sciendo

ADHISTORY

ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR
VERWALTUNGSGESCHICHTE

BAND 6, 2021
SEITE 172–186

DOI: 10.2478/ADHI-2022-0011

The Only Game in Town? New Steering Models as Spaces of Contestation in 1990s Public Administration

ALINA MARKTANNER

Introduction

Since the 1980s, variations of administrative models have been circulating in Western industrialized countries, taking the organizational form of a company as a role model. Publications by the Organization für Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) conceiving of the state administration as »public service« changed the administrative paradigm and established the model of »New Public Management« (NPM).[1] Only in the early 1990s, however, did the German *Kommunale Gemeinschaftsstelle für Verwaltungsvereinfachung* (Joint Office for Administrative Simplification, KGSt) create an adaptation of the NPM (the New Steering Model, NSM) and set out to advocate for its adoption among municipalities. The NSM outlined a set of guidelines according to which cities could transform into professional service firm look-alikes: effective, efficient, non-hierarchical, and »customer«-friendly.

While the history of the administrative steering models the emerged in the late 20th century certainly deserves a monograph, historical research on the German administrative reform movement has remained surprisingly scarce. Political and administrative scientist Werner Jann presented convincing historicized accounts of changing paradigms in administrative discourse.[2] However, since his writings co-shaped the events they describe, they can be considered sources.[3] Margrit Seckelmann equally retraced changing paradigms in administrative science and practice since the 1970s but focused on the federal level.[4] Disciplines other than history have presented the most comprehensive analyses of municipal reforms in the Germany of the 1990s, usually focusing on the NSM as the most prominent case study.[5] They inadvertently might suggest that the NSM was the only game in (the underfunded) town. However, sources speak to the variety of similar yet different reform concepts informing administrative discourse and practice at the time. Notions such as the »Corporation City«[6] or »Administration 2000«[7] signalled the onset of a plurality of »new steering models«. Upholding the longstanding view of administration as an object to be programmed and tinkered with at will (implied by the notion of »steering«), frameworks such as the NSM did not constitute radically »new« administrative paradigms.[8]

© 2022 Alina Marktanner.
Published by Sciendo. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Nevertheless, they normalized semantics adapted from the private sector. As they appeared, the terms »modernization«, »competition«, »evolution«, and »innovation« were used as interchangeable buzzwords by the actors.

This article will highlight hitherto understudied facets of administrative history by broadening the view on the variety of ideas and actors fuelling new steering models in public administration. To this end, it will analyse two intermunicipal performance contests that began in the early 1990s: the »Speyer Quality Contest« of 1992 and the »Carl Bertelsmann Price« of 1993. Respectively hosted by the Research Institute for Public Administration at the University for Administrative Sciences Speyer and the Bertelsmann Foundation, the contests honoured cities and public bodies who used particularly »innovative« problem-solving approaches to cope with tightened budgets. They applauded cities that, rather than requesting more funds and more staff to handle the increasing public task demands, restructured their inner workings. In the absence of market mechanisms in the public sphere, the Speyer Quality Contest and the Carl Bertelsmann Price functioned as »quasi-markets«. They figured as simulated competitions in which municipalities were supposed to question their own organizational functioning and adhere to standards that mimicked a professional service firm.

I conceive of simulated competitions as comparative practices meant to anchor market elements in a societal sphere beyond the private economy. The notions of competition and innovation figure as source terminology. That is, I do not inquire into the conditions that might make innovations »successful« or not.[9] Additionally, I refrain from applying value-laden notions such as »neoliberalization« in the analysis.[10] Instead, I want to shed light on the meaning contemporary actors attributed to the terms and what agenda they pursued in their name. Recent contributions on comparative practices offer valuable methodological insights.[11] In their account of the origin of rankings, Ringel and Werron drew up a useful »heuristic tool for historical studies« in understanding comparative practices that construct competition. They define rankings »as social operations combining comparisons of performances, quantification, visualization, and repeated publication, which, by integrating these elements, partake in the social construction of competition.«[12]

The simulated competitions of the Speyer Quality Contest and the Carl Bertelsmann Price do not neatly correspond to Ringel and Werron's notion of a ranking. In fact, they did not follow the idea of »zero-sumness« that the authors highlight.[13] Rather than ascribing municipalities one place in a list of mutually exclusive positions, the Research Institute for Public Administration and the Bertelsmann Foundation celebrated the principle of »everybody wins«. While framing the choice of awardees as highly selective and emphasizing the need for competition in the public realm, they finally offered shared prices to all shortlisted candidates. Hence, the case of intermunicipal performance contests showed that contemporaries approached comparisons more pragmatically than analytical takes would assume. Still, Ringel and Werron's heuristic concept proves highly instructive, particularly in how they retraced the performative dimension of comparative practices. To understand why rankings were or were not accepted in specific contexts, they point out, one should look into »the way in which they address publics, and [...] the degree to which they succeed in attracting attention and appreciation.«[14] Indeed, intermunicipal performance contests in the 1990s could develop discursive power because the organizers managed to involve all relevant audiences, including the public sector trade unions and staff councils.

To elucidate this, the article will address the following questions: What notions of competition and innovation did the Speyer Quality Contest of 1992 and the Carl Bertelsmann Price of 1993 make prominent in German municipal administration? Compared to that, what meanings did practitioners and interest groups in the public sector attribute to notions of competition and innovation? I claim that while actors like the Research Institute for Public Administration and the Bertelsmann Foundation were driven by the genuine belief in the superiority of the organizational model of the firm, city treasurers and heads of administrative departments were looking for a way to continue to offer public services even under financial constraints. Public-sector unions and staff councils, in turn, struggled to avert the threat of privatization to preserve jobs in the public sector and continue to play a role in administrative development.

Previous accounts on new steering models, particularly the NSM, have focused on prescriptive types of sources such as programmatic reports and mission statements by reform-oriented actors, mostly because of the high visibility these publications achieved. The present account takes a different approach by scrutinizing sources that show new steering models »in the making«. The Research Institute for Public Administration and the Bertelsmann Foundation published conference proceedings as edited volumes, and these captured the debates held at the symposia and workshops taking place during the award ceremonies. The extensive documentation of the speeches and discussions held at the Speyer Quality Contest of 1992 and the Carl Bertelsmann Price of 1993 holds great potential for the historian in that they offer insights into the heterogeneous views on new management philosophies in the municipality.

I will first situate the phenomenon of intermunicipal performance contests in its context. Who were the actors driving the creation and diffusion of »new steering models« in German municipal administration of the 1990s? Then, I will shed light on intermunicipal performance contests as a unifying tool across administrative theory and practice. The phenomenon of simulated competition represented the temporary blossoming of business semantics in the German public administration of the 1990s. Rather than indicating an unequivocal reform process, however, it revealed the heterogeneity of actors and their motives.

What Was New About the »New Steering Models«?

