

Organizational Learning in Municipalities and Universities -

Empirical Studies of Public Sector Organizations' Use of Online-Participation

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Motivation and central research topic

Online-Participation (OP) as a possibility to deal with several changes, e. g. reforms, an unstable voter participation and technological progress

- **New requirements** of OP lead to **new tasks and procedures** of staff in municipalities and universities, e.g. digital communication (cf. e. g. Mergel 2013)
- **Learning process**, how to deal with these new requirements to implement and use OP (cf. Rashman/Withers/Hartley 2009, p. 465)
→ Theory of **Organizational Learning** (cf. Argote/Miron-Spektor 2011; see fig. 1)
- For a successful learning process, an open-minded attitude and willingness to change routines by the staff is necessary
- **Problems:**
 - Scepticism towards changing in structures by staff in public sector organizations (cf. Wüstner 2006; Bumiller/Hübler/Simen 2015)
 - characteristics of the public sector that might impede change: strict, rigid structures, strong hierarchies (cf. Weber 1980; Richter 2012)
- **Obstacles** to learn and to use OP

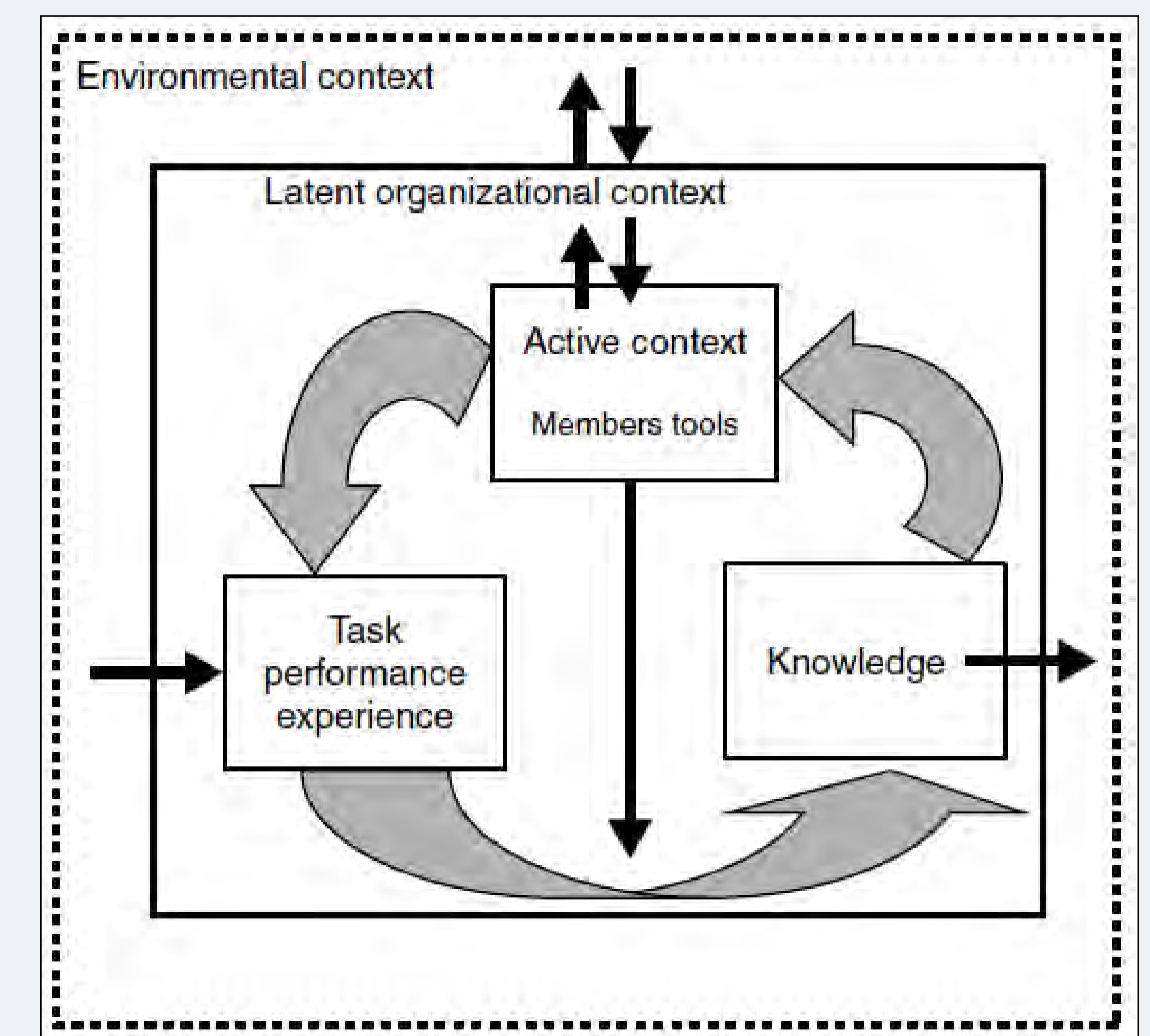


Fig. 1 Analytical Framework for Organizational Learning (cf. Argote/Miron-Spektor 2011, p. 1125)

Research question: How do municipalities and universities learn to implement and use online-participation processes?

Approach and current status (article-based dissertation)

- **First study:** “Innovative decision-making processes in universities: A qualitative analysis of the implementation of online-participation processes” (with Malte Steinbach and Prof. Dr. Stefan Süß; under review)

Focus: Organizational structures of a university and structures of two OP processes to renew dissertations- and habilitations regulations
Aim: Point out the effects and influences of the OP processes on the organizational structure of the university.
Results: Conflict between elected decision-makers and the participatory approach. The decision-makers defend their decision-making authority vehemently and argue that (online-) participation is not suitable for such formal decision-making processes

- **Second study:** “Civil servants’ competencies for the use of internet-based participatory budgets in German municipalities – A qualitative analysis” (in progress)

Focus and aim: Identify competencies of civil servants in municipalities, regularly working on OP, to use internet-based participatory budgets
Results: Especially process- and time-management, financial and juridical knowledge but also attitudes like innovativeness, open-mindedness and persuasiveness play an important role in the competency profile of civil servants. Interestingly, formal qualifications, e.g. school/university graduation only play a subordinate role to deal with tasks that occur while working on an internet-based participatory budget

- **Methods** used in both studies: qualitative, semi-structured interviews; qualitative content analysis (cf. Mayring 2014; Saldaña 2015).
- **Focus of the third study:** Analysis of knowledge management and transfer in public sector organizations

Inter- and transdisciplinarity

Intersectional dissertation focusing on different research fields:

- Organizational theory
- Administrative Science
- eGovernment
- Knowledge management

Additionally: **Cooperation with practitioners**

- Support for recruiting participants for interviews, surveys and experiments
- Knowledge exchange between science and practitioner about currently discussed topics in science and in practice

Supervision team

- Prof. Dr. Stefan Süß (Business Administration, HHU)
- Prof. Dr. Katrin Möltgen-Sicking (Social Sciences, FHöV NRW)
- Ass.-Prof. Dr. Jost Sieweke (Business Administration, VU Amsterdam)
- Jürgen Behrendt (City of Cologne)