

Topics for master's theses

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The master's thesis topics offered by our chair are derived from our research profile. We distinguish broadly between four fields: Organization, Human Resource Management, Strategic Management, and Market-Oriented Leadership in Public and Nonprofit Organizations. In addition to this list of topics, you also have the option to propose your own topic that aligns with the chair's profile. The following table provides examples of possible topic areas within each field. To develop a master's thesis topic, please get in touch with Mr. Bruder (jonas.bruder@uni-mannheim.de). For information on the framework and requirements for master's theses at our department, please first read our guidelines for academic writing.

Research domain	Possible topic areas
Organization	Hybrid Organizing, Bureaucracy, Public-Private Partnerships, Resilience, Digitalization, Organizational development
Human Ressource Management	Volunteering, Recruiting, Motivation, Person-Environment (Mis-) Fit
Strategic Management	Accountability, Legitimacy, Citizen-State Interactions, Administrative Burden, Nonmarket Strategy, Shared Value Creation, Corporate Philanthropy, Dynamic Capabilities
Market-Oriented Leadership	Representative Bureaucracy, Fundraising, Public service delivery

Organization	Introductory questions	Introductory literature
<p>Ways to Avoid Mission Drift? Organizational Response towards Mission Achievement in Hybrid Organizations.</p> <p><i>Wege, um Mission Drift zu vermeiden? Organisationale Reaktionen zur Zielerreichung in hybriden Organisationen.</i></p>	<p>Which scientific findings regarding organizational responses to mission drift in hybrid organizations are discussed in the literature?</p> <p>What factors constitute an effective response to potential mission drift in hybrid organizations?</p> <p>Method: qualitative (quantitative is possible)</p>	<p>Grimes, M. G., Williams, T. A., Zhao, E. Y. (2019). Anchors Aweigh: The Sources, Variety, and Challenges of Mission Drift. <i>Academy of Management Review</i>, 44(4), 819–845. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2017.0254</p> <p>Hota, P. K., Manoharan, B., Rakshit, K., Panigrahi, P. (2023). Hybrid Organization Deconstructed: A Bibliographic Investigation into the Origins, Development, and Future of the Research Domain. <i>International Journal of Management Reviews</i>, 25(2), 384–409. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12314</p>
<p>The Machines Take Over – Citizens’ Perceptions of Automated Bureaucratic Decision Making.</p> <p><i>Die Maschinen übernehmen – Die Wahrnehmung automatisierter behördlicher Entscheidungsprozesse</i></p>	<p>Which scientific findings on the opportunities and challenges of using algorithms in official decision-making processes are discussed in the literature?</p> <p>How does the visible use of algorithms affect citizens' perception of official decision-making processes?</p> <p>Method: quantitative</p>	<p>Grimmelikhuijsen, S. (2023). Explaining Why the Computer Says No: Algorithmic Transparency Affects the Perceived Trustworthiness of Automated Decision-Making. <i>Public Administration Review</i>. https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13483</p> <p>Alon-Barkat, S., & Busuioc, M. (2024). Behavioural public administration meets data science: A behavioural research agenda on algorithmic decision-making. <i>Journal of Behavioral Public Administration</i>, 7. https://doi.org/10.30636/kbgvqh65</p>

