

Rolf Frankenberger | Elena Chernenkova [eds.]

# Local Politics in a Comparative Perspective

The Cases of Petrozavodsk and Tübingen



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## Preface

In 2014, the cities of Petrozavodsk and Tübingen celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the city twinning in 1989. In these 25 years, many cooperation projects, partnerships, exchanges and friendships were built between the two cities' people and institutions. In advance of the anniversary, there were several projects to deepen scientific exchange and closer cooperation between the universities in both cities, Eberhard Karls University and Petrozavodsk State University. Starting from a study on comparative local politics and political culture conducted by a Tübingen Team of researchers in Tübingen and Petrozavodsk, the idea of an intense exchange on perspectives of local politics and culture and their determinants arose. Together with representatives of the two municipalities, Stephan Klingebiel and Natalya Lavrushina, a concept for a joint workshop and public presentations was developed. Thanks to funding of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Project "TUE-PETRO-NET" came to life, including public lectures and joint discussions at Petrozavodsk State University in September 2016 and an Expert Workshop in October 2016 in Petrozavodsk. At the workshop, social scientists and practitioners from politics and civil society discussed and analyzed different aspects of local politics, power, participation and civil society. Most of the contributions to this volume were presented and discussed at the workshop, and further research perspectives were identified, namely local participation and political culture as well as social innovation. As editors, we would like to thank all participants of the workshop contributing to fruitful and lively discussions and thank all authors delivering articles for the book. Special acknowledgements go to the municipalities of Tübingen and Petrozavodsk as well as to Eberhard Karls University and Petrozavodsk State University for supporting the project.

Special thanks go to Olga Riedinger for her excellent efforts in translating several articles from Russian to English. For translating from German to English and proof-reading we also thank Carsten Rith and Isabel Sinner. Invaluable communicative and interpretative work was also done by Ernest Tziprin, Mark Kirsanov and Svetlana Filon during the workshop. Elena Kharcheva and Olga Riedinger deserve special acknowledgement for assisting during the workshop. Monika Przybysz at the DAAD was always there for questions and advise during the whole project. Thanks also to the European Center for Research on Federalism for including the volume in their publication series. Volker Daiber from Nomos Publishers guided us through the publication process. Carmen Thamm always was patient with lately submitted manuscripts that she layouted, edited and proof-read very carefully. Last but not least, we want to thank the DAAD for funding the volume.

Petrozavodsk and Tübingen, August 2017  
Elena Chernenkova and Rolf Frankenberger



# Contents

Preface	5
Introduction <i>Elena Chernenkova/Rolf Frankenberger</i>	11
PART 1: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS	
Does the Systematic Environment Matter? Theoretical and Methodological Issues in Comparing Local Politics across World Regions <i>Rolf Frankenberger</i>	21
Understanding Multi-Level Governance. The Example of Migration Policy and Integration Management in Germany <i>Martin Große Hüttmann</i>	35
“Lifeworld”, Democracy and the Creation of Social Trust <i>Rolf Frankenberger/Daniel Buhr</i>	43
Methodological Challenges and Sociological Surveys. The Example of Surveys on the Quality of State and Municipal Services <i>Konstantin Terentyev</i>	59
PART 2: POLITICAL CULTURE; IDENTITY AND PUBLIC OPINION	
Discourses on the “National Idea” in Political Party Programs. The Case of the Republic of Karelia <i>Svetlana Rozhneva</i>	67
Political Life Worlds in Baden-Württemberg <i>Rolf Frankenberger/Daniel Buhr</i>	77
Sustainability of Social Relations: Internal and External Factors <i>Oleg Tolstoguzov/Maria Pitukhina</i>	89
Petrozavodsk Citizens’ Attitude towards the Activities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Karelia <i>Alexander Ilyin</i>	103

### PART 3: SOCIAL INNOVATION IN LOCAL POLITICS

Innovation by Participation – Quadruple Helix of a Welfare State <i>Daniel Buhr</i>	117
Innovative Technologies and Social Participation as Factors of Social Well-Being <i>Yulija A. Petrovskaya</i>	131
The LebensPhasenHaus. Innovation by Participation in Practice <i>Daniel Buhr</i>	139

### PART 4: PARTICIPATION AND LOCAL POLITICS

Political Participation in Local Politics. The Case of Tübingen <i>Gertrud van Ackern/Rolf Frankenberger</i>	153
The Institution of Public Hearings in the City of Petrozavodsk <i>Gleb O. Yarovoy/Elena Yu. Tsumarova</i>	163
Expert Communities and the State. Experience from the Republic of Karelia <i>Varvara Inozemtseva</i>	173

### PART 5: STATE-SOCIETY-RELATIONS AND NGOS IN LOCAL POLITICS

Several Directions of State Support for Socially-Oriented NGOs in the Municipalities of the Republic of Karelia <i>Elena Chernenkova</i>	189
State-Society Cooperation in Improving the Quality of Social Services at the Municipal Level <i>Yelena Antoshko</i>	201
Some Practices of the Karelian Resource Center of NGOs: Success Brings Experience, Activity and Interaction <i>Nikolay Oskin</i>	215
Social Partnership in the Sphere of Legal Awareness of Socially-Oriented NGOs. The Experience of Petrozavodsk <i>Anastasia Lesik</i>	231



*PART 6: LOCAL POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS*

Cultural and Social Exchange as a Vital of Citizen Participation. Petrozavodsk's View <i>Natalya Lavrushina</i>	241
Cultural and Social Exchange as a Vital Part of Citizen Participation. The Tübingen View <i>Stephan Klingebiel</i>	249
Sister City Collaboration as an Added Value for a University. A Case Study of Petrozavodsk <i>Marina S. Gvozdeva/Inna V. Kreneva/Olga A. Veselovskaya</i>	255
Jews of Petrozavodsk and Christians of Tübingen. An Amazing Love-Story <i>Dmitry Tsvibel</i>	265
Editors and Authors	271



