a unified framework, often referred to as the "main process." According to Milani et al. (2013), a main process represents a core business process stripped of individual variations, focusing instead on the essential steps that define its core functionality. The purpose of this consolidation is to create a high-level model that synthesizes the key elements of each variant into a coherent process structure, laying the groundwork for the harmonized process that will eventually be implemented across the organization. By consolidating diverse process variants into a main process, organizations can establish a standardized framework that aligns with strategic goals while still allowing for minor regional or functional customizations, where necessary.

The development of a main process typically involves identifying the high-level phases or sub-processes that are common across most variants, often referred to as the "5±2" steps, a method suggested by Milani et al. (2016). This methodology aims to break down the process into manageable components, simplifying complex processes into fundamental stages that capture the primary functions of each process. Through workshops with domain experts, key stakeholders, and BPM professionals, organizations can collaboratively define the essential steps of the main

process, ensuring that it accurately reflects the critical tasks necessary for achieving business objectives.

Workshops serve as a platform for stakeholders to discuss and negotiate the components of each variant, allowing them to collaboratively prioritize the steps that will constitute the main process. During these workshops, BPM experts facilitate discussions, guiding participants through a structured process of mapping and validating each step. This collaborative approach not only promotes alignment across departments but also helps in identifying and mitigating potential conflicts that could arise during the harmonization process. For example, one entity might prioritize speed and efficiency, while another values compliance and thoroughness. By identifying these differences early, organizations can design the main process in a way that balances these priorities, incorporating best practices from each entity to create a unified approach that meets diverse needs.

#### **4.3.1.3 Identifying the Variation Drivers and Assessing the Impact Factor**

The third step in the process harmonization framework involves the systematic elicitation and classification of variation drivers. This critical task serves to illuminate the underlying factors contributing to process variations across the merging entities. The identification and classification of these variation drivers are typically facilitated through structured workshops and interviews, which engage key process stakeholders in the analysis. This approach aligns with the methodology developed by Milani et al. (2016), as delineated earlier in this thesis. Through collaborative discussions in workshops, the business drivers responsible for process variation are not only identified but are also classified according to their root causes. These root causes can be categorized into five distinct domains: operational (how), product/service (what), customer (who), market (where), and time (when). The output from this phase results in a comprehensive overview of all potential drivers of process variation, laying the groundwork for informed decision-making in subsequent stages of harmonization.

To effectively capture and categorize the variation drivers, a multifaceted approach is employed that integrates qualitative and quantitative methodologies. During the workshops, participants,

including process owners, domain experts, and other relevant stakeholders, are encouraged to contribute their insights into the factors that influence process variability. This collaborative effort not only enriches the data collection process but also fosters a sense of ownership among participants, which is crucial for the successful implementation of process changes.

Once the variation drivers are identified, each driver is assigned an "impact factor," which serves as a critical metric reflecting both the importance of the driver and the investments required for harmonizing process variants associated with it. This impact factor is pivotal for differentiating between "relevant" and "irrelevant" variation drivers. "Relevant" drivers are those that are integral to the business model and its associated processes; they significantly influence operational efficiency and strategic direction. For example, in a manufacturing context, the product/service driver may be deemed "relevant" if a significant change in the production methods of a key product represents a fundamental shift in the business model. Conversely, "irrelevant" drivers are characterized by their lack of substantial impact on business operations. For instance, in a service-oriented firm catering to multiple customer segments, if variations in customer segments do not meaningfully affect service delivery, the customer driver can be classified as "irrelevant" and subsequently excluded from further analysis.

#### **4.3.1.4 Creating a Variation Matrix**

Following the identification of relevant variation drivers, the next logical step is the creation of a variation matrix (Figure 4.3). This matrix serves as a vital analytical tool that organizes the identified drivers and their associated sub-processes. In constructing the variation matrix, rows correspond to the relevant variation drivers identified in the previous step, while columns represent each sub-process delineated during the earlier analysis phase. The creation of this matrix can be facilitated through another collaborative workshop, involving members of the BPM CoE, regional process owners, and the global process owner.

During this workshop, participants work together to identify and document existing process variants, aligning them with the respective business drivers. This process culminates in a textual representation within the variation matrix, facilitating a clear understanding of how each driver

influences the various sub-processes. The completion of this matrix provides a structured framework for analyzing the implications of variation drivers on the harmonization process, enabling stakeholders to visualize relationships and dependencies among different process components.

**Business Process X**



Variation Driver 1	Sub-Process 1 -> Variant 1	Sub-Process 2 -> Variant 1	Sub-Process 3 -> Variant 1
Variation Driver 2	Sub-Process 1 -> Variant 2	Sub-Process 2 -> Variant 2	Sub-Process 3 -> Variant 2
Variation Driver 3	Sub-Process 1 -> Variant 3	Sub-Process 2 -> Variant 3	Sub-Process 3 -> Variant 3

Figure 4.3. Variation matrix (source: own illustration)

**4.3.1.5 Assessing the Operational Similarity and Cultural Alignment**

With the variation matrix established, the subsequent step involves assessing the operational similarity of process variants across the identified sub-processes. This assessment is captured within the same two-dimensional variation matrix, where the cells are filled with a similarity level corresponding to each identified driver. For this purpose, a four-level scale is proposed for evaluating operational similarity: (1) identical, (2) very similar, (3) partly similar, and (4) not similar. The determination of similarity levels serves as a crucial indicator of the level of investments and management decisions required to achieve effective harmonization of the existing process variants.

Given that detailed models of each sub-process may not always be readily available for an objective comparison, the evaluation of similarity often relies on subjective assessments

conducted through interviews with domain experts. These experts are queried about the likelihood that the identified sub-process variants could yield process models that are identical, very similar, partly similar, or not similar (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Guidelines for subjective operational similarity assessment (source: own illustration)

Similarity assessment	Similarity of process variants
Identical	No perceivable differences
Very similar	No significant differences
Partly similar	Some isolated parts of the process variants are perceivably similar.
Not similar	No perceivable similarities

It is essential to emphasize that the focus of the similarity assessment is on the actual process steps themselves, rather than the supporting IT systems employed in executing these processes. For example, if two process variants are executed in a fundamentally similar manner but utilize different IT systems, they would still be categorized as "very similar". However, the supporting IT system will be documented in the variation matrix, which serves as input for decision-making in the conception phase. The output of this phase would be hence an annotated variation matrix (for example by using color codes) that can be used to distinguish the similarity of the variants.

In parallel, each process variant is evaluated for its cultural alignment with the principles of BPH cultural model developed in this study. Cultural alignment refers to the extent to which a process variant reflects the values, norms, and behaviors that support the process culture that characterized by end-to-end thinking, continuous improvement, and collaborative accountability. Cultural alignment is assessed using a simplified binary scale:

- **Aligned:** The process variant demonstrates behavioral compatibility with BPH culture. It supports cross-functional collaboration, transparency, and shared accountability, and is likely to be accepted and sustained within the merged organization.

- **Misaligned:** The process variant reflects legacy cultural traits that conflict with BPH principles. It may be characterized by hierarchical rigidity, siloed execution, or resistance to change, and is likely to encounter behavioral friction during harmonization.

This cultural assessment is conducted through qualitative methods such as interviews, surveys, and behavioral audits, and is recorded alongside the similarity score in the variation matrix. For example, a sub-process may be “partly similar” operationally but “misaligned” culturally due to differences in decision-making authority, communication style, or accountability norms.

The resulting annotated variation matrix enables a more nuanced analysis of harmonization feasibility. It allows decision-makers in the conception phase to distinguish between variants that require only technical adjustments and those that necessitate cultural ones

This dual-layered model ensures that harmonization decisions are informed by both process logic and cultural viability, thereby increasing the likelihood of successful implementation and long-term adoption.

#### **4.3.2 Conception – Designing Operations and Cultural Alignment**

The results of the initial analyses serve as foundational inputs for the subsequent conception phase, which is characterized by critical activities related to process harmonization, optimization, and redesign. This phase is pivotal as it not only encompasses the refinement and improvement of processes but also includes the potential integration of IT systems, assuming such integration is an objective of the harmonization project. The conception phase must be strategically aligned with the overarching objectives of the newly formed entity post-merger. Thus, it is essential to delineate and communicate the company's strategic vision clearly, as it will provide the guiding framework for all process-related undertakings.

Cultural alignment must also be treated as a design criterion in this phase. This involves embedding shared values and behavioral norms into the process architecture. For example, if the approval process were to be redesigned during this phase, the organization might choose to retain hierarchical checks for compliance-critical decisions while introducing peer-level approvals for

routine tasks. This hybrid model would reflect both operational efficiency and cultural sensitivity. To achieve this, co-design workshops could be conducted with representatives from both legacy organizations to embed shared values and behavioral norms into the process architecture.

During this phase, the development of new processes must be meticulously aligned with the company's revised strategy to ensure coherence and efficiency (Schönreiter, 2016). The strategy not only influences the direction of process development but also determines the criteria and extent of process harmonization. Should the post-merger strategy closely mirror that of the acquiring company, it allows for a more straightforward harmonization process, with new processes being closely modeled after the acquiring company's existing processes. The following sub-phases are all content of the conceptual work for the conception phase and developing trade-off processes.

#### **4.3.2.1 Decision Making on To-Be Process and Developing Process Trade-Offs**

Following the comprehensive elicitation and dual-layered assessment of process variants, strategic decisions must be made regarding the future configuration of each sub-process. These decisions concern whether specific elements of business processes should be retained, adapted, or replaced, and are central to the development of the harmonized “to-be” process landscape.

This decision-making process is best facilitated through structured workshops involving key stakeholders, including top management, the BPM CoE, and the global process owner of the business process under consideration. These workshops serve as a collaborative platform for evaluating the performance, strategic relevance, and cultural viability of existing process variants. Participants engage in critical reflection on the operational model of the merged organization and deliberate on the most appropriate harmonization strategy for each sub-process.

The outcomes of these workshops typically fall into one of the following three harmonization strategies:

- **Maintain All Existing Process Variants:** This option involves continuing to maintain existing structures and processes within each business unit independently. No changes would be implemented, allowing each business unit to operate using its established processes and methodologies. This approach preserves the status quo, with no disruption to current operations.
- **Capture the Best Practices:** In this scenario, one of the existing process variants is identified as the best practice and is adopted across the entire organization. This approach involves a systematic benchmarking and performance evaluation of existing process variants within business units. Once the best practice process is identified, an integration team, which includes the GPO and local process owners, develops a detailed rollout plan. This plan outlines how the best practice process will be implemented across the organization, including the pace of integration and any necessary adaptations. This option aims to standardize processes without requiring significant redesign or transition efforts.
- **Develop a New Trade-Off Process:** This option involves designing a completely new process or transitioning from two existing operating models to a new, optimized process that is novel to all involved units. The new base process is developed by combining the best aspects of regional variants or by creating an entirely new process tailored to the specific needs of the organization. The focus is on selecting process variants with higher complexity, as these can be tailored or scaled down to fit less complex variants. This approach requires all business units to move from their current state (as-is) to the end state (trade-off process), often necessitating interim steps that may vary across different units. This comprehensive redesign aims to create a more streamlined and effective process model that can be adapted to diverse operational contexts.

The selection of a harmonization strategy is not solely determined by operational similarity; it must also reflect the cultural alignment of the process variants with the principles of the process culture (Table 4.2). The following decision logic applies:

- If **all process variants are culturally aligned**, any of the three harmonization strategies—maintain, capture best practices, or develop a new trade-off—may be considered. The final choice should be based on operational performance, strategic fit, and scalability.
- If **only one variant is culturally aligned**, and it is operationally acceptable, it should be adopted as the best-practice model.
- If **none of the variants are culturally aligned**, or the **aligned variant is operationally unsuitable**, a new trade-off process must be developed. This process should embed BPH cultural principles and be supported by a structured cultural program to ensure successful adoption.

Table 4.2. Mapping cultural alignment and harmonization strategy (source: own illustration)

Cultural alignment	Harmonization strategy	Interpretation
All variants aligned	Any of the three options	Cultural compatibility allows flexibility; decision should be based on operational and strategic criteria.
One variant aligned and operationally strong	Capture the best practices	The aligned variant should be adopted if it meets operational requirements.
One variant aligned but operationally weak	Develop a new trade-off process	If the aligned variant is operationally unsuitable, a new process must be designed.
No variants aligned	Develop a new trade-off process	Cultural divergence necessitates redesign to embed shared values and ensure behavioral acceptance.

### 4.3.2.2 Modelling and Documenting the Process Trade-offs

In the analysis phase of process optimization, the degrees of operational similarity between sub-process variants are meticulously assessed. This assessment, combined with strategic decisions from the previous step, serves as the foundation for developing, managing, and planning the rollout of process trade-offs, as guided by the decision matrix illustrated in Figure 4.4. This decision matrix is instrumental in determining the appropriate approach for handling process variants and ensuring optimal alignment with organizational goals.

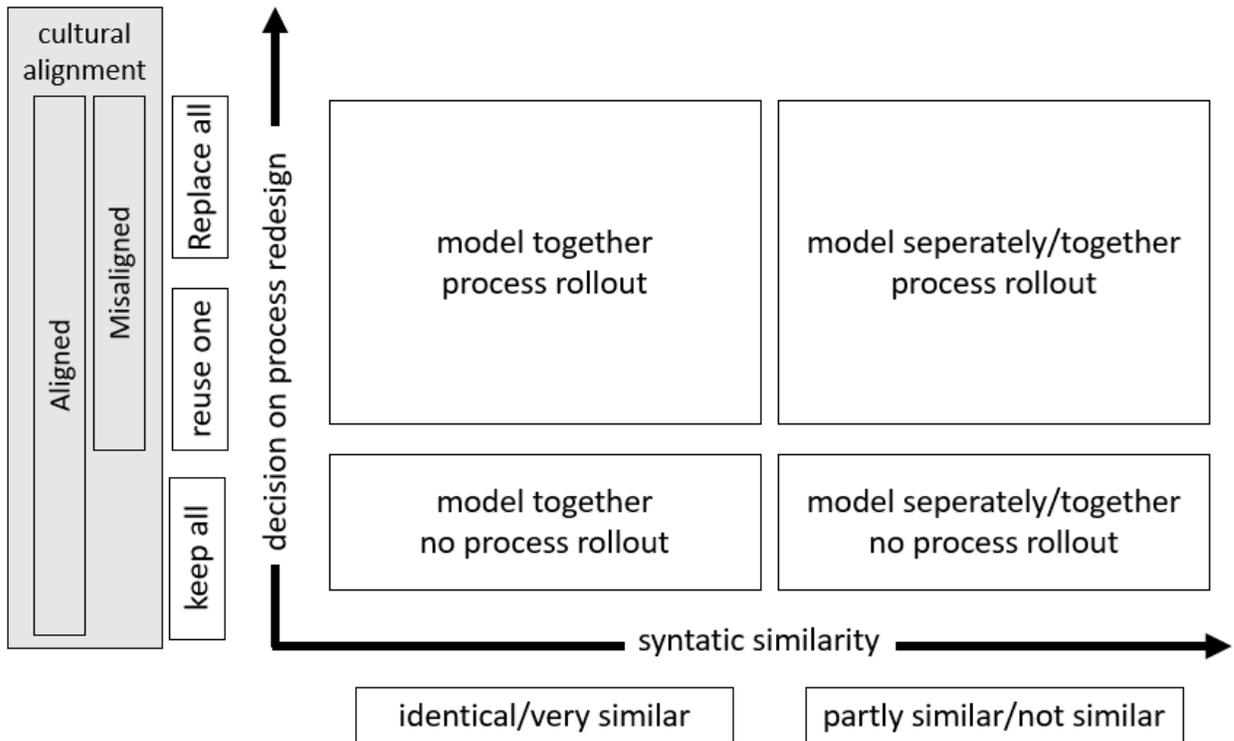


Figure 4.4. Decision matrix (source: own illustration)

- When process variants are found to be identical or exhibit high degrees of similarity, and there is no decision to redesign or replace the existing processes with a best practice model, the current process variants are documented and modeled collectively. In this scenario, no further rollout actions are required, as the existing processes are deemed sufficient and efficient for ongoing operations. The collective documentation and modeling of these similar variants help maintain consistency and clarity across the organization, facilitating easier management and reference.
- In cases where the existing process variants are somewhat similar or not similar at all, and the decision is made to retain all existing process variants, no actions regarding process rollout are necessary. However, it is crucial to decide whether to model these process variants together or separately. This decision hinges on the degree of syntactic differences in how the process variants produce their outcomes. Modeling the variants together may be advantageous for overarching processes with minor variations, whereas modeling them separately might be more effective for processes with significant differences, ensuring that each variant is accurately represented and managed.
- In scenarios where one or more process variants are slated for replacement with new processes, process implementation and rollout become imperative during the realization phase. Ideally, the development of new processes aims to eliminate variations and create a standardized process that can be uniformly applied across all company locations. This standardization simplifies management, enhances operational efficiency, and ensures consistency in process execution. However, if maintaining process variants is unavoidable due to regional or legal considerations, it becomes essential to decide whether to model these variants together or separately based on their degree of difference. The primary objective in such cases is to create clear and understandable process models while avoiding unnecessary complexity.