<p>Blockade or Steppingstone? Effects of Multiple Logics in Nonprofit Organizations</p> <p><i>Blockade oder Sprungbrett? Die Effekte von multiplen Logiken auf Nonprofit Organisationen</i></p>	<p>Which scientific findings on the multiplicity of logics in nonprofit organizations are discussed in the literature?</p> <p>How do multiple logics affect nonprofit organizations?</p> <p>Method: qualitative (quantitative possible)</p>	<p>Malhotra, A., Wright, A. L., & Jarvis, L. C. (2024). Hybridity in Nonprofit Organizations: Organizational Perspectives on Combining Multiple Logics. <i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>, 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-024-05687-y</p> <p>Tuckerman, L., Nelles, J., Owalla, B., & Vorley, T. (2024). Exploring the Evolutionary Boundaries of Community Business. <i>Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly</i>, 53(5), 1205-1229. https://doi.org/10.1177/08997640231210555</p>
<p>Certificates for the Win? On the Importance of External Certificates for the Success of Social Enterprises</p> <p><i>Zertifikate für den Erfolg? Über die Bedeutung von externen Zertifikaten für die Missionserfüllung von Sozialunternehmen.</i></p>	<p>Which scientific findings on the external certification of practices and its impact on social enterprises is discussed in the literature?</p> <p>How do external certifications impact social enterprises?</p> <p>Method: qualitative/quantitative</p>	<p>Moroz, P. W., Branzei, O., Parker, S. C., & Gamble, E. N. (2018). Imprinting with purpose: Prosocial opportunities and B Corp certification. <i>Journal of Business Venturing</i>, 33(2), 117–129. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2018.01.003</p> <p>Tabares, S. (2021). Certified B corporations: An approach to tensions of sustainable-driven hybrid business models in an emerging economy. <i>Journal of Cleaner Production</i>, 317, 128380. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2021.128380</p>
<p>The invisible byproducts of the digital organization – How the digitalization of organizations changes the work of employees</p> <p><i>Die unsichtbaren Nebenprodukte der digitalen Organisation – Wie die Digitalisierung von Organisationen die Arbeit der Mitarbeitenden verändert</i></p>	<p>Which scientific findings on the effects of digitalization on the nature of work and on employees are discussed in the literature?</p> <p>What new and often unseen tasks do digital technologies create for employees?</p> <p>Method: qualitative</p>	<p>Justesen, L., & Plesner, U. (2024). Invisible Digi-Work: Compensating, connecting, and cleaning in digitalized organizations. <i>Organization Theory</i>, 5(1), 26317877241235938. https://doi.org/10.1177/26317877241235938</p> <p>Orlikowski, W. J. (2016). Digital Work: A Research Agenda. <i>Orlikowski</i>. https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/108411</p>

<p>The invisible byproducts of digital government – How the digitalization of public administration changes the work of street-level bureaucrats</p> <p>Die unsichtbaren Nebenprodukte der digitalen Verwaltung – Wie die Digitalisierung der öffentlichen Verwaltung die Arbeit von Street-Level Bureaucrats verändert</p>	<p>Which scientific findings on the influence of digitalization on the nature of work of Street-Level Bureaucrats are discussed in the literature?</p> <p>What new and often unseen tasks do digital technologies create for Street-Level Bureaucrats?</p> <p>Method: qualitative</p>	<p>Møller, A. M. (2025). Inside the Digital State: Frontline Work in the Context of Digital Layering. <i>Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory</i>, muaf001. https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muaf001</p> <p>Gräfe, P., Marienfeldt, J., Wehmeier, L. M., & Kuhlmann, S. (2024). Changing tasks and changing public servants? The digitalisation and automation of public administrative work. <i>Information Polity</i>, 13837605241289773. https://doi.org/10.1177/13837605241289773</p>
<p>Bridging the divide? – Relational governance and the formation of trust in interorganizational relations</p> <p><i>Eine Brücke schlagen? – Relationale Governance und die Bildung von Vertrauen in interorganisatorischen Beziehungen</i></p>	<p>How is trust formed between businesses and NPOs with differing goals and operational logics?</p> <p>What governance practices best support the development and maintenance of trust between businesses and NPOs?</p> <p>Method: qualitative</p>	<p>Poppo, L., Zhou, K.Z. and Zenger, T.R. (2008), Examining the Conditional Limits of Relational Governance: Specialized Assets, Performance Ambiguity, and Long-Standing Ties. <i>Journal of Management Studies</i>, 45: 1195-1216. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2008.00779.x</p> <p>Cao, Z. and Lumineau, F. (2015), Revisiting the interplay between contractual and relational governance: A qualitative and meta-analytic investigation. <i>Journal of Operations Management</i>, 33-34: 15-42. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jom.2014.09.009</p>

Human Ressource Management	Introductory questions	Introductory literature
<p>Tabula Rasa? Strategies of Socializing Employees in Hybrid Organizations</p> <p><i>Tabula rasa? Strategien zur Sozialisierung von Mitarbeitenden in hybriden Organisationen</i></p>	<p>Which scientific findings are discussed in the literature on socialization strategies of employees in hybrid organizations?</p> <p>How and why are employees socialized in hybrid organizations?</p> <p>Method: qualitative</p>	<p>Battilana, J., & Dorado, S. (2010). Building sustainable hybrid organizations: The case of commercial microfinance organizations. <i>Academy of Management Journal</i>, 53(6), 1419-1440. https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/29780265.pdf</p> <p>Hsieh, Y. C., Weng, J., & Lin, T. (2018). How social enterprises manage their organizational identification: A theoretical framework of identity management approach through attraction, selection, and socialization. <i>The International Journal of Human Resource Management</i>, 29(20), 2880-2904. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2017.1328610</p>