Ideas of the »managerial city« in Germany took shape against the background of increased financial constraints following reunification. Between 1989 and 1995, the German national debt rose from 929 to 1,996 billion marks.[15] To avoid unpopular tax increases, the federal government, the West German Länder, and municipalities financed the reconstruction efforts in the East through special funds such as the »German Unity Fund«, which was largely carried by loans. In addition, the eastern states also received financial means through the social insurance system. The financing of reunification via the health and pension insurance funds set in motion the »vicious cycle« of the welfare state in the sense that higher labour costs led to higher unemployment figures, in turn burdening the federal budget.[16] As political scientist Wolfgang Renzsch laconically noted, »more services were demanded from a poorer government.«[17] While the Länder refused to contribute more than necessary to the Reunification Fund, the financial situation hit the beleaguered municipalities particularly hard. Rising unemployment produced more expenses and smaller budgets for the cities which primarily financed themselves through income taxes. In this context, alternative concepts for running municipalities gained prominence—the image of the city as a professional service firm that provided citizens first-rate and quick services and offered staff members a lucrative and inspiring work environment while also being thrifty.

What was new about the emerging »new steering models«, compared to earlier attempts at administrative reform? For one, prescriptive guidelines like the ones issued by the KGSt in its NSM implied a significant redefinition of what public administration ought to be: a service provider to be likened to a professional service firm. In the company-like decentralized management structure, politics and administration were supposed to be separated from one another. Politics, i.e., the mayor and the city council, were to set political objectives that the administration was to execute. In this way, the administration was to be prevented from setting its own costly agenda. In addition, each administrative branch was supposed to be in charge of its own budget, thus incentivizing public servants to make more conservative spending decisions. Decentralized budget responsibility, in turn, implied a new way of valorising public services in the form of »products«.[18] This redefinition of the purpose and functioning of tax-funded organizations contrasted, for instance, administrative paradigms dominating the federal level under the conservative-liberal government since 1982. While chancellor Helmut Kohl's original credo had been to »restore [the state's] original and true tasks«, he did not combine his objective of consolidating the state budget with administrative reform.[19] Rather, measures came down to linear cost-cutting and shortening of personnel. The slogan of the federal »lean state« was

only taken up by a governmental task force in 1995 and resembled a collection of single measures for further fiscal consolidation.[20] It did not, however, attempt to infuse public administration with a new logic, as actors advocating for »new steering models« on the municipal level claimed to do.

The novelty of the »new steering models« cannot be solely explained by their content and objectives, however. Their impact primarily resulted from their originators' ability to forge alliances with vastly heterogeneous actor groups. The approach towards implementation differed from reform attempts made, for instance, by the Project Group Governmental and Administrative Reform on the federal level between 1969 and 1972 or by the state governmental commission »New Leadership Structures for Baden Wurttemberg« in 1984–1985. While the Project Group made up of sociologists and political scientists had been tasked by the social liberal government to suggest measures for organizing the ministerial administration more efficiently, civil servants in the ministries resisted externally induced change.[21] Attempts to introduce management techniques from the private sector into the ministries in Baden Wurttemberg were equal failures due to a lack of approval among staff.[22]

Rather than drawing up a temporal intervention, the actors advocating for »new steering models« in the 1990s made a structured attempt at long-term changes, resting primarily on cross-sectoral cooperation.[23] The discourse coalition carrying the reform approaches was broad and varied. Besides the KGSt, professors from the University for Administrative Sciences Speyer, and the Bertelsmann Foundation, the coalition intently also entailed bodies traditionally representing staff interests: staff councils and the public sector union *Gewerkschaft ÖTV* (Trade Union for Public Services, Transport and Haulage, ÖTV). In the following, each actor group, their perception of municipal issues, and their approach to solutions shall be briefly introduced.

The KGSt was established as a »self-help organization for municipalities« in Cologne in 1949.[24] Municipalities could acquire a membership for a small fee and regularly receive expert reports and recommendations on administrative practice.[25] By the end of the 1950s, the membership included 203 cities, municipalities, and districts.[26] By the early 2020s, the number of members had risen to over 2,300.[27] Based on its research and networking function, the KGSt constituted one of the most important consulting bodies on the municipal level. From 1976 to 1995, the lawyer Gerhard Banner acted as the KGSt's chairman. Already in the 1970s, he participated in the then prominent debate on the notion of »Management by Objectives« in public administration.[28] In the early 1990s, he picked up on the governmental mode practiced in Tilburg, the Netherlands. In 1985, the city of Tilburg had implemented the principles of contract-management and replaced the cameralistic accounting system with double-entry bookkeeping as was common in the market economy. At the base of this lay the conviction »that a municipality […] can be managed better politically and administratively if management concepts from the private sector are adopted in an adapted manner«.[29]

In an initial report, the KGSt laid out the »Tilburg Model« which then developed into the NSM.[30] In the following years, Banner made it his personal mission to promote the organizational blueprint among the representatives of Eastern and Western German cities alike. Between 1991 and 1996, he gave 170 talks related to the NSM while the KGSt published 18 dense reports detailing its aspects.[31] In the course of these activities, Banner's alarming diagnosis, »The bureaucratic system is a system of organized irresponsibility«, turned into a catchphrase in municipal science and practice.[32] Hence, while the NSM significantly built on other organizational approaches, it was the KGSt's brainchild and flagship project.

Professors from the University for Administrative Sciences Speyer fuelled the debate on municipal reform on an academic level. Founded by the allied forces in 1947 according to the French model of the »Ecole Supérieure d'Administration«, the university focused on the education of civil servants. In the 1960s, the Research Institute for Public Administration was anchored at the university to produce, in the words of the temporary director Carl Böhret, »research on and for public administration«.[33] Here, the professors Helmut Klages and Hermann Hill lead the debate on new steering models with their expertise in organizational sociology. As the Institute's scientific coordinator, Oliver Haubner supported their research and public outreach activities. While the KGSt showcased the notion of the

»professional service firm«, Klages, Hill, and Haubner coined the notion of »quality« in public administration. Inspired by the U.S. management bestseller »In Search of Excellence« from 1982, Klages and Haubner emphasized in 1989–1990 that the public administration needed to develop ways to determine and measure the quality of its performance—just like private organizations did. »Quality« in their reading denoted the »effectiveness» of public services to be observed, on the one hand, in the number and speed of public services offered and, on the other, in the citizens' subjective level of satisfaction with local administration.[34] As their research objective, they declared wanting to develop a set of indicators to measure and evaluate the »performance« of public administration.[35] The organization of the Speyer Quality Contest, taking place bi-annually from 1992 to 2005, can be situated in this context.