In this context, both aligned and misaligned processes can be documented and modeled effectively, provided that their cultural status is explicitly considered. Aligned processes may be modeled collectively or adapted with minimal intervention, while misaligned processes must be

treated with greater sensitivity, often requiring redesign and targeted change management strategies. The modelling phase thus becomes not only a technical exercise but also a cultural integration effort, ensuring that the harmonized process landscape is both operationally coherent and behaviorally sustainable.

#### **4.3.2.3 Review for Finalization**

Upon the completion and modeling of the trade-off processes, it is imperative that these processes undergo validation by all relevant process owners to ensure that key requirements are adequately considered and met. This step is critical for aligning the trade-offs with the strategic objectives and operational constraints of the organization. The validation process can be effectively facilitated through structured workshops. These workshops should include participation from a representative of the BPM Center of Excellence, the global process owner, and all regional process owners. The primary goal of these workshops is to collaboratively review and refine the trade-off processes, ensuring they are optimized and aligned with organizational goals.

The outputs generated from these workshops play a crucial role in the iterative process of refining and fine-tuning the trade-offs. They provide a platform for feedback and adjustments, allowing for a comprehensive evaluation of the trade-off decisions. This iterative refinement is essential for addressing any discrepancies or gaps identified during the validation phase, ensuring that the trade-offs are both practical and effective in meeting the organization's needs.

Subsequent to making informed decisions on each process variant and finalizing them, the project transitions into the "realization" phase.

#### **4.3.3 Realization – Implementing Operations and Cultural Change**

Upon the development and finalization of the trade-off process, its application must be rigorously enforced to ensure consistency and adherence across the organization. During the realization phase, the harmonized processes, alongside the trade-offs devised in the conception phase, are implemented and rolled out.

Furthermore, during the realization phase, cultural transformation must be actively supported through structural enablers. These include formal communication channels, training programs, and incentive systems that reinforce process accountability and cross-functional collaboration. For instance, if the harmonized approval process were to be implemented during this phase, the organization might encounter resistance from employees accustomed to informal or decentralized decision-making. To mitigate this, cultural sponsors could be appointed to guide teams through the transition and explain the rationale behind the new structure. Training programs would be launched to reinforce process accountability, and KPIs would be aligned with harmonization goals to incentivize adoption. These structural enablers would ensure that cultural transformation accompanies operational change.

The realization phase is pivotal in transitioning from theoretical frameworks to practical application, ensuring that the new processes are operationalized effectively. The implementation of new processes can be conducted through three primary approaches, as identified by Schönreiter (2016). These approaches are:

- **Step-by-Step Implementation:** This method involves the gradual introduction and rollout of new processes within one business region or unit at a time. Becker et al. (2003) further classify this approach into two subcategories: regionally-scheduled and functionally-scheduled implementations. The subcategory of regionally-scheduled implementation involves rolling out new processes across business regions either individually or in sets. For instance, in the case of an international merger, the new processes may be implemented country by country, allowing for localized adjustments and smoother transitions. The functionally-scheduled approach targets specific business units across all regions. For example, the new processes might first be implemented within the procurement departments of all regions before being extended to the sales departments.

While the step-by-step implementation method can be time-intensive, particularly in the context of large-scale mergers, it offers the advantage of reducing the complexity associated with the rollout and implementation. By addressing one segment at a time, the organization can manage and mitigate risks more effectively.

- **All-at-Once Implementation:** In this approach, new processes are implemented simultaneously across the entire organization. This method expedites the rollout, making it significantly faster than the step-by-step approach. However, it comes with a higher risk of implementation failure due to the complexity of managing simultaneous changes across various departments and regions. The all-at-once implementation necessitates robust planning, extensive resource allocation, and comprehensive training to ensure its success.
- **Pilot-Operated Launch:** This approach involves piloting the new processes within a limited scope, such as a single project or a few business units, before extending the implementation across the entire organization. The pilot-operated launch allows for the identification and rectification of potential failures and shortcomings in a controlled environment, thereby reducing the risk of widespread issues during the full-scale rollout. Although this method is time-consuming, it provides valuable insights and data that can be used to refine the processes before broader implementation.

Furthermore, an effective rollout of new processes necessitates a well-structured communication strategy and the development of training concepts to support employees affected by the changes. Clear and consistent communication ensures that all process stakeholders and participants are adequately informed about the upcoming changes. Training programs are crucial for equipping employees with the necessary skills and knowledge to take ownership of the new processes. This involves not only technical training but also change management initiatives to address resistance and foster a culture of continuous improvement.

In conclusion, the realization phase is critical for embedding new trade-off processes within the organization. The choice of implementation approach should be carefully considered based on the organization's specific context, resources, and risk tolerance. Successful implementation hinges on meticulous planning, robust communication, and comprehensive training, ensuring that the new processes are not only adopted but also sustained in the long term.

#### 4.3.4 Verification – Assessing Operations and Cultural Sustainability

The verification phase proposed in this study serves as a critical juncture for evaluating the success of the harmonization initiative. It is designed as a multifaceted assessment framework that combines operational metrics with cultural diagnostics to ensure that harmonized processes are not only technically implemented but also culturally embedded. This phase is essential for validating whether the intended process improvements have materialized and whether process-oriented behaviors have been internalized across the merged organization.

Verification must also assess whether process-oriented behaviors have been internalized and whether the harmonized processes are being enacted in a culturally coherent manner. For example, if the approval process were to be assessed during this phase, the organization might find that although the new process is technically followed, employees still seek informal validation from former supervisors. This behavior would indicate that cultural norms have not fully aligned with the new process logic. To address this, pulse surveys and behavioral audits could be conducted to measure cultural adoption and identify gaps in process ownership. Follow-up interventions such as coaching or symbolic actions might be necessary to reinforce the desired cultural shift.

To support this evaluation, the framework incorporates four methodological pillars: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), Maturity Models, Internal Process Reviews, and Process Audits. These pillars are proposed based on real-world observations from post-merger integration projects and established best practices in business process management. They provide a comprehensive and structured approach to assess both the operational effectiveness and cultural sustainability of harmonized processes.

- **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** are proposed as quantifiable metrics that allow organizations to systematically monitor and evaluate the performance of harmonized processes. KPIs serve as a bridge between strategic objectives and operational execution, enabling direct comparison between the performance of newly implemented processes and legacy benchmarks. Improvements in KPIs post-implementation are indicative of enhanced

efficiency, effectiveness, and process optimization. KPIs are widely recognized as essential tools for operationalizing strategic goals and tracking performance across the business model lifecycle (Parmenter, 2015).

- **Maturity Models** offer a structured approach to assess the developmental stage of business processes. These models provide a framework for evaluating the current state of process maturity and identifying areas for improvement. By benchmarking harmonized processes against established maturity models, organizations can determine the extent to which processes have evolved from their initial implementation. This evaluation not only measures the success of the current harmonization effort but also informs future optimization strategies. Maturity models have been extensively applied across various domains to guide process improvement and organizational development (Rosemann & de Bruin, 2005)
- **Internal Process Reviews** are proposed as collaborative evaluations conducted by internal stakeholders, including process owners and cross-functional teams. These reviews ensure that harmonized processes align with organizational goals and operational standards. They facilitate the identification of bottlenecks, redundancies, and misalignments, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and shared accountability. Engaging stakeholders in these reviews enhances transparency and promotes collective ownership of process outcomes (Harmon, 2019).
- **Process Audits** are introduced as a fourth pillar to ensure ongoing alignment and responsiveness. These audits provide a systematic and objective assessment of process execution, uncovering inefficiencies, compliance gaps, and opportunities for refinement. In the context of post-merger integration, process audits are particularly valuable for identifying legacy behaviors that persist despite formal harmonization. Regular audits enable organizations to adapt their processes in response to evolving conditions, ensuring sustained performance and customer satisfaction (Bodner & Capron, 2018; Vaara & Monin, 2010).

The success of the implementation is further gauged by juxtaposing the outcomes of the harmonized processes with the results obtained during the analysis phase of the legacy processes. This comparative analysis provides a clear picture of the advancements achieved through the

harmonization project. Enhancements observed in KPIs, maturity levels, internal review outcomes, and audit findings are indicative of a successful implementation, showcasing tangible improvements in process performance and alignment with strategic objectives.

However, it is essential to recognize that the business environment is dynamic. Changes may occur over time at the local process level due to shifts in customer demand, economic fluctuations, market conditions, and other external influences. Consequently, the need for continuous improvement becomes paramount. Regular process audits are proposed as a mechanism for sustaining performance and responsiveness. The insights gained from these audits enable organizations to refine their processes and maintain alignment with evolving strategic goals.

Building upon the three tiers of our framework, in the next chapter of this thesis, we evaluate the plausibility and effectiveness of the developed framework through a detailed case study. The case study provides empirical evidence and practical insights into the application of the framework in a real-world organizational setting. By examining the outcomes and lessons learned from the case study, we aim to validate the framework and provide recommendations for its broader application. The case study will also highlight best practices and potential challenges, offering a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved in process harmonization initiatives.

## **5. Applying the Framework in a Merger (Evaluation)**

To evaluate the framework developed in the preceding chapter, this section presents an in-depth case study focused on process harmonization activities within the context of a corporate merger. As previously discussed, the use of case studies is a recognized method for evaluating artifacts within the scope of Design Science Research (Pries-Heje et al., 2008). Accordingly, this chapter applies the developed framework to a real-world organizational scenario to assess its practical relevance and effectiveness.

The case study examines the acquisition of a generator construction company and energy contractor operating within the commercial sector by one of Europe's leading firms in the industrial sector. The organizations involved in the merger had distinct organizational cultures. One organization was more process-centric than the other, although neither had a strong focus on a process-oriented culture prior to the merger.

The strategic intent of the merger was to address significant challenges arising from differing operational practices across business units and the continued use of disparate IT systems that supported various versions of similar business processes. An essential early step in this transformation was to define the scope of the process harmonization initiative. This involved selecting the specific processes to be harmonized and identifying the IT architecture that would support them.

The company chose to focus on its core customer-facing processes within both the Industrial (IND) and Commercial (COM) sectors. The industrial sector primarily serves industrial clients, such as factories and manufacturing facilities, through the construction of generators and the delivery of tailored services. The commercial sector addresses the needs of a different client base, including residential buildings and healthcare institutions such as hospitals.

The principal objective of the newly integrated organization was to establish a unified operational framework across all business units and to cultivate a process-oriented organizational culture. The harmonization initiative aimed to improve data accuracy, increase transparency, and enhance process efficiency. As outlined in the business case, achieving these objectives required

the implementation of a Process Harmonization project. This project involved selecting core value-creating processes from each company and aligning them to create a standardized operational model. The development of a single IT system to support these harmonized processes was also considered critical.

The successful integration of the two companies was expected to deliver substantial benefits by leveraging the strong operational performance and specialized capabilities of both sectors. In addition to streamlining processes, the harmonization initiative sought to foster collaboration and promote synergy between the merged entities.

The methodological framework developed in this research was applied systematically to the case study, providing a structured approach for analyzing process harmonization efforts. The following sections of this chapter provide a detailed examination of the implementation process, highlighting how the theoretical concepts embedded in the framework were translated into practice. The analysis includes a discussion of the specific methodologies employed, the challenges encountered during implementation, and the strategies adopted to address these challenges.

Furthermore, the chapter presents a comprehensive evaluation of the framework's applicability in a real-world context. This includes an exploration of both the operational aspects of process harmonization and the cultural and organizational dynamics that emerged during the merger. Empirical data and specific examples gathered during the implementation phase are used to illustrate the practical implications of applying the framework.

The insights gained from this case study contribute to the broader discourse on business process management and harmonization. They offer practical guidance for both practitioners and scholars by demonstrating how a systematic approach to process harmonization can lead to significant improvements in performance, efficiency, and adaptability. Through rigorous analysis and reflective evaluation, this chapter provides a robust foundation for understanding the key elements that support successful process harmonization in contemporary organizational settings.

## **5.1 Cultivating a BPH Culture in the Case Study Organization**

The successful implementation of business process harmonization (BPH) in the examined case study required more than aligning systems or redesigning processes. As the framework outlined in the previous chapter emphasizes, BPH is not solely a technical endeavor but a culturally contingent process, in which the development of a shared, process-oriented culture plays a central role. This chapter analyzes how the case study organization approached the development of a BPH culture, the challenges encountered, and the cultural mechanisms used to support integration following the merger between the industrial and commercial sectors.

### **5.1.1 Cultural Starting Point of the Merging Entities**

Prior to the merger, the IND and COM sectors operated under distinct organizational cultures. The IND sector was characterized by a strong engineering focus, hierarchical decision-making, and a tradition of custom-built solutions for industrial clients. In contrast, the COM sector exhibited a more flexible, service-oriented culture with informal communication channels and reactive processes driven by client needs.

Neither sector had developed a fully process-oriented culture prior to integration. Processes were often siloed within functional units, and performance metrics were based on departmental rather than cross-functional achievements. There was limited awareness of business process management principles among staff, and process ownership was fragmented. As such, one of the primary integration challenges was not only to harmonize disparate processes but also to embed a new cultural layer that would enable sustainable BPM practices across the unified enterprise.

### **5.1.2 Applying the BPH Cultural Program in Practice**

To address this challenge, the organization adopted a cultural integration program informed by the multi-element BPH cultural framework introduced in the prior chapter. The program included a number of practical measures, which are outlined below in relation to the case study.

**Shared vision, goals, and measures:** A strategic vision was developed jointly by the integration leadership team, emphasizing unified operations, cross-functional efficiency, and customer-centricity. This vision was formally communicated across both sectors through workshops, roadshows, and leadership messaging.

Operational KPIs were redefined to emphasize end-to-end process performance. Rather than continuing to measure departmental outputs, the new performance system introduced shared indicators such as cycle time, order fulfillment rate, and customer satisfaction scores. These KPIs were used as a foundation for harmonizing processes across both business sectors.

**Legitimization and leadership behavior:** Leaders from both legacy organizations were selected to champion the process orientation initiative. A cross-sector leadership council was established to model the new cultural behaviors. This council was responsible for communicating the rationale behind the process changes and for demonstrating commitment to harmonization initiatives.

In practice, IND managers were encouraged to adopt more collaborative, cross-functional approaches, while COM leaders were trained to emphasize procedural rigor and accountability. Leadership workshops reinforced the importance of BPM not only as a strategy but as a shared cultural value.

**Rules and policies:** Legacy policies that reinforced siloed working were systematically reviewed and replaced. For example, approval procedures that had previously routed decisions through multiple layers of hierarchy in the IND sector were simplified to support faster cross-unit decision-making. Similarly, policies in the COM sector were revised to require formal documentation of process deviations, fostering a culture of transparency.

**Communication:** A dedicated internal communication platform was created to facilitate process knowledge sharing. Monthly updates, integration success stories, and process walkthroughs were disseminated to all staff. Integration town halls included presentations on process milestones, customer feedback, and lessons learned from harmonization pilots.

The communication program prioritized openness and employee feedback. Surveys and suggestion portals allowed employees to voice concerns, which were reviewed regularly by the integration team.

**Involvement:** Employees from both organizations were invited to participate in harmonization workshops, where they co-designed future-state processes. These sessions served dual purposes: they surfaced operational knowledge and gave participants ownership of the cultural transformation.

Process champions were appointed from both the IND and COM sectors. These individuals were selected not only for their technical knowledge but also for their cultural influence. Their task was to advocate for the new BPM values within their teams.

