Political Maneuvering During Business Process Transformation: A Pluralist Approach

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Abstract:

For years, managers have tried to improve organizational performance through business process transformation (BPT), and their experiences have informed IS research and practice. Although extant theory acknowledges the political nature of these dynamic transformation initiatives, researchers have yet to empirically investigate and theorize how organizational politics impacts BPT behaviors and outcomes. Drawing on a pluralist methodology, we present an embedded case study of a company-wide BPT project across four business units at the high-tech firm Terma. First, we apply different perspectives on organizational politics to develop detailed accounts of each business unit's response to the transformation initiative, which reveals four distinct patterns of BPT politics: "applying the hammer", "struggling to engage", "walking the talk", and "keeping up appearances". Next, we combine the empirical findings with extant literature to theorize how transformation agents and process users engage in politics during BPT implementation. As a result, our research leverages a pluralist approach to show how alternative political perspectives and forms of politics can help managers maneuver BPT initiatives in their roles as transformation agents and process users.

Keywords: Business Process Transformation, Organizational Politics, Power, Pluralist Approach, Embedded Case Study.

1   Introduction

Business process transformation (BPT) is the latest strand in a long tradition of improving business performance through adopting technology and implementing new ways of managing, organizing, and executing work (Grover & Markus, 2008). As such, BPT requires alignment of IS with business needs on the one hand and with transformation goals on the other. BPT is a particular form of organizational change that requires one to use IS for process-transformation purposes and that reinforces the complex interplay between technology and people-related issues. As an important area of IS research (Broadbent, Weill, Clair, & Kearney, 1999; Kettinger, Teng, & Guha, 1997; Lee, Wyner, & Pentland, 2008; Mani, Barua, & Whinston, 2010; Venkatesh & Bala, 2012), BPT covers both incremental and radical transformation initiatives (Davenport, 1993; Venkatraman, 1994), which the literature refers to as continuous improvement (Deming, 1986) and process innovation (Deming, 1986; Hammer & Champy, 1993).

There is overwhelming evidence that BPT breeds political tensions (Grint, Case, & Willcocks, 1995; Kelley, 1976; Knights & McCabe, 1999, 2002) and that organizational actors, therefore, need to understand and engage in BPT politics to promote their interests and to respond appropriately to stakeholders (Buchanan, 1997; Dhillon, 2004; Grover, Lederer, & Sabherwal, 1988). However, extant research has not adequately leveraged theory on power and politics to empirically investigate BPT. Although the literature offers a variety of heuristics and lessons (Brown, 1998; Kautz, Hansen, & Thaysen, 2001; Willcocks & Smith, 1995), no theories focus on understanding and managing BPT implementation politics. This knowledge gap is a problem in light of industry reports that show that organizational politics prevents one-third of BPT efforts from becoming successful (Gartner, 2012).

In response, we analyzed behaviors and outcomes as the Danish high-tech firm Terma implemented a corporate-wide BPT project over a two-year period. Four of Terma's business units—Aerostructures (AES), Airborne Systems (ASY), Integrated Systems (ISY), and Radar Systems (RSY)—undertook this project to address problems of keeping systems development efforts on schedule and within budget, and to respond to customers' demand for the company to document business process maturity. Observing significant differences in how the project was impacted by and dealt with power and politics, we explain the observed behaviors and outcomes based on a pluralist approach in which we apply multi-perspective analyses to reveal political tensions and maneuvering and to verbalize, synthesize, and extend the ways we think about politics in IT-based BPT implementations (Bradshaw-Camball & Murray, 1991; Lapointe & Rivard, 2005, 2007; Mingers, 2001). As such, we relied on multiple research methods to capture how complex political processes manifested and unfolded over time (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962; Mingers & Brocklesby, 1997). These methods included the first author's engagement as an employee and action researcher at Terma (Mathiassen, 2002; Susman & Evered, 1978), our adopting an embedded case study design to report the empirical findings (Yin, 2003), and our advancing new theory through a pluralist approach inspired by metatriangulation (Lewis & Grimes, 1999).

As a result, our research complements existing studies that attempt to explain variations in IS implementation across business units in an organization based on how actors engage in and respond to such effort to further their own interests (Barley, 1986; Robey & Sahay, 1996). Hence, following Gregor (2006), we provide analyses and descriptions of BPT politics and prescriptions for managing BPT politics in response to the following research question:

> **RQ:** How can knowledge of organizational politics help one understand and manage business process transformation behaviors and outcomes?

We acknowledge that the concepts one uses shapes how one understands politics and that one should not view it as a one-dimensional concept. Hence, we base our investigations on Bradshaw-Camball and Murray's (1991) framework of pluralist[1], rationalist, interpretive, and radical politics—each representing competing sociological paradigms. Our application of multiple perspectives fostered both empirical and theoretical insights and resulted in two distinct contributions to the literature. First, we present rich, contextual accounts of BPT politics in each of Terma's business units and identify four distinct patterns of politics: "applying the hammer", "struggling to engage", "walking the talk", and "keeping up appearances". Second, we theorize the interplay between transformation agent and process user politics during BPT implementation as reflecting shifts in the alignment of process needs and compliance with transformation

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[1] Note: we use the term "pluralist" here based on Burrell and Morgan's (1979) categorization of sociological paradigms, and it differs from the concept of "pluralism" in reference to multi-perspective, multi-method approaches to conducting research.

goals. Hence, although extant theory acknowledges the political nature of technology-enabled change efforts (Jasperson et al., 2002), our research is the first in the IS field to systematically adopt a pluralist approach to empirically investigate and theorize how organizational politics impacts behaviors and outcomes in such initiatives.

This paper proceeds as follows: in Section 2, we review the literature on organizational politics related to BPT implementation. In Section 3, we describe Bradshaw-Camball and Murray's (1991) framework that we used to analyze the BPT implementation at Terma. In Section 4, we describe our research methodology and in Section 5, we summarize the empirical findings. In Section 6, we discuss our findings and develop new theory based on the empirical findings and extant literature. In Section 7, we conclude the paper by discussing its theoretical contributions and managerial implications. In particular, we advise managers to proactively maneuver BPT efforts by considering their intrinsic political nature rather than passively reacting to political moves.

2 Organizational Politics and BPT

In this section, we first outline the characteristics of BPT as a particular technology-enabled form of organizational change. We then delineate BPT politics as a literature stream in the intersection between organization and IS theory. Finally, we describe state-of-the-art knowledge on politics in BPT.

2.1 BPT

BPT is a collective name for ongoing, cross-functional, process-focused change initiatives. Because such initiatives are information intensive, coordination and information management constitute their main challenges. Handling these challenges requires one to align processes, information, and systems as work practices change by adopting IT to accommodate emerging information needs. BPT is the latest strand of management approaches to organizational innovation; others include business process reengineering (BPR), total quality management (TQM), Six Sigma, lean, software process improvement (SPI), and a variety of industry-specific maturity models (Hackman & Wageman, 1995; Hammer, 1990; Müller, Mathiassen, & Balshøj, 2010; Tennant, 2001; Womack, Jones, & Roos, 2007). Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI) (CMMI Product Team, 2010) is a widely used BPT approach for reducing costs, increasing speed, and improving quality of software and systems development. The five CMMI levels of maturity signal technical competence in well-defined areas. In general, BPT is an IT-based approach to organizational innovation and spans a continuum of incremental and radical approaches (Davenport, 1993; Deming, 1986; Hammer & Champy, 1993). More specifically, it is an organization-wide approach that "requires redesigns in which IT, business processes, and other organizational elements are aligned and jointly optimized" (Grover & Markus, 2008, p. 8). Compared to other management approaches, BPT takes a broad perspective by paying attention to intra- and inter-organizational business processes with a focus on redesigning the use of IS to manage knowledge. Further, it heralds an evolution from first- to second-generation process management—from "a radical, intra-organizational, IT-led, mechanistic, and inspirational approach" to "a contingent, interorganizational, IT-enabled, holistic, and systematic approach" (Grover & Markus, 2008, p. 45).

BPT is highly relevant to IS researchers (Broadbent et al., 1999; Kettinger et al., 1997; Lee et al., 2008; Mani et al., 2010; Venkatesh & Bala, 2012) because of its information- and technology-intensive nature that entails organizational use of IS to support coordination and management. Extant research on BPT is informed by various strands of IS literature that emphasize the need to consider technical, organizational, social, and managerial aspects of organizational change. In particular, state-of-the-art BPT literature shows that a "lack of attention to social-political and organizational issues are major reasons" (Grover & Markus, 2008, p. 50) for why BPT projects fail. Recognizing that BPT is an IT-based approach to organizational innovation, we review the literature at the intersection between politics in organization and IS theory (see Figure 1). We draw on both literature streams to take stock of state-of-the-art knowledge of BPT implementations: triggers of BPT politics, politicking during BPT, and the impact of politics on BPT (see Table 1).
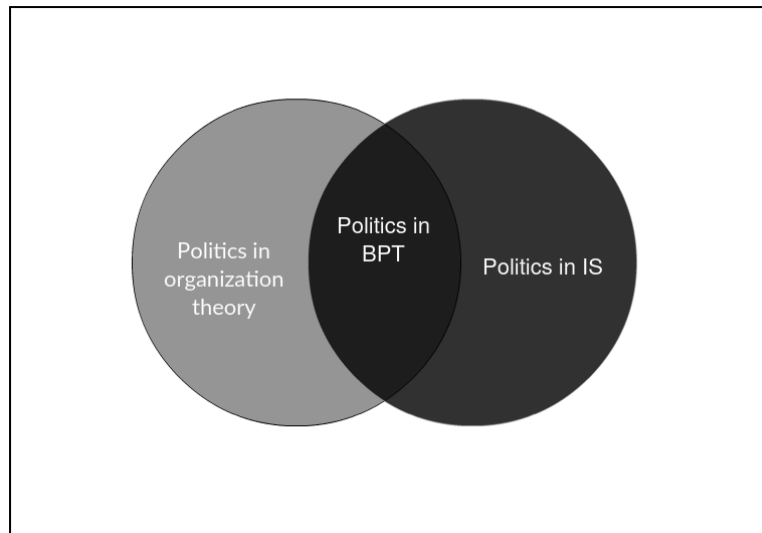
Figure 1. Research on Politics in BPT

Table 1. Knowledge of BPT Politics

Triggers	Politicking	Impact
Conflicting (self-)interests	Negotiating competing interests	Power redistribution
Turf guarding and identity threats	Framing communication and information flows through narratives	Transformed organizational structures
Fear of transparency	Mobilizing discursive and symbolic resources	Transfer of influence to managers
Threats to existing political structures and power relations	Designing solutions aligned with goals, power, and culture	Equalization of power and influence
Managerial oppression of labor and increased control	Management of organizational responses	Transformed interorganizational relationships

2.2   Politics

For decades, scholars have been interested in organizational politics (Drory & Romm, 1990) as a multidisciplinary research topic that encourages one to apply different perspectives (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962; Jasperson et al., 2002). Definitions of power and politics abound (Drory & Romm, 1990). Pfeffer (1981, p. 7), for example, refers to power as the capacity to influence (e.g., by controlling information) and to politics as the use of power (e.g., by disclosing information). Individuals and groups may engage in organizational politics to construct, reproduce, and change organizational and technological realities (Knights & Murray, 1994). Many scholars see political behavior as "an accepted rather than an objectionable dimension of the change agency role" (Buchanan & Badham, 1999, p. 609). However, the impact depends on actors' ability to mobilize and use various resources, including expertise, information, political access, and informal networks (Krackhardt, 1990; Pettigrew, 1975; Schein, 1985). Moreover, organizational politics is a catalyst for (Knights & Murray, 1994; Mintzberg, 1983) and a consequence of organizational change (Pettigrew, 1973; Pfeffer, 1981), and it concerns opposition to managerial intervention and the management and prevention of conflict (Hardy, 1996). Lastly, Drory and Romm (1990) suggest that organizational politics is dynamic in nature and that a combination of elements (namely, the presence of influence, use of informal means in the pursuit of outcomes, and conflict) characterize it (Drory & Romm, 1990).