The Bertelsmann Foundation joined the debate on organizational models in public administration as a third influential player. Founded in 1977 by Reinhard Mohn, the CEO of the media conglomerate Bertelsmann Inc., the think tank sought political influence by addressing a broad array of societal issues: culture, health, and higher education policy among others.[36] The foundation's board members consistently advocated market-liberal positions aiming at implementing principles of efficiency and competition in non-economic spheres. Through academic research, a wealth of self-published reports, and high-profile events, the Foundation sought to provide the impetus for reform in the German and European political landscape. Spokespersons advised political parties as well as individual decision-makers and formed part of governmental commissions. Scholarly research on the Bertelsmann Foundation and its activities has been scarce.[37] The case of new steering models in municipal administration, however, points to the Foundation's objective of linking up various societal groups to popularize market principles in the public realm. Hosting the event series of the Carl Bertelsmann Price counted among these efforts. While the KGSt and the Hochschule für Verwaltungswissenschaften developed approaches for administrative reform, the Bertelsmann Foundation, with its large purchasing power and its extended network spanning the political, the media, and the business sphere, acted as an important distributor.

The efforts by the KGSt, the Research Institute for Public Administration, and the Bertelsmann Foundation relied upon involving the audiences concerned with public administration. Among these, they counted the »customers«, i.e., the citizens, as well as the civil servants. Both the citizens and the civil servants constituted much more heterogeneous actor groups than the reform-oriented bodies: While a significant part of staff members and representatives resisted adopting renewed organizational elements, others considered internal reforms necessary to avert the privatization of public services. Chiefly among the civil servants' representatives, the trade union ÖTV and staff councils of individual municipalities got involved in the debates. In 1988, the ÖTV had started the initiative »Future Through Public Services«, laying out demands to reduce hierarchies and increase participative elements in public administration.[38] In 1993, following reunification, the organization issued a renewed version of the program, stressing that it rejected »the adoption of purely private-sector rationalization strategies.« At the same time, it declared itself »willing to support projects that seek to improve the performance of public services in terms of greater citizen-friendliness and improved working conditions for employees«[39]—such as proclaimed by the triad of the KGSt, the Research Institute, and the Bertelsmann Foundation.

Two concerns propelled the unions' engagement for administrative reform: the threat of the privatization of municipal services in the face of increased financial constraints and the threat of losing even more significance due to a dwindling membership base. Before reunification, the ÖTV had retreated from its traditional sphere of collective bargaining policy and counted on cooperating with legislators and employers in the public sector.[40] Funding made mobilizing for protests increasingly difficult. Between 1974 and 1990, membership in the core areas of public services and local traffic stagnated and began to decline. More specifically, the number of members paying a full membership fee was dwindling. In 1990, 22% of all ÖTV members were either retired or unemployed, thus paying smaller contributions.[41] The program »Future Through Public Services« was supposed to counter ideas of privatization and deregulation with the notion of an »active welfare state«, resting on strengthened bonds between civil

servants and the public.[42] However, since Banner's NSM quickly gained more attention in the political and administrative realm than the ÖTV's concept ever had, it became clear that the KGSt, the Research Institute for Public Administration, and the Bertelsmann Foundation had set a train in motion. The ÖTV was afraid to be permanently marginalized in the public administration landscape if it did not get involved.

Staff councils of municipalities were more concerned with how administrative reforms as envisioned by the triad would impact day-to-day operations and job security in the public sector. Redefining the municipality as a company involved a redefinition of the role of pressure groups and the negotiation of staff interests. Decentralised financing responsibility implied decentralised staff member representation, thus entailing the risk of eroding staff councils' possibilities to mobilize for overarching staff interests.[43] Staff councils feared that if they did not influence the debate, mayors would adopt elements of the NSM that pushed for streamlining departments and cutting positions, and ignore elements that stressed the need for increased staff member participation. Hence, rather than the enthusiasm displayed by the other actors, unions and pressure groups showed a torn if not calculating attitude towards »new steering models«. Their reading of reform concepts was the result of attending to the interests of the groups they represented but also of concerns pertaining to their organizational survival. Comparative practices in the form of simulated intermunicipal competition functioned as a tool to tie the various positions together.

»Innovation Through Competition«: Holy Grail or Necessary Evil?

Performance contests as »market surrogates«

By hosting the Speyer Quality Contest in 1992 and the Carl Bertelsmann Price in 1993, Klages, Hill, and Haubner, as well as Mohn, advocated for new steering models in municipal administration. The KGSt's chairman Banner played an important role in both competitions in that he formed part of the respective selection committees along with similarly exposed actors in administrative theory and practice, such as Dietrich Budäus, Christoph Reichard, and Klaus Lüder. Simulating competition among municipalities, the actors evaluated candidate cities based on how closely they had approached the ideal of the professional service firm. The events did not only involve the process of selecting and awarding prizes to candidate cities; they also, importantly, included a forum for stakeholders to meet, and—so the organizers hoped—adopt one another's techniques.

As rationale for the events, the organizers put forth that public administration needed competitive elements to ensure the quality of services. The pronounced scepticism towards the public administration as a sphere beyond market mechanisms became apparent in Mohn's words: »In other industries and areas of life, there is usually some kind of competitive impulse; not so in the case of the state. This also explains why things are not progressing there the way one would like.«[44] Haubner explained, too, that the idea of the Speyer Quality Contest was to make German municipalities »to not institutionalize but rather to ›internalize ‹ the idea of competition.«[45] According to Haubner, legal »framework conditions and restrictions on administrative action in no way stand in the way of ›internal‹ administrative competition.«[46] Competition, however, was not an end in itself for the actors. Rather, it seemed like the driver for innovation, something municipalities seemed to desperately need as a KGSt report stated: »Like any private service company, [the administration] needs the challenge of competition to remain capable of performance and innovation.«[47] In the absence of market pressure, proper functioning of the state had to be »enforced«. As Mohn claimed, »We must force our state system to think about innovation and better services through transparency and competition.«[48] The notion of innovation, in turn, functioned as a placeholder for any element taken from the organizational form of the professional service firm, bringing the argument full circle. Being convinced by the superiority of the private economic form of organization, the actors made intertwining the notions of competition, innovation, and service plausible.

Given this rather thin line of argument, the events from 1992 and 1993 exemplify that not only the participating municipalities competed for recognition.

Rather, the triad of the KGSt, the Research Institute, and the Bertelsmann Foundation worked hard to render new steering models visible and popular. By inviting municipalities to compete for awards and certificates for implementing new organizational principles, the hosts framed the paradigm of the firm as something to aspire to. The various steps in organizing and conducting the events were all directed toward this objective. Being the first to host an intermunicipal performance contest in 1992, the Research Institute for Public Administration went to great lengths to interest municipalities in participating. The unknown competition first needed to be made competitive. By running advertisements in magazines circulating in the administration and sending out information posters to heads of municipalities, Klages, Hill, and Haubner meant to invite both interested and potential candidates. At the Quality Contest's opening event, Haubner quoted from one of the advertisements:

> *If you think that your administration works in a future-oriented, service-oriented, efficient and effective, successful and high-performance manner; if you want to be a figurehead and role model for others and can justify and convincingly explain this, too, then you should participate and request the detailed application material.*[49]