# Introduction: Comparing Local Politics. The Cases of Petrozavodsk and Tübingen

*Elena Chernenkova/Rolf Frankenberger*

All politics is local. This is at least what former Congressman and US Speaker of the House of Representatives Tip O’Neill is said to have stated referring to the principle that successful politicians have to stay connected to their constituency and to the problems, interests and opinions of their local electorate.<sup>1</sup> But, as Peter Allen and David Cutts ask, “what do we mean by local?”<sup>2</sup> Can we reduce the term local to the rootedness of national politics in the grass of constituencies, communities, or municipalities? This might be one way to define it. One could also argue that even though all politics is local, local politics is where the people are. This shifts the focus of analysis away from the national level of the political system towards the regional or even local level of governance, government, politics and participation. There are manifold studies dealing with political phenomena on the local level in different disciplines from political science to public administration, from geography to ethnography, from economics to architecture. Even though probably addressing the same entities, the foci of interest slightly shift: Whereas Urban Studies<sup>3</sup> mainly focus on development and planning of cities, Local and Municipal Government Studies highlight the importance of public administrations and governmental institutions in local politics.<sup>4</sup> Local Governance Studies instead broaden the perspective of politics by including private, business and not-for business actors in their analysis of political decision making.<sup>5</sup> And there are also different perspectives on actors in local politics. Whereas some studies focus on political elites, others take a grassroots perspective on citizen government, civic participation, and social engagement.

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- 1 Cf. *Gelman, Andrew* 2011: All Politics is Local? The debate and the Graphs. *FiveThirtyEight*, 03.01.2011. <https://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/01/03/all-politics-is-local-the-debate-and-the-graphs/> (01.08.2017).
  - 2 *Allen, Peter/Cutts, David* 2014: All Politics is local – but what do we actually mean by local. *Political Insight*, 17.02.2014. <https://www.psa.ac.uk/insight-plus/blog/all-politics-local-%E2%80%93-what-do-we-actually-mean-local> (01.08.2017).
  - 3 For an overview on Urban Studies cf. *Paddison, Ronan (ed.)* 2001: *Handbook of Urban Studies*, London.
  - 4 For an overview on different aspects of local politics cf. *Haider-Markel, Donald* 2014: *The Oxford Handbook of State and Local Government*, Oxford; *Baldersheim, Harald/Wollmann, Hellmut (eds.)* 2006: *The Comparative Study of Local Government and Politics: Overview and Synthesis*, Leverkusen.
  - 5 For trends and the shift from urban studies to urban governance studies, cf. *McCann, Eugene* 2017: Governing urbanism: Urban governance studies 1.0, 2.0 and beyond, in: *Urban Studies* 54 (2), pp. 312-326; *Pierre, Jon* 2005: Comparative Urban Governance-Uncovering Complex Causalities, in: *Urban Affairs Review* 40, pp. 446–462. For shifts from Government to Governance, cf. *Andrew, Caroline/Goldsmith, Michael* 1998: From Local Government to Local Governance and beyond?, in: *International Political Science review* 19, pp. 101-117; *John, Peter* 2001: Local Governance in Western Europe, London. An overview on Governance: *Bevir, Marc (ed.)* 2010: *The Sage handbook of governance*, London.

Starting from the notion that local self-government is one of the core principles for the political organization of municipalities across Europe<sup>6</sup>, this volume takes a slightly different perspective, that in a way combines several aspects of the fields of study mentioned above. Municipalities are the venue for citizens to directly experience politics, and they also constitute the playground for diverse actors from business, civil society, administration and politics in the political arena. Thus, one could argue that local politics work similarly irrespective of cultural, political and social environments, as they are driven by local needs and demands. This narrow perspective on local politics seems to be somewhat misleading, given the fact that the local political level of municipalities is embedded in multi-level governance arrangements and political institutions. And they are embedded in different settings of (political) culture and society.

If we then want to understand local politics, we should widen the perspective of analysis and treat regional belonging, institutional settings and multi-level governance at least as potential determinants of variation. As research-literature doing or dealing with inter- and cross-regional comparisons suggests, these systemic environments still do have impact on local self-government<sup>7</sup>: They might constrain political actors and shape political processes in very specific ways. Examining two cities - Petrozavodsk and Tübingen – in comparative case studies and from a comparative perspective, social scientists and practitioners in politics and civil society from both municipalities contributing to the volume analyze how local politics and political culture are shaped in multi-level governance, how state-society relations and civic participation work in different systemic settings.

The volume comprises six thematic sections, each focusing on a different aspect of local politics. Starting from more general theoretical and methodological issues in section I, we investigate in political culture, identity and public opinion in section II move on to in section II. The articles in section III deal with social innovation as a mechanism and driving force of change and development in municipalities. In sections IV, V, and VI we broaden the perspectives, starting from political participation in local politics, passing on to state-society relations and NGOs and ending up with international relations in local politics.

In the first section, four articles deal with *theoretical and methodological issues*. In his article, *Rolf Frankenberger* asks whether the systemic environment makes a difference for local politics. He argues that cross-national comparisons as such come along with some theoretical and methodological challenges. This is even more the case considering different

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6 Local self-government is codified in German Basic Law (Art. 28, 2.1) as well as in the Constitution of the Russian Federation (Art.12, 1+2). In addition, both countries have ratified the European Charter on Local Self-Government in 1988, and 1998 respectively.