Extant research has identified numerous triggers (see Table 1) of organizational politics in BPT initiatives. In fact, BPT breeds politics (Grint et al., 1995; Kelley, 1976; Knights & McCabe, 1999; Knights & McCabe, 2002) despite claims to the contrary (Knights & McCabe, 1998) and attempts at replacing conflicts with shared goals (Knights & McCabe, 2002). According to Keen (1981, p. 24), IT-based transformations "alter relationships, patterns of communication and perceived influence, authority, and control". When stakeholders challenge existing power relations as they try to further their self-interests, BPT becomes an increasingly political activity in which outcomes remain uncertain (Grover et al., 1988; Knights & McCabe, 1999; McCabe, Knights, & Wilkinson, 1998).

2.3   BPT Politics

Stakeholders resist management-led initiatives such as BPT for numerous reasons (van Offenbeek, Boonstra, & Seo, 2013; Rivard & Lapointe, 2012), including conflicting interests (Boudreau & Robey, 1996), politicized solutions based on self-interest (Buchanan, 1997), turf-guarding and identity threats (Goldenson & Herbsleb, 1995; Grover et al., 1988; Stelzer & Mellis, 1998), fear of vulnerability due to increased transparency and data accessibility (Hart & Saunders, 1997), and threats to existing political structures (Currie & Willcocks, 1996; Lapointe & Rivard, 2005, 2007) and expert power (Wilkinson & Witcher, 1993) (Table 1). Although IT-enabled change may involve participation and collaboration across organizations, some stakeholders resist BPT when it threatens existing power structures. "Simply put, power trumps technology" (Watson, Akselsen, Evjemo, & Aarsæther,1999, p. 63). From an employee perspective, BPT may indeed be seen as a "managerial attempt to oppress labor" (Boudreau & Robey, 1996, p. 52), and managers may hide the real purpose of a BPT initiative "by justifying actions on rational grounds and honoring the appropriate organizational rituals" (Franz & Robey, 1984, p. 1203). Hiding behind rhetoric about empowerment and efficiency, managers may implement systems that increase transparency and, subsequently, their control over business processes and employees. Consequently, employees may engage in politics to not only resist and guard their turfs but also constructively protect existing work practices against management-led BPT initiatives (Keen, 1981; Nielsen & Nørbjerg, 2001a, 2001b). From a bird's eye perspective, BPT initiatives are vehicles for ongoing struggles between competing groups and individuals that may reinforce or challenge existing power relations (Knights & McCabe, 1999; McCabe, 2000). Similarly, BPT initiatives may reflect competing institutional interests as "the institutional power to influence and regulate can be linked to ideologies governing supply-push and demand-pull approaches to innovation" (King et al., 1994, p. 162).

With regard to politicking (Table 1), multiple stakeholders enact organizational politics during BPT (Keen, 1981; McCabe et al., 1998). Therefore, managers need both technical and political skills to balance and negotiate competing stakeholder interests, garner support, build commitment, and ensure the legitimacy of chosen solutions (Buchanan, 1997; Dhillon, 2004; Schein, 1985). Management must deal explicitly with conflicts and engage proactively in politicking to increase the likelihood of successful outcomes. Otherwise, a power vacuum may emerge in which self-interests may undermine publicly announced goals and values (Levine & Rossmoore, 1994). As various stakeholder groups engage in politicking, managers must "recognize and deal with the politics of data and the likelihood, even legitimacy, of counterimplementation" (Keen, 1981, p. 24). Employees may support BPT when they perceive that it suits their needs (Nidumolu, Goodman, Vogel, & Danowitz, 1996, p. 208). Different stakeholder groups may use narratives to further their interests during BPT (Brown, 1998), and they may frame communication and information flows to manipulate perceptions of an initiative (Brown, 1995). In fact, socio-political actions centered on the mobilization of discursive and symbolic resources are inherent to BPT implementations (Bloomfield & Danieli, 1995, p. 23). Although one may minimize resistance by experimenting with and designing solutions in accordance with organizational goals, power distribution, and culture (Kautz et al., 2001; Lapointe & Rivard, 2005, 2007; Markus, 1983; Markus & Pfeffer, 1983), BPT is subject to different interpretations depending on key stakeholders' roles and interests. Stakeholders may influence the change effort differently depending on their interests in reducing uncertainty and supporting organizational goals (Sillince & Harindranath, 1998). Accordingly, Willcocks and Smith (1995) suggest three specific politicking tactics for managing BPT: 1) regularly carry out power audits and determine the feasibility of various transformation mechanisms, 2) monitor politics and identify changing opinions and shifting moods, and 3) mobilize power to ensure proper momentum and counter opposition (Willcocks & Smith, 1995).

By shaping the transformation process, organizational politics inevitably impacts BPT outcomes (Table 1). Focusing on the role of IT in BPT, research highlights how transformation initiatives impact organizational structures and power distributions (Burkhardt & Brass, 1990; Saunders, 1981), which, in turn, challenges

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implementation (Cavaye & Christiansen, 1996; Markus, 1981, 1983). The use of IS such as group support systems (GSS) is an illustrative example of how BPT impacts power distributions. On the one hand, GSS may transfer influence to managers whose own agendas may intentionally or unintentionally motivate their own actions (Griffith, Fuller, & Northcraft, 1998). On the other hand, such technologies may:

> *exert an equalizing force on power and influence by 1) increasing participation in the decision-making process, 2) improving access to information, 3) improving access to persons, 4) reducing the 'power distance' to key individuals, and 5) providing increased opportunities to influence the opinion of others.* (Williams & Wilson, 1997, p. 911)

IS support for business processes may also influence interorganizational relationships. For example, one can coercively use supply chain management systems to increase one's level of control over trading partners (Hart & Saunders, 1997), and one may consciously adopt such interorganizational systems for that purpose (Premkumar & Ramamurthy, 1995).

In summary, BPT is a management approach to organizational innovation (Grover & Markus, 2008). However, BPT challenges existing power relations, and organizational politics shapes both behaviors and outcomes. Thus, BPT is a highly uncertain socio-technical activity, and stakeholders need to understand and engage in organizational politics as they implement, adapt to, and use the technology. Although the literature offers a variety of managerial heuristics and lessons (Brown, 1998; Kautz et al., 2001; Willcocks & Smith, 1995) and demonstrates how to apply discourse theory to understand BPT politics (Knights & McCabe, 1998, 1999, 2002), no theory on BPT implementation politics exists. Buchanan and Badham (1999) lament "the limited value of checklists of 'power tactics' found in some of the politics literature" (Buchanan & Badham, 1999, p. 624).

3   Four Perspectives on Organizational Politics

Bradshaw-Camball and Murray (1991) propose three perspectives on organizational politics that represent different sociological paradigms: functional, interpretive, and radical (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Furthermore, they distinguish between two main schools of thought in the functional perspective: the pluralist and rationalist. The well-cited Jasperson et al. (2002) article applies the pluralist, rationalist, interpretive, and radical perspectives in its review of the IS literature on politics, which suggests that this multi-perspective framework offers a comprehensive view of power and politics in IS research. Of the 82 papers the authors review, they place five in the radical, 15 in the interpretive, 39 in the rationalist, and 42 in the pluralist perspective, which underscores the importance of distinguishing between the two functionalist schools. Hence, we use the four theoretical perspectives as alternative analytical lenses for understanding important aspects of organizational politics. Well-aligned with our pluralist research methodology, the Bradshaw-Camball and Murray (1991) framework is unique in offering competing perspectives that allow one to investigate the complexities and multi-faceted nature of organizational politics in depth. Table 2 summarizes the alternative perspectives, the role of key concepts in understanding politics, and references to IS studies that apply them. In this study, we focus on structure (e.g., who the political agents are, what their interests are, what means of influence they have), process (e.g., how this influence is exercised), and outcome (e.g., what the consequences are).

From a pluralist perspective, organizations comprise people who pursue personal interests with less regard for organizational goals (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Conflicts are an intrinsic and inescapable part of organizational life. However, they can play a constructive role by highlighting different opinions, identifying potential problems, and garnering acceptance of joint undertakings. Power is a source of and a means to resolve conflicts among individuals and groups through negotiation and coalition formation. The pluralist perspective draws attention to the physical, concrete manifestations of politics by asking: "Who are the key players in the game (stakeholders), how much power do they have, and what basis of power do they utilize?". (Bradshaw-Camball & Murray, 1991, p. 381). Stakeholders recognize and use sources of power—such as relationships, information, and control of critical resources—in political game playing. In terms of outcomes of political game playing, stakeholders use their power and resources, and often ignore broader organizational ramifications. An advantage of the pluralist perspective is that it draws "attention to the surface, revealing more conscious conflicts and bases of power" (Martin, 1992, cited in Lewis & Kelemen, 2002, p. 266). It deals with "evolutionary as opposed to catastrophic change" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 359). Hart and Saunders (1997) in their investigation of the role that power and trust play in EDI adoption and use provide an example of pluralist politics. They look at how companies use coercive power to force trading partners to adopt EDI.

Table 2. Perspectives on Organizational Politics

Perspective	Concept	Goals	Conflicts	Application emphasis	References
Pluralist	Political game playing (e.g., bargaining and coalition formation) in which stakeholders mobilize power (e.g., control of critical resources) to further their interests and resolve conflicts.	Stake-holders pursue their own different goals.	Conflicts often manifested at the surface level but may be resolved through negotiation.	Reveals surface-level conflicts and bases of power.	Bamber & Lansbury (1988), Burkhardt & Brass (1990), Hart & Saunders (1997), Howell & Higgins (1990)
Rationalist	Legitimate and formal authorities handle disagreements through routine decision making and rational appraisal of arguments vis-à-vis organizational goals and objectives.	Organization-level goals dominate.	No apparent conflicts.	Emphasizes formal authority and standard operating procedures.	Brown & Magill (1998), Nault (1998), Dean, Yoon, & Susman, (1992), Sambamurthy & Zmud (1999)
Interpretive	Influence exerted by constructing meaning and controlling the thought patterns of others through social use of language, symbols, myths, and stories.	Creation of perception of common goal.	Latent conflicts may exist at a deeper structural level, but are not manifested because of perceived common goals.	Focuses on processes that shape shared goals.	Bloomfield & Danieli (1995), Brown (1998), Nidumolu et al. (1996)
Radical	Power embedded in deep societal structures represents intrinsic contradictions between opposing forces which eventually lead to radical change.	Conflict of goals at societal level manifests in organization.	Conflicts represent deep structures within society and upheaval ensues.	Emphasizes deeper social structure.	Boudreau & Robey (1996), King et al. (1994), Knights & McCabe (1999)

From a rationalist perspective, organizations are "instruments of rational and purposeful activity" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 202). Organizations seek to control conflicts—if not entirely eliminate them—because they are seen as disruptive to the harmonious nature of organizational interests. Grounded in authority and control, power is a neutral resource that managers employ to achieve common interests and shared goals. Politics plays out through data-driven arguments to support value judgments and decision making. Hence, the rationalist perspective adopts a surface-level view of structure by attributing power to hierarchical positions, organizational roles, and expertise. At an organizational level, conflicts are dealt with through standard operating procedures and the chain of command. With regard to outcomes, organizations measure goal achievement through information and control systems. Thus, the rationalist perspective's strength is that it emphasizes formal authority in organizational politics. Nault (1998), who investigates the impact of information technology on organization designs, provides an example of rationalist politics. IT influences formal decision making by providing decision makers with information or by redesigning monitoring and incentive structures.