However, Haubner and Klages conceded that the effect of such activities had been moderate. Rather than advertisements, word of mouth had been an effective means to reach potential competitors. As possible reasons for the campaign's slow start, they mused that the respective magazines might not be widely read and that heads of municipalities might not have passed on the information to their departments.[50] The possibility of municipalities resisting external attempts to incite change was thus alluded to. Out of the more than 10,000 existing municipalities, 362 had requested the extended application material from the Research Institute. Out of these, 59 handed in a full application, expounding among other things on their »implemented or planned modernization measures«, their »knowledge on their own success factors« and their »steering philosophy«.[51] Applicants were varied: cities, rural districts, but also individual public organizations such as schools and even one federal agency – the Federal Labor Agency – filled in the questionnaire comprising 25 questions.[52] Having municipalities investigate and evaluate themselves in gathering the necessary application material fulfilled a central purpose in familiarizing them with the principles of the organizational model of the professional service firm. The applicant organizations chose various ways of gathering the necessary knowledge about their own inner workings, for instance, displaying different levels of staff member engagement. In some cases, the heads of institutions alone reported on the administration's way of operating. In other cases, lower-level staff initiated the application process. The third set of applicants had formed task forces, the most »participatory« and hence favourable approach in the eyes of the jury.[53]

Upon a review of the application materials, a circle of five referees selected 18 candidate cities that they deemed above average in resembling a professional service firm. An extended jury of 13 widely-known administration experts—among those Klages and Hill, but also Banner and his pronounced critic Eberhard Laux—went on to decide on the final cut. For this purpose, they visited the applicants and inspected the functioning of the municipalities on site. 11 finalists remained.[54] While the organizers emphasized the selectiveness of the process and, consequently, the finalists' exceptional »performance«, they chose a non-competitive approach for the last step: Three municipalities shared the »Speyer Award«; the remaining eight were awarded the »Speyer Tribute«. The organizers did not differentiate within the different categories, following the slogan »everybody wins« rather than the »winner takes all« principle. In this spirit, the organizers celebrated their initiative as a success, despite the drawbacks in getting the campaign rolling in the beginning. Having set in motion internal debates in municipalities and local agencies across the country they considered the event's actual impact.

The Carl Bertelsmann Price 1993 was fuelled by the same objective as the Speyer Quality Contest. Marga Pröhl, head of the Foundation's department »State and Administration«, explained at the opening event that the price was,

> *intended to honor municipalities that have innovatively adapted their structures and working methods to today's challenges and have*

evolved from traditional ›public authorities‹ to modern, democratically controlled ›public service companies‹.[55]

However, the Bertelsmann Foundation chose a slightly different approach for creating a pool of competitors. Rather than having municipalities apply, the think tank selected its own preferred set of exemplary cities. By choice, it enlarged the circle of potential competitors to include municipalities all over the Western industrialized world. Thus, it circumvented lines of argumentation that legal frameworks could not be compared cross-nationally as put forth regularly by administrative practitioners. Similar to the Research Institute for Public Administration, the Bertelsmann Foundation used the opportunity of organizing the event to network with other reform-oriented actors. Thus, the international committee charged with making a pre-selection was headed by KGSt chairman Banner. The committee decided on ten participating countries, including New Zealand, the US, the UK, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and various Nordic countries. Five administration experts from every selected country proceeded to respectively suggest one or two candidate cities. In the next step, the Bertelsmann Foundation hired management consultants to inspect the recommended municipalities on site. Management consultants from the companies Mummert + Partner Inc. and Zündel + Partner Inc. travelled to the various places and conducted interviews with local representatives. Based on their results, Banner's task force recommended a shortlist to the jury consisting of the Bertelsmann Foundation's advisory board.[56]

More strongly than the KGSt and the Research Institute, the Bertelsmann Foundation created a link between administrative »performance« and its democratic outlook. In taking up the notion of »democracy«, it mobilized a value commonly attributed to public institutions rather than tapping into the controversially debated dichotomy between publicly and privately run organizations. Still, the seven criteria the task force based its choices on simply mirrored the NSM guidelines. Under the heading »Performance Under Democratic Control«, the jury considered all the participatory elements in the candidate municipalities' functioning. The notion of »democratic control« in this context came down to citizens being involved in municipal decisions and the municipality regularly and publicly reporting on the »quality, cost-efficiency and effectiveness« of its operations. The criterion of »Cooperation between Politics and Administration« captured whether, as stated by the NSM, the city council issued directions that the administration merely executed. »Decentralized Leadership« referred to the question of whether financial responsibility was handled in each administrative department. As the decisive seventh criterion, Pröhl sketched out the notion of competition: Cities that included competitive elements among staff members and regularly compared their own »performance« against other cities and private service providers qualified as finalists.

Similar to the Research Institute for Public Administration, the Bertelsmann Foundation decided that all pre-selected cities were »winners in their own way.«[57] The municipalities of Phoenix, USA, and Christchurch, New Zealand, shared the price for constituting the most »efficient and innovative« municipalities worldwide. Not only had they practiced systematic citizen participation in the form of polls and reporting, but they also made use of institutionalized elements of competition. While Phoenix granted 300 leading civil servants performance-based bonuses, Christchurch had the municipality compete with private service providers by offering the cheapest services.[58] The remaining eight pre-selected cities received honourable mentions for their »consistent modernization efforts«.[59] The ultimate goal of initiating an imitation effect at home became clear in Banner's final appeal to German mayors while announcing the awardees: Local municipalities could learn a lot from the international exemplary cases, not least that the state could create a »climate for reform« and enable cities to take action themselves rather than calling for federal (financial) support. Both the Speyer Quality Contest and the Carl Bertelsmann Price can thus be described as simulated competitions aimed at creating role models to induce change.

Everybody wins?

One thing became abundantly clear from their framing of the intermunicipal performance contests: The

representatives of the KGSt, the Research Institute for Public Administration, and the Bertelsmann Foundation considered the administration in its traditional form unfit to cope with contemporary challenges. However, their efforts to conceive of state agencies as companies met with resistance. Pushbacks happened on the academic plane. Administrative expert Eberhard Laux emphasized that,

> *[i]t should take no intellectual effort to note that similarities between a private sector enterprise and a local administrative body only exist in terms of the provision of resources, but not in any other decisive aspects.*[60]

More significantly, staff members in the civil service sought out ways to delay changes. Sociologist Johannes Bruns wrote in 1997 about common strategies to resist interventions that advocated for municipal reforms: »[I]nformation is concealed, official events on the ›New Steering Model‹ and the ›mission statement‹ are undermined, and relevant announcements on such topics ignored.«[61]

As Ringel and Werron explained, the »success« of practices of comparing (or lack thereof) importantly rested on the involvement of the relevant publics. The »relevant publics« in this case of the municipal administration consisted of a diverse set of actors: Next to the citizens, political heads of the cities as well as staff member representatives acted as important spokespersons. For individual mayors and city treasurers, the award series of the Speyer Quality Contest and the Carl Bertelsmann Price constituted an opportunity. Not that they attributed inherent problem-solving capacities to notions of competition and innovation; rather, they demonstrated an instrumental approach to concepts adapted from the private sector. Winning awards could generate reputation and pre-empt public criticism of public services. What was more, reporting and comparing their figures enabled individual cities to generate accountability: Demonstrating that they had to manage with ever shrinking funds, they justified service cuts to the public.