7 Cf. *Ahram, Ariel I.* 2011: The theory and method of comparative area studies", in: *Qualitative Research* 11(1), pp. 69-90; *Basedau, Matthias/Köllner, Patrick* 2007: Area studies, comparative area studies, and the study of politics: Context, substance, and methodological challenges, in: *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Politikwissenschaft* 1(1), pp. 105-124; *Frankenberger, Rolf/Kiener, Isabel* 2015: Kommunale Politik im Wandel: Petrosawodsk und Tübingen, Tübingen; *Frankenberger, Rolf/Graf, Patricia* 2013: Von Mangos und Pflaumen. Herausforderungen interregional vergleichender Fallstudien, Paper presented at the Conference „Politik, Region(en) und Kultur in der vergleichenden Politikwissenschaft“ der Sektion Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft der DVPW in Leipzig, 09.-11.10.2013.

regional cultures, political systems, the dualism of formal institutions and informal politics and social environments being involved in such studies. Using the cases of Tübingen and Petrozavodsk for comparing local self-government, he illustrates these challenges and offers a strategy to deal with them: the use of systems theory as a heuristic for research and the triangulation of research methods, such as document analysis and expert interviews, seem to be a valuable strategy to control for some of the challenges for empirical research. Non-rigorous, analytic-inductive case study designs then can offer valuable insights into functional equivalents and the interplay of formal and informal practices. *Martin Große Hüttmann* further elaborates on systemic environments in his article on multi-level governance. Using the examples of the challenges of migration policy and the integration management in recent times in Germany, he explains and explores the leverage of the the concept of multi-level governance. The high amount of migrants seeking entry into Europe and Germany in 2015 made clear that decentralized policy-making is better prepared for the management and implementation of policies than the top down approach. In their article on lifeworld, democracy and social trust, *Rolf Frankenberger* and *Daniel Buhr* focus on individual and collective determinants of local politics. They argue that contemporary societies undergo fundamental changes driven by individualization, globalization and digitalization. Using Alfred Schütz' phenomenological approach of life world, they argue that learning democracy depends on whom you bowl with and where. They propose a conceptual enlargement of research on democracy and participation to assess the varieties of life worlds, the themes and relations that are relevant to them and the way how specific patterns of orientation and motivation derived from the life world influence social capital, political participation and the evaluation of democracy. *Konstantin Terentyev* devotes his article to the analysis of methodological challenges concerning the development and organization of sociological surveys aiming to identify the level of citizens' satisfaction with the quality of municipal services. The main emphasis in the article is on the development of effective and scientifically-based tools (questionnaire and sample design), the organization of the field stage, and the calculation of indicators. The basis for this article is provided by the author's methodology for conducting a similar survey, as well as by the results of its implementation.

*Political culture, identity and public opinion* influence local politics as much as institutional frameworks. In section II, four articles are dedicated to shed light on these aspects. *Svetlana Rozhneva* analyzes discourses on the "National Idea" in political party programs in Russia and Karelia. The choice of Karelia is connected with specific region, its cross-border nature to the European North. This allows for contrasting conflicts of authoritarian and democratic values. The author concludes that rather than being a dominant value, the national idea is used by political elites to influence public opinion. The myth of a national idea thus is enhanced by its pragmatic value for political forces. Political Parties of real weight at the federal and regional levels use this discourse time by time in order to enhance their legitimacy. Drawing on theoretical assumptions outlined in their article in section I, *Daniel Buhr* and *Rolf Frankenberger* dispreads a map of political life worlds in Baden-Württemberg. Based on a qualitative study with 275 interviews conducted in 2014 in fourteen municipalities, they analyze political attitudes and everyday life in order to identify

political life worlds. They find three groups of life worlds – distant, delegative, and participatory – with different patterns and concepts of democracy and politics, as well as different levels and forms of participation, that cross-cut established categories of social stratification and social milieus. *Oleg Tolstoguzov* and *Maria Pitukhina* investigate in the sustainability of society in the cross-border region of the Republic of Karelia. As a result, federal and regional migration policies were called into question. The authors present a survey-based study that allows them to estimate the changes in Karelian society in the following ten years. Surveys were conducted in 2016 among both, migrants and the recipient society members. The results reveal specific features of the core and the waves of migration that allow for predictions of structural societal changes. *Alexander Ilyin* analyzes Petrozavodsk citizens' attitudes towards the activities of internal affairs bodies and the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the Republic of Karelia. Negative evaluations and attitudes towards the performance and work of internal affairs bodies in Russia were the main drivers for the Russian federal law „On the Police“, that was set into force in 2011. In order to monitor the quality of services of internal affairs bodies and especially police forces as well as their evaluation by the citizens, the Republic of Karelia conducted two surveys in 2014 and 2015. One of the main results is that citizens' trust in the activities of the police declined during this period, partly due to perceived low quality of the internal affairs bodies' work, but partly also caused by the poor overall socio-economic situation and the comparative perspective on the quality of public services in Finland.

Local politics can serve as a laboratory for social development and participatory problem solving. The three articles of section III explore the role of *social innovation* in social development. *Daniel Buhr* argues that innovation is driven by people and that, although these processes become more open and even more globalized, a main knowledge-base for innovation remains on the local and regional level. He uses the concept Quadruple Helix as a framework for analyzing and setting up local innovation processes including four different stakeholder groups: industry, university, government, and civil society. In modern Welfare States these regional networks are embedded in specific institutional settings which influence both, the supply and demand for new products and innovative services – especially in the area of health and care. Instead of focusing on a technology-driven understanding of innovation and support of the supply-side, he argues, the demand-side and diffusion of new ideas, products or services should be in the focus of interest especially with regard to the health and care sector. Here, users play a crucial role. Therefore, users and employees should be involved in the innovation process from the very beginning – as co-designers and co-deciders as well as the central drivers of technological and social innovation. *Yulija Petrovskaya* shares this perspective and argues that social participation and innovative technologies should be combined, as both are core factors for enhancing social well-being. Analyzing existing approaches to the study of social welfare, she argues that there is a lack and profound inconsistency concerning the impact of social change on subjective individual well-being and the correlation of individual and social well-being. She substantiates the importance of public organizations as subjects in the production of welfare and presents specific features for assessing the significance of their activities. Finally, *Daniel Buhr* presents the LebensPhasenHaus as an example for innovation by participa-

tion. An ageing society is confronted with challenges but in parallel there is a plethora of opportunities that might sooner or later impact the development and usage of smart environments. This was the starting point for the LebensPhasenHaus in Tübingen (Germany), which provides the opportunity to touch, explore and experience technologies and services in the field of independent living. Following the quadruple helix approach of the European Commission, all relevant stakeholders (academia, businesses, government authorities and the civil society) have to be involved in the innovation process: innovation by participation. Elderly volunteers – some of them informal care-givers – help to develop new ideas into smart services and products while, at the same time, raising the awareness and acceptance of smart environments by strengthening user involvement. It is shown how acceptance can be considered to be a running process, based on observations and experiences in Tübingen.

