

Breaking the silos - the organizational challenge of interagency data exchange in complex contexts (working title)

Moritz Heuberger, Universität Potsdam

This paper examines interagency data exchange in public administration for digital one-stop delivery of public services. Using a very recent case – the parental support service delivery in Germany – to observe this phenomenon including document analysis and qualitative expert interviews, the goal is to integrate the rather interdisciplinary debate on data sharing in the very field of Public Administration research. Though, the research question can be formulated as follows: Which are organizational barriers of implementing interagency data exchange in the public administration?

The importance of interagency government data sharing for successful digital service delivery of the public administration is well discussed, but while the discussion is very fruitful on the side of Information Science – with a look at the field of the corresponding authors and journals –, the topic is rather under-examined in Public Administration (PA). Though, cooperation and coordination of different actors is a well-known phenomenon in PA, in the context of digital transformation of government, this phenomenon is not discussed at all – let alone theoretical contextualization.

This study will be based on empirical research of a case study: Easy service delivery for parents (“ELFE – einfache Leistungen für Eltern”), a project coordinated by the state government of Bremen in Germany and scaled up by the federal ministry of the interior for the whole republic in line of the online access act (“OZG – Onlinezugangsgesetz”) in 2020 enables different government agencies on different federal levels to exchange necessary data to allow a complete only one-stop delivery of services such as parental support. In this case, data exchange between multiple agencies is necessary: from the registry office (Standesamt) to the parental support office (Elterngeldstelle), connected with the tax administration (Finanzamt) and health insurances will be enabled – with the goal to save up to 5.2 Million € annually on all federal levels cumulated. For this study, different actors of this project are interview partners: technical staff as well as leadership personnel both on state and federal level. An inductive categorization in the first step will then allow to count indications for organizational barriers during the project in a deductive manner.

In the end, the aim of this study is to further develop the debates around e-service delivery, automation of government activity and interagency (data) exchange – all from a PA perspective, going back to theoretical classics of the field. This is the third paper of a cumulative (paper based) PhD project on the change of the coordination of actors in PA due to digital transformation and the empirical part is in the making. The planned date of submission is by mid 2021.