

Empirical analyses of the online-participation diffusion process in public organizations

Malte Steinbach

Business Administration, in particular Organization Studies and Human Resource Management • HHU

Motivation and central research topic

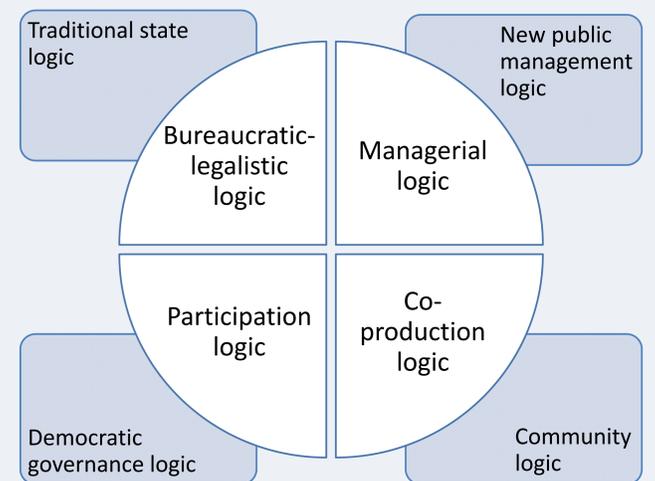
- Growing importance of informal practices of political participation as well as ICTs lead to an increasing diffusion of online-participation practices.
- Often, municipalities and other public organizations (e.g., universities or police) in the local living environment of citizens are **organizers of participation** processes (Peters 2010; Klages 2015).
- Online-participation challenges public organizations. Participatory reforms and changing interactions with online-communities introduce new interpretive schemes and frames of reference for legitimate administrative action (**institutional logics**; see. Thornton et al. 2012). This happens in an increasingly hybrid context of public administration, in which new public management (NPM) and governance (NPG) reform logics layer on top of traditional bureaucratic ideals of organizing (Christensen/Laegreid 2012).
- Little is known about how this complex interplay of institutional logics influences the **actual adoption, implementation and institutionalization** of online-participation practices in public organizations.

Research question: How does online-participation diffuse in public organizations with regard to their hybrid institutional context?

Diffusion Process



Public sector hybridity



Approach and current status (article-based dissertation)

- **First study:** "The adoption, implementation, and institutionalization of e-participation in public administration: A systematic literature review" (with Ass.-Prof. Dr. Jost Sieweke and Prof. Dr. Stefan Süß; re-submitted)

Focus: Facilitating an overview of existing research in the field of e-participation diffusion in public administrations and identify future research avenues.

Method: Systematic literature review

Results: The study maps central research topics related to the diffusion of e-participation in public sector organizations. This led to the identification of five research gaps. Scholars should pay more attention to: strategies, the institutionalization phase, the micro level, and the process and multi-level character of diffusion.

- **Second study:** "Institutional aspects of the e-participation innovation process – A qualitative analysis of institutional logics and institutional work in German municipalities" (with Prof. Dr. Stefan Süß; under review)

Focus: Analysis of the implementation and institutionalization of e-participation in three municipalities. The focus lies on the organizational and individual strategies throughout the diffusion process in the hybrid context.

Method: Multiple case study

Results: Administrators develop different role identities in regard to e-participation: entrepreneurs, pragmatists, and skeptics. These identities evolve as actors engage strategically in the innovation process through institutional work on e-participation practices at the individual, project, and organizational level.

- **Third study:** "Innovative decision-making processes in universities: A qualitative analysis of the implementation of online-participation processes" (with Kathrin Diekmann and Prof. Dr. Stefan Süß; under review)

Focus: Analysis of the effects and influences of two online-participation processes to redraft examination regulations on the organizational and institutional decision-making structures of a university

Method: Case study

Results: Conflicts arose between participatory and representative decision-making practices. The decision-makers defend their authority based on the logic of representation and delegation of power and argue that online participation and deliberation are less suitable for formal decision-making processes.

- **Fourth study:** "Civil servants' professional identities and their use of e-participation – A latent profile analysis" (work in progress)

Focus: Analysis of the internalization of values based in different institutional logics. Do different types of civil servants exist and how do they differ in their use of online-participation?

Method: Latent profile analysis

Inter- and transdisciplinarity

Inter- and transdisciplinary cooperation throughout the development of the dissertation's approach and during a survey of the diffusion of online-participation in the German federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia

Dissertation is situated at the intersection of different scientific disciplines. It addresses for instance organization theory, public administration, and e-government research.

Cooperation with project members from municipalities during the empirical studies. In 2018 further activities for transferring knowledge produced in the dissertation to practitioners are planned.

Supervision team

- Prof. Dr. Stefan Süß (Business Administration, HHU)
- Ass.-Prof. Dr. Jost Sieweke (Business Administration, VU Amsterdam)

- Prof. Dr. Katrin Möltgen-Sicking (Social Sciences, FHöV NRW)
- Claus Arndt (Stadt Moers)