From an interpretive perspective, organizations do not exist in a literal and concrete sense. Instead, they emerge as individuals create and recreate a shared social reality based on experiences and subjective interpretations (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Structures and other organizational characteristics are expressions of ongoing social construction, and politics focuses on communication, persuasion, and influencing the perceptions of others; "the parties involved exert influence by constructing the meaning of what others experience" (Bradshaw-Camball & Murray, 1991, p. 382). Politics shapes interpretations of common goals through language and symbols rooted in organizational culture. Power is the ability to construct and maintain a shared social reality by ascribing meaning to the experiences of others. Outcomes focus on the status quo and its retention through symbolic processes. Little apparent conflict exists since all are presumed to be working toward a shared goal. Thus, the interpretive perspective's strength is its focus on the communicative processes that shape the shared goal. It delves deeper than the pluralist and rationalistic perspectives since it focuses on "more subconscious processes of structuring reality that maintain illusions of power" (Martin, 1992, cited in Lewis & Kelemen, 2002, p. 266). An example of interpretive politics is Brown's (1998) study of IT implementation, which investigates how groups deploy narratives in attempts to preserve and further their perceived interests.

From a radical perspective, organizations are structural elements of society and mirror their wider social settings (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Structurally, organizations are concrete and relatively persistent. Changing the status quo is disruptive and only possible when economic and political crises occur, conflicts peak, and radically new social forms emerge. Politics focuses on social structure, resource control, radically different goals, and oppression versus emancipation in the struggle for power. The radical perspective draws attention to the deeper structure of politics by emphasizing societal constraints on individual and organizational actions as the result of decisions that those in power make (Bradshaw-Camball & Murray, 1991). It views the "superstructure" of capitalist society as "the medium through which the consciousness of human beings is controlled and molded to fit the requirements of the social formation as a whole" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 297). The radical perspective emphasizes oppression by means of ideology as expressed, for example, through market forces, technologies, government regulations, or ideas proposed by society's dominant class. In a class-based society, conflicts escalate into revolts if the dominant class fails to hold the less powerful in check through oppression. Outcomes focus on how macro-level politics leads to tensions that shape practices at the organizational level. Thus, the radical perspective's strength is that it emphasizes the impact of deeper social structures on organizational politics. In their study of power, politics, and resistance to TQM, Knights and McCabe (1999) show that TQM both influences and is conditioned by power relations and that it is a vehicle for the struggle between opposing individuals and social groups.

4   Research Methodology

Our research grew out of a wider action research project conducted at Terma over a two-year period. The first author organized the project as collaborative practice research (Mathiassen, 2002), a particular form of action research that emphasizes close collaboration between practitioners and researchers to improve organizational practices. Becoming aware of the many different interests in the BPT implementation during our research engagement, we decided to investigate the role of politics as a means of understanding surprising BPT outcomes such as when two business units achieved the BPT goals despite misalignment of strategies and interest between themselves and the organizational change project[2].

In line with collaborative practice research, we organized the research as a case study for several reasons. First, case studies suit investigating "a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (Yin, 2003, p. 13), and we focused on understanding how organizational politics impacted BPT implementation at Terma. Second, multiple data sources and theory-driven analysis are key characteristics of case study research (Yin, 2003), and we had access to rich data from multiple sources at multiple levels. Third, the case study method is advantageous in situations where investigators ask "how" or "why" questions about events over which they have little or no control (Yin, 2003). Specifically, we organized our research as an exploratory, embedded multiple case study of BPT politics in four business units in the same company. Fourth, according to Walsham (1995) case studies can also be used to build new theory or extend existing theory (Walsham, 1995).

Inspired by Jasperson et al. (2002) who used metatriangulation (Lewis, 1998; Lewis, 2000; Lewis & Grimes, 1999; Saunders, Carte, Jasperson, & Butler, 2003) to guide their review of the IS literature on politics and to synthesize across multiple theories, we applied a pluralist methodology (Mingers, 2001) to analyze the data and build theory. Hence, following Mingers, we applied multiple theoretical perspectives to understand and theorize BPT implementation politics and, thus, broke away from our initial or "home" paradigm of critical realism (Mingers, Mutch, & Willcocks, 2013; Mingers, 2004). Mingers (2001, p. 243) argues that "the real world is ontologically stratified and differentiated, consisting of a plurality of structures that generate the events that occur (and do not occur)". Consequently, one needs to apply multiple perspectives that focus on different aspects of the situation. This approach afforded a better understanding of BPT outcomes by assisting us "in recognizing, cultivating, and accommodating diverse paradigmatic insights" (Jasperson et al., 2002, p. 402). In summary, with our pluralist approach, we could triangulate data across both theoretical perspectives and methods (Finfgeld-Connett, 2010).

Because we had unrestricted access to quantitative and qualitative data from the corporate level and all four business units, we could analyze each case from multiple perspectives. Our data sources included audio recordings of 16 management meetings (two to three hours each) over an 18-month period during the BPT implementation and 21 post-implementation interviews with all key stakeholders at different organizational levels. The interviewees included the CEO, the corporate BPT manager, all project

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[2] We thank a reviewer for this observation.

managers charged with implementing new processes, the implementation manager from each business unit, and the business unit senior VPs. The semi-structured interviews lasted one to two hours each and provided comparable data across the four units to support theory building. We transcribed all audio recordings of meetings and interviews, which resulted in more than 500 pages of transcript. We also had access to more than 2,500 documents, including project status reports, minutes of meetings, BPT plans (for each business unit and for the overall project), and process maturity assessments (conducted under the auspices of the corporate BPT manager).

To develop distinct accounts of BPT politics within each business unit at Terma, we applied multiple theoretical perspectives to the data set based on Bradshaw-Camball and Murray's (1991) framework. We coded and analyzed the data following a five-step process. First, we developed a comprehensive case study protocol, including a data-analysis guide (Table 3) and a coding scheme (Table 4). The data analysis guide contained key questions and concepts that helped us apply the four political perspectives to understand how politics played out in each unit at Terma. We derived the questions from Bradshaw-Camball and Murray's (1991) framework, and they reflected how the perspectives apply to BPT initiatives. The coding scheme included codes that identified the transformation agent or process user making a political statement (interviewee), what unit the statement was about (organizational unit), and the political nature (perspective) of the statement. By using this coding scheme, we were able to select and present all organizational actors' political statements that concerned either one of the four business units or corporate services. Further, the coding scheme helped us categorize political statements according to type and sort empirical data into manageable chunks (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Second, we used the coding scheme to conduct multi-perspective coding of the data, which yielded nearly 600 expressions of organizational politics that ranged from a single sentence to half a page of transcript. We coded the data by 1) identifying political statements using the data-analysis guide, 2) coding statements based on the coding scheme, and 3) checking and recoding statements based on political perspective. We identified all expressions of politics and, subsequently, coded each expression in accordance with the coding scheme. We also attached comments to each expression to justify the coding and to provide preliminary interpretations of the political content and, thereby, increase intra-coder reliability (Miles & Huberman, 1994). We then sorted all expressions of politics according to political perspective, which we evaluated for internal consistency and homogeneity and recoded as needed. Specifically, we recoded one audio recording and compared it to the initial coding. Additionally, two authors independently coded the data sets for one business unit and discussed and resolved differences. This process brought definitional clarity to the coding scheme. This process of recoding and "check coding" parts of the data strengthened both intracoder (close to 90%) and intercoder (estimated at 80%) reliability (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Table 3. Data Analysis Guide

Perspective	Questions	Concepts
Pluralist	How are conflicting interests between involved stakeholders expressed and negotiated during the initiative? How do differences in powerbase between stakeholders influence the process and its outcomes?	Stakeholders Interests Powerbases Conflicts Negotiation
Rationalist	How are goals expressed and data collected and used as a basis for evaluating options during the initiative? How are choices between alternative processes and outcomes made based on legitimate and formal authority structures?	Goals Data Authority Value judgments Decision making
Interpretive	How do actors make sense of the initiative based on past experience and symbolic expressions? How do actors use symbols to socially construct the process and influence its outcomes?	Experiences Symbols Sensemaking Social constructions Organizational culture
Radical	How are actors influenced during the initiative by the ideologies and constraints of the firm's environment? How does the resulting struggle between opposing forces influence the process and its outcomes?	Ideology Constraints Struggle Oppression Emancipation

Third, we described the BPT implementation process and outcome in every business unit from each of the four political perspectives, which yielded sixteen distinct accounts. To facilitate these analyses, we selected all expressions related to a specific unit and a particular political perspective and organized them into sixteen tables (four perspectives on four units). Each table (exemplified in Table A1 in the Appendix) contained quotations from BPT participants at the corporate, unit, and project level. These tables helped us systematically compare statements using Yin's (2003) pattern-matching strategy and describe the BPT process and outcome for each business unit and political perspective in juxtaposition with one another.

Table 4. Coding Scheme

Organizational Unit	Interviewee	Perspective
Corporate	Corporate management Corporate BPT management Corporate BPT agent	Interpretive Pluralist Radical Rationalist
AES[3]	AES management AES BPT management AES implementation management	
ASY	ASY management ASY BPT management ASY BPT agent ASY implementation management	
ISY	ISY management ISY BPT management ISY BPT agent ISY implementation management	
RSY[3]	RSY management RSY BPT management RSY implementation management	

Fourth, we synthesized the four distinct analyses for each unit into an overall storyline with an explanation of what happened and why. Table 5 shows the qualitative impacts of the political perspectives on the overall storylines. We describe these impacts in greater detail in Section 5. In doing so, we relate each story to a metaphor that encapsulates the observed organizational politics and highlights its key characteristics (Kendall & Kendall, 1993; Morgan, 1980, 1996). As stated by Kendall and Kendall (1993, p. 149): "Metaphors are like the magical incantations of old. By using words that people understand and believe in to make linkages with the new and unfamiliar, the speaker provides the ability to envision the world in a new way". The metaphors are descriptive and heuristic devices that, at an aggregate level, express the sequence of political moves and countermoves that played out in the business units. As such, the metaphors represent an understanding of organizational politics that goes beyond the underlying perspectives and, thereby, facilitates theorizing of BPT implementation politics. These metaphors encapsulate the synthesized accounts of BPT politics at Terma. Different metaphors might better describe other political patterns that unfold under different circumstances in other companies.

