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Public Administration in Germany: Precarious Present, Promising Future?

Stefan Becker and Michael W. Bauer

Public Administration (PA) assumes a precarious existence in Germany. While many scholars work on administrative issues, often with great individual success, the German PA community has never developed into an independent discipline. It has rather remained a loose field of study. Threats of fragmentation and irrelevance loom large, as other established disciplines are more visible in public discourse, attract better students and acquire larger amounts of funding. As a result, the PA community perceives its reputation to be mediocre, attracting only moderate public interest and having little practical influence. Yet, it is not all doom and gloom in German PA. Transformative dynamics are currently materialising in the social sciences and this field of study is no exception. Increasing internationalisation and digitalisation are reshaping the conduct of social sciences. Along with demographic change, these trends can open up new avenues for interdisciplinarity in German PA and thereby provide for a promising future.

This chapter shows how the German PA community can harness these developments to overcome its problematic boundaries and path dependencies to strengthen its collective standing in academia and beyond. It first provides a brief history of PA in Germany, outlining the roots of institutional fragmentation and discussing its negative implications. Weak institutionalisation and heterogeneous scientific orientations currently impair sustained and effective cooperation – neither a core curriculum in teaching, nor a common agenda in research has yet materialised. The chapter then turns to positive developments in recent years and, on this basis, closes with a few plausible scenarios for the future of PA in Germany. This portrayal is informed by results from a recent survey of more than 400 scholars and practitioners who revealed details about their work and shared their view on the community at large (see Bauer & Becker, 2018 for more information on these data).

1 A brief history of Public Administration in Germany

Academic disciplines emerge in idiosyncratic processes, sometimes with peculiar outcomes. Yet, once disciplines become established, they are often persistent and tend to reproduce themselves. One reason lies in their capacity to absorb new and dissenting paradigms. However, new disciplines occasionally come into being through secession from their mother discipline. In these cases, the relationship between the old and the new usually remains close and contentious. The history of German PA is no exception to this rule. It is also marked by secession and competition, just as in most Western European countries. Knowledge about the state and how it should conduct its affairs was traditionally gathered in a comprehensive “science of the state,” which brought together a broad range of expertise that is nowadays divided into public law, macroeconomics, budgeting, management and other fields (Heyen, 1982). Then, with increasing professionalisation and differentiation of the academic sciences, the legal dimension became dominant in the study of public administration, before the advent of modern social sciences led to different national trajectories with individual compromises between the disciplines.

In contrast to other countries, the dominance of legal approaches in studying public administration has never been broken in Germany. This hegemony has its roots in the nineteenth century, when a law degree became the crucial entry ticket for the public service and the more comprehensive approach to educating civil servants became obsolete (Wunder, 1986). The following differentiation of disciplines left issues of public administration firmly in the hands of law schools, and PA in Germany became ever more synonymous with its legal dimension. Even after the Second World War, when a more pluralistic conception of PA spilled over from the United States, the legal dominance persevered. One reason was that the newly established political science departments – often deemed to be the suitable hosts for such a pluralistic PA approach – still needed to consolidate their positions and, for this reason, prioritised other research themes closer to democratic legitimacy. Political science was at first a science of democracy and later developed into an empirical undertaking focused on public institutions and collective decision-making. From this perspective, PA issues were rather technocratic matters not to be bothered with. Several attempts to make PA a central research area in political science, especially at the time when the policy analysis approach became popular in the 1970s, failed to take off (see, e.g., Scharpf, 1973: p. 9–32). The fate of PA in management departments was similar. Even though scholars dominated the reform discourse in the high times of the New Public Management movement, PA never came to play a

substantial role in management departments and has all but disappeared from their curricula.

A survey of popular topics in German social sciences also reveals the problematic position of public administration issues (see also Jann, 2009). These had their greatest appeal when the political agenda was hopeful about social engineering in the late 1960s and early 1970s. At that time, many practitioners and scholars saw social transformation as a promise that only well-designed and effective administrative machinery was able to deliver. With the oil crisis of 1973, the end of the welfare state expansion dreams, and the turn towards lean government concepts under rising austerity, however, German PA developed an agenda of de-bureaucratisation and reform. Major concepts for this undertaking came from think tanks and consultants rather than from the PA community, which remained sceptical about the achievable benefits. As a result, public administration issues lost their appeal and relevance in the empirical social sciences. Only recently, in the 2010s, with the waning ideational supremacy of neo-liberalism and the cautious return of pro-regulation initiatives, have questions of public organisation gathered new interest.