**Trust:** Trust between the merging entities was initially limited, given their differing operational philosophies and perceived power imbalances. To build trust, the organization committed to transparent decision-making, equitable representation in integration forums, and open acknowledgement of legacy strengths.

Early wins from joint projects were highlighted to build confidence in the new operating model. For instance, the successful harmonization of the "Concept Development" process between IND and COM demonstrated the value of integration and helped dispel skepticism.

**Rewards and Recognition:** The reward system was restructured to reflect process outcomes rather than functional performance. Employees who contributed to process improvements, supported integration efforts, or exhibited collaboration across units were recognized publicly and rewarded through team-based bonuses.

Special recognition was given to integration teams that successfully aligned processes and eliminated redundancies, reinforcing the connection between cultural values and performance expectations.

**Staffing and selection:** New leadership appointments were made with cultural alignment as a key selection criterion. Individuals with a demonstrated history of collaboration, adaptability, and cross-functional thinking were promoted into key roles.

Additionally, new hires brought into the organization were screened for cultural fit with the BPM values, ensuring the reinforcement of the desired cultural attributes over time.

**Training and development:** Training initiatives included both technical and cultural content. Employees were trained in process mapping, root cause analysis, and performance measurement, alongside sessions on change readiness and process accountability.

Just-in-time training was used during specific harmonization phases, such as the rollout of the unified customer service platform, ensuring that employees had the necessary skills to work within the new processes.

**Ceremonies and events:** The organization introduced symbolic events such as "Integration Days" and "Process Innovation Challenges," where cross-sector teams showcased improvements, shared integration success stories, and celebrated milestones.

These events played a significant role in fostering a sense of shared identity and bridging cultural divides between the IND and COM sectors.

**Physical environment and psychological safety:** The physical environment was intentionally modified to support the development of a process-oriented culture throughout the post-merger integration. One of the most impactful decisions was to colocate employees who worked on the same or similar business processes. This was done regardless of their original business sector, and where practical, they were placed in the same office space. For example, individuals responsible for procurement from both legacy organizations were assigned to shared work areas. This physical proximity encouraged direct communication, promoted informal collaboration, and helped establish a unified understanding of process goals.

This spatial arrangement enabled more effective problem-solving and faster coordination of daily activities. Employees began to develop a shared identity that was based on process responsibilities rather than previous organizational affiliations. This helped shift focus from sector-based priorities to collective process performance. By redesigning the workspace in this way, the organization signaled its commitment to harmonization and actively supported cross-functional teamwork.

In addition to physical space, the organization also leveraged digital environments to strengthen process collaboration. Open office concepts, integrated project rooms, and shared digital platforms created an environment where transparency and cooperation became the norm. These spaces were used not only for formal BPM activities but also for ongoing informal exchange among process participants.

Equally important was the emphasis on psychological safety. Leaders regularly communicated that learning and adaptation were essential during the integration. Employees were encouraged to ask questions, raise concerns, and propose improvements without fear of negative consequences. Managers reinforced this mindset by responding constructively to feedback and avoiding any punitive responses to mistakes. This helped employees feel safe and supported as they navigated new processes and roles.

By combining thoughtful workspace design with a culture of openness and respect, the organization created an environment that supported both operational integration and cultural alignment.

## **5.2 Establishing a BPH Organizational Structure in the Case Study Organization**

In line with the structural framework presented in the previous chapter, the case organization responded to post-merger challenges by deliberately establishing a dedicated BPH organizational structure. This structure was not developed ad hoc but was purposefully designed to coordinate integration activities across previously disconnected business units, IT systems, and cultural environments. The structural foundation became a key enabler for harmonizing end-to-end processes and aligning strategic objectives across the merged entities.

The case organization reflected Scenario 2 of the cultural maturity model, in which only one of the two merged organizations had a pre-existing process-oriented structure. The acquiring firm maintained a moderately developed BPM infrastructure, including documented processes, designated process owners in key functions, and familiarity with process modeling techniques. In

contrast, the acquired firm exhibited low process maturity, characterized by functional silos, undocumented processes, and a limited understanding of process governance.

As a result, the integration team used the more mature BPM structure as a model for extending roles, governance mechanisms, and tools across the newly combined entity. The structural asymmetry required targeted interventions to manage knowledge transfer, establish new roles in the acquired business units, and align operational responsibilities under a unified process framework.

- **BPM Sponsor and Strategic Alignment**

To provide top-level strategic direction, the integration was sponsored by a Board-level executive, who served as the formal BPM Sponsor. This individual was instrumental in ensuring that harmonization efforts received sustained executive attention and budgetary support. Beyond advocacy, the sponsor mandated that harmonization be integrated into the broader post-merger strategy and positioned it as a vehicle for long-term value realization. Their continued engagement allowed the BPM team to overcome political resistance and prioritize process transparency over legacy structures.

- **Establishment of a BPM Center of Excellence**

A BPM Center of Excellence was established within six months of the merger. This centralized body was built upon the foundations of the acquiring firm's BPM practices but expanded to include process leads from both legacy organizations. Its purpose was threefold:

- To define common process standards, modeling conventions, and documentation practices.
- To serve as an internal consultancy supporting harmonization projects across business units.
- To facilitate learning and knowledge exchange across the organization through training and coaching.

Staffed with experienced BPM professionals, the CoE acted as the intellectual and procedural backbone of harmonization efforts. It organized workshops, deployed toolkits, and ensured methodological consistency across process improvement initiatives.

- **Appointment of a Chief Process Officer**

Recognizing the need for executive-level ownership of the BPM portfolio, the organization formally appointed a chief process officer nine months into the integration. The CPO assumed responsibility for coordinating all ongoing and future BPH initiatives. This role extended beyond sponsorship, providing strategic leadership, cross-functional oversight, and direct authority over BPM resources. The CPO chaired the newly created Process Governance Council, ensuring that harmonization efforts were aligned with business priorities and that interdependencies across processes were effectively managed.

- **Deployment of BPM Experts and Local Change Agents**

To operationalize process transformation on the ground, the CoE mobilized a network of BPM Experts, composed of internal process consultants, business analysts, and change agents. These individuals were drawn from both legacy organizations and trained in the unified BPM methodology. Their key responsibilities included:

- Conducting diagnostics and mapping existing processes.
- Identifying harmonization opportunities based on performance gaps.
- Supporting regional units in adopting new process standards.

Importantly, BPM Experts played a translation role between strategic intentions and local operations. They facilitated buy-in by tailoring process designs to the realities of local contexts while maintaining alignment with overarching process goals.

- **Creation of Process Modeler Roles**

Within the CoE, a small team of dedicated Process Modelers was established to ensure technical excellence in process documentation. These individuals utilized standardized tools and notations to represent current-state and target-state processes. Their models served as key artifacts in design workshops and training sessions, enabling shared understanding among stakeholders from different functional and regional backgrounds.

The presence of professional modelers helped bridge the communication gap between operational staff and executive decision-makers, particularly during the harmonization of complex core processes such as order-to-cash and procure-to-pay.

- **Role of Global and Regional Process Owners**

The organization formalized a dual structure of Global Process Owners and Regional Process Owners to ensure accountability across hierarchical and geographical boundaries. This structural configuration operationalized the BPH framework developed in this study, which emphasizes the importance of clearly defined roles to support both strategic alignment and local adaptability.

GPOs were assigned to each of the six core end-to-end processes and held responsibility for global process design, performance monitoring, and compliance assurance. These individuals were selected from the acquiring firm's existing process leadership, reflecting their alignment with enterprise-wide objectives and their experience in driving process excellence. In contrast,

RPOs were appointed from local operations and were tasked with adapting and implementing the harmonized processes within their respective regions. The interaction between GPOs and RPOs was structured through monthly alignment forums, which served as platforms for discussing performance metrics, feedback loops, and change requests. This dual governance model enabled the organization to balance global consistency with regional flexibility, thereby reinforcing the structural-cultural interdependence central to the BPH framework. It also ensured that process accountability was embedded at multiple organizational levels, supporting both operational coherence and cultural integration across the post-merger landscape.

- **Governance and Accountability Mechanisms**

To institutionalize the structure, the organization created a Harmonization Steering Committee, chaired by the CPO and composed of GPOs, key business unit heads, and IT leadership. This body met quarterly to review process performance dashboards, approve deviation requests, and prioritize harmonization projects. It functioned as the top-level decision-making forum for resolving cross-functional conflicts and ensuring integration coherence.

In parallel, KPI frameworks were redesigned to reflect process-based accountability rather than functional targets. Metrics such as cycle time, error rates, and cost per transaction were tracked at the process level, further reinforcing the shift toward process orientation.

The structural choices made by the organization were not only technical adjustments but also deliberate cultural interventions. By assigning clear roles, creating process communities, and formalizing communication channels, the organization signaled its intent to move away from siloed mindsets and toward a unified, process-centric culture. In internal communications, harmonization was consistently framed as a collaborative endeavor, and success stories were shared across teams to build momentum and legitimacy.

This intentional coupling of structure and culture supported the emergence of shared values, including transparency, cross-functional collaboration, and continuous improvement. These values gradually became embedded in daily practices, reinforced by structural scaffolding such as performance reviews and incentive systems aligned with process goals.

### **5.3 Operational Implementation of BPH in the Case Study Organization**

As established in the prior chapter, the operational phase of the harmonization project was initiated. The merger was strategically intended to create value through the transfer and integration of capabilities. The primary objective of this merger was initially envisioned as a complete absorption, wherein all organizational elements and processes of the acquired company would be wholly integrated into the structure of the acquiring firm. However, this approach was soon recognized as unrealistic and ineffective due to various cultural challenges and the fact that both organizations maintained well-established and distinct business processes.

In light of these challenges, the decision was made to adopt a symbiotic strategy, emphasizing the creation of synergy by leveraging the respective strengths of both entities involved in the merger. This shift in strategy reflected a deeper understanding of the complexities associated with merging distinct organizational cultures and processes. As previously noted, this merger prompted a strategic focus on addressing core processes within both organizations. The

harmonization initiative was structured into several distinct stages, each of which will be elaborated upon in the subsequent sections.

### **5.3.1 Analysis**

In alignment with the established framework, the initial stage of the process harmonization project concentrated on the analysis phase. This critical phase aimed to furnish comprehensive insights into the current state of the processes utilized by the merging organizations. The detailed analysis of the current state revealed nuances and disparities in existing process models and descriptions, thereby illuminating the substantive content of the processes that fall within the primary scope of process harmonization. Specifically, this examination involved a thorough survey of the various process variants present within both organizations and the subsequent compilation of these variants into a cohesive main process framework.

Importantly, the analysis phase also incorporated cultural diagnostics to identify how organizational values, behavioral norms, and legacy practices shaped the execution and interpretation of these processes. For example, in the “Concept Development and Offer Preparation” sub-process, significant cultural variation was observed. In the industrial sector, flexibility was prioritized, and offer approvals were often granted solely by the responsible project manager. In contrast, the commercial sector adhered to a hierarchical approval structure, requiring up to three sign-offs from top management for high-value contracts. These differences were not merely procedural but reflected deeper cultural assumptions regarding autonomy, risk tolerance, and governance. By capturing these cultural dimensions alongside operational data, the integration team was able to assess not only what processes were performed but how they were enacted and perceived across organizational boundaries.

The as-is analysis served as both a technical and cultural tool in assessing the similarities and differences among the identified process variants, providing essential data that would serve as the foundation for the forthcoming conception phase. Through this rigorous examination, the

integration team was able to identify commonalities in processes, potential redundancies, and areas where integration efforts could be focused to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

#### **5.3.1.1 Elicitation and Capturing the Available Process Variants**

The elicitation of available process variants, coupled with the analysis of the current state, was conducted through a meticulous review of process descriptions derived from the documentation and management systems of the various business units involved in the merger transaction. This phase not only involved gathering comprehensive data on existing processes but also entails identifying shortcomings and areas for improvement within the current processes. The insights gained during the as-is analysis were crucial, as they provided a clear and concise understanding of the operational landscape for the integration team, which comprises members from the BPM CoE, as well as both global and local process owners.

Moreover, this analysis furnished the integration team with a systematic checklist designed to ensure that all relevant process variants were thoroughly considered. By leveraging this checklist, the team could systematically evaluate the operational efficiency and effectiveness of each process variant, ensuring that no critical aspect was overlooked during the harmonization efforts.

Importantly, the as-is analysis served as a benchmark for the harmonized processes; it was understood that the harmonized processes should not only consolidate the best practices from both organizations but also represent significant improvements compared to the existing processes. This benchmark function ensures that the new harmonized processes are not merely a replication of previous ones but rather a reimagined and optimized approach that reflects the best capabilities and practices of both organizations.

#### **5.3.1.2 Consolidation of Existing Process Variants in a Main Process**

Following the comprehensive capture of the available process variants, the next step involved the collaborative modeling of a unified main process with key stakeholders and domain experts. This endeavor was conducted during an intensive three-hour workshop, where the main process was meticulously delineated to consist of five distinct sub-processes (Figure 5.1). The main process is triggered upon the receipt of an order and concludes when the client requests cancellation.

Throughout the workshop, members of the BPM CoE engaged in identifying and aligning analogous terminologies for the various process steps. This initiative was pivotal in laying the groundwork for subsequent phases of process harmonization.



Figure 5.1. Generator construction and energy contracting process (source: own illustration)

The "Generator Construction and Energy Contracting" process is set into motion upon the reception of an order. The initial phase, "Concept Development and Offer Preparation, " involves the creation of a tailored concept that aligns precisely with the customer's specific requirements. This phase culminates in the meticulous preparation of an offer. Following this, the process advances to the "Negotiation and Agreement" stage, during which the parties involved deliberate on the terms of the contract. This stage is marked by thorough discussions and negotiations, ultimately resulting in the formal signing of the contract, thus cementing the agreement. The subsequent phase, "Generator Design and Construction," involves the detailed design of the generator in accordance with the contract specifications, followed by its construction and implementation. This phase is critical as it translates the agreed-upon concept into a tangible product. Next, the process proceeds to the "Energy Supply" stage, where the necessary energy for the generator is contracted and delivered, ensuring a seamless and continuous power source. The final step in the process is "Service and Maintenance, " which focuses on guaranteeing the regular and efficient operation of both the generator and its energy supply. This phase encompasses routine maintenance activities and any necessary service interventions to ensure sustained performance. The comprehensive process reaches its conclusion when a client decides to terminate the contract, thereby marking the end of the contractual engagement.

Cultural considerations were also addressed during this modeling exercise. For instance, the terminology and sequencing of steps in the “Concept Development and Offer Preparation” phase were debated to reflect both the flexible, project-manager-led practices of the industrial sector and the hierarchical, compliance-driven procedures of the commercial sector. This ensured that the consolidated process model would be both operationally sound and culturally inclusive.

#### **5.3.1.3 Identifying the Variation Drivers and Assessing the Impact Factor**

The subsequent phase of the BPH process entailed the identification of the drivers of variation within the main process, which had been modeled in the previous phase. This critical phase was initiated through the organization of a workshop aimed at elucidating the concept of variation drivers. The workshop commenced with an introduction to the theoretical underpinnings of variation drivers, followed by the presentation of practical examples. Participants, including domain experts, were then engaged in discussions to identify the presence and implications of such drivers within their business processes.

During these discussions, it was observed that variations were primarily driven by two factors: product/service and customer requirements. Product/service variation drivers were further categorized into industrial generators and commercial generators. On the other hand, customer-driven variations were classified based on the type of clients, namely industrial and commercial clients.

Following the identification of these variation drivers, the next step involved assessing their impact factors. Through rigorous discussions and analysis, it was revealed that product/service drivers exerted the most significant influence on the conduction of processes. This influence stemmed from the inherent variability in generator design and construction methods, which are highly dependent on the type of generator being produced. Consequently, the product/service driver was classified as "relevant" and was subsequently incorporated into the variation matrix for the next phase of the project. Conversely, it was determined that customer-driven variations had no discernible impact on process performance. This conclusion was based on the observation

that the processes could be treated as similar irrespective of the customer categories. As a result, the customer driver was labeled as "irrelevant" and was excluded from the variation matrix.

#### **5.3.1.4 Creating a Variation Matrix**

In this phase of our methodology, we systematically identified and cataloged existing process variants for the variation drivers previously categorized as "relevant" within each sub-process modeled in step 2. This endeavor was accomplished through rigorous consultations with domain experts and process owners responsible for each respective sub-process. The consultation process entailed thorough documentation of existing variants per identified variation driver. These documented variants were then textually incorporated into a comprehensive variation matrix.