Table 5. Impact of Political Perspectives on Synthesized Stories

	Political metaphor	Pluralist politics	Rationalist politics	Interpretive politics	Radical politics
AES	Applying the hammer	Minimal	Major	Dominant	Minimal
ASY	Struggling to engage	Dominant	Some	Some	Minimal
ISY	Walking the talk	Minimal	Dominant	Some	Some
RSY	Keeping up appearances	Major	Minimal	Dominant	Minimal

Fifth, we theorized how actors engage in political practices during BPT implementation through a creative, iterative process of extrapolating from empirical data, comparing results with extant theory, and engaging in "disciplined imagination" (Weick, 1989). This multi-step process took into account the four synthesized stories, the related patterns of BPT politics, and the four underlying political perspectives (Bradshaw-

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[3] No BPT agent was appointed for this business unit.

Camball & Murray, 1991). As a first step, we listed similarities and differences among the four cases in order to break simplistic frames (Eisenhardt, 1989), deepen our understanding, and create possible explanations (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As a second step, we considered extant theory on organizational politics and BPT to generalize insights from each case and to integrate these into a comprehensive view of BPT implementation politics. During this process of creative thinking and discussion, we relied on Bacharach's (1989) definition of theory and Eisenhardt's (1989) guidelines (to deepen our understanding and arrive at possible explanations (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Furthermore, we followed Rivard (2014), Weber (2012), and Gregor (2006) in defining the type of theory we offer, specifying the boundary of our theory, providing definitions of concepts, and offering propositions in specifying the relationship between concepts. As a third step, we applied the practice of alternating "between abstractions and specific instances of the explanation of the phenomenon under study" (Rivard, 2014, p. viii) as a theory-building heuristic. We engaged in theory building with two goals in mind: 1) to contribute theory as an analytical framework for understanding BPT politics (i.e., analysis and description) and 2) to build theory as a practical tool for managing BPT politics (i.e., prescription). As a result, we developed a theoretical model of BPT implementation politics and derived nine propositions from it that describe how process users react politically to BPT implementations, how transformation agents engage with process users, and the interplay between the two.

5   Findings: BPT at Terma

In this section, we provide an overview of the corporate-led BPT project, which includes its goals, how Terma organized it, and key characteristics of the BPT implementation process in each of the four business units. Subsequently, we provide a detailed account of how organizational politics impacted behaviors and outcomes in each unit. In addition, we provide examples of the dynamic and emergent nature of organizational politics (Drory & Romm, 1990) and change during the BPT implementation process. The Appendix shows empirical evidence of the link between structure, processes, and outcomes.

5.1   Overview of BPT at Terma

Founded in 1944 as a small manufacturer of thermometers and manometers, Terma has grown to employ more than 1,000 people in the United States, Singapore, The Netherlands, Germany, and Denmark, where the company headquarters are located. Today, Terma offers a wide range of mission-critical, off-the-shelf systems and products for civilian and military use. Even though Terma's business units have considerable latitude in selecting, planning, and executing systems development projects, the company expects all employees to comply with the Terma Management System (TMS), a comprehensive ISO-9001-certified quality system that contains more than 1,000 development and management processes. Since the company-wide ISO 9001 certification in 2003, Terma has engaged in several smaller process initiatives. These initiatives were either limited to a single business unit or focused on large joint-venture projects with business partners. However, due to a lack of management commitment, insufficient resources, ill-defined goals, and over-reliance on grassroots tactics, the sustained impact of these initiatives on Terma's development and management practices was quite limited. When the BPT project began in 2005, some—if not all—of these conditions had changed. The project was conceived by a corporate senior VP and CTO who possessed the clout and will to push for ambitious, corporate-wide BPT. Given his reputation of being a "tough dog", the senior VP had the leverage needed to initiate the BPT project with the CEO's blessings.

The BPT project ran for two years and was based on CMMI. CMMI is a model for evaluating and improving software- and systems-development processes (Chrissis, Konrad, & Shrum. 2003; CMMI Product Team, 2010). Although used globally today, the U.S. Department of Defense originally initiated the development of CMMI as a methodology for assessing the process maturity of defense contractors in developing information systems (see, e.g., https://www.sei.cmu.edu/about/statisticshistory.cfm). It is an incremental approach to BPT that one can use to guide improvement efforts at both project and organizational levels (CMMI Product Team, 2010). The model 1) distinguishes between five levels of process capability, 2) describes a considerable repertoire of processes in different areas (e.g., configuration management, measurement and analysis, process and product quality assurance, project monitoring and control, project planning, requirements management, and supplier agreement management at CMMI level 2), and 3) offers practical guidance for evaluating and improving an organization's current processes. Although organizations across different industries adopt CMMI, it has

historically been associated with the defense industry, where the U.S. Department of Defense has actively promoted the model as the approach to improve and benchmark supplier capabilities.

Terma's project is a textbook example of a BPT initiative in the sense that the processes being transformed through organizational innovation were information intensive and required IS support. TMS, for example, contains technological tools for project management. In addition, Terma used various information systems to support the processes in and across business units and projects. The BPT project at Terma had two primary goals: to bring processes into compliance with CMMI and to reach level 2 where basic project management processes are stable and repeatable. These two BPT project goals were corporate-level goals. The degree of a priori alignment (Kelley, 1976; Pettigrew, 1973) of perceived process needs between stakeholders differed significantly across the four units (Table 6). The Aerostructures (AES) unit's interests diverged from those of the BPT project in three key ways: 1) AES operated in segments of the aerospace industry where CMMI was not widely used for improvement and benchmarking, 2) most projects were blueprints with little focus on development, and 3) the unit's management tradition was not strong on stability and control. The Radar Systems (RSY) unit's interests also diverged from those of the BPT project: the civilian customer base had no interest in CMMI, most projects focused on servicing radar systems with little emphasis on development, and the unit's management tradition put strong emphasis on ingenuity and creativity rather than CMMI's focus on repeatability. In contrast, both the Airborne Systems (ASY) and Integrated Systems (ISY) units had vested interests in the BPT project because both were suppliers in the military industry that recognized CMMI as the model of choice for BPT and benchmarking purposes. In both ASY and ISY, most projects were IS development projects with a significant focus on software engineering. Also, management in these two units traditionally emphasized stability and control.

From a bird's eye view, a corporate BPT manager and a group of process experts who assisted him led the BPT project and orchestrated it through an extensive network of people at the corporate, business unit, and project levels. Initially, small teams focused on making existing TMS processes compliant with CMMI, which were subsequently deployed and revised in pilots before implementation. Based on the generic processes resulting from these corporate-level activities, each unit planned its own BPT implementation to ensure ownership of new processes. The projects in each unit focused on adapting the generic processes and putting them into practice. The corporate BPT manager continuously monitored each implementation project's compliance with CMMI level 2 through assessments. Table 6 highlights differences and similarities across units in terms of business domain, BPT plans, extent of software development, alignment of process needs (goal alignment), and BPT outcomes. ASY and ISY decided to follow the generic plan set forth by the corporate BPT manager. AES management translated the generic processes into a cookbook (containing instructions, checklists, and templates) to provide implementation guidance for project managers. Similarly, RSY management established a lightweight version of the generic processes to help tailor them to needs in the unit.

Table 6. Four Cases of BPT at Terma

	AES	ASY	ISY	RSY
Business domain	Aerostructures for commercial and military customers	Aerospace technology for military customers	Integrated systems for military customers	Radar systems for civilian customers
BPT plan	Process tailoring through guidelines, checklists, and templates	Generic implementation plan	Generic implementation plan	Management-driven tailoring to suit RSY needs
Software development	Limited	Major	Major	Limited
Goal alignment	A priori low	A priori high	A priori high	A priori low
BPT outcomes	Process maturity increased; not CMMI level 2 compliant; met BPT goals	Process maturity decreased; not CMMI level 2 compliant; did not meet BPT goals	Process maturity increased; CMMI level 2 compliant; met BPT goals	Process maturity decreased; CMMI level 2 compliant; did not meet BPT goals

The BPT project led to varying degrees of transformation goal compliance across the four units as reflected in the assessments of their process maturity based on standard appraisal guidelines (CMMI Product Team, 2010; Rose, Aaen, & Nielsen, 2008). Corporate BPT management regularly performed assessments in the form of electronic surveys, which, in essence, made them technology-based implementation drivers. If we compare assessments at the beginning and the end of the project, the process maturity in AES increased and the unit stopped just short of being compliant with CMMI level 2; in ASY, the process maturity decreased and the unit did not reach compliance with CMMI level 2; ISY implemented improvements consistently throughout the project and increased its process maturity to become compliant with CMMI level 2; and RSY was compliant with CMMI level 2 at the beginning of the BPT project, but its efforts resulted in a decreased process maturity at the end of the project.

5.2   Applying the Hammer (AES)

AES designs and manufactures aerostructures such as roof sections, wing parts, pylons, pods, and engine components for both commercial and military aircraft and delivers them to systems integrators, known as airframers. At the time of BPT, AES was undergoing organizational restructuring and problems were mounting: the economy was in poor health and people were being laid off. Although AES management traditionally saw generic corporate processes and CMMI as inapplicable to AES, AES management perceived that the project was a means to solve existing problems by reducing risks and increasing project predictability. Hence, social construction played a dominant role (Table 5) in AES in forming a shared vision of the BPT project as both a welcome solution to existing problems and a symbol of the unit's future directions. Having encouraged the formation of a shared vision, the AES senior VP pursued BPT with an emphasis on rationalist politics to improve the unit's process maturity by relying on a cookbook approach and by adapting Terma's generic processes to the local context. Following the adage "when you have a hammer, the world looks like a nail", BPT was an opportunistic and welcome solution to existing problems. Even though their process needs did not perfectly align with the BPT changes, AES managers realized value in successfully maneuvering the BPT implementation to their benefit. They were in a proverbial sense "applying the hammer" to drive changes within the business unit, which left a strong impact on AES projects. Because the unit acknowledged that its goals were overlapping with those of the BPT project, and due to the absence of manifest conflicts, it did not emphasize pluralist or radical politics.

The AES senior VP became a symbol of decisive action. He attempted to discursively construct the BPT project as an answer to current challenges and poor project practices in the past. The project was an expression of interpretive politics based on skillful use of language and symbols. Indeed, his management style became known as "the John way". According to the AES implementation manager, "the AES senior VP is a very systematic person, very methodical". AES participants accepted and understood the reasons behind his decisions and followed his lead. During BPT, the AES senior VP also used symbols to facilitate the process and influence outcomes. For example, he created an image of success by likening AES to ISY—the unit that was, in his eyes, the unofficial process champions at Terma—by frequently comparing maturity assessment results and showing the two units to be on par. Both the AES implementation manager and the project managers bought into the AES senior VP's vision and approach and praised the cookbook's usefulness despite implementation problems. They saw value in implementing BPT because it promoted AES interests. In the words of the AES implementation manager, "the kind of project management I've seen out here has been diddly-squat…, so, right away, I accepted that this is the tool".