The development of PA in Germany has therefore produced some problematic path dependencies. Traditionally perceived to be a primarily legal matter, PA has neither developed into an independent discipline nor risen to prominence in the relevant disciplines.

2 The present state of Public Administration in Germany

The German PA community seems currently to be ill-prepared to seize the opportunity of renewed interest in issues of public organisation. A damaging combination of fragmented institutionalisation and heterogeneous scientific orientations renders its standing precarious. Topical and theoretical convergence on the working level may, however, provide a basis for German PA to work its way out of this impasse.

2.1 Fragmented institutionalisation

In Germany, research and teaching pertaining to public administration is widely dispersed (see also Kropp, 2014). A good portion of the formal education is provided by the numerous universities of applied sciences for public administration at federal and state levels. These institutions focus

exclusively on training civil servants, primarily for entry-level positions in various departments. Most programmes are dual-track, including both academic courses and hands-on training at different levels and in different branches of the public sector. Administrative law typically overshadows other disciplines relevant for public administration in their curricula. It follows that empirical research also remains limited at these institutions. Furthermore, while most faculty members build up expertise in specific areas, their teaching load effectively prevents them from engaging in larger research projects. As a result, many PA students in Germany receive a strong practice-driven, law-focused education with little input from other social sciences. This is all the more true for the second main type of PA education, the public law part of the legal training. After all, many top positions in German administrations still require a law degree (*Befähigung zum Richteramt*) with obligatory practical training (*Referendariat*).

The third group of PA students in Germany, non-law students at regular universities, can choose from a more diverse menu which is, however, not easy to navigate. Only a few German universities have established distinct PA profiles in research and teaching, and truly comprehensive programmes are hard to find. More regular are single modules on public administration in larger programmes of political science, law or management. Furthermore, much research is done by individual PA-oriented scholars in the respective departments – quite often productively (see, for instance, Kuhlmann & Wolmann, 2019; Knill & Bauer, 2017; Jann, 2009; Benz, 2005; Goetz, 2001). While their outputs have strong visibility in the international research community, they often remain in the shadows of their home institutions. Students generally interested in public administration must therefore invest some time in identifying those programmes and institutions where they can learn about specific administrative issues. Compared to political science, for instance, the institutional landscape of German PA is rather fragmented. Only five institutions represent exceptions to the rule of fragmentation.

First, the German University of Administrative Sciences remains an important node in the German PA community, especially among legal scholars. Its postgraduate teaching focuses on the training of future civil servants in both short-term courses and two-year master's programmes, with emphases on law, economics or the social sciences. In line with its general mission, the research at Speyer University tends to be practice-oriented and Germany-centric, with the occasional project on matters of Europeanisation and internationalisation. Second, the Centre for Policy and Management at the University of Potsdam offers both undergraduate and graduate programmes in the social sciences with a strong emphasis on issues of public administration. Its curricula

are quite international, with strong theoretical imports from Scandinavia. Accordingly, its main research activities lie in the theory-driven analysis of public organisations. With a research training group on “Wicked Problems, Contested Administrations: Knowledge, Coordination, Strategy” (WIPCAD), Potsdam also had the first exclusively PA-oriented graduate school. Third, a broad curriculum on public administration is also available at the Department of Politics and Public Administration at the University of Konstanz. Its teaching and research tend to be international and strongly policy-oriented, with a heavy focus on quantitative methods. The University of Konstanz is frequently ranked among the best German universities, a fact which is also reflected in this department. Notwithstanding, its relationship with the world of practitioners appears to have worn thinner over the years. Finally, the Hertie School of Governance and the Zeppelin University in Friedrichshafen, two private universities, complete the group of five. The former specialises in postgraduate and executive education, with teaching and research having a strong international orientation, while the latter offers undergraduate and graduate programmes with an explicit focus on public administration issues.

Additional clusters of PA expertise exist regarding practice-oriented research and consulting. The Lorenz von Stein Institute at the University of Kiel enjoys a good reputation in the legal community, especially in the field of digitalisation and electronic government. Furthermore, the *Kommunale Gemeinschaftsstelle für Verwaltungsmanagement*, an institute of an association of local authorities, is a key participant in debates on administrative reform. In this field the Bertelsmann Foundation is another crucial actor. Lastly, the German Research Institute for Public Administration is an important institution for regulatory impact assessment and evaluation. Together with innumerable individual researchers on public administration at other universities, these clusters make for a strong supply of PA expertise. The fragmented nature of this expertise, however, impairs its impact in both research and practice.

