

Public Administration Capacities for Digital and Sustainability Transitions

Summary

As modern societies are facing different transformative changes from coping with digital transformation to leading sustainability transitions, there is an acute need to think over also the role of public administration (PA) from its structures and processes to the capacities and values it provides. We look for prospective PhD students with relevant background and individual research proposals to study in detail (some of) these challenges.

Research field:	Public policy and innovation
Supervisors:	Dr. Veiko Lember Prof. Dr. Erkki Karo
Availability:	This position is available.
Offered by:	School of Business and Governance Ragnar Nurkse Department of Innovation and Governance
Application deadline:	Applications are accepted between June 01, 2022 00:00 and June 30, 2022 23:59 (Europe/Zurich)

Description

We face unprecedented challenges such as climate emergency, mass migration, energy transition, and the concentration of (digital) technological power that have put a sustainable future under severe pressure.

These challenges require more coordinated and directed global actions (e.g., mission-oriented and other similar challenge-focused approaches to governance). As the latest Covid-19 pandemic has clearly shown, technological fixes (i.e., from contact-tracing apps to vaccines) alone will not suffice to mitigate global challenges. Next to technological advances, societies arguably need major institutional adjustments, or more precisely: to shape the technological solution according to societal needs and challenges. A key feature of such shaping processes are governance institutions. This proposal rests on the assumption that public administrations form a pivotal yet often neglected cog in the social shaping of technological progress. More specifically, governments need to develop new, and redevelop old, PA and policy capabilities. They should form new kinds of public-private and public-people relationships to tap into these stakeholders' resources and successfully coordinate the activities of these stakeholders in tackling the societal challenges.

Thus, public administrations across Europe face not only double pressure to adjust to the digital age while inducing sustainable development, but also the question how to coordinate this in a meaningful way. The European Green Deal explicitly states that digital transformation should be at the service of Green Transition, but we (should) know by now that this will not occur automatically. As modern societies are facing different transformative changes from coping with digital transformation to leading sustainability transitions, there is an acute need to think over also the role of public administration (PA) from its structures and processes to the capacities and values it provides. We look for prospective PhD students with relevant background (in social sciences) and individual research proposals to study in detail (some of) these challenges.

Please submit a 3-page research proposal with indicative list of publications you plan to publish as part of your PhD research. Please link the research proposal to the research activities of the Nurkse Department (www.tal-tech.ee/nurkse). The position will be partly financed and implemented as part of the 3-year Horizon Europe Twinning Project Public Administration Capacities for Digital and Sustainability Transitions (PADST) starting in Fall 2022 and implemented in cooperation with UCL (UK), KU Leuven (Belgium) and Utrecht University (the Netherlands).

Responsibilities and (foreseen) tasks

- Carrying out literature reviews
- Novel theory building combining PA with relevant literatures such as technological change, sustainability transitions and other fields
- Empirical research (case studies, comparative research, surveys)



- Writing research papers and policy briefs / blogs
- Supporting administration of research projects
- Lecturing on the topics of PhD research

Applicants should fulfil the following requirements:

- a master's degree in social sciences (preferably in public administration, political science or economics)
- a clear interest in the topic of the position
- excellent command of English
- strong and demonstrable writing and analytical skills
- capacity to work both as an independent researcher and as part of an international team
- capacity and willingness to provide assistance in organizational tasks relevant to the project

We offer:

- 4-year PhD position in one of the largest, most internationalized and leading social science research centers in Estonia with a large portfolio of ongoing pan-European and national public administration, digital governance and innovation studies projects
- The chance to do high-level research in one of the most dynamic digital government contexts globally
- Opportunities for conference visits, research stays and networking with globally leading universities and research centers in the fields of public administration, innovation studies and digital government
- The position will be partly financed and implemented as part of the 3-year Horizon Europe Twinning Project "Public Administration Capacities for Digital and Sustainability Transitions" (PADST) starting in Fall 2022.

About the department

The Ragnar Nurkse Department of Innovation and Governance (RND) is an interdisciplinary research center of Tallinn University of Technology that focuses on socially relevant and future-oriented research and teaching issues:

- models and practices of governance and public administration globally
- fiscal governance and fiscal bureaucracies
- digital transformation of societies: datafication, public services, state-citizen relations, and smart cities in the digital era
- commons-based peer-to-peer technologies, its' governance and potential new production models
- science and innovation policies and its' management
- science and technology studies.

RND is a highly internationalised department and engages some of the top international thinkers and researchers in its research fields. Next to a fully English taught PhD degree it offers a MA degree in Technology Governance and Digital Transformations, and a unique Erasmus Mundus joint MSc programme in Public Sector Innovation and e-Governance in cooperation with KU Leuven (Belgium) and University of Münster (Germany). RND and its staff have coordinated or been involved in a multitude of international research projects with the EU (ERC, H2020, HE, FP7, INTERREG, COST), UN (UNDP), OECD (SIGMA),

INET, and have participated in various European Commission working groups (the EU's Lisbon Agenda Group, Expert Group on Managing Risks in Public Technology Procurement, Expert Group on Public Sector Innovation). Recently RND initiated a major, 32 MEUR international R&D project on Smart Cities (FinestTwins). RND is also engaged in several international associations, such as the European Master in

Public Administration program (EMPA), European Inter-University Association on Society, Science and Technology (ESST), and the European Group for Public Administration (EGPA) where RND coordinates the Permanent Study Group on Public Administration, Technology and Innovation.



Additional information

For further information, please contact Veiko Lember (veiko.lember@taltech.ee) and Erkki Karo (erkki.karo@taltech.ee) or visit <https://www.taltech.ee/nurkse>.



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