The resulting output was a structured variation matrix (Figure 5.2). In this matrix, the rows are designated for variation drivers, which are further qualified by their respective impact factors. The columns, on the other hand, correspond to the sub-processes identified and modeled in step 2. Within each cell of the matrix, we listed the specific variants of a given sub-process that are induced by a particular variation driver, assuming the driver's relevance. For instance, in our ongoing case study, we observed two distinct variants for the "Generator Design and Construction" sub-process. These variants are differentiated based on the generator type, which we have categorized as either commercial or industrial generators.

#### **5.3.1.5 Assessing the Operational Similarity and Cultural Alignment**

Following the creation of the variation matrix, we proceeded to annotate it with a detailed assessment of the similarity levels among the sub-process variants identified. This assessment used a structured 4-level similarity scale as introduced in our framework. To ensure the accuracy and reliability of this similarity assessment, we engaged domain experts once again. These experts provided insights into whether the variants of the identified sub-processes were identical, very similar, partly similar, or not similar, based on the defined criteria of the scale.

The focus of this assessment was primarily on the inherent process steps rather than on the supporting IT systems, ensuring that the evaluation was centered on the procedural aspects. Nonetheless, we also documented the supporting IT system for each sub-process within the

variation matrix (Figure 5.2). In addition to assessing operational similarity, we extended the variation matrix to include a second dimension of cultural alignment. This enriched matrix served the dual purpose of it providing a comprehensive view of the process architecture and critical input for decision-making during the subsequent conception phase of our project.

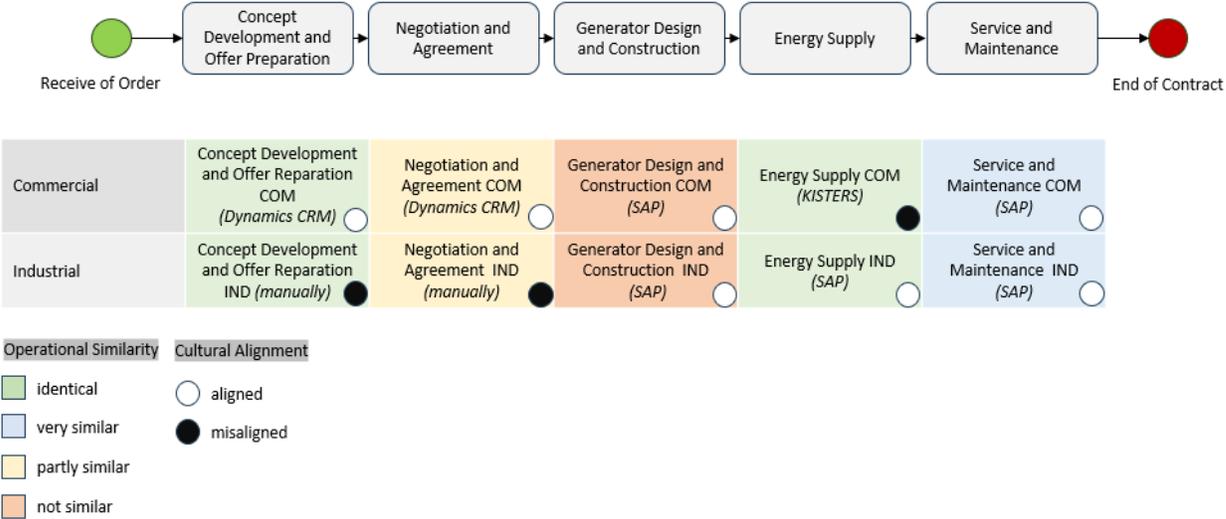


Figure 5.2. Variation matrix for generator construction and energy contracting process (source: own illustration)

### 5.3.2 Conception

During the conception phase, the primary activities related to process harmonization were conducted. This phase involved critical decision-making and the integration of IT systems across the project. The active participation of domain experts was essential to ensure that the harmonized processes were both operationally sound and culturally coherent.

In alignment with the BPH framework developed in this study, the conception phase was designed not only to consolidate process variants but also to reconcile cultural differences embedded in legacy practices. The following sub-phases were conducted.

#### **5.3.2.1 Decision Making on To-Be Process and Developing Process Trade-Offs**

The BPM center of excellence orchestrated a series of three-hour workshops dedicated to each sub-process. These workshops were designed to engage top management, global process owners, and the head of the IT department in critical evaluations. The aim was to determine whether to maintain current process variants, adopt best practices, or develop new trade-off processes. During these sessions, the global process owner presented comprehensive analyses of the pros and cons associated with existing process variants. If applicable, the global process owner also proposed entirely new processes along with alternative IT systems, grounded in extensive research and analysis. These sessions also explicitly addressed cultural considerations.

The final decisions for each sub-process were reached through thorough discussions involving top management and other key participants. The following decisions were made for each sub-process:

- **Concept Development and Offer Preparation:** The process steps were operationally identical across both companies. However, the industrial sector used a manual process and was culturally misaligned due to its flexible, autonomous approval culture. The commercial sector, using Dynamics CRM, was culturally aligned with a hierarchical approval structure. Based on this assessment, the decision was made to implement the automated Dynamics CRM process for both sectors to streamline operations and reinforce process-oriented behavior.
- **Negotiation and Agreement:** The process was partly similar across both companies. The commercial sector was culturally aligned and used a structured approval model, while the industrial sector relied on a manual process and was culturally misaligned. The commercial sector's process was selected as the best-practice model and adopted across both entities, ensuring consistency and reinforcing process accountability.

- **Generator Design and Construction:** Both sectors were culturally aligned and operationally distinct. Due to significant differences in process steps, harmonization was deemed infeasible. Therefore, the decision was made to retain the existing process variants for the involved companies.
- **Energy Supply:** The commercial sector had outsourced this process using the KISTERS IT system and was culturally misaligned. The industrial sector used SAP and was culturally aligned. Based on this assessment, the industrial sector's SAP-based process was selected as the best-practice model and implemented across both entities to enhance efficiency and reduce redundancy.
- **Service and Maintenance:** Both sectors were culturally aligned and operationally very similar. It was determined that harmonizing the process variants into a single optimized trade-off process was feasible with minimal configuration investment. The final process was designed collaboratively with domain experts as a unified variant.

The outcomes of these workshops served as essential inputs for the subsequent phases of the project.

### **5.3.2.2 Modelling and Documenting the Process Trade-offs**

The information and decisions made in the decision-making workshops have been recorded using the decision matrix outlined earlier in this thesis (Figure 5.3).

The modelling and documentation of the to-be processes were carried out based on the harmonization decisions described above. Each sub-process was modeled to reflect the selected strategy, with the goal of ensuring clarity, consistency, and operational feasibility. With the active support of the BPM CoE has been analyzed whether it is more advantageous to model the to-be process variants together in a consolidated process model or if it would be more understandable to model the process variants separately, especially when the variants are partially similar or not similar.

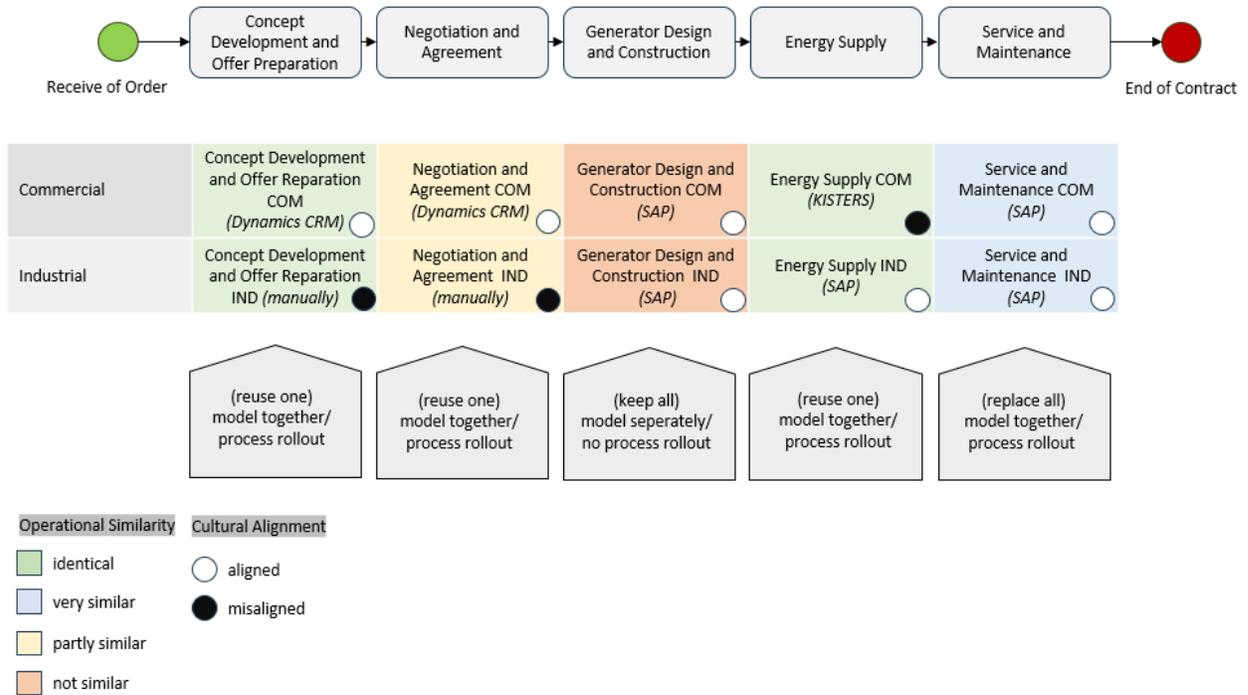


Figure 5.3. Decision-making on modelling and rollout of trade-off processes  
(source: own illustration)

The modelling outcomes for each sub-process were as follows:

- **Concept Development and Offer Preparation:** A consolidated model was created, incorporating the automated process for both entities.
- **Negotiation and Agreement:** The best-practice process was documented and implemented across both entities.
- **Generator Design and Construction:** Separate models were created for each company due to significant operational differences.
- **Energy Supply:** The SAP-based process was documented and implemented for both entities.
- **Service and Maintenance:** The harmonized process was modeled as a single optimized variant, requiring minimal configuration adjustments.

### **5.3.2.3 Review for Finalization**

Following the development and visualization of the trade-off processes, the global process owners presented the proposed models in a series of workshops with regional process owners. These sessions facilitated a thorough review and refinement of the harmonized processes. Discussions focused on ensuring that the trade-off processes met regional operational requirements and respected local cultural norms. For example, in regions where hierarchical approval structures were deeply embedded, the harmonized “Concept Development and Offer Preparation” process retained multi-level sign-offs to maintain legitimacy and compliance. Conversely, in regions with more agile decision-making cultures, streamlined approval workflows were preserved. These refinements were incorporated into the final process models, ensuring that the harmonized processes were both strategically aligned and culturally sustainable.

### **5.3.3 Realization**

Once the trade-off processes were finalized and validated, the critical phase of realization followed to ensure that these processes were enforced across the business units affected by the merger. This phase was particularly vital in translating the theoretical frameworks and models into operational reality, ensuring that the harmonized processes were not only adopted but also effectively integrated into the daily processes of both organizations involved in the merger. In the case study, the merger has opted for a step-by-step implementation approach, underscoring the importance of a gradual and controlled rollout to mitigate potential disruptions and maximize acceptance among employees.

The rollout strategy was meticulously functionally-scheduled for both companies, ensuring that the implementation of new processes was systematically phased and coordinated. This strategic scheduling was essential in managing the complexities associated with the merger, allowing for careful monitoring and adjustment at each step.

Prior to the enforcement of the new processes, a comprehensive communication plan was executed to inform all relevant process stakeholders about the impending changes. This pre-

implementation communication was crucial in setting the stage for the changes, reducing uncertainty, and fostering a culture of openness and readiness.

To further support the transition, detailed training concepts were developed. These training programs were designed to equip employees with the necessary skills and knowledge to adapt to the new business processes. The training sessions were meticulously planned and tailored to address the specific needs of different functional areas within the organizations. The educational sessions aimed not only to disseminate procedural knowledge but also to cultivate an understanding of the strategic importance of the new processes, thereby fostering a sense of ownership and commitment among the employees.

#### **5.3.4 Verification**

The verification phase served as a further pivotal component of the process harmonization project, dedicated to assessing the effectiveness and success of the implemented processes. This phase employed a multifaceted approach, utilizing diverse methods to ensure a comprehensive evaluation. A maturity model was developed to measure the evolution of business process maturity from the pre-merger state through to full integration. This model provided a structured framework for evaluating the progress and effectiveness of the process harmonization efforts, offering a clear metric for assessing improvements and identifying areas that required further enhancement.

In addition to the maturity model, the verification phase included scheduled internal process reviews. These reviews were instrumental in conducting thorough audits of the newly implemented processes. The internal process reviews aimed to identify any weaknesses, inefficiencies, or areas of improvement within the processes. By systematically auditing the processes, the merger was able to pinpoint specific issues that could hinder the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the business operations.

Furthermore, these reviews facilitated a continuous improvement cycle, allowing for the iterative refinement of processes based on the feedback and insights gathered during the audits. This

proactive approach ensured that the harmonized processes remained dynamic and adaptable, capable of evolving in response to emerging challenges and opportunities. The internal process reviews also served to validate the alignment of the new processes with the strategic objectives of the merger, ensuring that the harmonization efforts contributed to the overarching goals of enhanced operational efficiency, data accuracy, and process transparency.

The verification phase underscored the importance of a systematic and structured approach to process evaluation, emphasizing the need for ongoing assessment and refinement. By integrating multiple evaluation methods, the merger was able to gain a holistic understanding of the effectiveness of the process harmonization efforts, ensuring that the new processes were not only implemented but also continuously optimized to achieve the desired outcomes.

## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter synthesizes the key findings obtained through the study and elucidates potential avenues for future research, offering insights into areas that merit further exploration and consideration.

The present thesis has developed a robust, culturally aware, strategically and operationally integrated framework for business process harmonization in the context of mergers and acquisitions. Through extensive theoretical grounding and empirical analysis, the study has revealed that successful process harmonization is not merely a matter of aligning processes or IT systems but a deeply cultural and organizational challenge.

### 6.1 Theoretical Foundations of Business Process Harmonization in M&A

This study presented the foundational theories necessary to understand business process harmonization in the context of mergers and acquisitions. The study focused on three core domains of Business Process Management, Mergers and Acquisitions, and Organizational Culture that played a critical role in shaping the analytical framework of the research.

- **Business Process Management** was introduced as a strategic discipline aimed at improving organizational efficiency, effectiveness, and adaptability. The chapter traced BPM's evolution from function-oriented structures to process-oriented models, highlighting its role in aligning operational activities with strategic objectives. Established methodologies such as Total Quality Management, Lean, and Six Sigma demonstrated how BPM supported continuous improvement and value creation. In the context of organizational integration, BPM provided the tools and principles necessary to standardize and optimize processes across diverse units.
- **Mergers and Acquisitions** were examined as a strategic mechanism for achieving rapid growth and competitive advantage. The study outlined the phases of the M&A process and emphasized the complexity of aligning systems, structures, and operations during integration. It was shown that successful M&A required more than financial and strategic planning; it

demanded careful coordination of business processes to ensure operational continuity and synergy realization.

- Organizational Culture was explored as a central factor influencing how individuals and groups responded to change. Defined through shared values, norms, and assumptions, culture shaped behavior, communication, and decision-making within organizations. The study demonstrated that cultural differences between merging entities could significantly impact the success of integration efforts. Understanding and managing organizational culture was therefore essential for ensuring that harmonized processes were accepted and sustained across the newly formed organization.

By establishing the theoretical relevance of BPM, M&A, and organizational culture, the study provided the intellectual foundation for analyzing process harmonization as a multidimensional challenge in corporate mergers.

## **6.2 BPH Framework**

The present study argued that business process harmonization must be approached as both a technical and human challenge. It requires not only the optimization of processes but also the reconciliation of cultural differences.

The framework developed in this study offers a comprehensive and multidimensional approach to business process harmonization in post-merger integration contexts. This framework is meticulously aligned with organizational theory, addressing critical aspects related to "culture," "structure," and "processes" as follows:

- **Fostering a BPH Culture:** This component emphasizes the deliberate cultivation of a process-oriented organizational culture. It promotes values such as procedural standardization, continuous improvement, and cross-functional collaboration. The framework proposes targeted interventions including training programs, leadership engagement, and symbolic actions to embed these cultural attributes across the merged organization. By

aligning behavioral norms with harmonization goals, this cultural foundation enhances employee buy-in and supports long-term adaptability.