Local politics is the place where citizens, politicians and administration interact in manifold ways. In section IV, *political participation* of citizens a vital part of policy making in municipal politics is examined. And it is a core element of local democracy, as *Gertrud van Ackern* and *Rolf Frankenberger* illustrate for the case of Tübingen. They examine the legal frameworks for participation in a multi-level governance system and show that there are different opportunities for participation in representative, deliberative and direct democratic regulations on the different supranational and federal levels of the systemic environment of local politics. As deliberative democracy becomes more and more important for civic participation, there need to be guideline for meaningful participation. The Tübingen principles for deliberative participation are one example how these processes can be managed. That also illustrates the principles for deliberative civic participation implemented by the municipality of Tübingen. One example of deliberative democracy is presented and evaluated by *Gleb Yarovoy* and *Elena Tsumarova*: Public Hearings. Public hearings are the communication channel between authorities and the population that do not entail significant investment or costs from both parties. Hearings allow citizens to commence directly, discuss and make political decisions concerning all or some of the population of a certain municipality. The authors discuss current state of public hearings in city of Petrozavodsk by analyzing the legal basis of direct participation of the citizens in municipal decision-making and the attitudes of regular citizens and experts towards the main problems of this institution. The authors show a significant amount of “pain points” that prevent the institution from carrying out its function efficiently. *Varvara Inozemtseva* adds another perspective on participation in policy making by focusing on a rather exclusive form of participation linked to a certain status beyond the one of being a citizen or inhabitant of a municipality. Experts and expert communities play a significant role in preparing decision making in modern administrations. Using a procedural-cyclical meta-model focusing on the dynamics of the behavior of the decision-making officials and state bodies, as well as on the factors that influence the shares of the decision makers, she analyzes the structure and impact of the regional expert-analytical community in the Republic of Karelia.

A somewhat broader picture of *state-society relations* is painted in section V. Four articles focus on the role of collective civil society actors and especially socially oriented nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in local politics. In her contribution, *Elena Chernenkova* discusses various forms of state support for socially-oriented NGOs operating in municipal districts in the Republic of Karelia. The author elicits top case studies as well as problem areas in the process of establishing a networking interaction between state and civil institutions. The focus of her analysis lies on social policy implementation in the framework provided by public administration. Closely related to that issue, *Yelena Antoshko* asks how the quality of social services at the municipal level can be improved by State-Society cooperation. In her article, she reveals the prerequisites for the origin and the formation of an independent quality assessment for the activities of organizations in the Republic of Karelia as a form of public control that ensures sustainable development of state-society cooperation, in order to improve the quality of social services and the quality of life in general. *Nikolay Oskin* analyzes the history of the development of civil society in Karelia, relations between the authorities and NGOs. Introducing the example of the Karelian Resource Center of NGO's he reveals the invaluable work of NGO's in the fields of interethnic relations, social support and cross-border cooperation. As NGO's play a vital role in providing services as well as opportunities for participation and interest articulation, they themselves need backup. *Anastasia Lesik* brings forward the project "Legal support of socially-oriented non-profit organizations" as an example for assisting NGOs by providing legal advice and legal education for their representatives. Consideration of the practice of the project allowed to analyze the social partnership between NGOs and public authorities built in the process of implementation the project and to analyze main results of the project activity.

Municipalities do have their own *international relations*, as many of them have partnerships with cities around the world. The cases of Tübingen and Petrozavodsk with their more than 25 years old history of city twinning provide evidence for the importance of local politics' going international, as the contributions of section VI illustrate. *Natalya Lavrushina* considers international cultural and social exchange to be a vital part of citizen participation in Petrozavodsk. Petrozavodsk's sister relations started in the 1960s and are now part of the city's life, in which citizens, authorities, institutions and NGOs are involved. In general, these decades of cooperation have been working towards development of the city and active citizen participation in the process. The communication system from the different proponents of international relations has been created in this city. And since the very beginning of the sister relation role of NGOs – friendship societies have been and are first and foremost very important. The relations between Petrozavodsk and Tübingen are a good example of different levels of successful cooperation. In his article, *Stephan Klingebiel* mirrors these experiences from a Tübingen point of view and highlights the positive effects of city twinning. Almost every city in Germany has sister cities. Most cities present their international relations with signs right at the road when you enter the city. They want to show that they are part of something bigger and express that they have an international appeal. Cities not only highlight their contribution to a better international understanding but also the enrichment of their inhabitants' lives. Starting from a brief history of town twinning, he focuses on four dimensions of town twinning that contribute to



these intentions: Reconciliation and peacekeeping, “enabling” citizens, fostering education, innovation and networking, and last but not least, city marketing. Sister City Collaboration also brings forward collaboration of collective actors and institutions, as *Marina S. Gvozdeva*, *Inna V. Kreneva* and *Olga A. Veselovskaya* show. They dwell on the history of the sister city relations of Petrozavodsk with the partners in Germany, France and USA. The sister city collaboration is viewed as an added value for the citizens, the municipality, NGOs, Petrozavodsk State University and other stakeholders. The article elaborates on the formats and best practices of such collaboration developed in the course of years. Besides, the authors make a special focus on the on-going intercultural dialogue as an asset to training prospective teachers in the region. Last but not least, *Dmitry Tsvibel* tells an amazing love story between Jews of Petrozavodsk and Christians of Tübingen that is originated in the cities’ international relations and is a perfect example of international understanding and reconciliation. On July 19<sup>th</sup> 1996, the Jewish community of Petrozavodsk received its Torah Scroll, purchased with money raised by the people of Tübingen. This event has changed the life of Petrozavodsk Jewry, enabling them to become a full-fledged community and uniting them with their ancestors and the great traditions of their people. The gift of Torah was initiated by a group of Tübingen Christians, who set their aim, as Christians and Germans, to build new ties of friendship with the Jews, particularly Russian Jews, spreading awareness of the Jewish history. The article is a brief recapitulation of that amazing love story between Petrozavodsk Jewish community and Tübingen Dietrich Bonhoeffer-Kirche, which has now entered into its third decade.

