

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 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, Corporate Social (Ir)Responsibility
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, Resource Dependence
Market-Oriented Leadership	Representative Bureaucracy, Fundraising, Public service delivery

Organization	Introductory questions	Introductory literature
<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>
<p>The Blame Game: Attributing Responsibility for Corporate Social Irresponsibility in the Eyes of the Public</p> <p><i>Das Schuldspiel: Die Zuschreibung von Verantwortung für unternehmerisches soziales Fehlverhalten aus der Perspektive der Öffentlichkeit</i></p>	<p>Which factors influence whether consumers attribute corporate social irresponsibility to individual managers, organizational culture, or systemic industry pressures?</p> <p>How do attribution patterns affect consumer trust and behavioral intentions toward the offending company?</p> <p>Method: quantitative (experimental)</p>	<p>Lange, D., & Washburn, N. T. (2012). Understanding attributions of corporate social irresponsibility. <i>Academy of Management Review</i>, 37(2), 300-326. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2010.0522</p> <p>Valor, C., Antonetti, P., & Zasuwa, G. (2022). Corporate social irresponsibility and consumer punishment: A systematic review and research agenda. <i>Journal of Business Research</i>, 144, 1218-1255. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.02.063</p>

<p>Buried in Paperwork – A Study of Administrative Burden in Government-Business Interactions.</p> <p><i>Begraben im Papierkram - Eine Studie über administrative Hürden in der Interaktion zwischen Behörden und Unternehmen</i></p>	<p>Welche wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnisse hinsichtlich der Rolle administrativer Hürden für Unternehmen werden in der Literatur diskutiert?</p> <p>Welche Faktoren beeinflussen, wie Entscheider in Unternehmen administrative Hürden im Kontakt mit Behörden wahrnehmen?</p> <p>Methodik: qualitativ</p>	<p>Petersen, O. H., Hansen, J. R., & Houlberg, K. (2022). The administrative burden of doing business with the government: Learning and compliance costs in Business-Government interactions. <i>Public Administration</i>. https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12904</p> <p>Moynihan, D. P., Herd, P., & Harvey, H. (2015). Administrative Burden: Learning, Psychological, and Compliance Costs in Citizen-State Interactions. <i>Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory</i>, 25(1), 43–69. https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muu009</p>
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Human Ressource Management	Introductory questions	Introductory literature

Strategic Management	Introductory questions	Introductory literature
<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>Who Gets Blamed? Resource Dependence and the Legitimacy of Protest Targets</p> <p><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>
<p>Consuming strategy narratives: How strategy texts influence the actions of organizational members</p> <p><i>Der Konsum strategischer Narrative: Wie Strategietexte das Handeln von Organisationsmitgliedern beeinflussen</i></p>	<p>What scientific findings are discussed in the literature concerning how organizational members consume and interpret narratives within strategy texts?</p> <p>How does the consumption and interpretation of strategy narratives influence how organizational members act and contribute to the organization's strategic direction?</p> <p>Method: qualitative</p> <p><i>The thesis is interview-based. Strategy texts may be used as contextual reference or interview prompts. Discourse or textual analysis is not required.</i></p>	<p>Fenton, C., & Langley, A. (2011). Strategy as Practice and the Narrative Turn. <i>Organization Studies</i>, 32(9), 1171–1196. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840611410838</p> <p>Vaara, E., & Fritsch, L. (2022). Strategy as language and communication: Theoretical and methodological advances and avenues for the future in strategy process and practice research. <i>Strategic Management Journal</i>, 43(6), 1170–1181. https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.3360</p> <p>Vaara, E., Sorsa, V., & Pälli, P. (2010). On the force potential of strategy texts: A critical discourse analysis of a strategic plan and its power effects in a city organization. <i>Organization</i>, 17(6), 685–702. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508410367326</p>

Market-Oriented Leadership	Introductory questions	Introductory literature
<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: quantitative (qualitative 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/10.1177/10946705</p>