- **Developing a BPH Organizational Structure:** Structural alignment is achieved through the formalization of roles and governance mechanisms that support harmonization efforts. The framework advocates for a dual structure of Global and Regional Process Owners to ensure accountability across hierarchical and geographical boundaries. This configuration enables strategic oversight while allowing for local responsiveness, thereby facilitating both consistency and contextual relevance. Clear role definitions, streamlined reporting lines, and coordinated decision-making processes are essential for sustaining harmonization momentum.
- **Conceptualizing a BPH Process Phase Model:** The framework introduces a phased model for harmonization, consisting of analysis, conception, realization, and verification. Each phase is methodologically structured to guide organizations through the identification of process variants, development of trade-off decisions, modeling of harmonized workflows, and evaluation of implementation outcomes. Cultural diagnostics are integrated throughout the phase model to ensure that harmonized processes are not only technically sound but also culturally coherent. Tools such as variation matrices, decision matrices, and similarity assessments support evidence-based decision-making and process optimization.

Together, these components form a cohesive strategy for achieving operational excellence and strategic alignment in post-merger environments. The framework recognizes that successful harmonization is not a linear or purely technical endeavor but a dynamic process that must adapt to organizational feedback, stakeholder engagement, and evolving priorities. By addressing cultural, structural, and procedural dimensions in an integrated manner, the framework enhances the capacity of organizations to capture synergies, reduce integration risks, and create sustainable value.

### 6.3 Findings and Conclusion

At the core of this work is the proposition that BPH must be conceptualized as both a technical process and a cultural transformation. Rather than treating culture as a backdrop to technical integration, this thesis places culture at the center of BPH success. The research has illuminated several key findings that are instrumental in understanding and executing successful process harmonization projects:

- First, in the context of business process management, the study emphasizes the pivotal role of organizational culture. This study finds that business process harmonization (BPH) in mergers and acquisitions must be understood as a culturally contingent process rather than a purely technical or structural task. While traditional M&A approaches have emphasized financial synergies, the research highlights that cultural alignment is essential for achieving sustainable integration outcomes. BPH culture is introduced as a strategic subculture that supports process excellence through shared values such as end-to-end thinking, continuous improvement, and collaborative accountability. To operationalize this approach a cultural model is proposed, encompassing the following key elements:
  - **Organizational Culture** refers to the overarching system of values, beliefs, and behavioral norms that shape how business process initiatives are perceived and enacted. It includes both dominant cultural patterns and subcultures, and serves as the contextual foundation within which BPH must operate.
  - **Process Culture** is defined as a deliberately cultivated cultural orientation toward process excellence. It is rooted in shared values and collective behaviors that support harmonization objectives, such as end-to-end thinking, continuous improvement, and collaborative accountability. Rather than replacing legacy cultures, BPH Culture is designed to coexist with them, functioning as a strategic subculture that facilitates operational alignment.
  - The **Cultural Program** is a structured initiative aimed at embedding BPH Culture into the broader organizational fabric. It aligns BPM goals with existing cultural realities

through targeted interventions, including communication strategies, performance metrics, and incentive systems. This program acts as a strategic mechanism to foster employee engagement and ensure the sustainability of harmonization efforts.

In this cultural model, the study proposes a structured cultural program tailored to the specific characteristics of the merging organizations. This program aligns BPM principles with existing cultural realities and fosters employee engagement without triggering resistance. The model encompasses the following elements:

- **Shared vision, goals and measures:** A clear and inspiring direction that aligns employees from both organizations around common objectives, supported by measurable process-oriented performance indicators.
- **Legitimization and leadership behavior:** Visible leadership commitment and modeling of the new culture, backed by clear explanations of why cultural transformation is necessary and valuable.
- **Rules and policies:** Formal guidelines and operational standards that promote collaboration and process thinking while removing outdated or conflicting legacy practices.
- **Communication:** Consistent, transparent, and two-way messaging that informs, engages, and aligns employees throughout the integration process.
- **Involvement:** Active employee participation in cultural and process-related decisions, fostering ownership and reducing resistance to change.
- **Trust:** A climate of fairness, transparency, and reliability that encourages collaboration, openness to change, and cross-organizational unity.
- **Rewards and recognition:** Incentives and acknowledgments that reinforce behaviors aligned with process orientation, teamwork, and cultural integration.
- **Staffing and selection:** Hiring and promoting individuals who embody cultural adaptability and process-focused thinking to sustain the new culture.

- **Training and development:** Skill-building programs and especially just-in-time learning that equip employees to operate effectively within the new cultural and operational framework.
  - **Ceremonies and events:** Symbolic and social activities that reinforce shared values, celebrate integration milestones, and foster a collective identity.
  - **Physical environment and psychological safety:** Workspaces and digital tools designed to support collaboration and process work, combined with a safe climate for experimentation and open dialogue.
- Second, the study highlights the indispensable role of organizational resources—such as skilled personnel, domain knowledge, and operational capabilities—in the success of process harmonization initiatives. To secure and allocate these resources effectively, organizations must establish a clearly defined organizational structure with distinct roles and responsibilities. This structural clarity is fundamental to the smooth execution of harmonization efforts. Key structural enablers include:
- **BPM Sponsorship at Board Level:** A senior executive acts as the BPM Sponsor, providing strategic direction, budgetary support, and executive endorsement to position harmonization as a long-term value creation initiative.
  - **Establishment of a BPM Center of Excellence:** The CoE standardizes process methodologies, offers internal consultancy, and facilitates cross-organizational knowledge exchange between legacy entities.
  - **Appointment of a Chief Process Officer:** The CPO oversees all BPH initiatives, chairs the Process Governance Council, and ensures alignment between harmonization activities and overarching business priorities.
  - **Deployment of BPM Experts and Change Agents:** Trained personnel from both organizations are responsible for diagnosing process gaps, implementing new standards, and adapting changes to local operational contexts.

- **Creation of Process Modeler Roles:** A specialized team ensures technical accuracy in documenting both current-state and future-state processes, thereby enhancing communication and stakeholder alignment.
- **Global and Regional Process Owners :** This dual accountability structure balances global process standardization with regional adaptability, supported by recurring alignment forums to manage interdependencies and feedback loops.

Furthermore, The concept of BPH structural maturity introduced in this study provides a diagnostic framework for assessing the readiness of merging organizations to implement business process harmonization. It identifies three distinct scenarios of structural maturity, each reflecting varying degrees of process orientation and requiring tailored integration strategies.

- In the first scenario, both organizations possess mature, process-oriented structures. These entities already have established roles such as process owners, governance bodies, and BPM centers of excellence. Integration in this context can build upon existing strengths by aligning governance frameworks, forming cross-organizational process councils, and leveraging shared resources. This scenario facilitates rapid harmonization with minimal ambiguity and greater clarity in decision-making.
- The second scenario involves structural asymmetry, where only one organization has a process-oriented structure. Here, the more mature entity serves as a model for integration. A transition plan is necessary to extend process roles and governance mechanisms to the less mature organization. This requires deliberate structural redesign, capacity building, and active change management to prevent fragmentation and role confusion.
- The third scenario is characterized by the absence of process-oriented structures in both organizations. In such cases, a dedicated BPH entity must be created from the ground up. This includes establishing key roles such as BPM sponsors and process owners, implementing governance mechanisms, and introducing accountability frameworks. Incremental pilot projects may be needed to demonstrate value and build momentum.

This scenario is the most resource-intensive and demands comprehensive structural and cultural transformation.

Across all scenarios, the study emphasizes that structural maturity is a critical determinant of BPH success. Without a foundational level of structural readiness, even well-designed roles and governance models may remain symbolic rather than operational. The structural maturity model thus serves as a strategic tool for guiding integration efforts, enabling organizations to anticipate challenges, allocate resources effectively, and design interventions that are both context-sensitive and operationally sound.

- Finally, to complete the foundation for successful business process harmonization, this study outlines a four-phase model that guides the execution of BPM projects. These phases are designed not only to structure the technical progression of harmonization but also to embed cultural alignment throughout the process.
  - The **Analysis** phase involves a thorough examination of existing processes to identify inefficiencies, gaps, and cultural misalignments. This phase must account for how organizational values and behavioral norms influence current practices and employee responses to change.
  - During the **Conception** phase, harmonized processes are designed to reflect strategic objectives and cultural realities. The design must incorporate shared values and foster a process-oriented mindset that is compatible with both legacy cultures.
  - The **Realization** phase focuses on implementing the newly designed processes across the organization. Cultural readiness and structural maturity are critical at this stage. Success depends on the presence of process owners, governance mechanisms, and cultural programs that support adoption and reduce resistance.
  - Finally, the **Evaluation** phase assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of the implemented processes. This includes measuring not only operational outcomes but also cultural integration indicators such as employee engagement, cross-functional collaboration, and alignment with process-oriented values.

It is essential to recognize that the cultural and technical phases of BPH must progress concurrently. Each technical phase must be complemented by corresponding cultural initiatives to ensure that the adoption of new processes is smooth and that the organization's culture evolves in tandem with structural and procedural changes. Neglecting the cultural dimension can lead to resistance, misalignment, and ultimately the failure of technical implementations. Therefore, integrating cultural change into each phase of the BPH process is not optional but fundamental to the overall success of post-merger integration.

#### **6.4 Recommendations for Future Work**

This study has laid the groundwork for a comprehensive understanding of business process harmonization in the context of mergers and acquisitions. The development and validation of a structured BPH framework, based on empirical evidence from a real-world merger, offers valuable insights into how organizations can effectively align processes, systems, and responsibilities after a merger or acquisition. However, given the complexity and variability of M&A environments, further scholarly investigation is required to expand the applicability, depth, and theoretical richness of the framework presented. Accordingly, the following directions are proposed for future research:

- **Validation of the Framework in Complex and Multi-Entity M&A Scenarios**

While the framework was validated in a two-party merger characterized by structural asymmetry and differing levels of process maturity, future research should explore its relevance in more intricate M&A scenarios. These include mergers involving three or more entities, cross-border transactions, and cases with decentralized or matrixed organizational structures. Multi-entity integrations often entail more complex governance models, increased coordination overhead, and a higher degree of cultural, technological, and procedural heterogeneity.

Studying the scalability and robustness of the BPH framework in such settings would not only test its generalizability but also surface potential limitations or constraints in its

application. For example, in conglomerate-style mergers, where the business units may retain significant autonomy, the feasibility of centralized process governance mechanisms—such as Global Process Owners or a unified BPM Center of Excellence—might be diminished. Consequently, future research could explore adaptive versions of the framework, such as federated or modular BPH models, and evaluate how these perform under varied organizational constraints.

Additionally, longitudinal case studies in large-scale integrations could help track the evolution of process harmonization efforts over multiple integration phases—initial stabilization, optimization, and transformation—offering a more temporally nuanced view of how BPH frameworks mature over time.

#### - **Enhancement of the Framework Through the Integration of Additional Enablers and Dimensions**

The current study focused on key structural enablers; such as BPM sponsorship, formal roles, and governance bodies, as critical conditions for successful harmonization. However, future research should examine the role of supplementary factors that may further strengthen the framework's effectiveness. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Organizational culture and change readiness:** Research could explore how cultural integration initiatives (e.g., shared values, leadership behaviors, communication practices) influence the acceptance and sustainability of harmonized processes. Mixed-method studies that assess the interplay between cultural congruence and process standardization would be particularly valuable.
- **Technological infrastructure and digital maturity:** The role of data integration platforms, process automation tools, and process mining could be examined as technological catalysts that enable or constrain harmonization efforts. Quantitative studies assessing the correlation between digital capability levels and process harmonization performance may yield actionable insights.

- **Human capital and capability development:** The development of BPM competencies across merged entities remains underexplored. Future studies could evaluate the impact of training programs, skill transfer mechanisms, and talent mobility on the successful institutionalization of BPM practices post-merger.
- **Leadership dynamics and political factors:** Further research is also needed to understand how leadership styles, power dynamics between merging organizations, and political behavior influence the prioritization, pace, and focus of BPH initiatives.

By incorporating these dimensions, the framework could evolve into a more holistic tool that not only prescribes structural elements but also captures the dynamic and multi-layered nature of organizational integration.

#### - **Cross-Industry Comparative Research to Determine Sector-Specific Adaptations**

Although this study's findings were derived from a case within a specific industry context, the challenges and strategies of process harmonization may vary significantly across sectors. For instance, highly regulated industries such as pharmaceuticals or financial services may impose strict compliance-related constraints on process changes, whereas technology-driven sectors may prioritize agility and speed of integration over standardization. Public-sector organizations may face bureaucratic hurdles, stakeholder complexity, and resistance to change that differ markedly from those in private enterprises.

Future research should therefore examine the application and outcomes of the BPH framework across diverse industries. Comparative case studies, survey-based research, and cross-sector benchmarking efforts could help identify patterns, contingencies, and sector-specific best practices.

Such research would enable the tailoring of the BPH framework to better accommodate industry-specific drivers, constraints, and success factors. In doing so, the framework would become more versatile and actionable for practitioners operating in diverse business contexts.

- **Empirical Testing of BPH Outcomes Using Quantitative and Longitudinal Methods**

Beyond the structural and contextual adaptations, future studies should also seek to empirically validate the relationship between BPH practices and integration performance. This includes quantifying the impact of harmonization on KPIs such as integration speed, operational cost reduction, customer satisfaction, and employee retention. Longitudinal research could trace how harmonization efforts influence these metrics over time, providing evidence for the long-term value contribution of structured BPM approaches in M&As.

Furthermore, empirical models could be developed to test the causal pathways between structural enablers (e.g., presence of a Chief Process Officer, establishment of a BPM Center of Excellence), process-related outcomes (e.g., cycle time reduction, error rate improvements), and broader strategic outcomes (e.g., realization of synergies, competitive advantage).

By pursuing these recommendations, future research can build on the foundation established by this thesis, contributing to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of process harmonization in the realm of mergers and acquisitions. This, in turn, will enhance the ability of organizations to navigate the complexities of M&As, ultimately leading to more successful and sustainable integration outcomes.

## References

- Abraham, M., Fisher, T., & Crawford, J. (1997). Quality culture and the management of organization change. *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*, 14(6), 616-636.
- Acher, M., Collet, P., Lahire, P., & France, R. (2010). Managing variability in workflow with feature model composition operators. In *Software Composition: 9th International Conference, SC 2010, Malaga, Spain, July 1-2, 2010. Proceedings 9* (pp. 17-33). Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Alam, A., Khan, S., & Zafar, F. (2014). Strategic management: managing mergers & acquisitions. *International Journal of BRIC Business Research*, 3(1), 1-10.
- Alibabaei, A., Aghdasi, M., Zarei, B., & Stewart, G. (2010). The role of culture in business process management initiatives. *Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*, 4(7), 2143-2154.
- Alibabaei, A., Bandara, W., & Aghdasi, M. (2009). Means of achieving business process management success factors. In *Proceedings of the 4th Mediterranean conference on information systems* (pp. 1348-1363). Athens University of Economics and Business.
- Allred, B. B., Boal, K. B., & Holstein, W. K. (2005). Corporations as stepfamilies: A new metaphor for explaining the fate of merged and acquired companies. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 19(3), 23-37.
- Al-Mashari, M., & Zairi, M. (2000). Revisiting BPR: a holistic review of practice and development. *Business process management journal*, 6(1), 10-42.
- Angwin, D. (2001). Mergers and acquisitions across European borders: National perspectives on preacquisition due diligence and the use of professional advisers. *Journal of world business*, 36(1), 32-57.
- Angwin, D. (2007). Motive archetypes in mergers and acquisitions (M&A): the implications of a configurational approach to performance. In *Advances in mergers and acquisitions* (pp. 77-105). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Ansoff, H. I. (1957). Strategies for diversification. *Harvard business review*, 35(5), 113-124.
- Ansoff, I., 1965. Corporate Strategy: an analytical approach to business policy for growth and expansion. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Appelbaum, S. H., & Gandell, J. (2003). A cross method analysis of the impact of culture and communications upon a health care merger: Prescriptions for human resources management. *Journal of Management Development*, 22(5), 370-409.