Albeit there might be many more aspects to be analyzed in local politics, e.g. policy formulation, city development, provision of services, or influence of local elites on local politics, this volume might be used as a starting point for further investigations into comparing local politics across regions and areas.



# **PART 1: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS**



# Does the Systemic Environment Matter? Theoretical and Methodological Issues in Comparing Local Politics across World Regions

*Rolf Frankenberger*

*Abstract:* Cross-national comparisons as such come along with some theoretical and methodological challenges. This is even more the case considering different regional cultures, political systems, the dualism of formal institutions and informal politics and social environments being involved in such studies. Using the cases of Tübingen and Petrozavodsk for comparing local self-government, I will illustrate these challenges and offer a strategy to deal with them: the use of systems theory as a heuristic for research and the triangulation of research methods, such as document analysis and expert interviews, seem to be a valuable strategy to control for some of the challenges for empirical research. Non-rigorous, analytic-inductive case study designs then can offer valuable insights into functional equivalents and the interplay of formal and informal practices.

*Keywords:* Comparative Politics, Methodology, systems theory, functional equivalents

## Introduction

Municipalities are the places where people experience politics directly in their immediate surrounding. Political processes and decision are tangible and can also be shaped within the limits of current legislation. Local self-government as “[...] the right and the actual capabilities of the regional and local authorities to regulate a considerable part of public issues within the limitations of current law on their own responsibility for the benefit of their inhabitants”<sup>1</sup> constitutes the core of this tangible politics.

The European Charter on Local Self Government constitutes a central normative foundation for the organization of local authorities. The latter are defined as having democratically elected decision-making bodies in addition to as much autonomy as possible with regards to their responsibilities and to the manner in which they exert these responsibilities. Furthermore, they are autonomous with respect to the means they require for the fulfillment of these responsibilities.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile the Charter has been ratified by all member states of the European council. Germany has ratified it on the 09/01/1988 and Russia on the 09/01/1998.

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1 *Europarat* 1985: Europäische Charta der kommunalen Selbstverwaltung, Straßburg. <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168007a0f6> (18.05.2016), here: Article 3.

2 *Ibidem*; The responsibilities of municipalities include services for the public such as to provide water, electricity, local transport, child care, primary education, medical and health care, road construction, public order and security. Cf. *Frankenberger, Rolf/Kiener, Isabell* 2015: Kommunale Politik im Wandel. Petrozawodsk und Tübingen, Tübingen.

But how are municipal self-government and civic participation designed and integrated? This question has been exemplarily examined in a study on the municipalities of Petrosawodsk and Tübingen.<sup>3</sup> Both municipalities are places where politics can be experienced as decision-making and implementation takes place on local level. In addition, they are regional authorities that administer and organize themselves autonomously and in self-responsibility in the sense of the European Charter: The principle of local self-government is anchored by the constitutions of both countries: In German basic law, Art. 28, paragraph. 2, Sentence 1 it says: “The municipalities must be granted the right to regulate all matters of the local community in the limits of given legislature in their own responsibility.” In the Constitution of the Russian Federation Art. 2, Sentence 1 and 2 say: “In the Russian Federation the local self-government is acknowledged a guaranteed say”. The local self-government is autonomous in the limits of its responsibilities.”<sup>4</sup>

However, the realization of municipal self-government takes place against the backdrop of differing institutional framework conditions of Germany and Russia, differing regional relevance of the cities and differing history and culture. This results in multiple theoretical and methodological challenges for a comparison. In the following, these are presented and discussed along the results of the studies.

## Theoretical Challenges

### *Case Selection and Comparative Design*

One core question of comparative politics is the question concerning the tertium comparationis. Arend Lijphart calls to limit a comparative analysis to comparable cases. He refers to cases that resemble one another with respect to a large number of characteristics but differ with respect to the variables of interest.<sup>5</sup> With this definition he highlights the role of the most similar case-design, which Przeworski and Teune propose as a potentially strict comparative design.<sup>6</sup> In fact, with respect to various aspects the cases are similar: Both municipalities represent the lowest level of a federal governmental system. Also, in both cases the Charta has been ratified, etc. With respect to other framework conditions such as culture, language, institutional framework conditions or regime type, the both municipalities are so called “most different systems”<sup>7</sup>. Also when having a closer at the phenomenon of interest it becomes questionable whether municipal self-government withstands such a

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3 Ibidem.

4 *Constitution of the Russian Federation*, <http://www.constitution.ru/en/10003000-09.htm> (2017/07/09). In Chapter 8 about „The local self-government“, the role of the municipalities is specified in Art. 130-133. E.g. Article 130,1 says, that „[l]ocal self-government in the Russian Federation shall ensure the independent solution by the population of the issues of local importance, of possession, use and disposal of municipal property.”

5 *Lijphart, Arend* 1971: *Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method*, in: *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 65, No. 3, pp. 682-693 (p. 687).

6 *Przeworski, Adam/Teune, Henry* 1970: *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry*, New York.

7 Ibidem, p. 32 f.

rigorous comparative design. With the municipal self-government both municipalities perform an analogous functionality but differ considerably with respect to the implementation.

Both rigorous comparative designs are about identifying causal relationship between an independent and a dependent variable. When comparing Tübingen and Petrosawodsk this comparative design however becomes blurred: The question about the framework conditions and their transformation which serve as the basis for the functioning of municipal self-government is paramount.