Having secured commitment to the BPT project, the implementation proceeded in a rational manner. Based on legitimate and formal authority, AES made decisions between alternative implementation choices as the unit developed the process cookbook to facilitate BPT. AES managers based these decisions on value judgments of the applicability of new processes and their knowledge of project managers' current strengths and weaknesses. In the corporate BPT manager's words, "AES is taking a different approach. Generally speaking, they run things pretty tough and rigidly. They want to establish checklists and that sort of thing in realization that it is the only way to push things through.". The cookbook development and implementation were management driven and executed faithfully by the involved project managers—even when delays occurred because of problems with adapting processes to the local culture. AES initially applied and continuously adapted the cookbook approach throughout the BPT implementation as a response and pro-active means of problem solving to wavering goal compliance. The AES senior VP and AES implementation manager conceived and executed this response. According to AES project manager #2, "it's like our management says that we have to implement the BPT project, and it has to be part of every program". Consequently, the BPT project strongly impacted both participating and future AES projects. The AES senior VP stated:

> *We see a positive trend in the projects that have been subjected to [the new processes] in terms of requirements management, customer relations, managing and monitoring projects. They have also led to very positive discussions about baselines when starting new projects.*

5.3 Struggling to Engage (ASY)

ASY is a global provider of advanced aerospace technology for fighter aircraft, transport aircraft, and helicopters with a focus on integrating defensive aids and systems to sustain pilots' comprehensive battlefield overview. During BPT, ASY encountered new business opportunities that required attention. Resources were already being stretched to the point where employees were complaining about stress and a poor working environment. To address this situation, the ASY senior VP had to prioritize and negotiate conflicting interests. Although the ASY senior VP voiced support for CMMI's ideology (in the sense of a set of ideas about management accepted as best practice in the industry) and underlying management philosophy of increasing efficiency, predictability, and repeatability by improving process quality, he questioned the necessity of a CMMI appraisal. Instead, he focused on maintaining customers' perception of ASY as a credible and trustworthy market player as evidenced by their long-standing customer relationships. The real struggle played out at the project level, where project managers saw CMMI as adding administrative burdens and detracting attention and resources away from more valued practices. The combination of new business opportunities, the ASY senior VP's ambivalence toward the BPT project, and the project managers' struggle against the CMMI ideology resulted in futile efforts to resolve conflicts and strike a responsive chord with multiple stakeholders. In this way, pluralist politics dominated BPT in ASY (Table 5), although the underlying conflict of interests was neither escalated nor resolved. As a result, ASY was unsuccessfully "struggling to engage" during the entire project. During this struggle, the unit displayed a few signs of rationalist and interpretive politics, whereas it placed minimal emphasis on radical politics.

Overall, ASY showed little commitment to the BPT project and consequently achieved only modest positive results from it. There was a conflict of interest between the BPT project's goals and process focus with ASY's strategic interests and customer focus. Conflicting interests were expressed on several occasions and resulted in lack of management commitment to and employee participation in the project. Despite frustrations, the ASY implementation manager accepted this lack of support and involvement, and ASY project managers were content to conduct business as usual. The ASY implementation manager conceded:

> *If you have a customer who is paying for something, it is a different matter. It is easier to postpone [an internal BPT project] even though it is equally important in the long run. It is easier to ask for absolution. There is no immediate cost of postponing these processes.*

In the end, it was differences in powerbases among the stakeholders that influenced the BPT's results. The corporate BPT manager and his local allies—one ASY project manager and the ASY implementation manager—could not change the degree of ASY's BPT engagement and the ASY senior VP's priorities. As such, the corporate BPT manager had no choice but to accept the ASY senior's VP's decision to scale down his unit's BPT implementation. In the face of competing forces, the corporate BPT manager and his local allies could not build a coalition based on converging BPT goals and provide the necessary resources during the BPT implementation as a response to competing interests and lack of goal compliance. Later, the ASY senior VP justified his prioritizing customer projects as follows:

> *When I look back, I think it was the right thing to do because we would have received a much more negative response from the organization if we had tried to implement broadly at a time when people were extremely busy.*

Although the ASY senior VP bought into CMMI's ideology and supported its underlying management philosophy, he did not give in to the dominating process discourse in the defense industry and continued to question the business value of CMMI assessments. Both he and the ASY implementation manager regarded CMMI as nice but unnecessary. The ASY senior VP argued:

> *CMMI is non-essential. We'd like to have it, but if you ask if I could argue that we've lost an order because of it, I cannot…. It can't be used for much else than to indicate that you're a player within the industry.*

At the project level, a struggle was evident as most project managers openly criticized CMMI and the new processes. ASY project manager #1 said, "you can disregard everything—disregard the whole TMS and not do anything about the things you're supposed to be doing. People ignore everything. They simply don't give a damn.". However, the conflict between corporate management's desire for increased control and local

project managers' dislike for increased administrative burdens never manifested itself and was therefore never negotiated. Instead, the BPT project in ASY displayed some evidence of a combination of rationalist politics (by developing plans, performing assessments, and participating in meetings) and interpretive politics (as evidenced by key actors expressing good intentions and not escalating conflicts). Because the corporate BPT manager also had reservations about the applicability of company-wide processes, the decision to give low priority to BPT was met with little opposition outside ASY despite the CEO's view of CMMI as a necessary tool for increasing efficiency and documenting organizational maturity.

5.4   Walking the Talk (ISY)

ISY provides integrated solutions for managing air, ground, and naval operations through large-scale projects for military customers. Coinciding with the BPT project, ISY faced market demands for proof-of-process maturity. CMMI was, therefore, highly valued as both a means and an end. ISY accepted the defense industry's maturity discourse and embraced the CMMI ideology wholeheartedly without any signs of struggle. ISY demonstrated support both in words and in action. Based on a priori goal alignment, ISY's degree of participation in BPT was high and its timetable was ambitious. Having analyzed gaps between existing practices and CMMI's requirements and using all available information about implementation progress, ISY process champions effectively established new, mandatory project practices. Confronted with questions about how to implement processes into projects, the implementation champions (the ISY implementation manager and the ISY training manager) intervened and supported each project manager individually. By adopting the CMMI ideology and rationally executing BPT, ISY was "walking the talk". The unit followed Terma's chain of command in implementing new processes, which left a strong impact on ISY projects. Hence, BPT in ISY was dominated by rationalist politics supplemented by some radical (the influence of the maturity discourse) and interpretive politics (creating a belief in CMMI as basis for the unit's operation) (Table 5). The unit only minimally emphasized pluralist politics since it had little need to resolve conflicts of interest.

Indeed, ISY's BPT implementation was greatly influenced by the CMMI ideology and market constraints in the defense industry. In particular, the CEO, ISY senior VP, and corporate BPT manager pointed to contract negotiations in which ISY's lack of a CMMI appraisal had been a problem. According to the CEO, "we simply cannot deliver to certain customer segments if we're not at CMMI level 3. So we must have it. This is the case for ISY in particular.". The ISY senior VP added:

> It is crucial for us to be at CMMI level 2 and be able to say that we are in control of what we develop…. It is not enough to have a certificate, because I can only live off that for a short while. It's burning the furniture to heat the house—it doesn't work in the long run. It's about the economic benefit.

Accordingly, ISY management adopted the CMMI ideology as a means to increase process predictability and efficiency. In the words of the ISY implementation manager, "it's important for us to be efficient, and it's important for us to be able to manage a business that's predictable". Moreover, ISY's project managers did not seriously challenge the CMMI ideology. Only scattered attempts at struggle surfaced during implementation, and the ISY implementation and training managers immediately addressed the issues that emerged through intervention and effective communication. Thus, during the BPT implementation, the ISY implementation and training managers were constantly scanning their environment and reinforcing the shared BPT goal as a response to criticism and implementation difficulties.

Because ISY was committed to the BPT's goals and the new processes, the project was planned and monitored similar to other projects within the business unit, and corrective actions were taken based on available maturity assessment data. For example, after evaluating implementation progress and problems—including lack of training and information about new processes—the ISY implementation and training managers modified BPT project plans. As ISY project manager #4 said, "it was the ISY training manager and the ISY implementation manager who had already planned such an implementation sequence to keep us on track". They spotted a need for guidance, identified gaps between existing practices and new processes, and, to ensure CMMI compliance, leveraged their formal authority to establish solutions across all projects.

5.5   Keeping up Appearances (RSY)

RSY provides radar systems for surveillance applications, including antennas and transceivers, to a mostly civilian market. In RSY, competing social constructions of the BPT project existed side by side: the

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RSY senior VP emphasized that the new processes might change project practices for the better, while the RSY implementation manager criticized the standardization ideal and the BPT project organization. These tensions resulted in discrepancies between, on the one hand, RSY's self-representation as supporters of the BPT project and, on the other hand, maturity assessments that documented a weak implementation impact on RSY projects. Although the CEO and the corporate BPT manager questioned RSY's engagement, RSY's BPT efforts were dominated by interpretive politics (Table 5) as they continued to "keep up appearances" by signaling commitment without making a whole-hearted attempt to reach BPT goals. As an expression of pluralist politics, the situation in RSY was characterized by conflicting goals and interests. However, rather than seeking confrontation and negotiation with the corporate-wide BPT project, RSY maintained a socially constructed image of being fully committed but only implemented minimal BPT processes in a couple of projects. The mixed messages and passive resistance (Marakas & Hornik, 1996) rendered it impossible to develop a shared understanding between RSY and the corporate level. This lack of a shared understanding at a deeper level below the appearance of commitment led to a failure to negotiate, prioritize, and resolve conflicts. Accordingly, the unit only minimally emphasized rationalist and radical politics.

The RSY senior VP made no secret of the fact that the BPT project had little value and conflicted with RSY interests. The project's focus on repeatable project management processes was ill-aligned with RSY's emphasis on customer relationships, and its focus on process standardization was at odds with the VP's preference for tailoring processes to each unit's needs. In his own words:

> All the time, the [business units] have to sort out the kind of structure that results from standardized documents and processes and decide whether they can be used as is or whether they have to be adjusted. Do it the other way around. Let the units optimize each process area themselves.

Moreover, the BPT project's focus on process compliance contrasted starkly with RSY's history of rewarding project managers for meeting deadlines and satisfying customer demands. The RSY implementation manager said:

> On an everyday basis, people accomplish certain things that bring home the bacon and earn them the thumbs up from the people they work for. This is a high priority for everyone…. It's not a priority for a project manager to implement these new processes if he also has a project to complete.

The tensions manifested at the project level where project managers were asked to implement only processes that they considered useful and valuable. The RSY implementation manager shielded RSY projects from the administrative burden associated with new processes, but project managers were left to fend for themselves and received limited guidance and information. The RSY implementation manager elaborated: "Part of our tailoring has ensured that the required activities are reasonable given the size of each project. I have, therefore, cut down on project reporting to fit the size of the projects.". The corporate BPT manager attempted to retain control of BPT implementation in RSY by monitoring progress, communicating non-compliance, and offering support. However, differences in powerbases between him and RSY stakeholders rendered the strategy ineffective. According to the *corporate BPT manager:*

> RSY claims they will reach the goal in time. However, I have heard nothing else from them. Yesterday, I saw something the RSY implementation manager has written about their interpretation [of processes]. So, apparently something is happening. But the participating projects have not come very far. Some have, others have not. It is really difficult to ascertain.