The case of Duisburg exemplifies how municipalities used the intermunicipal performance contests hosted by the Research Institute and the Bertelsmann Foundation partially for strategic ends. Duisburg had been the one city that won both the Speyer Award 1992 and the Carl Bertelsmann Price 1993. In the latter contest, it had been the only German contestant even considered. Indeed, the administration had taken drastic cost-saving measures in the program »Duisburg 2000« beginning in 1988.[62] Situated at the heart of the coal and steel industry, the city had lost more than 100.000 inhabitants in the course of deindustrialization.[63] Lacking a significant amount of income tax while needing to pay increasing amounts of social security provisions, the local government had to find ways to make ends meet. Supported by the Land North Rhine-Westphalia and the Federal Government, the city for one instigated a program to strategically invest in new industries. However, the city treasurer Monika Kuban also applied ever more creative tricks to cut expenditures: By the mid-1990s, sports fields were privatized, several schools shared one janitor and Duisburg shared its opera with the neighbouring Düsseldorf.[64] Kuban was not quiet on the fact that this happened out of necessity:

> *Administrative modernization [...] is intended to contribute to securing or restoring the local government's ability to act despite the greatest social, economic, ecological and financial difficulties.*[65]

One of Kuban's objectives in continuing to have the city's »performance« compared and ranked with similar-sized German cities was to shed light on the fact that fewer funds meant less-reliable public services. In 1997, Duisburg presented a budget plan that lacked the legally required outline for securing the municipal debt. By that time, deficits had risen to 10%. Faced with rising social-security payments, the treasurer argued for a federal tax reform to generate more reliable income streams for municipalities. The reputation the city had gained thanks to the performance contests provided her with the necessary standing:

> *In recent years, we have always been presented as a shining example to other cities because we were prepared to make radical cuts. That's why it matters when we say: There's nothing more to be done.*[66]

As another example, the Franconian city of Mellrichstadt had received the Speyer Award for having transformed its municipal affairs office into a »citizens' office« in the 1980s, a construct the mayor Helmut Will explained as a »state-of-the-art service company for the citizens«. All city services had been pooled into the »citizen's office« which remained the only administrative body besides the construction agency and the financial agency. The tasks fulfilled by the »citizens' office«, in turn, were divided into everyday, quickly-processed citizens' requests, on the one hand, and requests that required longer appointments, on the other. Asked for the motivation behind the administrative reform, Will stated: »In the end, it was our dissatisfaction with our satisfaction.« Although local politicians, civil servants, and the public alike had considered public services to perform »alright«, the city had thought it reasonable to »invest early on« into »the future satisfaction with our administration.«[67] The city council sought to gain a strategic advantage in attracting taxpayers and corporations.[68] Sensitivity to public perception as well as an orientation towards the future, therefore, played a role in the city's altered self-stylization. In this reading, the convictions of the KGSt and others did not figure. If the triad pushed notions of competition and innovation, municipal departments sought to cope with consolidation, cost-cutting, and privatization. Therefore, what appeared as the holy grail to adjacent actors seemed like a glimmer of hope to actors on the ground.

However, events like intermunicipal performance contests did not only provide a forum for stakeholders to adapt techniques moving them closer to the professional service firm, even if for strategic reasons; they also provided torn civil servants with the possibility to vent. The head of a cultural department present at the symposium following the Carl Bertelsmann Price was particularly poignant on the challenge he was facing: needing to cut costs, i.e. positions, so that theatres could be maintained while also needing to motivate staff members to get involved in new managerial approaches. The question he raised must have rung all too familiar to other heads of departments present: »How am I actually supposed to motivate employees to participate in cutting their own jobs?«[69] Statements such as these never received the same amplification as did the approaches honoured in the performance contests. Yet, they show that the workshops and forums accompanying the award ceremonies provided municipal actors with the opportunity to share creative ways of dealing with the financial pressure exerted on them. Addressing the circle of practitioners, the head of culture warned against being too outspoken on possibilities to save the municipality money:

> *If I continue to be as transparent as I am at the moment, all the heads of cultural departments will accuse me of building sewage treatment plants with savings made in the cultural sector. And that's not my job.*[70]

Despite the joint efforts of the KGSt, the Research Institute for Public Administration, and the Bertelsmann Foundation to popularize »new steering models«, only a fraction of the existing municipalities actually implemented approaches like the NSM to a significant extent. About 15 years after the KGSt had presented the concept, some of its academic promoters evaluated the NSM as »at least a partial failure«.[71] Out of a representative set of surveyed municipalities, only 2.5% turned out to be »NSM hardliners«, having implemented a majority of the prescribed measures.[72]

The same held true for practices of intermunicipal competition. In the course of the 1990s, the ÖTV engaged in a regular exchange with both the KGSt and the Bertelsmann Foundation by hosting joint events.[73] In addition, the KGSt and the Bertelsmann Foundation initiated intermunicipal benchmarking networks. Here, municipalities could join a circle of cities comparable to them in terms of demographics, tasks, and their financial condition. They then discussed the resulting benchmarking figures with the help of management consultants. However, in 2000/01, merely 4% of West German municipalities participated in intermunicipal benchmarking, with much lower figures among East German municipalities. A year later, participation had reduced by a fifth.[74] While the Carl Bertelsmann Price kept being awarded for various achievements other than administrative reform, the Speyer Quality Contest took place for the last time in 2005.[75] Hence, the NSM and other steering models dominating the municipal discourse in the 1990s did not lead to the proclaimed

overhaul in terms of organizational self-understanding. Rather, they constituted a temporary intervention with mixed results.

Conclusion: Intermunicipal Performance Competitions as a Tool for Reform

German municipal administration at the turn of the 1990s saw a surge in managerial semantics. Conceptual frameworks created by actors surrounding and intently impacting public administration provided blueprints on how to remodel municipalities according to the professional service firm. What was new about the »new steering models« (advocated for by the KGSt, the Research Institute for Public Administration, and the Bertelsmann Foundation) was the diverse set of actor groups they managed to tie together. Practices of comparing such as the Speyer Quality Contest and the Carl Bertelsmann Price provided the setting for think tanks, researchers, mayors, treasurers, and staff representatives to come together and negotiate their views on how the administration was supposed to function.

In this endeavour, the notions of »competition« and »innovation« were as omnipresent as they were elusive. In the eyes of the actors spreading new managerial approaches, competition could cure many ills of non-commercial organizations. Simulated competitions were supposed to make participating public bodies »innovate«, i.e., develop alternative ways to overcome financial constraints rather than demand more funds from higher levels in the federal system. »Innovation« to organizations like the Bertelsmann Foundation seemed like a promise: a promise of a more efficient, output-oriented, »customer«-friendly functioning of public services. For mayors, city treasurers and public sector trade unions, in contrast, »innovation« in the form of the firm model promised a way to cope with dire financial constraints following reunification. While the wave of »new steering models« had subsided by the early 2000s, the debate highlighted shifts in power relations and areas of responsibility that occurred in the public sector. The ÖTV and staff councils participated in the reform discourse but did not shape it in a significant way. As the impact of administrative staff decreased, decisions on the direction of the municipality were increasingly left at the discretion of individual city councils, mayors, and treasurers. The history of intermunicipal performance contests thus elucidates broader changes unfolding in the urban administrative landscape of the 1990s.