From a methodological point of view this study consists of two qualitative single case studies<sup>8</sup> for which the peculiarities of both cases have been carved out and subsequently compared. Moses and Knutsen emphasize that merging single case studies in more or less rigid comparative studies has a large relevance especially for generating hypotheses about the phenomenon of interest. The strength is that the findings of completely different cases can be brought together like building blocks in order to generate evidence with the highest possible degree of generalization.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Theoretical Foundations***

In order to allow for such a generalization, it is also recommended for hypothesis generating and inductive-analytical<sup>10</sup> case studies to consult theoretical approaches as heuristics for the comparison. Thereby, it seems to be advisable to follow a two-stage process: First, the formulation of a heuristic framework along general categories and second its specification using more specific approaches. For the first step, such approaches seem to be useful that are indifferent towards regime types and regional peculiarities and which allow to capture functional logics and the relevance of intervening variables. Concerning the first step, e.g. Frankenberger and Graf plead for the systematic usage of system theoretical approaches.<sup>11</sup> This would allow for using the concept of functional differentiation of societies in order to answer the question on functional equivalents: All societies have to fulfill four basic functions: 1) Adaption (Mediating the interests between system and environment); 2) Goal achievement (Regulating the goal relations between system and environment); 3) Integration (Unity of the system and adaption of the subsystem to one another as well as implementation and coordination of individual and collective interests) and 4) Structure maintenance (meaning endowing rules and symbolism of long persisting cultural systems)<sup>12</sup>. Depending on the system context different behavior patterns can make an equiva-

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8 *Eckstein, Harry* 1975: Case Study and Theory in Political Science, in: *Greenstein, Fred I./Polsby, Nelson W. (Eds.): Strategies of Inquiry. Handbook of Political Science Volume 7*, Reading, Mass. pp. 79-138 (p. 104 f).

9 *Moses, Jonathan/Knutsen, Torbjorn* 2012: *Ways of Knowing*, 2.Aufl., Edition, Houndmills, Sp. 140.

10 *Znaniecki, Florian* 1934: *The Method of Sociology*, Austin.

11 *Frankenberger, Rolf/Graf, Patricia* 2013: Von Mangos und Pflaumen. Herausforderungen interregional vergleichender Fallstudien, Paper presented at the Conference „Politik, Region(en) und Kultur in der vergleichenden Politikwissenschaft“ der Sektion Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft der DVPW in Leipzig, 9.-11-10.2013.

12 *Almond, Gabriel* 1965: A Developmental Approach to Political Systems, in: *World Politics*, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp. 183-214; *Parsons, Talcott* 1963: On the Concept of Political Power, in: *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 107, No. 3, pp. 232-262.

lent contribution to system maintenance, or respectively, the same behavioral patterns can make a different contribution. Building on that idea, approaches of comparative system analysis identify diverse types of political systems.<sup>13</sup> However, the way in which the political system is integrated in its societal environment is often neglected in comparative research. Yet, the societal context is often central for the identification of interdependencies of effects.

Therefore, as a second step, to operationalize the integration in societal contexts via area specific theories is conducive. This is basically about the question in how far the municipal territorial authorities are actually capable to administer themselves. Two aspects play a role for this: first, the question of institutionalization and second the question of historic and cultural embeddedness of power.

Institutions are defined as “behavior regulating and predictability generating social rule systems”<sup>14</sup>. They can be interpreted as historically grown bundles of formal and informal rules and norms, of monitoring and implementation mechanisms and of meaning systems. They provide the framework for individual and collective action<sup>15</sup> and represent crystallized power structures<sup>16</sup>. Institutions are political in a narrower sense when they “serve the authoritative regulation of conflicts through norms which have been created for that exact purpose and provide an apparatus with suitable personal for their implementation”<sup>17</sup>. As a general rule this is understood as referring to institutions which have been codified in political constitutions as well as laws and their regulating purposes. However, as Helmke and Levitsky<sup>18</sup> show, this falls short, as in political reality formal institutions are often transcended by informal institutions – mostly uncodified, socially shared rules, which are created, communicated and implemented outside of the officially sanctioned channels<sup>19</sup>. Considering formal and informal institutions separately from each other thus will not yield a sufficient foundation for the assessment of the functional logics of municipal self-government and political systems in general. Both can be effective or ineffective, can complement or compete with each other or over-shape, replace or adapt each other<sup>20</sup>. With respect to the basic question this implies that both, formal and informal institutions, have to

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13 Easton, David 1965: *A Framework for Political Analysis*, Englewood Cliffs; Almond, Gabriel A./Powell, G. Bingham/Mundt, Robert J. 1996: *Comparative Politics, A theoretical framework*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, New York.

14 Czada, Roland 2002: *Institutionen/Institutionentheoretische Ansätze*, in: Nohlen, Dieter/Schultze, Rainer-Olaf (eds.): *Lexikon der Politikwissenschaft. Theorien, Methoden, Begriffe*. Band 1, A-M, München, pp. 354-360 (p. 354).

15 Campbell, John 2004: *Institutional Change and Globalization: Problems and Prospects*, Princeton, p.1.

16 Waschkuhn, Arno 1994: *Institutionentheoretische Ansätze*, in: Kriz, Jürgen/Nohlen, Dieter/Schultze, Rainer-Olaf (Eds.): *Lexikon der Politik*. Band 2. *Politikwissenschaftliche Methoden*, München, pp. 188-195 (p. 188 f).

17 Czada 2002 (fn. 14), p. 354.

18 Helmke, Gretchen/Levitsky, Steven (eds.) 2006: *Informal institutions and democracy. Lessons from Latin America*. Baltimore, p. 5.

19 Ibidem Cp also: North, Douglass C. 1990: *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*, Cambridge; O'Donnell, Guillermo 1996: *Illusions about Consolidation*, in: *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 34-51; Lauth, Hans-Joachim 2000: *Informal Institutions and Democracy*, in: *Democratization* Vol. 7, No. 4, pp. 21-50.