Strategic Management	Introductory questions	Introductory literature
<p>Tackling Administrative Burden - Effects of Administrative Burden Reduction Strategies on Citizens' Burden Perception</p> <p><i>Bewältigung administrativer Belastungen - Auswirkungen von Strategien zur Reduktion administrativer Belastungen auf die Wahrnehmung der Belastung durch die Bürger*innen</i></p>	<p>Which scientific findings on dimensions and strategies for reducing administrative burdens are discussed in the literature?</p> <p>How do strategies for reducing administrative burdens affect learning costs, compliance costs, and psychological costs?</p> <p>Method: quantitative</p>	<p>Halling, A., & Baekgaard, M. (2023). Administrative Burden in Citizen–State Interactions: A Systematic Literature Review. <i>Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory</i>. https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muad023</p> <p>Benish, A., Tarshish, N., Holler, R., & Gal, J. (2023). Types of administrative burden reduction strategies: who, what, and how. <i>Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory</i>, muad028. https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muad028</p>
<p>Double Negative Effects of Administrative Burden? The Impact of Administrative Burden on Citizens' Civic Capacities</p> <p><i>Doppelt negative Auswirkungen von administrativen Belastungen? Die Auswirkungen administrativer Belastungen auf die Civic Capacities von Bürger*innen</i></p>	<p>What scientific findings on the effects of administrative burdens on citizens' civic capacities are discussed in the literature?</p> <p>What impact do administrative burdens have on citizens' civic capacities?</p> <p>Method: qualitative (quantitativ possible)</p>	<p>Halling, A., & Baekgaard, M. (2023). Administrative Burden in Citizen–State Interactions: A Systematic Literature Review. <i>Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory</i>. https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muad023</p> <p>Christensen, J., Aarøe, L., Baekgaard, M., Herd, P., & Moynihan, D. P. (2020). Human capital and administrative burden: The role of cognitive resources in citizen-state interactions. <i>Public Administration Review</i>, 80(1), 127-136. https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13134</p>

<p>When Citizens Like Administrative Burden - Identifying Conditions in Which Administrative Burdens are Welcomed</p> <p><i>Wenn Bürger administrative Belastungen begrüßen – Identifikation von Bedingungen, unter denen administrative Belastungen positiv wahrgenommen werden</i></p>	<p>Which scientific findings on the effects of administrative burdens on citizens' civic capacities are discussed in the literature?</p> <p>What effects do administrative burdens have on the civic capacities of citizens?</p> <p>Method: qualitative</p>	<p>Baekgaard, M., Halling, A., & Moynihan, D. (2024). Burden tolerance: Developing a validated measurement instrument across seven countries. <i>Public Administration Review</i>. https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13835</p> <p>Doughty, M., & Baehler, K. J. (2020). "Hostages to compliance": Towards a reasonableness test for administrative burdens. <i>Perspectives on Public Management and Governance</i>, 3(4), 273-287. https://doi.org/10.1093/ppmgov/gvaa010</p>
<p>Design Matters – Identifying Factors Influencing Administrative Burden in Digital Citizen-State Interactions</p> <p><i>Auf das Design kommt es an – Identifikation von Faktoren, die die administrative Belastung in digitalen Bürger-Staat-Interaktionen beeinflussen</i></p>	<p>Which scientific findings on the causes of digital administrative burdens are discussed in the literature?</p> <p>What factors in the design of digital government services cause administrative burdens? How are the causes related to interactions between technology, administrative staff, and users?</p> <p>Method: quantitative (qualitative possible)</p>	<p>Halling, A., & Baekgaard, M. (2023). Administrative Burden in Citizen–State Interactions: A Systematic Literature Review. <i>Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory</i>. https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muad023</p> <p>Peeters, R. (2023). Digital administrative burdens: An agenda for analyzing the citizen experience of digital bureaucratic encounters. <i>Perspectives on Public Management and Governance</i>, 6(1), 7-13. https://doi.org/10.1093/ppmgov/gvac024</p>