1 OECD: Administration as Service. The Public as Client, Paris 1987. On national variations of the NPM cf. Christopher Hood: »The New Public Management« in the 1980s. Variations on a theme, in: Accounting, Organizations and Society 2/3/20 (1995), pp. 93–109.
2 Werner Jann: Wandel verwaltungspolitischer Leitbilder. Vom Management zur Governance, in: Klaus König (ed.): Deutsche Verwaltung an der Wende zum 21. Jahrhundert, Baden-Baden 2002, pp. 279–303.
3 Werner Jann: Lernen vom privaten Sektor - Bedrohung oder Chance? Oder: Wer hat Angst vor Public Management?, in: Thomas Edeling / Werner Jann / Dieter Wagner (eds.): Öffentliches und privates Management, Wiesbaden 1998, pp. 11–51.
4 Margrit Seckelmann: Die »effiziente Verwaltung«. Zur Entwicklung der Verwaltungsleitbilder seit dem Ende der 1970er Jahre, in: Peter Collin / Klaus-Gert Lutterbeck (eds.): Eine intelligente Maschine? Handlungsorientierungen moderner Verwaltung (19./20. Jh.), Baden-Baden 2009, pp. 245–261.
5 Cf. the highly analytical take from urban studies researcher Felix Silomon-Pflug: Verwaltung der unternehmerischen Stadt. Zur neoliberalen Neuordnung von Liegenschaftspolitik und -verwaltung in Berlin und Frankfurt am Main, Bielefeld 2018 and the monographs by the economists Bernd Vogel: Herkunft und Verbreitung des »Neuen Steuerungsmodells« in der deutschen Kommunalverwaltung, Hamburg 1998 and Rick Vogel: Zur Institutionalisierung von New Public Management. Disziplindynamik der Verwaltungswissenschaft unter dem Einfluss ökonomischer Theorie, Wiesbaden 2006.
6 Werner Killian / Karsten Schneider: »Konzern Stadt« und Interessenvertretung. Herausbildung neuer Arbeitsbeziehungen im kommunalen Sektor, in: Industrielle Beziehungen / The German Journal of Industrial Relations 3/5 (1998), pp. 270–297.
7 Innenministerium Baden-Württemberg: Verwaltung 2000. Die Ziele und ihre Umsetzung, Stuttgart 1990.
8 Andreas Anter: Verwaltung und Verwaltungsmetaphorik. Der lange Weg der Maschine, in: Peter Collin / Klaus-Gert Lutterbeck (eds.): Eine intelligente Maschine? Handlungsorientierungen moderner Verwaltung (19./20. Jh.), Baden-Baden 2009, pp. 35–56.
9 The German-speaking historiography of innovation, in contrast, has produced enlightening accounts of technological development and detailed case studies of individual firms. Recently, authors have explored the notion of »cultures of innovation«, examining the institutional frameworks that enable and constrain technological advances: Thomas Wieland: Innovationskultur. Theoretische und empirische Annäherungen an einen Begriff, in: Reinhold Reith / Rupert Pichler / Christian Dirninger (eds.): Innovationskultur in historischer und ökonomischer Perspektive. Modelle, Indikatoren und regionale Entwicklungslinien, Innsbruck 2006, pp. 21–38.
10 Stephanie Mudge: What is neo-liberalism?, in: Socio-Economic Review 4/6 (2008), pp. 703–731. For a critical reading of the notion, however, cf. Peter-Paul Bänziger / Laura Rischbieter / Monika Wulz: Neoliberalism as a concept of contemporary history. A prolific research tool or an analytic pitfall?, in: Journal of modern European history 4/17 (2019), pp. 381–383 and the contributions in the same special issue.
11 Cf. the contributions in Angelika Epple / Walter Erhart (eds.): Die Welt beobachten. Praktiken des Vergleichens, Frankfurt am Main 2015. Becker's call for a focus on practices to go beyond the »master narratives« of modernization and rationalization and dissolve contradictions in administrative discourse similarly continues to be instructive here: Peter Becker: Überlegungen zu einer Kulturgeschichte der Verwaltung, in: Jahrbuch für Europäische Verwaltungsgeschichte (2003), pp. 311–336, at p. 335.
12 Leopold Ringel / Tobias Werron: Where do rankings come from? A historical-sociological perspective on the history of modern rankings, in: Angelika Epple / Johannes Grave / Walter Erhart (eds.): Practices of Comparing. Towards a New Understanding of a Fundamental Human Practice, Bielefeld 2020, pp. 137–170, at p. 140.
13 Ringel / Werron: Where do rankings come from?, p. 142.
14 Ringel / Werron: Where do rankings come from?, p. 145.
15 Foundational: Gerhard Ritter: Der Preis der deutschen Einheit. Die Wiedervereinigung und die Krise des Sozialstaats, München 2006.
16 Gerhard Ritter: Die deutsche Wiedervereinigung, in: Historische Zeitschrift 286 (2008), pp. 289–339, at p. 328.
17 Wolfgang Renzsch: Financing German Unity. Fiscal Conflict Resolution in a Complex Federation, in: Publius: the journal of federalism 4/28 (1998), pp. 127–146, at p. 128.
18 For a comprehensive summary of the NSM cf. Werner Jann: Neues Steuerungsmodell, in: Bernhard Blankeet al. (eds.): Handbuch zur Verwaltungsreform, Opladen ^{3}2005, pp. 74–84.
19 For the full speech cf. »Stenographische Berichte«, 9th voting period, session no. 121, 13. 10. 1982, p. 7224. On the turn towards condolidation policy from the mid-1970s onwards cf. Hans-Peter Ullmann: Das Abgleiten in den Schuldenstaat. Öffentliche Finanzen in der Bundesrepublik von den sechziger bis zu den achtziger Jahren, Göttingen 2017, pp. 301–377.
20 Werner Jann: Helmut Kohl und der »schlanke Staat«. Eine verwaltungspolitische Bilanz, in: Göttrik Wewer / Hans-Hermann Hartwich (eds.): Bilanz der Ära Kohl. Christlich-liberale Politik in Deutschland 1982-1998, Opladen 1998, pp. 229–266.
21 Winfried Süß: »Rationale Politik« durch sozialwissenschaftliche Beratung? Die Projektgruppe Regierungs- und Verwaltungsreform 1966-1975, in: Stefan Fisch / Wilfried Rudloff (eds.): Experten und Politik. Wissenschaftliche Politikberatung in geschichtlicher Perspektive, Berlin 2004, pp. 329–348. Cf. also Rudolf Fisch: Widerstände gegen Veränderungen in Behörden. Sozialpsychologische Perspektiven, in: Klaus König (ed.): Deutsche Verwaltung an der Wende zum 21. Jahrhundert, Baden-Baden 2002, pp. 547–584.
22 Jörg Bischoff: »Ein Mann der Lüfte«, in: Die ZEIT, 23.08.1985.
23 Silomon-Pflug: Verwaltung der unternehmerischen Stadt, p. 74.
24 Harald Plamper: Die Kommunale Gemeinschaftsstelle (KGSt) in Köln, in: Organisationsentwicklung 1 (1996), pp. 62–63, at p. 62.
25 Heinrich Siepmann: Wissenschaftliche Beratung der Kommunen, in: Michael Borchmann / Günter Püttner (eds.): Handbuch der kommunalen Wissenschaft und Praxis: Band 1 Grundlagen, Berlin u.a. 1981, pp. 37–47, at p. 39.
26 Reinhard Badenhoop: System der kommunalen Verwaltungsrationalisierung, in: Hans Peters (ed.): Kommunale Finanzen und Kommunale Wirtschaft, Berlin u.a. 1959, pp. 555–610, at p. 558.
27 KGSt Mitgliedsverzeichnis, https://www.kgst.de/mitgliedsverzeichnis, last checked on 07. 12. 2021.
28 Vogel: Herkunft und Verbreitung des »Neuen Steuerungsmodells«, p. 40 f.
29 Gerrit Wolters: Das Tilburger Modell. Leistungsorientierte Steuerung der niederländischen Verwaltungen und der Kameralistik, in: Der Gemeindehaushalt 10 (1992), p. 217-218, at p. 217.
30 KGSt: Wege zum Dienstleistungsunternehmen Kommunalverwaltung. Fallstudie Tilburg, Köln.
31 Vogel: Herkunft und Verbreitung des »Neuen Steuerungsmodells«, p. 43.