- Appelbaum, S. H., Gandell, J., Shapiro, B. T., Belisle, P., & Hoeven, E. (2000). Anatomy of a merger: behavior of organizational factors and processes throughout the pre-during-post-stages (part 2). *Management Decision*, 38(10), 674-684.
- Appelbaum, S. H., Leblanc, M., & Shapiro, B. T. (1998). The aftermath of downsizing: A case study of disengagement, disidentification, disenfranchisement and disenchantment. *Journal of Management Development*, 17(6), 402-431.
- Armistead, C., & Machin, S. (1997). Implications of business process management for operations management. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, 17(9), 886-898.
- Armistead, C., Pritchard, J. P., & Machin, S. (1999). Strategic business process management for organisational effectiveness. *Long range planning*, 32(1), 96-106.
- Augusto, A., Conforti, R., Dumas, M., La Rosa, M., Maggi, F. M., Marrella, A., ... & Soo, A. (2018). Automated discovery of process models from event logs: Review and benchmark. *IEEE transactions on knowledge and data engineering*, 31(4), 686-705.
- Ayora, C., Torres, V., Weber, B., Reichert, M., & Pelechano, V. (2015). VIVACE: A framework for the systematic evaluation of variability support in process-aware information systems. *Information and Software Technology*, 57, 248-276.
- Badrtalei, J., & Bates, D. L. (2007). Effect of organizational cultures on mergers and acquisitions: The case of DaimlerChrysler. *International Journal of Management*, 24(2), 303.
- Bakka, J. F. Fivelsdal, E. Lindqvist, L. (2006). *Organisationsteori; struktur - kultur – process*. Malmö: Liber AB
- Bandara, W., Gable, G. G., & Rosemann, M. (2005). Factors and measures of business process modelling: model building through a multiple case study. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 14(4), 347-360.
- Barkema, H. G., & Schijven, M. (2008). Toward unlocking the full potential of acquisitions: The role of organizational restructuring. *Academy of management journal*, 51(4), 696-722.
- Barney, J. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of management*, 17(1), 99-120.
- Bastien, D. T. (1987). Common patterns of behavior and communication in corporate mergers and acquisitions. *Human resource management*, 26(1), 17-33.
- Bauer, F., & Matzler, K. (2014). Antecedents of M&A success: The role of strategic complementarity, cultural fit, and degree and speed of integration. *Strategic management journal*, 35(2), 269-291.

- Becker, J., Delfmann, P., Dreiling, A., Knackstedt, R., & Kuroopka, D. (2004, May). Configurative process modeling—outlining an approach to increased business process model usability. In *Proceedings of the 15th IRMA International Conference* (pp. 1-12).
- Becker, J., Kugeler, M., & Rosemann, M. (2003). *Process Management: a guide for the design of business processes: with 83 figures and 34 tables*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Beimborn, D., Gleisner, F., Joachim, N., & Hackethal, A. (2009, January). The role of process standardization in achieving IT business value. In *2009 42nd Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences* (pp. 1-10). IEEE.
- Benbasat, I., & Zmud, R. W. (1999). Empirical research in information systems: The practice of relevance. *MIS quarterly*, 3-16.
- Berger, T., Rublack, R., Nair, D., Atlee, J. M., Becker, M., Czarnecki, K., & Wąsowski, A. (2013, January). A survey of variability modeling in industrial practice. In *Proceedings of the 7th International Workshop on Variability Modelling of Software-intensive Systems* (pp. 1-8).
- Berkovitch, E., & Narayanan, M. P. (1993). Motives for takeovers: An empirical investigation. *Journal of Financial and Quantitative analysis*, 28(3), 347-362.
- Beugelsdijk, S., Koen, C. I., & Noorderhaven, N. G. (2006). Organizational culture and relationship skills. *Organization Studies*, 27(6), 833-854.
- Bijlsma-Frankema, K. (2001). On managing cultural integration and cultural change processes in mergers and acquisitions. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 25(2/3/4), 192-207.
- Birkinshaw, J., Bresman, H., & Håkanson, L. (2000). Managing the post-acquisition integration process: How the human iintegration and task integration processes interact to foster value creation. *Journal of management studies*, 37(3), 395-425.
- Blake, R. R., & Mouton, J. S. (1985). How to achieve integration on the human side o the merger. *Organizational dynamics*, 13(3), 41-56.
- Bleicher, K. (1991). *Das Konzept integriertes management* (p. 1991). Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.
- Bodner, J., & Capron, L. (2018). Post-merger integration. *Journal of Organization Design*, 7(1), 3.
- Box, S., & Platts, K. (2005). Business process management: establishing and maintaining project alignment. *Business Process Management Journal*, 11(4), 370-387.
- Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2011): *Business research methods*. 3rd ed. Cambridge, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

- Buckley, P., & Ghauri, P. N. (2002). *International mergers and acquisitions: A reader*. Cengage.
- Buono, A. F., & Bowditch, J. L. (2003). *The human side of mergers and acquisitions: Managing collisions between people, cultures, and organizations*. Beard Books.
- Buono, A. F., Bowditch, J. L., & Lewis III, J. W. (1985). When cultures collide: The anatomy of a merger. *Human relations*, 38(5), 477-500.
- Burns, T., & Stalker, G. M. (1994). *The management of innovation*. Oxford University Press.
- Burton, R. M., Obel, B., & Håkansson, D. D. (2015). *Organizational design: A step-by-step approach* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Caiazza, R., & Volpe, T. (2015). M&A process: a literature review and research agenda. *Business Process Management Journal*, 21(1), 205-220.
- Cameron, K. S., & Quinn, R. E. (2006). *Diagnosing and changing organizational culture: Based on the competing values framework*. MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Capron, L., & Mitchell, W. (2012). *Build, borrow, or buy: Solving the growth dilemma*. Harvard Business Press.
- Carmichael, D. (1997). IBM's journey towards a market-driven process-managed business model. *Journal of Market-Focused Management*, 2, 99-103.
- Cartwright, S. (2005). Mergers and acquisitions: An update and appraisal. *International review of industrial and organizational psychology 2005*, 20, 1-38.
- Cartwright, S., & Cooper, C. L. (1992). *Mergers and Acquisitions: The Human Factor*. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann Books.
- Cartwright, S., & Cooper, C. L. (1993). The role of culture compatibility in successful organizational marriage. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 7(2), 57-70.
- Cartwright, S., & Cooper, C. L. (1996). *Managing mergers, acquisitions, and strategic alliances: Integrating people and cultures*. Routledge.
- Cartwright, S., & Schoenberg, R. (2006). Thirty years of mergers and acquisitions research: Recent advances and future opportunities. *British journal of management*, 17(S1), S1-S5.
- Chatterjee, S. (2009). The keys to successful acquisition programmes. *Long range planning*, 42(2), 137-163.

- Chatterjee, S., Lubatkin, M. H., Schweiger, D. M., & Weber, Y. (1992). Cultural differences and shareholder value in related mergers: Linking equity and human capital. *Strategic management journal*, 13(5), 319-334.
- Chia, R. (1999). A 'rhizomic' model of organizational change and transformation: Perspective from a metaphysics of change. *British journal of management*, 10(3), 209-227.
- Choudrie, J., & Dwivedi, Y. K. (2005). Investigating the research approaches for examining technology adoption issues. *Journal of Research Practice*, 1(1), D1-D1.
- Creswell, J. W. (2011). Controversies in mixed methods research. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, 4(1), 269-284. Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. London: Sage.
- Creveling, C. M., Slutsky, J., & Antis, D. (2002). *Design for Six Sigma in technology and product development*. Prentice Hall Professional.
- Crotty, M. J. (1998). The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process. *The foundations of social research*, 1-256.
- Czarnecki, K., & Antkiewicz, M. (2005, September). Mapping features to models: A template approach based on superimposed variants. In *International conference on generative programming and component engineering* (pp. 422-437). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Davenport, T. H. (1993). *Process Innovation: Reengineering Work through Information Technology*. Harvard Business School Press.
- Davenport, T. H. (2005). The coming commoditization of processes. *Harvard business review*, 83(6), 100-108.
- Davenport, T. H. (2013). *Process Innovation: Reengineering Work through Information Technology*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- Davenport, T.H., & Short, J.E. (1990). The new industrial engineering: Information technology and business process redesign. *Sloan Management Review*, 31(4).
- Davenport, T. H., & Spanyi, A. (2019). What process mining is, and why companies should do it. *Harvard Business Review*, 97(2), 2-7.
- Deming, W. E. (1986). *Out of the Crisis* MIT Press.
- Denyer, D., Tranfield, D., & Van Aken, J. E. (2008). Developing design propositions through research synthesis. *Organization studies*, 29(3), 393-413.

- DePamphilis, D. (2010). *Mergers and acquisitions basics: all you need to know*. Academic Press.
- DePamphilis, D. (2019). *Mergers, acquisitions, and other restructuring activities: An integrated approach to process, tools, cases, and solutions*. Academic Press.
- Deutsch, C. and West, A. (2010) *Perspectives on merger integration*, McKinsey & Company, June 2010
- Dijkman, R., Vanderfeesten, I., & Reijers, H. A. (2016). Business process architectures: overview, comparison and framework. *Enterprise Information Systems*, 10(2), 129-158.
- Döhring, M., Reijers, H. A., & Smirnov, S. (2014). Configuration vs. adaptation for business process variant maintenance: an empirical study. *Information Systems*, 39, 108-133.
- Doleski, O. D. (2015). *Integrated Business Model: applying the St. Gallen Management concept to business models*. Springer.
- Dumas, M. (2011, August). Consolidated management of business process variants. In *International Conference on Business Process Management* (pp. 1-1). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Dumas, M., Rosa, L. M., Mendling, J., & Reijers, A. H. (2018). *Fundamentals of business process management*. Springer.
- Düsterhoff, H. (2018). Managing the M&A Integration Challenge: The Strategy of Simple Rules Heuristics.
- Dyer, J. H., & Singh, H. (1998). The relational view: Cooperative strategy and sources of interorganizational competitive advantage. *Academy of management review*, 23(4), 660-679.
- Dyer, J. H., Kale, P., & Singh, H. (2004). *When to ally and when to acquire* (pp. 109-115). Harvard Business Review.
- Eckert, M., Freitag, A., Matthes, F., Roth, S., & Schilz, C. (2012). *Decision support for selecting an application landscape integration strategy in mergers and acquisitions* (pp. 88). ECIS Proceedings.
- Epstein, M. J. (2004). The drivers of success in post-merger integration. *Organizational dynamics*, 33(2), 174-189.
- Fama, E. F. (1970). Efficient capital markets. *Journal of finance*, 25(2), 383-417.
- Farley, J. B., & Schwallie, E. D. (1982). An approach toward successful acquisitions. *The Texas Business Executive*, 7, 32-40.

- Fayol, H. (1916). *Administration*. London: Pitman.
- Fernandez, J., & Bhat, J. (2010). Addressing the complexities of global process harmonization. In *Handbook of research on complex dynamic process management: Techniques for adaptability in turbulent environments* (pp. 368-385). IGI Global.
- Fink, A. (2019). *Conducting research literature reviews: From the internet to paper*. Thousand Oaks: Sage publications.
- Frantz, T. L. (2014). *A behavioral theory of the merger: dynamics of the post-merger integration process* [Unpublished PhD Thesis]. Carnegie Mellon University.
- Franz, P., & Kirchmer, M. (2012). *The chief process officer*. London: Accenture Publication.
- Frei, F. X., Kalakota, R., Leone, A. J., & Marx, L. M. (1999). Process variation as a determinant of bank performance: evidence from the retail banking study. *Management Science*, 45(9), 1210-1220.
- Galliers, R. (1992). *Information systems research: Issues, methods and practical guidelines*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Galliers, R. D., & Land, F. F. (1987). Choosing appropriate information systems research methodologies. *Communications of the ACM*, 30(11), 901-902.
- Galpin, T. J. & Herndon, M. (2000). *The complete guide to mergers and acquisitions: Process tools to support M&A integration at every level*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers Inc.
- Gaughan, P. A. (2010). *Mergers, acquisitions, and corporate restructurings*. John Wiley & Sons.
- George, M. L. (2002). *Lean Six Sigma: Combining Six Sigma quality with Lean production speed*. McGraw-Hill.
- Gertsen, M. C., Søderberg, A. M., & Torp, J. E. (Eds.). (1998). *Cultural dimensions of international mergers and acquisitions* (Vol. 85). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Girod, S. J., & Bellin, J. B. (2011). Revisiting the "modern" multinational enterprise theory: an emerging-market multinational perspective. In *The future of foreign direct investment and the multinational enterprise* (pp. 167-210). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Goetsch, D. L., & Davis, S. B. (2016). *Quality management for organizational excellence: Introduction to total quality*. pearson.
- Gomes, E., Angwin, D. N., Weber, Y., & Yedidia Tarba, S. (2013). Critical success factors through the mergers and acquisitions process: revealing pre-and post-M&A connections for improved performance. *Thunderbird international business review*, 55(1), 13-35.

- Goold, M., & Campbell, A. (1998). Desperately seeking synergy. *Harvard business review*, 76(5), 131-143.
- Gorton, G., Kahl, M., & Rosen, R. J. (2009). Eat or be eaten: A theory of mergers and firm size. *The Journal of Finance*, 64(3), 1291-1344.
- Gottschalk, F., Wagemakers, T. A., Jansen-Vullers, M. H., van der Aalst, W. M., & La Rosa, M. (2009). Configurable process models: Experiences from a municipality case study. In *Advanced Information Systems Engineering: 21st International Conference, CAiSE 2009, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, June 8-12, 2009. Proceedings 21* (pp. 486-500). Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Graebner, M. E. (2004). Momentum and serendipity: How acquired leaders create value in the integration of technology firms. *Strategic management journal*, 25(8-9), 751-777.
- Graebner, M. E., Heimeriks, K. H., Huy, Q. N., & Vaara, E. (2017). The process of postmerger integration: A review and agenda for future research. *Academy of Management Annals*, 11(1), 1-32.
- Grant, R. M. (1991). The resource-based theory of competitive advantage: implications for strategy formulation. *California management review*, 33(3), 114-135.
- Greenwood, R., Hinings, C. R., & Brown, J. (1994). Merging professional service firms. *Organization Science*, 5(2), 239-257.
- Gregor, S., & Hevner, A. R. (2013). Positioning and presenting design science research for maximum impact. *MIS quarterly*, 337-355.
- Grisold, T., Wurm, B., Mendling, J., & Vom Brocke, J. (2020, January). Using Process Mining to Support Theorizing About Change in Organizations. In *HICSS* (pp. 1-10).
- Grix, J. (2004). *The Foundations of Research*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Grugulis, I., & Wilkinson, A. (2002). Managing culture at British Airways: hype, hope and reality. *Long Range Planning*, 35(2), 179-194.
- Glykas, M.M., (2011). Effort based performance measurement in business process management. *Knowledge and Process Management*, 18(1).
- Hall, G., & Rosenthal, J. (1993). How to make reengineering really work. *Harvard business review*, 71(6), 119-131.
- Hallerbach, A., Bauer, T., & Reichert, M. (2008). Managing Process Variants in the Process Lifecycle. *10th Int'l Conf. on Enterprise Information Systems*, 154-161.

- Hallerbach, A., Bauer, T., & Reichert, M. (2010). Configuration and management of process variants. *Handbook on Business Process Management 1: Introduction, Methods, and Information Systems*, 237-255.
- Hammer, M. (1997). *Beyond reengineering: How the process-oriented organization is changing our work and our lives*. New York, NY: Harper Business.
- Hammer, M. (2002). Process management and the future of six sigma. *MIT Sloan management review*.
- Hammer, M. (2014). What is business process management? In *Handbook on business process management 1: Introduction, methods, and information systems* (pp. 3-16). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Hammer, M., & Champy, J. (2009). *Reengineering the corporation: A manifesto for business revolution*. Harper Business.
- Hammer, M., & Stanton, S. (1999). How process enterprises really work. *Harvard business review*, 77, 108-120.
- Harmon, P. (2003). *Business process change: a manager's guide to improving, redesigning, and automating processes*. San Francisco: Morgan Kaufmann Publishers.
- Harmon, P. (2010). The scope and evolution of business process management. *Handbook on Business Process Management 1: Introduction, Methods, and Information Systems*, 37-81.
- Harmon, P. (2019). *Business process change: a business process management guide for managers and process professionals*. Morgan Kaufmann.
- Harmon, P., & Trends, B. P. (2010). *Business process change: A guide for business managers and BPM and Six Sigma professionals*. Elsevier.
- Harrison, J. (2007). Why integration success eludes many buyers. *Mergers Acquis Journal*, 42(3), 18-21.
- Harrison, J. S., Hitt, M. A., Hoskisson, R. E., & Ireland, R. D. (1991). Synergies and post-acquisition performance: Differences versus similarities in resource allocations. *Journal of management*, 17(1), 173-190.
- Harry, M., & Schroeder, R. (2006). *Six Sigma: The breakthrough management strategy revolutionizing the world's top corporations*. Crown Currency.
- Haspeslagh, P. C., & Jemison, D. B. (1991). *Managing acquisitions: Creating value through corporate renewal* (Vol. 416). New York: Free Press.