20 Helmke/Levitsky 2006 (fn.18), p. 14.



be considered and their potential effects analyzed. For example, the role of blat as the “use of personal networks and informal contacts to obtain goods and services in short supply and to skirt formal procedures”<sup>21</sup> is such an informal institution in Russia that influences and transcends formal rule. By being vastly effective for those having blat, it further delegitimizes formal practices and adherence of legal prescriptions.

As a second point, the aspect of cultural embeddedness of politics is especially relevant from a system-analytical perspective in the tradition of Talcott Parsons and David Easton: It is particularly visible in the imaginations, opinions and attitudes of the population towards what politics should be and should do. This subjective dimension of politics, the political value orientation, attitudes and behavior patterns form a community’s respective political culture. It constitutes a social adhesive or glue that holds societies together through a sufficient level of positive attitudes towards the political system<sup>22</sup>. Essentially, it is thus about capturing, how “the citizens feel as being a part of their political community, feel about their political system as appropriate and trust both the political institutions and the authorities. The latter are not only supported for their sake but especially because of their ability to render political, social and economic services for the society”<sup>23</sup>.

A strong relationship between the concrete design of political institutions and persons as well as their assessment can be deduced from both of these aspects. In the context of their foundational work “The Civic Culture” Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba<sup>24</sup> have differentiated between different types of political culture: The so called “parochial culture” is characterized by non-intervention, lacking individual interest on political acting as well as minimal knowledge and limited affective connections to politics. The “subject culture” is characterized by a more differentiated view on the system, but at the same time by values of passivity and limited political adhesion in addition to a strong orientation on the outputs of the political system. The “participant culture” however is coined by an active interest on political processes and active political participation. According to Almond and Verba there are mixed types: The “parochial subject culture” is characterized by a large distance between state and citizens whereas the “participant subject culture” is expressed through a common (national) identity and loyalty with a tendency to subordination towards a central authority that frequently results in political passivity. On the opposite side there is the “civic culture” which is rational-activist and strongly input-oriented and tied to positive attitudes towards community, political system and institutions.

In the sense of the system-theoretical considerations invoked above, one can assume that there is a functional proximity between the different system types and culture. While democracies rely on a civic culture, autocracies are rather fostered by different forms of

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21 *Ledeneva, Alena* 2008: Blat and Guanxi: Informal practices in Russia and China. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50(1), pp. 118-144, here: p. 118.

22 *Easton, David* 1975. A re-assessment of the concept of political support, in: *British Journal of Political Science*, 1975, 5. Vol., No. 4, pp. 435-457.

23 *Pickel, Susanne/Stark, Toralf* 2010. Politische Kultur(en) von Autokratien, in: *Albrecht, Holger/Frankenberg, Rolf* (eds.): *Autoritarismus Reloaded. Neuere Ansätze und Erkenntnisse der Autokratieforschung*, Baden-Baden, pp. 201-226 (p. 204).

24 *Almond, Gabriel/Verba, Sidney* 1963: *The Civic Culture. Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, Princeton.

subject culture. According to Friedrich and Brzezinski autocracies are political systems in which the ruler is insufficiently or not at all constrained by established law so that there are no other powers with sufficient authority to force the ruler(s) to abide by established law.<sup>25</sup> In other words, the central indicator of an autocracy is the lack of effective separation and control of powers. Juan Linz defines autocracies via the following characteristics:

„Limited, not responsible, political pluralism: without elaborate and guiding ideology (but with distinctive mentalities); without intensive or extensive political mobilization (except some points in their development); and in which a leader (or occasionally a small group) exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones”.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, a rather passive political culture oriented towards obedience fosters the stability of autocracies. On the contrary, an active participatory citizen culture is rather typical for democracies and even dysfunctional for authoritarian systems due to the high level of knowledge and strong desires to participate.<sup>27</sup> In this study, the illustrated theoretical considerations serve as a slide of reflection for the findings in both case studies.

### ***Methodical Challenges***

One main question arising from this kind of studies is how informal institutions can be identified and measured. Formal institutions are codified in constitutions and laws and what makes them provable. To a certain extent the compliance with the respective rules is verifiable. When analyzing informal institutions, one is however confronted with the problem to a) identify the so far mostly unwritten rules and then b) to examine to what extent they are complied with, sanctioned and modified.<sup>28</sup> With respect to autocracies it is often pointed out that formal institutions are transcended by informal rules and norms. Nonetheless it would be naïve to presume that the first do not play a role for securing and enforcing rule in autocracies. Through their explicit formulation, constitutions and laws build the central foundation and source of legitimation for political acting also of non-democratic rulers. They are often subject to strategies which can be referred to as “institutional engineering”, i.e. the conscious and targeted modifying and reforming, introducing, and abolishing of institutional arrangements in order to secure own claims to power and mechanisms of rule. Hence it is the institutions which are intensively fought about in political contests. Conversely it would however be equally naïve to believe that informal institutions do not play a role in democracies.

A central approach for capturing formal and informal institutions is thus the triangulation, i.e. the application of different research methods. A document analysis may thus be a start-

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25 Friedrich, Carl J./Brzezinski, Zbigniew. K. 1965. *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, Cambridge: Cambridge, p. 5.

26 Linz, Juan A. 1964: *An Authoritarian Regime: Spain*, in: *Allardt, Erik/Littunen, Yrju (eds.): Cleavages, Ideologies, and Party Systems*, Turku, pp. 291-341 (p. 297).

27 Pickel/Stark 2010 (fn. 22).

28 Vgl. Helmke/Levitsky 2006 (fn. 18); Meyer, Gerd 2008. *Formal institutions and informal politics in central and eastern Europe: Hungary, Poland, Russia and Ukraine*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Opladen.

ing point for the analysis of formal institutions. The institutional frame is determined on the basis of the respectively valid constitutions, law and legal order and subsequently complemented by a literature analysis of relevant academic sources. The examination of the actual effect and functionality of formal institutions or respectively the search for informal institutions can be enabled by embedding experts in the research process. Especially with such explorative questions they can offer “background information on situations and incidents but also information about motives for action and cooperativeness and assessments about developments and changes”<sup>29</sup>, that cannot be determined from a document analysis.