<p>Dynamic Capabilities and Organizational Resources – The value of Dynamic Capabilities for NPOs</p> <p><i>Dynamische Fähigkeiten und Organisatorische Ressourcen: Der Wert der dynamischen Fähigkeiten für gemeinnützige Organisationen</i></p>	<p>How are dynamic capabilities in the context of nonprofit organizations discussed in the literature?</p> <p>How do dynamic capabilities manifest within nonprofit organizations (NPOs)?</p> <p>Which role do dynamic capabilities play in NPOs' adaption to changes in the external environment, such as donor trends or policy changes?</p> <p>Method: qualitative</p>	<p>Wilden, R., Devinney, T. M., & Dowling, G. R. (2016). The architecture of dynamic capability research identifying the building blocks of a configurational approach. <i>Academy of management annals</i>, 10(1), 997-1076. https://doi.org/10.1080/19416520.2016.1161966</p> <p>Brown, W. A., Andersson, F. O., & Jo, S. (2016). Dimensions of capacity in nonprofit human service organizations. <i>Voluntas</i>, 27(6), 2889-2912. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-015-9633-8</p>
<p>Cross-sector collaborations – understanding family firms in their partnering activities</p> <p><i>Intersektorale Zusammenarbeit – Verständnis von Familienunternehmen bei ihren Partnerschaftsaktivitäten</i></p>	<p>How do governance structures in family firms influence the management of cross-sector collaborations?</p> <p>How do family-specific dynamics, such as succession planning or reputation concerns, affect cross-sector collaboration decisions?</p> <p>Method: qualitative</p>	<p>Vazquez, P. (2018). Family business ethics: At the crossroads of business ethics and family business. <i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>, 150, 691-709. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3171-1</p> <p>Feliu, N., & Botero, I. C. (2016). Philanthropy in family enterprises: A review of literature. <i>Family Business Review</i>, 29(1), 121-141. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894486515610962</p> <p>Monti, A., & Salvemini, S. (2014). The “Barolo brothers” Organizational identity and social relationships as strategic decision-making drivers. <i>Management Decision</i>, 52(9), 1750-1781. https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-10-2013-0559</p>

Market-Oriented Leadership	Introductory questions	Introductory literature
<p>To Grant or not to Grant. How Important are Grants for Follow-Up Funding in Social Enterprises?</p> <p><i>Gefördert zu werden oder nicht gefördert zu werden. Wie wichtig ist eine Förderung für Sozialunternehmen für anschließende Kapitalrunden?</i></p>	<p>What scientific findings are discussed in the literature on the signaling effect of successful fundraising?</p> <p>Can funding in the start-up phase of a social enterprise help to raise funds more effectively in later financing rounds?</p> <p>Method: qualitative/quantitative</p>	<p>Martin, M. (2015). Building Impact Businesses through Hybrid Financing. <i>Entrepreneurship Research Journal</i>, 5(2), 109–126. https://doi.org/10.1515/erj-2015-0005</p> <p>Hirschmann, M., Moritz, A. (2020). Social Finance in Europe: The Transition from Grants to Follow-Up Financing for Social Enterprises. In: Moritz, A., Block, J.H., Golla, S., Werner, A. (eds) Contemporary Developments in Entrepreneurial Finance. FGF Studies in Small Business and Entrepreneurship. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-17612-9_10</p>
<p>When Public Service Delivery Fails – The Effects of Public Service Failures on Citizens' Satisfaction, Emotions, and Trust in Public Institutions</p> <p>Wenn öffentlicher Dienstleistungen versagen – Welche Auswirkungen haben Public Service Failures auf die Zufriedenheit, Emotionen und das Vertrauen von Bürger*innen in öffentliche Institutionen</p>	<p>Which scientific findings on the impact of public service failure on citizens are discussed in the literature?</p> <p>How does public service failure affect the emotions of affected citizens and third parties? How is this justified?</p> <p>Method: quantitative (qualitative possible)</p>	<p>Holler, R., Tarshish, N., & Kaplan, E. (2024). “That's where the hunt for the correction begins”: Experiences of administrative errors as sites of administrative burden. <i>International Journal of Social Welfare</i>. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijsw.12637</p> <p>Van Vaerenbergh, Y., Orsingher, C., Vermeir, I., & Larivière, B. (2014). A meta-analysis of relationships linking service failure attributions to customer outcomes. <i>Journal of Service Research</i>, 17(4), 381-398. https://doi.org/10.1177/10946705145383</p>

<p>When Service Recovery Matters – How Recovery Activities Influence Citizens' Perception of Public Service Failures</p> <p>Wenn Service Recovery den Unterschied macht – Wie Service Recovery Maßnahmen die Wahrnehmung von Public Service Failures durch Bürger*innen beeinflussen</p>	<p>Which scientific findings on the effect of recovery activities in the context of public service failure are discussed in the literature?</p> <p>What recovery activities after a public service failure are expected by affected citizens and third parties?</p> <p>Method: qualitative (quantitative possible)</p>	<p>Döring, M. (2022). 'Explain, but make no excuses': service recovery after public service failures. <i>Public Management Review</i>, 24(5), 799- 817. https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2020.1864013</p> <p>Grégoire, Y., & Mattila, A. S. (2021). Service failure and recovery at the crossroads: recommendations to revitalize the field and its influence. <i>Journal of Service Research</i>, 24(3), 323-328. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670520958073</p>
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