The competing social constructions of the BPT project made monitoring the unit's progress difficult. On the one hand, the RSY senior VP emphasized the BPT project's positive impact on existing practices—a social construction that RSY project manager #1 contributed to by describing his implementation experiences as positive. On the other hand, the RSY implementation manager criticized not only the emphasis on standardization but also the implementation effort's organization. In particular, he disputed the reliability and value of maturity assessments and used various symbols (such as "rolling snowball") to portray the BPT project as a juggernaut and ill aligned with RSY's organizational culture. In his own words:

> With such a process apparatus, you start out by making a snowball and get it rolling, and then you expect it to yield a positive result somewhere down the line. The problem is that you'll never be able to measure it because it will be three years before it is implemented.

Based on past experiences, the RSY project managers responded to these expressions of pluralist politics by trying to reconcile the apparent ambiguity toward the BPT project. They implemented processes only hesitantly. RSY project manager #1 described the ambiguity as follows: "things have changed—from being something that management said we had to do, to being something management says we're not going to do. Such mixed signals are very confusing.". For his part, the corporate BPT manager accepted the status quo but expected that maturity assessments would eventually challenge RSY's alleged process maturity. During the BPT implementation, the corporate BPT manager did not escalate the conflict and exercise his power and corporate mandate as a response to deal with the lack of goal compliance despite the espoused support for the overarching BPT goal. Instead, he relied on the assessments to identify constraints and lack of implementation progress.

In all four cases, corporate and business unit managers leveraged their powerbases based on their hierarchical position and control of resources. Though the corporate managers had higher positions in the organizational hierarchy and used their power based on authority and control of corporate resources, the business unit managers had additional leverage from catering to customer interests. The implementation managers relied on power vested in their roles and based on their expertise. The project managers had a lower position than others in the organizational hierarchy and relatively fewer powerbases. Hence, they tried their best to comply with the demands of other powerful stakeholders.

6 Theorizing BPT Implementation Politics

Relying on a pluralist methodology (Mingers, 2001), we leveraged our empirical analyses and the extant literature to theorize BPT implementation politics (Eisenhardt, 1989). As such, we moved from empirical description and existing theory toward new theory of how stakeholders engage in politics during BPT implementation (Lee & Baskerville, 2003). Consistent with our engagement at Terma, we sought to offer concepts and relationships to analyze (Gregor, 2006) how stakeholders engage in politics during BPT implementations through different process user responses and transformation agent counter responses and to prescribe (Gregor, 2006) how reinforcement, accommodation, persuasion, and confrontation politics may be combined to proactively influence BPT behaviors and outcomes. Table 7 defines our key concepts.

Table 7. Key Theoretical Concepts

Construct	Definition
Process user	Change recipient as party most directly affected by a change initiative.
Transformation agent	Change agent as party responsible for initiating or driving a change initiative.
Process user response	Political reaction of process users to change initiative, including rationalist, pluralist, interpretive, and radical politics.
Transformation agent counter response	Political reaction of transformation agents to political actions taken by process users, including reinforcement, accommodation, persuasion, and confrontation politics.
Goal compliance	Degree to which process user responses converge toward the goals promoted by transformation agents on behalf of management.
Goal alignment	Degree to which the goals promoted by transformation agents on behalf of management offer solutions to the perceived problems of process users.
Powerbase	Source of power that enables one party to compel another party to do something, including hierarchical position, control of critical resources, expertise, and knowledge.
Deep structure politics	Political activity which is deeply embedded in organizational or societal structures, including institutional logics, discourses, and ideological beliefs.
Success	State at which process goals of the initiative are achieved.

6.1 Basic Premises

BPT are technology-enabled management-led initiatives that target organizational goals (Davenport, 1993; Grover & Markus, 2008; Venkatraman, 1994) by transcending both vertical boundaries from management to operations and horizontal boundaries between different organizational units (Boudreau & Robey, 1996; Franz & Robey, 1984; Knights & McCabe, 1999, 1994; McCabe, 2000). As such, they change the organization of work and, thus, often conflict with key stakeholders' interests (Boudreau & Robey, 1996; Buchanan, 1997; Grover et al., 1988). Keen's (1981) response-counter response view of BPT

implementation and the general idea that organizational change initiatives result from ongoing interactions between change recipients and change agents capture the resulting interactions between stakeholder groups (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolph, & DePalma, 2006; Stensaker, Falkenberg, & Grønhaug, 2008). Thus, we assume BPT implementation politics plays out as follows:

Premise 1: Politics in BPT implementation initiatives unfold as ongoing interactions between process user (change recipient) responses and transformation agent (change agent) counter responses.

Further, from analyzing Terma, we found that each unit developed its own, unique response to the corporate initiative. ISY, for example, fully embraced the BPT initiative and collaborated closely with the corporate BPT team by drawing on shared resources and maturity assessments to support progress. In contrast, RSY held the corporate BPT team at arm's length by keeping interactions to a minimum and continuously communicating their commitment to avoid confrontations over a lack of progress. These variations suggest BPT implementation politics depends on the alignment between the initiative's process goals and users' process needs (i.e., the extent to which BPT implementation initiatives offer solutions to perceived problems). This observation is consistent with the recommendation in the literature to compare process goals with existing practices' perceived strengths and weaknesses at the very start of BPT initiatives (Chrissis et al., 2003; CMMI Product Team, 2010). When the goal alignment is high, less conflict and more collaboration is expected than if the process goals do not meet process users' perceived needs (Boudreau & Robey, 1996; Buchanan, 1997; Currie & Willcocks, 1996). While this logic is true in principle, the variations across units at Terma suggest that user responses may differ from this pattern. Although ISY's and ASY's perceived needs aligned well with process goals while AES's and RSY's perceived needs did not, ISY's and AES's responses were less conflictual and led to greater goal compliance compared to ASY's and RSY's responses. Hence, goal alignment is an indicator of the likely political response to BPT implementation, whereas goal compliance is an indicator of the actual response. Consistent with this observation, the BPT literature suggests one should continually monitor goal compliance through regular process assessments (Chrissis et al., 2003; CMMI Product Team, 2010), which leads to our second premise for theorizing BPT implementation politics:

Premise 2: How BPT implementation politics unfolds depends on goal alignment and goal compliance.

6.2　Process User Responses

As Table 8 illustrates, one should understand ISY's walking-the-talk response in the context of the industry's preference for CMMI. Terma's CMMI-based process goals were consistent with perceived process needs in ISY as evidenced by the unit's high level of CMMI level 2 goal compliance. Essentially, the maturity discourse motivated and influenced ISY's BPT implementation and served as a shared reference point for process users and transformation agents. In AES, there was low a priori alignment with the CMMI-based process goals, but the senior VP and his allies changed this situation by constructing an image of BPT as a welcome solution to existing problems, which led to the applying-the-hammer response and, eventually, to high goal compliance. In ASY, the senior VP's support for BPT implementation was synonymous with high a priori goal alignment. However, the unit's struggling-to-engage response resulted from its prioritizing emerging business opportunities over the BPT project, which adversely affected goal compliance. Finally, RSY's keeping-up-appearances response effectively concealed the unit's low goal alignment by continually signaling its commitment to the BPT implementation despite giving priority to product development and customer service. Not surprisingly, this focus led to decreasing goal compliance during the implementation.

Table 8. Exemplar Process User Responses

	High goal alignment		
High goal compliance	**Business unit**: ISY **Politics**: Walking the talk	**Business unit**: ASY **Politics**: Struggling to engage	Low goal compliance
	Business unit: AES **Politics**: Applying the hammer	**Business unit**: RSY **Politics**: Keeping up appearances	
	Low goal alignment		

Although political analyses tend to rely on a one-dimensional understanding of power rooted in resources as expressed in pluralist politics, Hardy (1996) argues that there are other equally important sources of politics (Hart & Saunders, 1997; Pettigrew, 1975; Schein, 1985). Power rooted in organizational structures and processes may manifest as rationalist politics (Ngwenyama & Nielsen, 2003), power grounded in deeply rooted cultural values may be expressed through interpretive politics and the ongoing creation of meaning among stakeholders (Brown, 1995, 1998), and power deeply embedded in the structure of society may lead to organizational repression or emancipation (McCabe, 2000) through radical politics. One may combine these perspectives on organizational politics to make sense of BPT implementations. For example, Nidumolu et al. (1996) observed that a functional perspective was more useful in understanding IS evaluation, whereas a symbolic perspective better helped explain IS implementation; Franz and Robey (1984) found rational and pluralist politics to be mutually reinforcing in successfully carrying out implementation efforts and in avoiding blame in unsuccessful BPT initiatives; and Sillince and Mouakket (1997) used different political perspectives to analyze the development and implementation of a housing information system. Consistent with these findings, the four units' responses to Terma's corporate BPT project reflect combinations of rationalist, pluralist, interpretive, and radical politics (Bradshaw-Camball & Murray, 1991) that represent different paths toward BPT outcomes. Uncovering the patterns through which a group of process users respond to BPT initiatives may, thus, provide transformation agents with important indicators of whether the group is moving toward higher goal compliance. Overall, these insights suggest:

> **Proposition 1:** BPT initiatives will more likely succeed if transformation agents monitor how different groups of process users respond to BPT implementation through patterns of rationalist, pluralist, interpretive, and radical politics.

Looking more closely at the particular patterns of political responses to Terma's BPT initiative (Table 5), it is interesting to consider the responses from the two business units that eventually achieved high goal compliance. ISY responded mainly through rationalist politics that relied on structures created by interpretive and radical politics, and AES responded through rationalist politics enabled by dominant interpretive politics. Deep structure politics influenced both cases. In contrast to activities at the surface structure of politics, which were guided by consciously recognized interests, other actions were influenced by meanings and interpretations, which were embedded at a deeper structural level. In one of the cases, mutual understanding was fostered through symbolism and social construction, and, in another case, daily operations were governed by institutionalized ideological beliefs. In ISY, these influences manifested through radical politics grounded in industry-wide process maturity ideologies combined with interpretive politics to disseminate these ideologies within the unit. For example, CMMI is institutionalized at the industry level as a way to complete projects more effectively. In AES, the deep structure influences manifested through the senior VP's effective use of interpretive politics to construct an image of BPT as a welcome solution to the unit's existing problems. In both cases, these influences paved the way for moving the BPT agenda forward inside the unit through rationalist politics. These findings suggest:

> **Proposition 2:** BPT initiatives will more likely succeed when process users pave the way for rationalist politics through deep structure influences based on interpretive or radical politics.