32 Gerhard Banner: Von der Behörde zum Dienstleistungsunternehmen, in: ZOE 2 (1994), pp. 31–38, at p. 31.
33 Heike Amos: Zur Geschichte des Forschungsinstituts für öffentliche Verwaltung bei der (Deutschen) Hochschule für Verwaltungswissenschaften Speyer 1956/1962-2001, Speyer 2002, p. 73.
34 Helmut Klages / Oliver Haubner: Qualitäts- und Erfolgsmerkmale von Organisationen im öffentlichen Bereich. 1. Teil, in: VOP 4 (1990), pp. 247–251.
35 Helmut Klages / Oliver Haubner: Qualitäts- und Erfolgsmerkmale von Organisationen im öffentlichen Bereich. 2. Teil, in: VOP 5 (1990), pp. 316–321, at p. 321.
36 Hans-Dieter Weger: Die Bertelsmann Stiftung, in: Rolf Hauer / Jürgen Rossberg / Winfrid Pölnitz-Egloffstein (eds.): Stiftungen aus Vergangenheit und Gegenwart, Tübingen 1986, pp. 167–182.
37 For a notable exception cf. Hartmut Berghoff: Blending Personal and Managerial Capitalism. Bertelsmann's Rise from Medium-Sized Publisher to Global Media Corporation and Service Provider, 1950-2010, in: Business History 5-6/55 (2013), pp. 855–874.
38 Nikolaus Simon: Die Initiative »Zukunft durch öffentliche Dienste« heute. Erfahrungen und Erfolge, in: Ulrich von Alemann / Josef Schmid (eds.): Die Gewerkschaft ÖTV. Reformen im Dickicht gewerkschaftlicher Organisationspolitik, Baden-Baden 1998, pp. 197–204.
39 X. Eckpunkte künftiger Gestaltungspolitik, in: Gewerkschaft ÖTV (ed.): Das Neue Steuerungsmodell der Kommunalen Gemeinschaftsstelle. Position der Gewerkschaft ÖTV, Frankfurt am Main 1997, pp. 138–143, at 138 f.
40 A pronounced critic of the cooperative course was the ÖTV secretary Michael Wendl: Michael Wendl: Zwischen Arbeitgeberinteresse und Mitgliederunmut. Die Tarifpolitik der ÖTV, in: Rolf Fritsch (ed.): Elemente der Erneuerung. Zukunft des öffentlichen Dienstes - Gewerkschaftspolitik im Umbruch, Hamburg 1991, pp. 47–63.
41 Werner Sauerborn: Der neue Mitgliederrekord. Ein trügerischer Erfolg, in: Rolf Fritsch (ed.): Elemente der Erneuerung. Zukunft des öffentlichen Dienstes - Gewerkschaftspolitik im Umbruch, Hamburg 1991, pp. 154–157, at p. 156.
42 Nikolaus Simon: Die Initiative »Zukunft durch öffentliche Dienste« heute. Erfahrungen und Erfolge, in: Ulrich von Alemann / Josef Schmid (eds.): Die Gewerkschaft ÖTV. Reformen im Dickicht gewerkschaftlicher Organisationspolitik, Baden-Baden 1998, pp. 197–204, at p. 198.
43 Gewerkschaft ÖTV (ed.): Das Neue Steuerungsmodell der Kommunalen Gemeinschaftsstelle. Position der Gewerkschaft ÖTV, Frankfurt am Main 1997, p. 111 f.
44 Reinhard Mohn: Begrüßung, in: Frieder Naschold / Marga Pröhl (eds.): Produktivität öffentlicher Dienstleistungen Bd. 2. Dokumentation zum Symposium, Gütersloh 1995, pp. 9–12, at p. 9.
45 Oliver Haubner: Zur Organisation des 1. Speyerer Qualitätswettbewerbs: von der Idee zum »Ideenmarkt«, in: Hermann Hill / Helmut Klages (eds.): Spitzenverwaltungen im Wettbewerb. Eine Dokumentation des 1. Speyerer Qualitätswettbewerbs 1992, Baden-Baden 1993, pp. 48–58, at p. 54.
46 Oliver Haubner: Spitzenverwaltungen im Wettbewerb: Konzept und Ergebnisse des »1. Speyerer Qualitätswettbewerbs 1992«, in: Hermann Hill / Helmut Klages (eds.): Qualitäts- und erfolgsorientiertes Verwaltungsmanagement. Aktuelle Tendenzen und Entwürfe; Vorträge und Diskussionsbeiträge der 61. Staatswissenschaftlichen Fortbildungstagung 1993 der Hochschule für Verwaltungswissenschaften Speyer, Berlin 1993, pp. 313–325, at p. 323.
47 KGSt: Das Neue Steuerungsmodell. Begründung, Konturen, Umsetzung. Bericht Nr. 5/1993, Köln 1993, p. 23.
48 Reinhard Mohn: Schlußwort, in: Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.): Carl-Bertelsmann-Preis. Demokratie und Effizienz in der Kommunalverwaltung. Dokumentation zu Symposium und Festakt, Gütersloh 1994, pp. 405–408, at p. 407.
49 Haubner: Zur Organisation des 1. Speyerer Qualitätswettbewerbs, p. 49.
50 Helmut Klages: Methodenfragen des Verwaltungswettbewerbs, in: Hermann Hill / Helmut Klages (eds.): Spitzenverwaltungen im Wettbewerb. Eine Dokumentation des 1. Speyerer Qualitätswettbewerbs 1992, Baden-Baden 1993, pp. 32–47, at p. 41.
51 Klages: Methodenfragen des Verwaltungswettbewerbs, p. 44.
52 Cf. the list in Haubner: Zur Organisation des 1. Speyerer Qualitätswettbewerbs, p. 56.
53 Haubner: Zur Organisation des 1. Speyerer Qualitätswettbewerbs, p. 52.
54 Haubner: Zur Organisation des 1. Speyerer Qualitätswettbewerbs, pp. 50–53.
55 Marga Pröhl: Vorgeschichte, Zielsetzung und Methodik der Preisvergabe, in: Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.): Carl-Bertelsmann-Preis. Demokratie und Effizienz in der Kommunalverwaltung. Dokumentation zu Symposium und Festakt, Gütersloh 1994, pp. 27–33, at p. 27.
56 Pröhl: Vorgeschichte, Zielsetzung und Methodik der Preisvergabe, p. 31 f.
57 Pröhl: Vorgeschichte, Zielsetzung und Methodik der Preisvergabe, p. 33.
58 Gerhard Banner: Laudatio zum Carl Bertelsmann-Preis 1993, in: Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.): Carl-Bertelsmann-Preis. Demokratie und Effizienz in der Kommunalverwaltung. Dokumentation zu Symposium und Festakt, Gütersloh 1994, pp. 369–394, at pp. 375–378.
59 Banner: Laudatio zum Carl Bertelsmann-Preis 1993, p. 378.
60 Eberhard Laux: Randbemerkung. Unternehmen Stadt?, in: Die öffentliche Verwaltung 12 (1993), p. 523–524, at p. 523.
61 Johannes Bruns: Verwaltungsmodernisierung und direkte Mitarbeiterbeteiligung. Macht, Widerstände und Blockaden, in: Gewerkschaftliche Monatshefte 7 (1997), pp. 409–417, at p. 412.
62 Cf. the overview on the programme in Dieter Steinkamp: Duisburg 2000. Stadt auf Reformkurs, in: Hermann Hill / Helmut Klages (eds.): Lernen von Spitzenverwaltungen. Eine Dokumentation des 2. Speyerer Qualitätswettbewerbs 1994, Berlin 1995.
63 Monika Kuban: »Duisburg 2000« – eine Stadt auf Reformkurs (oder: »Not macht erfinderisch«), in: Christoph Reichard / Hellmut Wollmann (eds.): Kommunalverwaltung im Modernisierungsschub, Basel 1996, pp. 135–140, at p. 135.
64 Daniela Weingärtner: »Duisburg und die Dame ohne Kohle«, in: taz, 30. 10. 1997, p. 13.
65 Kuban: »Duisburg 2000«, p. 140.
66 Daniela Weingärtner, »Duisburg und die Dame ohne Kohle«, in: taz, October 30, 1997, p. 13.
67 Helmut Will: Die öffentliche Verwaltung als Dienstleistungsunternehmen. Das »Bürgeramt Mellrichstadt«, in: Hermann Hill / Helmut Klages (eds.): Spitzenverwaltungen im Wettbewerb. Eine Dokumentation des 1. Speyerer Qualitätswettbewerbs 1992, Baden-Baden 1993, pp. 151–162, at p. 151.
68 On the discourse on Germany as a »location for business« cf. Wencke Meteling: Internationale Konkurrenz als nationale Bedrohung. Zur politischen Maxime der »Standortsicherung« in

