

The Politicization of E-Government. A Comparative Analysis across Policy Domains and Countries

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by

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Summary

This *Ambizione* project analyzes the politicization of electronic government (e-government) across policy domains and countries. I pose the question how the use of digital information and communication technologies (ICTs) in government is politicized? In other words, I examine how data storage and exchange for governmental services becomes subject to political conflicts, which are the involved actors, how are political coalitions polarized, how are issues framed, and which are proposed policy changes? Furthermore, I investigate whether and why there are differences between countries and policy domains. I start from the observation that, on the one hand, current research has focused on the digitalization of democratic processes broadly defined, such as the use ICTs in political campaigning and for voting. On the other, research has targeted the conceptualization, diffusion, and implementation of the provision of public goods through electronic services. Surprisingly, scholars have overlooked how the use of digital data in the provision of public services and especially the storage and exchange of data for example regarding healthcare or security, is politicized. Data storage and exchange is important for e-government to be effective but it touches on citizens' privacy and therefore it is an important political problem. In this *Ambizione* project, I compare the politicization of e-government in four policy domains: banking, health, crime / terrorism prevention, and welfare across four countries: France, Germany, Switzerland, and the U.S. My empirical analysis contains three sequential steps: (1) explorative interviews with experts, (2) quantitative text analysis of policy documents, and (3) confirmatory interviews with key policy stakeholders. The project contributes to the political science and public policy literature through its comparative analysis of e-government politicization. My research will inform scholars about the causes of differences and similarities in the politicization of e-government between policy domains and countries and allow for theoretical conclusions on the politics of e-government and digitalization. Furthermore, this research is informative for decision-makers because it provides them with comparative information on how the storage of data and exchange of data by government is politically sensitive.