In contrast, none of the two units that eventually achieved low goal compliance seriously engaged in rationalist politics, which presupposes a common purpose or goal. Instead, ASY responded by engaging in pluralist politics with some rationalist and interpretive politics, and RSY's response reflected a combination of interpretive and pluralist politics (Table 5). In both these cases, pluralist politics was prevalent (dominant or major) albeit for quite different reasons. ASY had high goal alignment, but the unit struggled to engage seriously because of competing commitments, whereas RSY had low goal alignment, but the unit concealed its interests by appearing to be seriously engaged in the BPT initiative (Table 8). These patterns of process user responses suggest:

> **Proposition 3:** BPT initiatives will more likely fail when process users give priority to competing interests despite high goal alignment.

> **Proposition 4:** BPT initiatives will more likely fail when process users conceal low goal alignment through interpretive politics.

6.3   Transformation Agent Counter Responses

The literature emphasizes the importance of transformation agents' active political involvement. Buchanan (1997) stresses effective BPT management requires both technical and political skills. Keen (1981) and

McCabe et al. (1998) argue that politics is fundamental to BPT; it motivates behavior and can have beneficial organizational outcomes. Although the focus has traditionally been on political conflict, Hardy (1996) points out it is equally important for transformation agents to engage in politics to prevent conflicts from arising, build relationships, and create shared meanings. Accordingly, Willcocks and Smith (1995) suggest transformation agents monitor politics during BPT, carry out power audits regularly, and continuously sustain political momentum. Thus, consistent with extant research we propose transformation agents should respond actively to process user politics through different types of counter responses (Table 9). Proposition 5 addresses counter responses in general while the remaining propositions focus on exemplar combinations.

Proposition 5: BPT initiatives will more likely succeed if transformation agents respond actively to process user politics through combinations of confrontation, accommodation, persuasion, and reinforcement politics.

Table 9. Transformation Agent Counter Responses

	High goal alignment		
High goal compliance	**Reinforcement politics** **Threat**: Weakening powerbases **Opportunity**: Reinforce overarching BPT goal that is broadly shared; environmental scanning	**Persuasion politics** **Threat**: Competing forces **Opportunity**: Build coalitions based on converging BPT goals; provide resources	Low goal compliance
	Accommodation politics **Threat**: Emerging conflicts **Opportunity**: Sustain coalition by promoting common aspects of BPT goals; pro-active problem solving	**Confrontation politics** **Threat**: Escalation of conflicts **Opportunity**: Construct motivational accounts; exercise power to push BPT goals and identify constraints	
	Low goal alignment		

In case of low goal alignment and indications of decreasing goal compliance, transformation agents may engage process users through confrontation politics (Table 8). RSY illustrated these conditions in that process users continually signaled their commitment to BPT while giving priority to product development and customer service. Although the corporate BPT manager questioned RSY's progress and attempted to retain control of the unit's BPT implementation by monitoring progress, communicating non-compliance, and offering support, RSY successfully exploited differences in powerbases to conceal its interests. In such situations, where process users hide diverging interests and avoid conflict (Brown, 1995), little progress toward goal compliance and unsatisfactory results will likely characterize BPT (Knights & McCabe, 1998; Willcocks & Smith, 1995). As a first step, transformation agents may use project audits and maturity assessments to identify and highlight discrepancies between process users' espoused commitment and the actual outcomes of their engagement. Next, they may confront process users with the results and activate a strong powerbase to negotiate an acceptable BPT involvement. Transformation agents may also exert influence through "repressive relations of power" (Boudreau & Robey, 1996; McCabe, 2000), especially when transformation agents have a relatively strong source of power compared to that of the process user. Such escalation may lead to all out warfare between transformation agents and process users. Either way, confrontation politics can escalate conflicts and eventually lead transformation agents to forfeit the political game and terminate the project.

Proposition 6: When goal alignment is low and there is decreasing goal compliance, BPT initiatives will more likely succeed if transformation agents can leverage a strong powerbase to engage process users in confrontation politics.

When there are indications of increasing goal compliance despite low goal alignment, transformation agents may engage in accommodation politics (Table 9) to downplay differences between stakeholders and instead focus on shared goals and advantages of cooperation. AES illustrated this situation in that corporate transformation agents supported the senior VP and his allies in tailoring processes to local conditions and needs. Such accommodation was possible because the process users had accepted the image of the BPT initiative as a welcome solution to their problems, which allowed the implementation to proceed through rational means. To avoid conflicts in these situations with low goal alignment, transformation agents should continuously nurture an image of BPT as contributing to problem solving and pay attention to competing social constructions that support conflicting images. Hence, transformation agents must be watchful of speech acts that use language and symbols to discursively construct BPT in both favorable and unfavorable

ways (Brown, 1995; Brown, 1998). To build and maintain powerful coalitions (Kelley, 1976) with process users, transformation agents can themselves use political narratives to communicate how BPT contributes to solving process users' perceived problems. In addition, they may proactively monitor emerging issues, continuously adapt solutions to address perceived problems, and redistribute resources in favor of process user interests. Such pragmatic problem solving requires the process users' active involvement (Grover et al., 1988) to secure BPT commitment and counteract shirking that risks degenerating into subversive behavior as displayed by RSY's keeping-up-appearances response. Similarly, if transformation agents eventually fail to sustain the coalition that holds the BPT initiative together, their engagement with process users may shift toward confrontation politics. These considerations motivate:

Proposition 7: When goal compliance is increasing despite low goal alignment, BPT initiatives will more likely succeed if transformation agents engage process users in accommodation politics.

Turning to situations characterized by decreasing goal compliance despite high goal alignment, transformation agents may focus on persuasion politics (Table 9). ASY illustrated these conditions in that process users, despite alignment with BPT goals, struggled to engage because customer demands took precedence. Although corporate transformation agents tried to persuade ASY to commit to the BPT implementation, differences in powerbases forced them to accept the ASY senior VP's continued prioritization of customer needs over BPT. As long as competing interests remain latent as in ASY, this struggling-to-engage pattern is likely to dominate with wavering commitment and dwindling resources (Knights & McCabe, 1998; Willcocks & Smith, 1995). When handling competing interests, transformation agents must pay attention to discrepancies between intentions and actions during BPT and carefully consider whether conflicting demands challenge process users' ability to honor BPT commitments (Willcocks & Smith, 1995). Once competing interests become manifest, transformation agents may negotiate conflicting demands and build coalitions (Keen, 1981; Kelley, 1976), which involves explicitly negotiating resources and business priorities with process users and may require reassigning people from other projects or units, or prioritizing BPT involvement at the expense of potential business opportunities. It is important to show how local goals might negatively affect BPT goals and, if possible, to consolidate shared meanings among process users at a deeper structure level. If such persuasion politics is unsuccessful due to failure to accommodate process user interests, insufficient resources, or a weakening powerbase, transformation agents may change the scope and timetable of the BPT initiative to realistically reflect circumstances. At the extreme, they may forfeit the political game and terminate the project.

Proposition 8: When goal compliance is decreasing despite high goal alignment, BPT initiatives will more likely succeed if transformation agents engage process users in persuasion politics.

Finally, transformation agents may engage in reinforcement politics when goal alignment is high and there are indications of increasing goal compliance (Table 9). ISY illustrated these conditions in that transformation agents stimulated and supported BPT implementation through regular maturity assessments, by providing guidance to project managers, and via ad hoc problem solving. While transformation agents may reinforce BPT implementation by cooperating with process users in solving complex and emerging BPT problems, process users' weakening powerbases threaten reinforcement politics. Given sufficient resources and consensus, transformation agents may proactively support BPT implementation by promoting organizational benefits and by engaging in environmental scanning to detect such weakening powerbases. If resources dwindle and disagreements arise, they may sustain progress by negotiating additional resources or by influencing perceptions through pluralist and interpretive politics.

Proposition 9: When goal alignment is high and there are indications of increasing goal compliance, BPT will more likely succeed if transformation agents engage process users in reinforcement politics.

6.4 A Summary Model

Figure 2 summarizes our theorizing. Politics is an intrinsic part of dynamic BPT implementations that depends on and impacts goal alignment and goal compliance throughout the process (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011).
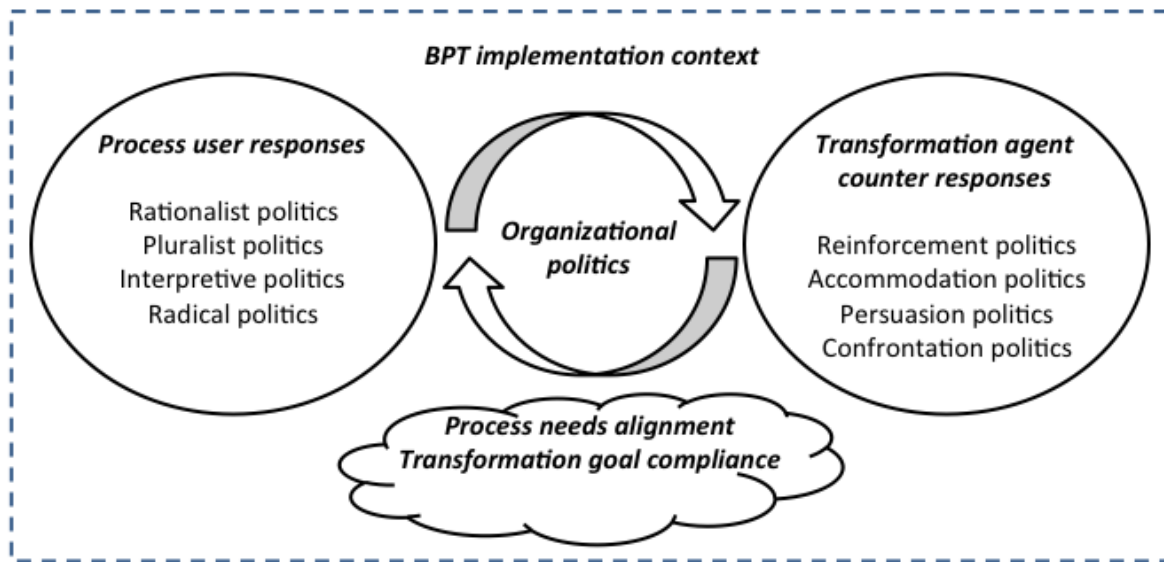
Figure 2. Model of BPT Implementation Politics

It unfolds over time through interactions between process user responses and transformation agent counter responses. As transformation agents initiate BPT in pursuit of organizational innovations, process users may respond using combinations of political perspectives in support or opposition of BPT goals. Transformation agents may engage in counter responses that support or challenge process user responses, which, in turn, triggers new responses and counter responses. Although our theorizing supports the management of BPT implementation, it also serves the general purpose of raising awareness and helping stakeholders "learn how to use power to protect *their* interests. Pretending that power does not exist does not make it go away" (emphasis in original) (Hardy, 1996, p. 14). Indeed, Krackhardt (1990) argues that understanding an organization's informal political network is itself a significant powerbase above and beyond power associated with the hierarchical positions of stakeholders. As a result, our theorizing affords stakeholders important "indirect power derived from knowing and using the power others have to influence the target" (Krackhardt, 1990, p. 359).