Much of this is rooted in disciplinary differences, which are discussed in the next section. Apart from this supply-side factor, however, fragmentation is also reinforced by extraordinary demand for the persistent dominance of lawyers in the higher echelons of German public administration, which has prevented the establishment of truly comprehensive PA schools. The reasons are twofold: a PA-oriented faculty cannot defend its turf by moving towards strong and consistent labour market demands (as in law), and students are not receptive to specialising in administrative issues with poor employment prospects. While German public administration has become more open towards non-lawyers in recent decades, Germany remains different from other countries, where social scientists and management graduates are more welcomed.

2.2 Heterogeneous scientific orientations

Each scholarly community has its fault lines; conflict and competition exist alongside cooperation. Indeed, differentiation and specialisation can foster scientific progress. German PA is, however, marked by extraordinary boundaries. These range from epistemological positions and research aims to publication strategies. As a result, knowledge on administrative issues is often generated and disseminated in isolation, and German PA fails to realise much potential from interdisciplinary cooperation and dialogue between practice and research. Two main results from our survey illustrate this heterogeneity in scientific orientations.

First, there is a rift regarding research priorities. The German PA community is divided between those who see their prime task in the transfer of insights to the world of practitioners, and those who focus on the production of theoretical knowledge, perhaps hoping that sooner or later their results will find their way to the practitioners. These priorities are not mutually exclusive, but they often entail differences in research designs and questions, method selection and publication outlets. In practice, therefore, scholars often have to face the decision where to invest their time, in either basic or applied research. In the German PA community, this trade-off brings clear disciplinary boundaries to the fore. Political scientists display the strongest preference for basic research and theory development, while students of business administration and legal scholars are at the other end of the spectrum. This mirrors the aforementioned institutional fragmentation and therefore fortifies asymmetries in both research and practical consulting. While the former could benefit from more insights from legal and management research, the latter could do better in terms of political science and sociological input.

Second, German PA scholars perceive the internationalisation of publication habits differently. This long-term process is relevant for all social sciences. PA communities, however, claim to have intimate relationships with their respective domestic systems. Indeed, unique cultures and organisational configurations are the prime contexts, if not the outright objects, of much PA scholarship. Furthermore, practical relevance is often linked to publishing in national journals, as these are more likely to be picked up by practitioners. Accordingly, much research has appeared in national publication outlets, which are now under pressure from international flagship journals. Internationalisation also entails a growing emphasis on benchmarking and rankings, which encourages other priorities for topics and methodological strategies. This development, which amounts to a profound transformation of publishing incentives, most of them highly ambivalent, has polarised the

German community. Age is a crucial factor in this regard. Younger scholars are, on average, more focused on international publication outlets. Yet again, there are differences among the disciplinary backgrounds, with law scholars being the most ardent supporters of national research and traditional outlets for scientific findings, while social scientists are more open to publishing in international outlets. Neither is necessarily superior, but the results of this division are important, as diverging attention makes interdisciplinary dialogue more difficult.

In both dimensions, the primary disciplinary affiliation does not determine individual outlooks. There are, for instance, political scientists who work on domestic issues and prefer to publish their findings in German-language journals, just as there are legal scholars who engage in cross-country comparisons and present their results in international journals. Perhaps more important than disciplinary boundaries is the general bifurcation between descriptive-normative work on national phenomena on the one hand, and analytical and theory-oriented work on international issues on the other. Again, it is not problematic if scholars specialise in different areas, but the two camps in the German community tend to ignore each other's work. Our survey revealed that members of both camps read different journals with the exception of only a few that the majority regarded as relevant. They also rate the relevance of specific institutions differently. The respective departments in Potsdam and Konstanz, for instance, score more highly in the international, theory-oriented camps, while the German University of Administrative Sciences in Speyer is more popular in the national, descriptive-normative camp. Finally, the two groups differ in their appreciation for leading scholars. These trends go beyond normal academic differentiation. They represent a bifurcation in substantial and social dimensions of German PA that renders productive dialogue difficult.

