

Call for Papers
WIPCAD Midterm Conference (4 - 6 December 2014)
“Contested Public Organizations: Knowledge, Coordination, Strategy”

Organizations commonly operate under conditions of high complexity, uncertainty, and ambiguity. Rapidly changing environments exert pressures to which organizations have to respond in order to gain and maintain legitimacy. Public organizations are particularly exposed to such external demands because they are typically embedded in a complex nexus of stakeholders, which often have inconsistent expectations and are ultimately assessed by political criteria. Emergent tensions may not only destabilize organizational structures and routines, but call into question conventional methods of administration. Contestation occurs in at least three areas of core organizational activity: knowledge use and transfer; internal and external coordination; and strategy building.

The WIPCAD Midterm Conference invites researchers to submit proposals for papers that critically examine the dynamics between environments and organizational core activities. The conference theme focuses on how public organizations deal with changing conditions in terms of: (1) knowledge use and transfer; (2) coordination; and (3) strategy building. How do they react to and/or proactively seek to shape environmental conditions in order to gain legitimacy and maintain effectiveness?

First, organizations are increasingly required to apply scientific knowledge, which is at the same time often highly contested. Knowledge is being increasingly politicized by counter-expertise, non-knowledge, and scientific parameters of uncertainty. Assessing and selecting relevant data and information for policies and their implementation can become highly contested, affecting the allocation of organizational attention and shaping relations both internally and externally.

Second, cross-cutting issues such as migration, climate change, or demographic developments, go beyond the portfolio of individual ministries or public agencies. Coordination across departments and with other organizations emerges as a core challenge for many public organizations, requiring the balancing of divergent organizational perceptions, priorities, and preferences.

Third, organizational problem-solving capacity becomes challenged by unclear, controversial, and conflicting problem interpretations hampering the development of joint problem definitions and solutions. These challenges raise concerns for intra-organizational strategy building and many organizations often expand specialized capacities by establishing strategy units at the organizational apex.

We welcome both theoretical and empirical papers focusing on change in public organizations and its causes and effects in terms of coordination, knowledge, and strategy from different social science disciplines including, but not limited to, sociology and organizational studies, political science, public administration, and public management. Papers addressing varying levels or units of analysis, such as the international, transnational, national and subnational level, or those studying organizational fields are particularly invited. We are open to papers applying a wide range of methods and research designs, including quantitative and qualitative approaches, single-case studies, or comparative analyses.

Please send an abstract for a paper (max. 250 words) to coordinator@wipcad-potsdam.de no later than **28 July 2014**. Final Papers are due 15 November 2014.

For more information on the **DFG-funded Research Training Group “WIPCAD – Wicked Problems, Contested Administrations: Knowledge, Coordination, Strategy”** at the University of Potsdam / Germany, please see www.wipcad-potsdam.de or contact the Academic Coordinator of WIPCAD, Katja Lass-Lennecke (coordinator@wipcad-potsdam.de).