7   Discussion

Although extant theory acknowledges the political nature of BPT initiatives, research has not adequately leveraged theory on power and politics to empirically investigate BPT. Moreover, the literature offers no theories dedicated to helping managers understand and manage BPT implementation politics. Motivated by these considerations, we applied existing theory on organizational politics to conduct detailed analyses of BPT in four business units at Terma. Asking how knowledge of organizational politics can help one understand and manage business process transformation behaviors and outcomes, we sought to provide insights into BPT at Terma and to synthesize our findings to advance theory on BPT implementation politics. Inspired by Jasperson et al. (2002), we applied Bradshaw-Camball and Murray's (1991) rationalist, pluralist, interpretive, and radical perspectives on organizational politics to arrive at multi-perspective explanations of how politics had shaped BPT in each of Terma's four business units. We subsequently went beyond the four political perspectives to theorize how process users and transformation agents make sense of and engage in politics during BPT implementation (Figure 2). By doing so, our theorizing answers the call to integrate differing perspectives on organizational politics in "understanding and diagnosing organizational events" (Bradshaw-Camball & Murray, 1991, p. 396). It also highlights that some perspectives are more dominant in some organizational contexts than others. For example, in Bradshaw-Camball and Murray's (1991) suburban hospital setting, the rationalist perspective was not emphasized to any extent. In contrast, in our BPT setting which focused on implementing processes for project planning, monitoring, and control in systems development, rationalist politics was highly prevalent in two units (AES and ISY).

Following a pluralist research methodology, we first leveraged the political perspectives to identify four distinct patterns of BPT politics among process users across Terma's business units, which we metaphorically describe as: applying the hammer, struggling to engage, walking the talk, and keeping up

appearances. We arrived at these patterns by developing distinct accounts of BPT implementation in every business unit from each of the four political perspectives and subsequently synthesizing these into overall storylines of how politics had shaped BPT in each unit. Table 5 summarizes how the four perspectives contributed to the synthesized account of BPT politics in each unit. The patterns encapsulated in the metaphors highlight key aspect of the situation and display variations in their emphasis on the four political perspectives. For example, the walking-the-talk pattern may also be rooted in (dominant or major impact in Table 5) either interpretive or radical politics, which both operate on a deeper structure level. However, given different perspectives on the goal of BPT, it is unlikely that rationalist politics will become dominant in cases where pluralist politics are already influential (e.g., the struggling-to-engage or keeping-up-appearances patterns). Considering the observed patterns in Table 5, it is also easy to imagine other political patterns unfolding under different circumstances. Drawing on Sabherwal and Grover's (2009) study of politics in systems development projects, one may, for example, envisage a tug-of-war pattern in which multiple parties with relatively equal power strive to gain control over a BPT project or an empire-building pattern in which one instrumentally uses a BPT project as a means to build powerbases. Likewise, it is possible to envisage numerous other patterns such as "when the lion prowls, the vultures gather" to describe a situation in which stakeholders use the opportunity to assume control when BPT is imposed on a failing department (Sabherwal & Grover, 2009). Although we did not observe these patterns at Terma, we acknowledge their existence and influence given other circumstances.

Further, we relate our empirical findings to extant theory on organizational politics to theorize BPT implementation politics. Relying on Bacharach's (1989) definition of theory as a system of concepts and variables in which the concepts are related to each other by propositions (Bacharach, 1989, p. 498), we summarize our theorizing in a model of BPT implementation politics. The model describes organizational politics as constituted through process user responses (expressed through combinations of pluralist, rationalist, interpretive, and radical politics) and transformation agent counter responses (expressed through combinations of reinforcement, accommodation, persuasion, and confrontation politics) as dependent on and impacting goal alignment and goal compliance in a particular BPT implementation context. Moreover, we express the relationships between concepts in nine propositions and illustrate those in Figure 2 and Tables 8 and 9.

Our theorizing builds on and extends the IS literature on resistance management. For example, Rivard and Lapointe (2012) develop a taxonomy of implementers' responses to user resistance to IT implementation, which comprises four categories: inaction, acknowledgment, rectification, and dissuasion. This taxonomy provides a "theoretical explanation of the patterns of relationships observed between implementers' responses and user resistance" (Rivard & Lapointe, 2012, p. 916). However, compared to our contribution, their framework is purely descriptive and does not include stakeholder motivation (interests) and response strategies (politics). van Offenbeek et al. (2013)'s framework is another example. Their framework links acceptance and resistance research and distinguishes between four categories of user reactions: supporting users, resisting users, supporting non-users, and resisting non-users. The framework allows one to describe and analyze behavior during IS implementation. The authors suggest that one can use the framework "as a tool to assess and monitor people's behaviors during IS implementation and to develop differentiated interventions" (van Offenbeek et al., 2013: 447). Meanwhile, the framework does not include perspectives on specific implementation strategies responding to user reactions.

Although our empirical analyses were limited to Terma, we leveraged the possibility of generalizing from description to theorizing (Lee & Baskerville, 2003; Yin, 2003). Following Mason (2002), our theoretical generalization relies on the quality of our pluralist analyses; "whatever else you do, you should make some claims for the wider resonance or generalizability of your explanations which are based on the rigor of your analysis" (p. 196). Thus, we not only provide analyses and descriptions of BPT politics but also prescriptions to help managers understand and effectively manage BPT politics (Gregor, 2006). Still, our theorizing of BPT implementation politics is limited to conditions similar to those at Terma; that is, incremental BPT within large, hierarchical, and project-based organizations that focus on developing systems and delivering services. Further, our model relates to the application of Bradshaw-Camball and Murray's (1991) perspectives on organizational politics. Their framework, capable of capturing the multi-dimensional nature of BPT politics, limited our empirical analyses and theorizing to four specific, albeit widely accepted, perspectives on organizational politics.

Considering these contributions and limitations, our investigation suggests interesting avenues for future research. Terma's CMMI-based project provided an opportunity to study incremental BPT in the sense of identifying current business problems, adopting step-by-step changes through employee involvement, and

implementing new processes based on best practices for systems development. Future studies of BPT politics should investigate other approaches to BPT, including radical transformations. One promising approach is neo-humanism, a radical humanist view that relates to critical theory (Hirschheim & Klein, 1989). Future explorations of BPT politics from other perspectives, including a critical perspective, might yield additional important insights.

From a practical point of view, our investigation emphasizes that BPT implementation involves complex and highly uncertain activities that challenge existing power relations and that politics is intrinsically tied to BPT behaviors and outcomes. BPT managers may draw on our concepts and propositions to understand and manage process user responses through transformation agent counter responses depending on the organizational context of transformation goal alignment and compliance. An enhanced understanding helps managers make better sense of such complex organizational change initiatives and enact interventions that serve their interests. Such interventions also benefit from key insights from our analyses of BPT politics at Terma. Successful BPT implementation requires creating a political environment in which the deeper structure of shared meanings and symbols are consistent with the surface structure of power. Moreover, goal alignment does not guarantee successful BPT implementation and divergence of interests does not necessarily preclude positive outcomes. When process politics unfolds, outcomes become truly unpredictable if left to chance. Hence, rather than taking a passive role and reacting to circumstances as politics plays out, we advise managers to proactively maneuver BPT efforts by taking their intrinsic political nature into account (Buchanan, 1997; Dhillon, 2004; Keen, 1981; Willcocks & Smith, 1995).

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Appendix

To further document our coding of data, Table A1 contains sample expressions related to AES and the interpretive perspective on organizational politics. The table links the key concepts from the data analysis guide (Table 3) to "example quotations", which resulted from our having used the coding scheme to categorize statements by BPT participants ("Interviewee" in Table 4) for each perspective. The table also contains comments and observations ("observed interactions") that we made during analysis, which helps to explain the outcomes.

Table A1. Sample Evidence of Interpretive Politics in AES (1 of 16)

Concepts	Example Quotations	Observed Interactions
Sensemaking	"Our project managers have come to realize that the BPT project gave them some tools that were actually useful" (AES implementation manager).	*Sensemaking* activities among AES managers led them to see the BPT project as a solution to the crisis situation in AES.
Symbols	"Speaking of the cookbook—at one point in time we realized that we needed to understand all this, and then we established a CMMI guideline for the projects to use. We wrote down what it is all about" (AES implementation manager).	The AES senior VP became a *symbol* of decisive action.
Social constructions	"I see it as a leap forward that each development process has been thoroughly defined… It commands greater respect" (AES project manager #1).	As part of *social construction*, AES managers continuously communicated the BPT project as the unit's future.
Organizational culture	"My fear is that having this cookbook will stop people from asking: 'What does all this mean to me?' and make them follow it blindly.... My belief is that, in AES, they don't have the maturity to reflect upon processes" (Corporate BPT manager).	AES management decided to adapt the generic processes to AES's *organizational culture* based on past *experiences* with project managers' inability to adopt off-the-shelf processes.

To further document our use of theoretical framing, Table A2 exemplifies how we linked the primary concepts (structure, process and outcomes) of Bradshaw-Camball and Murray's (1991) framework during the analysis of the empirical material.

Table A2. Sample Evidence of Structure, Process, and Outcomes

Structure (political actors)	Process (how influence is exercised)	Outcomes (ensuing consequences)
AES senior VP	Make BPT implementation a symbol of a solution to existing problems; create vision; use authority to apply a standard set of implementation steps.	Achieve CMMI level 2 rating; "[AES management] wants to establish checklists and that sort of thing in realization that it is the only way to push things through" (Corporate BPT manager).
AES implementation manager	Apply expertise to support implementation.	Achieve CMMI level 2 rating; "the kind of project management I've seen out here has been diddly-squat… so right away, I accepted that this is the tool."
ASY senior VP	Focus on maintaining customers' perception of ASY as credible market player; Apply persuasion as influence tactic.	Failure to resolve conflicts; lack of business unit leadership commitment; scaled-down BPT implementation; "the CMMI is non-essential. We would like to have it, but if you ask if I could argue that we have lost an order because of it, I cannot."
ASY implementation manager	Concede to lack of support and involvement because of low powerbase.	Recognize lack of power to move BPT implementation forward: "If you have a customer who is paying for something, it is a different matter. It is easier to postpone [an internal BPT project] even though it is equally important in the long run. It is easier to ask for absolution. There is no immediate cost of postponing these processes."
ISY senior VP	Point to contract negotiations in which ISY's lack of a CMMI appraisal had been a problem.	Achieve desired CMMI level 2 rating; "It is crucial for us to be at CMMI level 2 and be able to say that we are in control of what we develop… It's about economic benefit."
ISY Implementation manager	Answer questions and support each project manager individually; leverage power derived from formal authority and expertise to establish project solutions.	Achieve desired CMMI level 2 rating: "It was the ISY training manager and the ISY implementation manager who had already planned such an implementation sequence to keep us on track" (ISY project manager #4).
RSY senior VP	Emphasize that new processes might improve project practices, but did not provide support for BPT implementation; emphasize customer relationship and tailored processes.	Conflicting goals; lack of BPT implementation progress; conflicting signals; "Do it the other way around [compared to BPT]. Let the units optimize each process area themselves."
RSY implementation manager	Criticize standardization ideal and organization of BPT implementation project based on expertise; Let project managers fend for themselves.	Implementation limited to few projects; conflicting goals and confusing situation for project managers; "With such a process apparatus, you start out by making a snowball and get it rolling and you expect it to yield a positive result somewhere down the line. The problem is that you'll never be able to measure it because it will be three years before it is implemented."

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