2.3 Topical and theoretical convergence

Beneath institutional fragmentation and differences in scientific orientations, however, scholars often work on similar topics, employing identical theoretical frameworks and integrating insights from other disciplines. There is, therefore, plenty of potential for further cooperation.

Regarding topical convergence, four clusters are currently attracting particular attention across disciplinary boundaries. First, questions related to digitalisation are engaging a growing number in the PA community. Scholars are analysing the possibilities of electronic government and new data sources and how their use has already transformed traditional forms of

public administration. Especially in the latter sense, digitalisation represents a cross-cutting issue that hardly any scholar or practitioner can ignore. It thus represents a fertile ground for dialogue and cooperation. Second, internalisation remains high on the PA agenda, as the implications of globalisation and Europeanisation for national bureaucracies are still not fully understood, nor are the bureaucratic organisations beyond the nation-state. Linkages between the different administrative levels, i.e. emerging forms of multi-level administration, are also at the core of this research avenue. Third, many scholars conduct research on the relationship between public administration and citizens, which raises a wide array of analytical and normative questions. Studies on traditional and new participation channels, open government initiatives and innovative accountability channels touch upon issues of legality, legitimacy and efficiency, thus rendering this research area almost ideal for interdisciplinary cooperation. Finally, migration and integration pose serious long-term challenges for public administration – both as a matter of regulation and as a transformative force for public administration itself. Accordingly, they attract much scholarly attention. The recent influx of asylum seekers has provided further impetus. Migration and integration touch upon matters of law, politics, management and more. All clusters thus lend themselves to interdisciplinary efforts.

Despite institutional fragmentation and heterogeneity in scientific orientations, such interdisciplinary efforts are not doomed to fail since there is also some common ground in the use of theories. Many scholars find decision theory to be relevant for their work, a sentiment that cuts across all disciplines. The “new” institutionalisms are also relevant for most, although legal scholars have less use for them. With these and many other approaches, such as systems theory, game theory or constructivism, which engage a sizeable minority in all disciplines relevant in the PA community, there is ample potential for cooperation below the level of institutionalised disciplinary integration or leadership. Furthermore, German PA scholars show a great openness towards other disciplines. On average, they name more than two disciplines – apart from their own – as relevant for their work. Political science is the most important discipline, followed by law, sociology, economics and management. In German PA, interdisciplinarity is thus practised on a working level, rather than being institutionalised in formal terms.

The present state of PA in Germany is therefore ambivalent. It is fragmented along disciplinary boundaries and sidelined within the relevant disciplines. As such, it is more a field of study than an academic discipline distinguishable from law, political science or management studies. However, while

institutional fragmentation and heterogeneity in scientific orientations hold steady, there is potential for cooperation in topical and theoretical terms.

3 The future of Public Administration in Germany

Many scholars have concluded that the feeble signs of topical and theoretical convergence may not be enough to bolster the standing of the German PA community or even avert its sliding into irrelevance. In recent years, they have embarked on a soul-searching journey. Admittedly, such exercises come to pass roughly every decade (see, e.g., Benz, 2005 and Bogumil, 2005 for important contributions); so far, however, these ruminations have failed to generate much impact. But the community has, at least, not given up, and ideas for improving its dire situation are proliferating. Some members of the legal community, for instance, seek to overcome the advancing isolation of their subfield by developing a more interdisciplinary decision-making paradigm in administrative law, while some management scholars advocate technology-driven innovation as the post-New Public Management paradigm. Some political scientists, meanwhile, recommend revisiting PA's theoretical foundations or linking its frequently parochial debates to the internationalisation agenda of the broader social sciences.

While providing substantial stimuli for future research, these contributions often merely reinforce disciplinary boundaries. They hardly address the fate of the German PA community as a whole, which can only prosper by overcoming the challenges of problematic boundaries and path dependencies. This section shows that, without realistic prospects of disciplinary integration, the German PA community must strengthen its efforts at the working level. The potential for this endeavour has already been outlined. Broader trends in academic science – internationalisation, digitalisation and demographic change – provide a promising context.

3.1 Prospects of disciplinary integration

One important proposal for overcoming PA's precarious standing in Germany is disciplinary independence (see, e.g., Bohne, 2018). According to this reasoning, the permanent need to demarcate itself from other fields of study within the mother disciplines and the concurrent disciplinary competition within the PA community are detrimental. Establishing an independent discipline, effectively integrating the various approaches in studying public administration, would instead help to bolster the standing of PA in Germany.