- Helfat, C. E., & Peteraf, M. A. (2003). The dynamic resource-based view: Capability lifecycles. *Strategic management journal*, 24(10), 997-1010.
- Hesse-Biber, S.N. (2009), *Mixed methods research: Merging theory with practice*. New York: Guilford Publications.
- Hevner, A. R. (2007). A three-cycle view of design science research. *Scandinavian journal of information systems*, 19(2), 4.
- Hevner, A. R., & March, S. T. (2003). The information systems research cycle. *Computer*, 36(11), 111-113.
- Hevner, A. R., March, S. T., Park, J., & Ram, S. (2008). Design science in information systems research. *Management Information Systems Quarterly*, 28(1), 6.
- Hevner, A., & Chatterjee, S. (2010). *Design research in information systems: theory and practice* (Vol. 22). Springer Science & Business Media.
- Hofstede, G. (1984). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values* (Vol. 5). sage.
- Hofstede, G. (1993). Cultural constraints in management theories. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 7(1), 81-94.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations*. Sage publications.
- Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J., & Minkov, M. (2010). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*, 3rd McGraw Hill. New York.
- Huang, C. T., & Kleiner, B. H. (2004). New developments concerning managing mergers and acquisitions. *Management Research News*, 27(4/5), 54-62.
- Hung, R. Y. Y. (2006). Business process management as competitive advantage: a review and empirical study. *Total quality management & business excellence*, 17(1), 21-40.
- Hunt, J. W. (1990). Changing pattern of acquisition behaviour in takeovers and the consequences for acquisition processes. *Strategic management journal*, 11(1), 69-77.
- Hyland, B., Tilly, B., & Glennon, R. (2013). Growth strategies for SMEs. *Business international*, 2(11), 34-44.
- International Organization for Standardization. (2015). *ISO 9000:2015 Quality management systems—Fundamentals and vocabulary*. ISO.

- International Organization for Standardization. (2010). *ISO 10244:2010 Business process baselining and analysis*. ISO.
- Jayaram, J., Vickery, S. K., & Droge, C. (2000). The effects of information system infrastructure and process improvements on supply-chain time performance. *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*, 30(3/4), 314-330.
- Jemison, D. B., & Sitkin, S. B. (1986). Corporate acquisitions: A process perspective. *Academy of management review*, 11(1), 145-163.
- Jensen, M. C., & Ruback, R. S. (1983). The market for corporate control: The scientific evidence. *Journal of Financial economics*, 11(1-4), 5-50.
- Jeston, J. (2014). *Business process management: practical guidelines to successful implementations*. Routledge.
- Jeston, J., & Nelis, J. (2008). *Management by process*. Routledge.
- Johnston, A. (2014). Rigour in research: theory in the research approach. *European Business Review*, 26(3), 206-217.
- Kazemek, E. A., & Grauman, D. M. (1989). Awareness of phases helps achieve successful mergers. *Healthcare financial management: journal of the Healthcare Financial Management Association*, 43(12), 82.
- Keesing, R. M. (1974). Theories of culture. *Annual review of anthropology*, 3, 73-97.
- Kekäle, T., Fecikova, I., & Kitaigorodskaja, N. (2004). To make it'total': Quality management over subcultures. *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence*, 15(8), 1093-1108.
- Kitching, J. (1967). Why do mergers miscarry. *Harvard Business Review*, 45(6), 84-101.
- Ko, R. K., Lee, S. S., & Wah Lee, E. (2009). Business process management (BPM) standards: a survey. *Business process management journal*, 15(5), 744-791.
- Kohlbacher, M., & Gruenwald, S. (2011). Process orientation: conceptualization and measurement. *Business Process Management Journal*, 17(2), 267-283.
- Kohlbacher, M., Gruenwald, S., & Kreuzer, E. (2011). Corporate culture in line with business process orientation and its impact on organizational performance. In *Business Process Management Workshops: BPM 2010 International Workshops and Education Track, Hoboken, NJ, USA, September 13-15, 2010, Revised Selected Papers 8* (pp. 16-24). Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques*. New Age International.

- Kuechler, W., & Vaishnavi, V. (2012). A framework for theory development in design science research: multiple perspectives. *Journal of the Association for Information systems*, 13(6), 3.
- Kuhn, T. S. (1962). Historical Structure of Scientific Discovery: To the historian discovery is seldom a unit event attributable to some particular man, time, and place. *Science*, 136(3518), 760-764.
- Kuhn, T. S. (1977, October). Theory-change as structure-change: comments on the Sneed formalism. In *Historical and Philosophical Dimensions of Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science: Part Four of the Proceedings of the Fifth International Congress of Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science, London, Ontario, Canada-1975* (pp. 289-309). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- Kumar, A., & Palvia, P. (2001). Key data management issues in a global executive information system. *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, 101(4), 153-164.
- La Rosa, M., Dumas, M., Uba, R., & Dijkman, R. (2010). Merging business process models. In *On the Move to Meaningful Internet Systems: OTM 2010: Confederated International Conferences: CoopIS, IS, DOA and ODBASE, Hersonissos, Crete, Greece, October 25-29, 2010, Proceedings, Part I* (pp. 96-113). Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Larsson, R. (1993). Barriers to acculturation in mergers and acquisitions: Strategic human resource implications. *Journal of European Business Education*, 2 (2): 1-18.
- Larsson, R., & Finkelstein, S. (1999). Integrating strategic, organizational, and human resource perspectives on mergers and acquisitions: A case survey of synergy realization. *Organization science*, 10(1), 1-26.
- Lasserre, P. (2003). *Global Strategic Management*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Laudon, K.C. and Laudon, J.P. (2007) *Management Information Systems: Managing the Digital Firm*, 10th ed., Pearson Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ.
- Lee, R. G., & Dale, B. G. (1998). Business process management: a review and evaluation. *Business process management journal*, 4(3), 214-225.
- Lewis, D. (1996). The organizational culture saga-from OD to TQM: a critical review of the literature. Part 1-concepts and early trends. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 17(1), 12-19.
- Lockett, A., Wiklund, J., Davidsson, P., & Girma, S. (2013). Organic and acquisitive growth: Re-examining, testing and extending Penrose's growth theory. In *New perspectives on firm growth* (pp. 291-324). Edward Elgar Publishing.

- Lohmann, P., & Zur Muehlen, M. (2015). Business process management skills and roles: an investigation of the demand and supply side of BPM professionals. In *Business Process Management: 13th International Conference, BPM 2015, Innsbruck, Austria, August 31--September 3, 2015, Proceedings 13* (pp. 317-332). Springer International Publishing.
- Lok, P., & Crawford, J. (2004). The effect of organisational culture and leadership style on job satisfaction and organisational commitment: A cross-national comparison. *Journal of management development*, 23(4), 321-338.
- Lubatkin, M. (1983). Mergers and the Performance of the Acquiring Firm. *Academy of Management review*, 8(2), 218-225.
- Lubatkin, M. (1987). Merger strategies and stockholder value. *Strategic management journal*, 8(1), 39-53.
- Lubatkin, M., Srinivasan, N., & Merchant, H. (1997). Merger strategies and shareholder value during times of relaxed antitrust enforcement: The case of large mergers during the 1980s. *Journal of Management*, 23(1), 59-81.
- Lukka, K. (2003). The constructive research approach. *Case study research in logistics. Publications of the Turku School of Economics and Business Administration, Series B, 1*(2003), 83-101.
- Lyytinen, K., & Newman, M. (2008). Punctuated equilibrium, process models and information system development and change: towards a socio-technical process analysis.
- Mackenzie, N., & Knipe, S. (2006). Research dilemmas: Paradigms, methods and methodology. *Issues in educational research*, 16(2), 193-205.
- Maher, M. A. (2000). Diagnosing and changing organizational culture: Based on the competing values framework. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 13(3), 300-303.
- Maire, S., & Collerette, P. (2011). International post-merger integration: Lessons from an integration project in the private banking sector. *International Journal of Project Management*, 29(3), 279-294.
- Malinova, M., Gross, S., & Mendling, J. (2019). Researching Information Systems Methods using Method Mining-A Case Study on Process Improvement Methods. In *ICIS*.
- Manrodt, K. B., & Vitasek, K. (2004). Global process standardization: a case study. *Journal of business logistics*, 25(1), 1-23.
- March, S. T., & Smith, G. F. (1995). Design and natural science research on information technology. *Decision support systems*, 15(4), 251-266.

- Marks, M. L. (1982). Merging human resources: A review of current research. *Mergers and Acquisitions*, 17(2), 38-44.
- Marks, M. L., & Mirvis, P. H. (2001). Making mergers and acquisitions work: Strategic and psychological preparation. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 15(2), 80-92.
- Marks, M. L., & Mirvis, P. H. (2010). *Joining forces: Making one plus one equal three in mergers, acquisitions, and alliances*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Marks, M. L., & Mirvis, P. H. (2011). A framework for the human resources role in managing culture in mergers and acquisitions. *Human Resource Management*, 50(6), 859-877.
- Marks, M.L. (1997). Consulting in mergers and acquisitions: Interventions spawned by recent trends. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 10(3), 267-279.
- Martin, J. (2001). *Organizational culture: Mapping the terrain*. Sage publications.
- McCormack, K. P., & Johnson, W. C. (2001). *Business process orientation: Gaining the e-business competitive advantage*. Crc Press.
- McKelvie, A., Wiklund, J., & Davidsson, P. (2006). A resource-based view on organic and acquired growth. In *Entrepreneurship: Frameworks And Empirical Investigations From Forthcoming Leaders Of European Research* (pp. 175-194). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Mead, G.H. (1934), *Mind, Self, and Society*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Mehta, M., & Hirschheim, R. (2007). Strategic alignment in mergers and acquisitions: Theorizing IS integration decision making. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, 8(3), 8.
- Melenovsky, M. J., & Hill, J. B. (2006). Role definition and organizational structure: Business process improvement. *GR Reports, Gartner*.
- Melenovsky, M. J., & Sinur, J. (2006). BPM maturity model identifies six phases for successful BPM adoption. *Gartner research, stamford*.
- Mendling, J., & Brocke, J. V. (2018). *Business process management cases: digital innovation and business transformation in practice*. Springer International Publishing AG.
- Milani, F., Dumas, M., & Matulevičius, R. (2012, June). Identifying and classifying variations in business processes. In *International Workshop on Business Process Modeling, Development and Support* (pp. 136-150). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Milani, F., Dumas, M., & Matulevičius, R. (2013). Decomposition driven consolidation of process models. In *Advanced Information Systems Engineering: 25th International Conference*,

CAiSE 2013, Valencia, Spain, June 17-21, 2013. *Proceedings 25* (pp. 193-207). Springer Berlin Heidelberg.

Milani, F., Dumas, M., Ahmed, N., & Matulevičius, R. (2016). Modelling families of business process variants: a decomposition driven method. *Information Systems*, 56, 55-72.

Mingers, J. (2001). Combining IS research methods: towards a pluralist methodology. *Information systems research*, 12(3), 240-259.

Mintzberg, H. (1993). *Structure in fives: Designing effective organizations*. Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Mirvis, P. H. (1985). Negotiations after the sale: The roots and ramifications of conflict in an acquisition. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 6(1), 65-84.

Moon, M., Hong, M., & Yeom, K. (2008, July). Two-level variability analysis for business process with reusability and extensibility. In *2008 32nd Annual IEEE International Computer Software and Applications Conference* (pp. 263-270). IEEE.

Morosini, P., Shane, S., & Singh, H. (1998). National cultural distance and cross-border acquisition performance. *Journal of international business studies*, 29, 137-158.

Münstermann, B., Möderer, P., & Weitzel, T. (2010, January). Setting up and managing business process standardization: Insights from a case study with a multinational e-commerce firm. In *2010 43rd Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences* (pp. 1-11). IEEE.

Nahavandi, A., & Malekzadeh, A. R. (1988). Acculturation in mergers and acquisitions. *Academy of management review*, 13(1), 79-90.

Nandhakumar, J., & Jones, M. (1997). Too close for comfort? Distance and engagement in interpretive information systems research. *Information systems journal*, 7(2), 109-131.

Nesheim, T. (2011). Balancing process ownership and line management in a matrix-like organization. *Knowledge and Process Management*, 18(2), 109-119.

Nguyen, H., & Kleiner, B. H. (2003). The effective management of mergers. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 24(8), 447-454.

Oakland, J. S. (2014). *Total quality management and operational excellence: text with cases*. Routledge.

Obenchain, A. M. (2002). *Organization culture and organizational innovation in not-for-profit, private and public institutions of higher education*. Nova Southeastern University.

- Offermann, P., Levina, O., Schönherr, M., & Bub, U. (2009, May). Outline of a design science research process. In *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Design Science Research in Information Systems and Technology* (pp. 1-11).
- Ogbonna, E., & Harris, L. C. (2000). Leadership style, organizational culture and performance: empirical evidence from UK companies. *international Journal of human resource management*, 11(4), 766-788.
- Ohno, T. (1988). *Toyota Production System: Beyond Large-Scale Production*. Productivity Press.
- Ojo, Olu (2003) *Fundamentals of research methods*. Lagos: Standard Publications.
- Orlikowski, W. J., & Baroudi, J. J. (1991). Studying information technology in organizations: Research approaches and assumptions. *Information systems research*, 2(1), 1-28.
- Ostrowski, L., & Helfert, M. (2012). Design science evaluation—example of experimental design. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Computing and Information Sciences*, 3(9), 253-262.
- Palmberg, K. (2009). Exploring process management: are there any widespread models and definitions?. *The TQM Journal*, 21(2), 203-215.
- Pande, P., Neuman, R., & Cavanagh, R. (2000). *The six sigma way, chapter 12-identifying core processes and key customers*. McGraw Hill Professional.
- Parenteau, R. S., & Weston, J. F. (2003). It's never too early to think integration. *Mergers and Acquisition*, 38(11), 17-24.
- Parmenter, D. (2015). *Key performance indicators: developing, implementing, and using winning KPIs*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Peppers, K., Rothenberger, M., & Kuechler, B. (2012, May). Design Science Research in Information Systems Advance in Theory and Practice. In *Proceedings of the 7th International Conference DESRIST, Las Vegas, NV, USA* (pp. 14-15).
- Peppers, K., Tuunanen, T., Rothenberger, M. A., & Chatterjee, S. (2007). A design science research methodology for information systems research. *Journal of management information systems*, 24(3), 45-77.
- Penrose, E. T. (2009). *The Theory of the Growth of the Firm*. Oxford university press.
- Pentland, B., Vaast, E., & Wolf, J. R. (2021). Theorizing process dynamics with directed graphs: A diachronic analysis of digital trace data. *MIS Quarterly*, 45(2).
- Perez-Batres, L. A., & Eden, L. (2008). Is there a liability of localness? How emerging market firms respond to regulatory punctuations. *Journal of International Management*, 14(3), 232-251.