Especially a comparison of municipalities in Germany and Russia reveals the discrepancies between formal and informal order: While the political systems of Russia and Germany exhibit comparatively similar institutional framework conditions the actual exertion of rule differs considerably. While Germany is rated as “free” or democratic in the relevant democracy-indices such as Freedom House<sup>30</sup> of Polity IV<sup>31</sup> Russia is categorized as “not free” or “Anocracy”. This divergent systemic context which manifests itself in the different mechanisms of rule suggests a differentiation of the creative possibilities of municipal politics de jure and de facto, so that besides formal institutions informal institutions have to be taken into account as well.

In political cultural research, attitudes and value orientations are often captured by interviews, and to a vast extend by closed questionnaires in the style of the world value survey<sup>32</sup>. These are supposed to guarantee a high degree of comparability across various contexts. Besides fundamental methodological challenges of reactive processes,<sup>33</sup> the social desirability of response behavior poses a problem to the examination. Already in democracies social desirability leads to distortionary effects. In non-democracies, in the context of limited freedom of speech and immediately threatening sanctions, it can lead to barely controllable results. Confidential qualitative interviews as well as expert interviews as triangulation methods are conducive to hedge findings. They also offer the possibility to obtain information even though surveys are missing. In the study on the comparison of Tübingen and Petrosawodsk it has been worked with an array of qualitative guided interviews which included questions on formal and informal institutions as well as on the political culture.<sup>34</sup>

Against this backdrop of the challenges and solution strategies illustrated above comparisons without rigorous comparison designs on the basis of single case studies can definitely be fruitful. They offer multiple advantages: They allow firstly, an analytical profundity, secondly, to capture processes and historical developments, thirdly, the identification of causal relationships and fourthly a contextualized analysis of functions of formal and informal institutions.

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29 Blatter, Joachim K./Janning, Frank/Wagemann, Claudius 2007: Qualitative Politikanalyse. Eine Einführung in Forschungsansätze und Methoden, Wiesbaden, p. 62.

30 Freedom House, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/> (2014/08/11).

31 Center for Systemic Peace, [www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm](http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm) (2016/05/11).

32 World Value Survey, [www.worldvaluesurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluesurvey.org) (2016/05/21).

33 Labaw, Patricia J. 1982. Advanced Questionnaire Design. Cambridge, Mass., p.95; Schnell, Rainer/Hill, Paul/Esser, Elke 1995: Methoden der Empirischen Sozialforschung, München, p. 307 ff.

34 Frankenberger/Kiener 2015 (fn. 3), p.14 ff.

## Municipal Politics in Transition: Results of the Comparison

All these aspects have been raised and processed in a comparative perspective in the case studies on municipal politics in Petrosawodsk and Tübingen. The common starting point of both case studies was the institutions of local self-government of the municipality. In both cases, this institution is enshrined by law and guaranteed in the constitution of the federal states Russia (Art. 12, Par. 1-2) and in Basic Law in Germany (Art. 28, Par 2. GG) as well as in the respective constitutions of the federal states: the Republic of Karelia as federal subject of the Russian Federation and Baden-Württemberg as federal state of the German Federal Republic. Narrower specified regulations on the design of the local self-government can each be found in basic law.<sup>35</sup>

In both states municipalities constitute independent regional authorities with own government bodies that act self-responsible. They fulfill the tasks they have been allocated in the federal system either executively and thus bound by instructions for a higher federal level or in self-responsibility. For tasks they fulfill “on behalf”, both Tübingen and Petrosawodsk are allocated proportionate shares of the tax revenues (and other allotments) from the federal state. In order to fund original functions they can levy own taxes and fees. The functions, which each municipality has to fulfill, are thereby very similar: Both fulfill tasks in securing livelihoods, public order, education, construction, traffic and social matters.<sup>36</sup>

In order to be able to fulfill these tasks both municipalities have institutions for local self-government. Until 2015, the mayor was directly elected by the citizens in both municipalities. Since 2016, this is only the case for Tübingen.<sup>37</sup> While the tenure for a mayor is eight years in Tübingen, the mayor in Petrosawodsk is elected for five years. In Tübingen besides German citizens also citizens of the European Union are entitled to vote. The mayor is the head of the city administration and municipal leader in both municipalities.

In both municipalities the municipal or respectively the city council constitutes the main body of the municipality that decides on all issues that falls in its jurisdiction. While in Tübingen the mayor chairs this body, the city council of Petrosawodsk (Petrosovet) has its own (full-time) chairman as well as its own steady administration. Also, at maximum three councilors work full-time while the remaining receives an hourly-based wage for their work. In both municipalities there are further bodies of local self-government. Both the municipal council and the Petrosovet form committees. Due to the mostly similar tasks

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35 Besides the Russian constitution (esp. Art. 2, 130-133 and 72) the regulations of the constitution of the republic Karelia (Chapter 6, Art 70-72) as well as federal laws (Law 131) and republican laws are essential for Petrosawodsk. The concrete designs of the political structures are prescribed in the statutes of the municipal district Petrozavodsk of 2014/02/25. <http://www.petrozavodsk-mo.ru/petrozavodsk/gorod/info/ustav.htm> (2014/08/18). For Tübingen especially Art 20, 28, 70, 71, 73 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany, the state constitution of Baden-Württemberg as well as the municipal code of Baden-Württemberg hold analogously.

36 *Frankenberger/Kiener* 2015 (fn. 3), p. 143.

37 The findings represent the legal status until December 2015. In the following the city council in Petrosawodsk abolished the direct election of the mayor. According to the new regulation the city council elects to mayor. In April 2016 Irina Miroshnik has been elected for mayor.