At first glance, this sounds plausible; however, the most significant problem with this approach is its lack of popularity in the community itself.

Reservations about developing PA into an independent discipline already start at the problem definition phase. Most German PA scholars agree that the current state of interdisciplinarity is in dire need of improvement. Two out of five argue outright that the rather multidisciplinary character of German PA has negative consequences in terms of standing, funding and teaching, but the majority fails to see it as *the* major factor. Furthermore, even the critical assessments tend to translate into calls for reform, not a revolution in the sense of establishing a new discipline. Accordingly, only a minority in the German PA community calls for such efforts. Two main rationales lie behind this reservation, which cuts across all disciplinary boundaries. On the one hand, academic turfs are defended. Many scholars fear that an independent discipline would lead to their own discipline losing influence in public administration issues. On the other hand, most German PA scholars argue that scientific progress is achieved at disciplinary frontiers. An independent discipline, no matter how careful the integration, might impede such creative multidisciplinary. Disciplinary integration is, therefore, no realistic option for German PA.

Another proposal to bolster PA's standing in Germany is to install a lead discipline. This solution would leave the multidisciplinary character of the field intact, while one specific discipline would provide orientation in terms of topics, research questions and methods. Stronger agenda-setting would solve collective action problems without ultimate hierarchy. While this proposal meets concerns about the stifling of scientific progress by an independent discipline, it fails to dispel anxieties about the potential loss of influence for specific disciplines. The views in the German PA community about potential lead disciplines are telling. Most scholars state that such leadership would be welcome; however they overwhelmingly name their own discipline as being the most suitable to fulfil this function. Political scientists are the most resolute group in this regard, but scholars from other disciplines are also reluctant to grant another discipline leadership functions. The results of our survey indicate that researchers from political science are the most prominent representatives of PA in Germany. This could support the case for a stronger social science-based PA, but this leadership would still have little following in other disciplines. The proposal for a lead discipline is, therefore, also without realistic prospects.

In this light, more debates on the disciplinary integration of German PA currently appear futile. At best, they lead to nothing, and at worst they incite conflict between the disciplines. At any rate, such reforms will not materialise

in the near future. Instead, the German PA community will continue to be plagued by institutional fragmentation and heterogeneity in scientific orientations. Its long-term standing, therefore, will depend on how fruitful the topical and theoretical convergence at the working level will become. Against the background of broader developments in the academic social sciences, there are some reasons to be cautiously optimistic.

3.2 Broader developments in the academic social sciences

Internationalisation and digitalisation are more than just fashionable research topics; they are responsible for transforming the academic social sciences and reshaping how research is conducted and communicated. In this regard, both developments can also affect German PA in that they offer new links and opportunities for interdisciplinary cooperation.

While opinions differ starkly on the internationalisation of the social sciences, almost everyone in the German PA community accepts its transformative impact. These days, tenure committees and grant commissions are placing increasing emphasis on the internationality of an applicant's publication habits, research projects and professional networks. The impact of this internationalisation – in all its facets – on the quality and relevance of the social sciences is not relevant for this chapter. What matters here is that the internationalisation trend is disrupting the current equilibrium of German PA. On the one hand, young scholars must meet the standards of international journals. This effectively reduces the incentives to engage in descriptive studies of individual German bureaucracies and raises the rewards for doing rigorous, comparative work. Admittedly, standards and peer review processes still vary, but this internationalisation trend will reduce the parochialism in some strands of the German PA community. This, by the way, does not necessitate moving away from the research objects, as some critics argue; it is rather about approaching them more systematically. Practical relevance must therefore not suffer either and could, by contrast, benefit from more rigorous work, as long as it also resonates in the national community. On the other hand, internationalisation brings the German community into closer contact with established independent PA disciplines. In light of the considerations above, this is unlikely to foster identical developments in Germany, but the community can benefit from being even more strongly confronted with different approaches to the study of public administration.

