

Camilla Wanckel, M.A.
Universität Potsdam
cwanckel@uni-potsdam.de

Paper Proposal

12. Jahrestagung des „Forum Junge Staats-, Verwaltungs- und Policy-Forschung“ „Grenzenlose Kooperation in und mit der Verwaltung? Verwaltungshandeln in komplexen Strukturen“

The effect of information and communication technologies (ICT) on decision-making processes in policy formulation - A case study

Governments in the digital era increasingly employ information and communication technologies (ICT) that are intended to support and improve policy formulation processes within and between ministerial portfolios. Hence, more and more policy makers are equipped with instruments such as digital platforms, dashboards, cloud systems and other web-enabled tools that are presumed to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of governments. It has been argued for example, that tools like these will expand the information base for decision-making by facilitating access to information, take into account a bigger set of policy alternatives and their consequences, and foster more consistent and consensus-based problem-solving. Therefore, ICT may contribute to an increase in evidence-based policy-making as endeavored by governments in many jurisdictions.

Yet, with more data and information landing on many policy-makers' desks, the need for coordination and the demands on information processing are growing, thus challenging analytical capacities in policy design. Accordingly, some scholars have argued that ICT may actually impede decision-making processes pointing to the phenomenon of "information overload" and stressing that policy-makers might not be interested in deviating from old and trusted patterns of decision-making. Hence, our knowledge on what actually happens inside government organizations and how ICT-tools are embedded into existing structures and processes of policy formulation is limited. Therefore, this paper seeks to answer the following research question: *How do ICT-tools affect decision-making processes with regard to the policy analytical capacity in policy formulation?*

In order to answer this research question, I would like to conduct a case study analysis on “eNAP”, an electronical sustainability assessment tool developed by the Germany Federal Government. The web-based tool has been introduced in the spring of 2018 and is intended to help government employees in assessing the impact of a planned regulation on the goals of the Sustainability Strategy. Its aim is to identify potential consequences and interactions of policies at the very beginning of the policy formulation process, thus offering the opportunity to react early in the legislative process. The case study will be carried out as part of the H2020 project TROPICO („Transforming into Open, Innovative and Collaborative Governments“) and rely on multiple expert interviews, mainly conducted with ministry officials from different portfolios. Drawing upon the concepts of policy analytical capacity and evidence-based policy-making, this paper will examine how eNAP is used in ministerial bureaucracies and if and how the tool induces changes in the procedure of regulatory impact assessments.