

Topics for master's theses

Last update: January 2026

The master's thesis topics offered by our chair are derived from our research profile. We broadly distinguish between four fields: Organization, Human Resource Management, Strategic Management, and Market-Oriented Leadership in Public and Non-Profit 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 Resource 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, Resource Dependence
Market-Oriented Leadership	Representative Bureaucracy, Fundraising, Public service delivery

Organization	Introductory questions	Introductory literature
<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>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>The Power Puzzle: Managing Competing Demands in Nonprofit Organizations <i>Das Machtpuzzle: Der Umgang mit konkurrierenden Anforderungen in Nonprofit-Organisationen</i></p>	<p>Which scientific findings on the relation between power and dealing with competing demands are discussed in the literature?</p> <p>How does power influence the ability of employees to deal with competing demands in nonprofit organizations?</p> <p>Method: qualitative</p>	<p>Ciuk, S., & McCabe, D. (2025). "Little Boxes All the Same": Exploring and contextualizing paradoxes of power in a strategic change programme in a UK university. <i>Organization Studies</i>, 46(3). https://doi.org/10.1177/01708406251314594</p> <p>Pache, A.-C., Battilana, J., & Spencer, C. (2024). An Integrative Model of Hybrid Governance: The Role of Boards in Helping Sustain Organizational Hybridity. <i>Academy of Management Journal</i>, 67(2), 437–467. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2021.0966</p>

Strategic Management	Introductory questions	Introductory literature
<p>Dynamic Capabilities and Organizational Resources – The value of Dynamic Capabilities for NPOs <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 <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>
<p>Who Gets Blamed? Resource Dependence and the Legitimacy of Protest Targets <i>Wer wird beschuldigt? Ressourcenabhängigkeit und die Legitimität von Protestzielen</i></p>	<p>How do internal and external resource dependencies of social movement organizations shape which actors are seen as legitimate or feasible targets?</p> <p>In what ways do internal resources and/or capabilities expand or constrain the range of feasible targets for social movement organizations?</p> <p>Method: qualitative</p>	<p>Briscoe, F., & Gupta, A. (2016). Social activism in and around organizations. <i>Academy of Management Annals</i>, 10(1), 671-727. https://doi.org/10.1080/19416520.2016.1153261</p> <p>Hiatt, S. R., Grandy, J. B., & Lee, B. H. (2015). Organizational responses to public and private politics: An analysis of climate change activists and US oil and gas firms. <i>Organization Science</i>, 26(6), 1769-1786. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2015.1008</p>

Market-Oriented Leadership	Introductory questions	Introductory literature