den neunziger Jahren, in: Ralph Jessen (ed.): Konkurrenz in der Geschichte. Praktiken – Werte – Institutionalisierungen, Frankfurt a.M. 2014, pp. 289–315.

69 Monika Kuban: Arbeitsgruppe V. Haushaltskonsolidierung versus Kommunalreform, in: Frieder Naschold / Marga Pröhl (eds.): Produktivität öffentlicher Dienstleistungen Bd. 2. Dokumentation zum Symposium, Gütersloh 1995, pp. 227–248, at p. 235.

70 Kuban: Arbeitsgruppe V, p. 235 f.

71 Sabine Kuhlmann / Jörg Bogumil / Stephan Grohs: Evaluating Administrative Modernization in German Local Governments. Success or Failure of the »New Steering Model«?, in: Public Administration Review 5/68 (2008), pp. 851–863, at p. 854.

72 Kuhlmann / Bogumil / Grohs: Evaluating Administrative Modernization in German Local Governments, p. 854.

73 Gewerkschaft ÖTV: Dezentrale Personalverwaltung. Neue Formen der Beschäftigungsbeteiligung, Stuttgart 1995.

74 Sabine Kuhlmann: Benchmarking auf dem Prüfstand. Kosten, Nutzen und Wirkungen interkommunaler Leistungsvergleiche in Deutschland, in: Verwaltungsarchiv. Zeitschrift für Verwaltungslehre, Verwaltungsrecht und Verwaltungspolitik 1/94 (2003), pp. 99–126.

75 Another volume of conference proceedings documented the final event: Elisabeth Dearinget al. (eds.): Spitzenleistungen zukunftsorientierter Verwaltungen. Eine Dokumentation zum 7. Internationalen Speyerer Qualitätswettbewerb, Vienna 2005.

Abstract

Reform concepts such as the »New Steering Model« (NSM) became prominent in the German administrative discourse of the 1990s. This article examines the examples of the Speyer Quality Contest and the Carl Bertelsmann Price. These intermunicipal performance contests awarded municipalities for the appropriation of NSM principles, thus popularizing the approach in administrative theory and practice. Simulated competition served as a tool for the relevant stakeholders to negotiate notions of quality and innovation. Actors such as the Joint Office for Administrative Simplification, the University for Administrative Sciences Speyer, and the Bertelsmann Foundation pushed frameworks that conceptualized the municipality as a non-commercial professional service firm. Cities, in turn, hoped to find ways to deliver public services with waning funds. While neither the NSM nor practices of simulated competition dominated the public administrative discourse beyond the early 2000s, they speak to a temporary belief in managerial practices in the public sphere.

About the Author

Alina Marktanner studied cultural studies and Science and Technology Studies at the University of Maastricht. She obtained her doctorate in modern history at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies and the University of Cologne with the dissertation „Behördenconsulting. Unternehmensberater in der öffentlichen Verwaltung der Bundesrepublik, 1970er bis 2000er Jahre“ (Berlin/Boston 2022). She is currently researching and teaching at the Chair for Modern History With Its Knowledge and Technology Cultures, RWTH Aachen University. Her research centers on the history of knowledge across various institutional contexts, including the academy, private companies and public administration, on both the national and global level.