- Petersen, K., Vakkalanka, S., & Kuzniarz, L. (2015). Guidelines for conducting systematic mapping studies in software engineering: An update. *Information and software technology*, 64, 1-18.
- Picot, G. (2002). *Handbook of international mergers and acquisitions: Preparation, Implementation and Integration*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pool, S. W. (2000). The learning organization: motivating employees by integrating TQM philosophy in a supportive organizational culture. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 21(8), 373-378.
- Porter, M. E. (1985). *Competitive advantage: Creating and sustaining superior performance*. Free Press.
- Pries-Heje, J., Baskerville, R., & Venable, J. (2008). Strategies for Design Science Research Evaluation. In W. Golden, T. Acton, K. Conboy, & V. K. Tuunainen (Eds.), *Conference Proceedings, 16th European Conference on Information Systems* National University of Ireland.
- Pyzdek, T., & Keller, P. A. (2014). *Six Sigma Handbook, (ENHANCED EBOOK)*. McGraw Hill Professional.
- Ravesteyn, P., & Batenburg, R. (2010). Cultural differences in implementing business process management systems.
- Reijers, H. A., Mans, R. S., & van der Toorn, R. A. (2009). Improved model management with aggregated business process models. *Data & Knowledge Engineering*, 68(2), 221-243.
- Richen, A., & Steinhorst, A. (2005). Standardization or harmonization? you need both. *European Health Informatics (November 2005)*, 5, 15.
- Rittel, H. W., & Webber, M. M. (1973). Dilemmas in a general theory of planning. *Policy sciences*, 4(2), 155-169.
- Roll, R. (1986). The hubris hypothesis of corporate takeovers. *Journal of business*, 197-216.
- Romero, H. L. (2014). *The role of contextual factors in process harmonization* [PhD Thesis]. TU Eindhoven.
- Romero, H. L., Dijkman, R. M., Grefen, P. W. P. J., & Weele, van, A. J. (2012). *A literature review in process harmonization : a conceptual framework*. (BETA publicatie : working papers; Vol. 379). Technische Universiteit Eindhoven.
- Romero, H. L., Dijkman, R. M., Grefen, P. W., & van Weele, A. J. (2015). Factors that determine the extent of business process standardization and the subsequent effect on business performance. *Business & Information Systems Engineering*, 57, 261-270.

- Rosa, M. L., Aalst, W. M. V. D., Dumas, M., & Milani, F. P. (2017). Business process variability modeling: A survey. *ACM Computing Surveys (CSUR)*, 50(1), 1-45.
- Rosemann, M. (2003). Application reference models and building blocks for management and control. In *Handbook on enterprise architecture* (pp. 595-615). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Rosemann, M. (2014). The service portfolio of a BPM center of excellence. In *Handbook on business process management 2: strategic alignment, governance, people and culture* (pp. 381-398). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Rosemann, M., & De Bruin, T. (2005). Application of a holistic model for determining BPM maturity. *BP Trends*, 2, 1-21.
- Rosemann, M., & Van der Aalst, W. M. P. (2007). A configurable reference modelling language. *Information systems*, 32(1), 1-23.
- Rosemann, M., & vom Brocke, J. (2014). The six core elements of business process management. In *Handbook on business process management 1: introduction, methods, and information systems* (pp. 105-122). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Rottig, D. (2007). Successfully managing international mergers and acquisitions: A descriptive framework. *International Business: Research Teaching and Practice*, 1(1), 103-126.
- Rumelt, R. P. (1982). Diversification strategy and profitability. *Strategic management journal*, 3(4), 359-369.
- Rüegg-Stürm, J. (2003). *Das neue St. Galler management-modell*. Bern: Haupt.
- Rüegg-Stürm, J., & Grand, S. (2019). *Managing in a complex world: The St. Gallen management-model*. utb GmbH.
- Rummler, G. A., & Brache, A. P. (2012). *Improving performance: How to manage the white space on the organization chart*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Salah, S., Rahim, A., & Carretero, J. A. (2010). The integration of Six Sigma and lean management. *International journal of lean Six Sigma*, 1(3), 249-274.
- Sales, A. L., & Mirvis, P. H. (1984). When cultures collide: Issues in acquisition. *Managing organizational transitions*, 107, 133.
- Salter, M., & Weinhold, W. A. (1988). Corporate takeovers: Financial boom or organizational bust. *Knights, raiders, and targets: The impact of the hostile takeover*, 135, 149.

- Sarala, R. M., Vaara, E., & Junni, P. (2019). Beyond merger syndrome and cultural differences: New avenues for research on the "human side" of global mergers and acquisitions (M&As). *Journal of World Business*, 54(4), 307-321.
- Schäfermeyer, M., Grgecic, D., & Rosenkranz, C. (2010, January). Factors influencing business process standardization: A multiple case study. In *2010 43rd Hawaii international conference on system sciences* (pp. 1-10). IEEE.
- Scheer, A. W. (1999). *ARIS-business process frameworks*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Scheer, A. W., & Hoffmann, M. (2014). The process of business process management. In *Handbook on Business Process Management 2: Strategic Alignment, Governance, People and Culture* (pp. 351-380). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Scheer, A. W., & Nüttgens, M. (2002). ARIS architecture and reference models for business process management. In *Business Process Management: Models, Techniques, and Empirical Studies* (pp. 376-389). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Schein, E. H. (1990). Organizational culture. *American Psychologist*, 45(2), 109–119.
- Schein, E. H. (1995). *Unternehmenskultur: Ein Handbuch für Führungskräfte*. Campus-Verlag.
- Schein, E. H. (1996). Three cultures of management: The key to organizational learning. *MIT Sloan Management Review*.
- Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership* (Vol. 2). John Wiley & Sons.
- Schmiedel, T., Vom Brocke, J., & Recker, J. (2014). Development and validation of an instrument to measure organizational cultures' support of Business Process Management. *Information & Management*, 51(1), 43-56.
- Schönreiter, I. M. (2016). Process Harmonization Phase Model in Post Merger Integration. In *SIMPDA* (pp. 3-22).
- Schönreiter, I. M. (2018). Methodologies for process harmonization in the post-merger integration phase: A literature review. *Business Process Management Journal*, 24(2), 330-356.
- Schreyögg, G., & Koch, J. (2020). *Management: Grundlagen der Unternehmensführung*. Springer-Verlag.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2001). *Dictionary of qualitative inquiry*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Schweiger, D. M., & Goulet, P. K. (2000). Integrating mergers and acquisitions: An international research review. *Advances in mergers and acquisitions*, 61-91.

- Schweiger, D. M., & Goulet, P. K. (2005). Facilitating acquisition integration through deep-level cultural learning interventions: A longitudinal field experiment. *Organization Studies*, 26(10), 1477-1499.
- Scott, D. L. (2003). *Wall Street words: an A to Z guide to investment terms for today's investor*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Sein, M. K., Henfridsson, O., Purao, S., Rossi, M., & Lindgren, R. (2011). Action design research. *MIS quarterly*, 37-56.
- Servaes, H., & Zenner, M. (1996). The role of investment banks in acquisitions. *The Review of Financial Studies*, 9(3), 787-815.
- Seth, A. (1990). Sources of value creation in acquisitions: an empirical investigation. *Strategic Management Journal*, 11(6), 431-446.
- Seth, A., Song, K. P., & Pettit, R. (2000). Synergy, managerialism or hubris? An empirical examination of motives for foreign acquisitions of US firms. *Journal of international business studies*, 31, 387-405.
- Seth, A., Song, K. P., & Pettit, R. R. (2002). Value creation and destruction in cross-border acquisitions: an empirical analysis of foreign acquisitions of US firms. *Strategic management journal*, 23(10), 921-940.
- Shearer, C. S., Hames, D. S., & Runge, J. B. (2001). How CEOs influence organizational culture following acquisitions. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 22(3), 105-113.
- Shelton, L. M. (1988). Strategic business fits and corporate acquisition: Empirical evidence. *Strategic management journal*, 9(3), 279-287.
- Sherman, A. (2010). *Mergers and Acquisitions from A to Z*. Amacom.
- Shimizu, K., Hitt, M. A., Vaidyanath, D., & Pisano, V. (2004). Theoretical foundations of cross-border mergers and acquisitions: A review of current research and recommendations for the future. *Journal of international management*, 10(3), 307-353.
- Shrivastava, P. (1986). Postmerger integration. *Journal of business strategy*, 7(1), 65-76.
- Sidorova, A., & Isik, O. (2010). Business process research: a cross-disciplinary review. *Business Process Management Journal*, 16(4), 566-597.
- Simon, H. A. (1996). *The sciences of the artificial*. 3rd ed. MIT Press Cambridge.
- Smart, P. A., Maddern, H., & Maull, R. S. (2009). Understanding business process management: implications for theory and practice. *British journal of management*, 20(4), 491-507.

- Smith, A. (1776). *Wealth of nations*. London: Methuen & Co., Ltd
- Snee, R. D. (2010). Lean Six Sigma—getting better all the time. *International Journal of Lean Six Sigma*, 1(1), 9-29.
- Soanes, C., & Stevenson, A. (Eds.). (2004). *Concise oxford English dictionary* (Vol. 11). Oxford: Oxford university press.
- Spanyi, A. (2003). *Business Process Management is a Team Sport: Play It to Win!* Tampa, FL: Anclote Press.
- Srbinoska, D. S. (2016). The Strategic Integration of Enterprises as Determinant of Merger and Acquisition Success. *International Journal of Accounting and Financial Reporting*, 6(2).
- Stachowicz-Stanusch, A. (2009). Culture due diligence based on HP/Compaq merger case study. *Journal of Intercultural Management*, 1(1), 64-81.
- Stahl, G. K., & Voigt, A. (2008). Do cultural differences matter in mergers and acquisitions? A tentative model and examination. *Organization science*, 19(1), 160-176.
- Surakka, H. (2018). *Harmonization of procurement processes in the merger of two construction companies* [Master's thesis]. Aalto University.
- Sydow, J., & Schreyögg, G. (Eds.). (2013). *Self-reinforcing processes in and among organizations*. Springer.
- Taylor, F. W. (1911). *The principles of scientific management*. NuVision Publications, LLC.
- Terre Blanche, M., & Durrheim, K. (1999). *Research in practice*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.
- Toppenberg, G. (2015). Expanded Understanding of IS/IT Related Challenges in Mergers and Acquisitions: Methods & Research Context. In *ECIS*.
- Toppenberg, G., & Henningsson, S. (2014). Taking stock and looking forward: a scientometric analysis of IS/IT integration challenges in mergers.
- Trautwein, F. (1990). Merger motives and merger prescriptions. *Strategic management journal*, 11(4), 283-295.
- Tregear, R. (2010). Business process standardization. *Handbook on Business Process Management 2: Strategic Alignment, Governance, People and Culture*, 307-327.

- Tregear, R. (2014). Business process standardization. In *Handbook on business process management 2: Strategic alignment, governance, people and culture* (pp. 421-441). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Tricker, R. I. (2015). *Corporate governance: Principles, policies, and practices*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Trkman, P. (2010). The critical success factors of business process management. *International journal of information management*, 30(2), 125-134.
- Tsoukas, H., & Chia, R. (2002). On organizational becoming: Rethinking organizational change. *Organization science*, 13(5), 567-582.
- Ulrich, H. & Krieg, W. (1972): *St. Galler Management-Modell*. Bern: Haupt
- Vaara, E. (2000). Constructions of cultural differences in post-merger change processes: A sensemaking perspective on Finnish-Swedish cases. *Management*, 81-110.
- Vaara, E., & Monin, P. (2010). A recursive perspective on discursive legitimation and organizational action in mergers and acquisitions. *Organization Science*, 21(1), 3-22.
- Vaishnavi, V., Kuechler, W., & Petter, S. (2004). Design science research in information systems. Retrieved from: <http://www.desrist.org/design-research-in-information-systems> (20.12.2021)
- Valença, G., Alves, C., Alves, V., & Niu, N. (2013). A systematic mapping study on business process variability. *International Journal of Computer Science & Information Technology*, 5(1), 1.
- Van der Aalst, W. M. (2013). Business process management: a comprehensive survey. *International Scholarly Research Notices*, 2013(1), 507984.
- Van der Aalst, W. M. (2016). *Process mining: Data science in action*. Springer.
- Van der Aalst, W., Adriansyah, A., De Medeiros, A. K. A., Arcieri, F., Baier, T., Blickle, T., ... & Wynn, M. (2012). Process mining manifesto. In *Business Process Management Workshops: BPM 2011 International Workshops, Clermont-Ferrand, France, August 29, 2011, Revised Selected Papers, Part I 9* (pp. 169-194). Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Van der Aalst, W. M., ter Hofstede, A. H., & Weske, M. (2003). Business process management: A survey. In *Business Process Management: International Conference, BPM 2003 Eindhoven, The Netherlands, June 26–27, 2003 Proceedings 1* (pp. 1-12). Springer Berlin Heidelberg.

- Van der Meer-Kooistra, J., & Vosselman, E. G. (2000). Management control of interfirm transactional relationships: the case of industrial renovation and maintenance. *Accounting, organizations and society*, 25(1), 51-77.
- Van Looy, A., & Devos, J. (2019). A roadmap for (un) successful BPM: positivist case studies. *Business Process Management Journal*, 25(5), 1164-1190.
- Vom Brocke, J., & Rosemann, M. (Eds.). (2014). *Handbook on business process management 1: Introduction, methods, and information systems*. Springer.
- Vom Brocke, J., & Schmiedel, T. (2011). Towards a conceptualisation of BPM-culture: Results from a literature review.
- Vom Brocke, J., & Sinnl, T. (2011). Culture in business process management: a literature review. *Business process management journal*, 17(2), 357-378.
- Vom Brocke, J., van der Aalst, W. M., Berente, N., van Dongen, B. F., Grisold, T., Kremser, W., Mendling, J., Pentland, B., Recker, J., Roeglinger, M., Rosemann, M., & Weber, B. (2024). Process science: the interdisciplinary study of socio-technical change. *Process Science*, 1(1), 1.
- Walsham, G. (1995). The emergence of interpretivism in IS research. *Information systems research*, 6(4), 376-394.
- Weber, M. (1922). *The theory of social and economic organization*. Free Press.
- Weber, R. A., & Camerer, C. F. (2003). Cultural Conflict and Merger Failure: An Experimental Approach. *Management Science*, 49(4), 400-415.
- Weber, Y. (2013). *A comprehensive guide to mergers & acquisitions: Managing the critical success factors across every stage of the M&A process*. FT Press.
- Weber, Y., & Tarba, S. Y. (2012). Mergers and acquisitions process: The use of corporate culture analysis. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 19(3), 288-303.
- Weber, Y., Tarba, S. Y., & Rozen Bachar, Z. (2012). The effects of culture clash on international mergers in the high tech industry. *World Review of Entrepreneurship, Management and Sustainable Development*, 8(1), 103-118.
- Webster, J., & Watson, R. T. (2002). Analyzing the past to prepare for the future: Writing a literature review. *MIS quarterly*, xiii-xxiii.
- Wernerfelt, B. (1984). A resource-based view of the firm. *Strategic management journal*, 5(2), 171-180.

- Weske, M. (2024). *Business Process Management: Concepts, Languages, Architectures*. Springer Nature.
- Weston, J. F., Hoag, S. E., & Chung, K. S. (1998). *Mergers, Restructuring and Corporate Control*.
- White, S. A., & Miers, D. (2008). *BPMN modeling and reference guide: understanding and using BPMN*. Future Strategies Inc..
- Williamson, O.E. (1985). *The economic institutions of capitalism*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Winter, R. (2008). Design science research in Europe. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 17, 470-475.
- Womack, J. P., & Jones, D. T. (1997). Lean thinking—banish waste and create wealth in your corporation. *Journal of the operational research society*, 48(11), 1148-1148.
- Worthen, B. (2002). Nestlé's enterprise resource planning (ERP) odyssey. *CIO Magazine*.
- Wullenweber, K., & Weitzel, T. (2007, January). An empirical exploration of how process standardization reduces outsourcing risks. In *2007 40th Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS'07)* (pp. 240c-240c). IEEE.
- Wullenweber, K., Koenig, W., Beimborn, D., & Weitzel, T. (2009). The impact of process standardization on business process outsourcing success. *Information systems outsourcing: enduring themes, global challenges, and process opportunities*, 527-548.
- Žabjek, D., Kovačić, A., & Indihar Štemberger, M. (2008). Business process management as an important factor for a successful ERP system implementation. *Economic research-Ekonomska istraživanja*, 21(4), 1-18.
- Zairi, M. (1997). Business process management: a boundaryless approach to modern competitiveness. *Business process management journal*, 3(1), 64-80.
- Zhao, F. (2004). Management of information technology and business process re-engineering: a case study. *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, 104(8), 674-680.
- Zollo, M., & Winter, S. G. (2002). Deliberate learning and the evolution of dynamic capabilities. *Organization science*, 13(3), 339-351.
- Zucchi, F., & Edwards, J. S. (1999). Human resource management aspects of business process reengineering: a survey. *Business process management Journal*, 5(4), 325-344.

