Public Administration Capacities for Digital and Sustainability Transitions

Summary

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

Research field:	Public policy and innovation
Supervisors:	Prof. 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 October 01, 2022 00:00 and October 23, 2022 23:59 (Europe/Zurich)

Description

We face unprecedented challenges such as climate emergency, food security, mass migration, energy transition, and the global concentration of (digital) technological power that have put our chances for a sustainable future under severe pressure. These challenges require more coordinated and directed global actions (e.g., mission-oriented and other similar challenge-focused and experimental approaches to governance and policies). As the mounting climate crisis and the latest Covid-19 pandemic have clearly shown, technological fixes alone will not suffice to mitigate global challenges.

Next to technological advances, societies arguably need major institutional adjustments, or more precisely: capacities to shape the technological solution according to societal needs and challenges. A key feature of such shaping processes are governance institutions. Here, public administrations form a pivotal yet often neglected cog in the social shaping of technological progress. There is a need to develop new, and also to reform old, public administration and policy capabilities for sustainability transitions. Governments need to 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.

Moreover, public administrations in Europe and beyond face not only the pressure to adjust to the sustainability challenges, but to do this in the context of the ongoing digital revolution. There is the question of how to coordinate this double challenge 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. Hence, there is an acute need to think over the role of public administration 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 max 3-page research proposal with indicative list of publications you plan to publish as part of your PhD research. At TalTech, PhD students write so-called "cumulative thesis" that consists of at least 3 internationally published peer-reviewed articles. Please link the research proposal to the research activities of the Nurkse Department (https://taltech.ee/en/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 carried out in cooperation with UCL IIPP (UK), KU Leuven Public Governance Institute (Belgium) and Utrecht University (the Netherlands).

Responsibilities and (foreseen) tasks:

- Carrying out literature reviews
- Novel theory building combining Public Administration with relevant literatures such as technological change, sustainability transitions and other fields
- Empirical research (e.g. 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 fully funded 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, technology governance and innovation studies projects. At TalTech, there is no tuition fee for PhD studies and we provide the starting monthly income of at least 1750 EUR gross + employers' healthcare and social security contributions.
- The chance to do high-level research in one of the most dynamic digital societies 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 sustainability transition.

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
- digital transformation of societies: datafication, public services, state-citizen relations, and urban futures
- commons-based peer-to-peer technologies, its' governance and potential new production models
- science and innovation policies and its' management
- philosophy of science and technology

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://taltech.ee/en/nurkse.

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