Digitalisation can be another catalyst for the release of German PA from its current equilibrium. In terms of scientific communication, it amplifies the effects of internationalisation. The dissemination of research results has

become quicker and more versatile. A scholar no longer has to wait months for a printed journal. Findings are first published online, placed in additional repositories, and reported in blogs and social media outlets. Again, the overall impact of this development is ambivalent, but as dissemination structures evolve, German PA scholars are increasingly drawn from their national echo chambers. The opportunities and the demands of this trend may bring them into closer contact with other approaches to the study of public administration. In the end, scientific orientations in the German community may converge. New data sources may have a similar effect. Research on public administration has traditionally been tedious. Information was hard to obtain, as secrecy reigned supreme. Research confined to individual bureaucracies was sometimes simply a matter of practical constraints. Digitalisation, along with higher transparency, is now creating new possibilities. Public organisations are increasingly opening their archives, while constantly producing transactional data. Statistical analysis of large data sets – from surveys, official databases and budgets – has become easier. As the black boxes of public administration become more and more illuminated, comparative research, both international and rigorous, is slowly becoming the mainstream of German PA.

The positive traits of internationalisation and digitalisation can provide the impetus for German PA to further converge on a working level. The fact that younger scholars are more open to both developments than their older counterparts will increase the likelihood of convergence, since German PA is currently undergoing profound demographic change. However, neither internationalisation nor digitalisation should necessarily lead to more constructive convergence; they could also produce a debilitating mainstream or increase divisions between the relevant disciplines. In the end, the fate of German PA as a common project depends on mutual disciplinary toleration and the constructive use of differences.

3.3 Three scenarios for the future

Despite its institutional fragmentation and heterogeneity in scientific orientations, German PA is still alive. It is, however, only moderately kicking. Its standing, as most of its members would agree, is precarious. Considering the circumstances described above, three scenarios for the medium term are currently plausible: drifting apart, muddling through or growing together.

Drifting apart appears to be the least likely scenario. After all, German PA has endured disciplinary fragmentation and differentiation for most of its existence. Why would it drift apart now? Because, as a loosely coupled system, it would not need much to break. The German PA community is

of only moderate size. As reported, it currently has problems attracting the best and brightest students. Career opportunities simply look brighter in the other fields of their mother disciplines. And it does not need much more than one generation to rip the feeble fabric of the German PA community. However, with ever growing student numbers at German universities, public administration programmes are also booming. From this pool it should be possible to recruit an adequate number of promising young scholars. But this alone is hardly enough, because what is taught in these programmes also matters. If the current trend towards even more specialisation continues, future graduates may enter the multidisciplinary field with a narrow view of public administration issues. This could impede constructive dialogue and, therefore, contribute to the community drifting apart.

Muddling through is a more realistic scenario, however. The decade-long resilience of the German PA community suggests that it will endure in the future. Given the renewed attention to issues of public organisation, there should be enough demand to keep study programmes attractive and grant-givers interested. As the civil service is still becoming more open to graduates of disciplines other than law, the situation of the few centres of PA teaching and research should remain stable. Yet, big improvements in the community's overall standing should not be expected. The challenges of multidisciplinaryity remain. Scholars working on issues of public administration will have to defend their turf within their mother disciplines and come to scientific understandings with their counterparts in other disciplines. As the field's history in Germany shows, this is hard work. Yet given the convergence in topical and theoretical orientations, the prospects of succeeding in keeping the community alive appear to be good.

Could German PA accomplish more than muddling through? Considering all its limitations, expectations for a promising future and for the community to grow closer together are currently low. Even below the level of disciplinary integration, there is no "German school," no unifying paradigm, in sight which could guide and foster the community. Scientific pluralism can be productive, but a lack of coherence can also be detrimental in today's academia. The heterogeneity in scientific orientations and the fragmented publication habits hardly bode well for the community at large. However, the transformative force of internationalisation and digitalisation, together with the topical and theoretical convergence among German scholars, may lead the way out of this impasse. An emerging research agenda based on behavioural approaches, studied with experimental and quasi-experimental methods, is, for instance, one avenue where PA scholars of all disciplines may come together. But this will work only when the strengths and weaknesses of such approaches – and

many others – are acknowledged by the community at large. It will neither save research on public administration, nor will it be its downfall. Innovations always come with turf wars, but mutual toleration and the productive use of differences could keep such struggles to a minimum for the benefit of the community at large.

4 Concluding remarks

When comparing PA in other European countries, the German community is found to share some of the problems. The field is under pressure, but it has the resources and ideas to reassert itself (Bertels, Bouckaert and Jann, 2016, p. 24). Given the peculiarities of the German community, however, we should caution against excessive optimism. For a stable or even promising future, German PA still has to face the double integration challenge of multidisciplinary. Respective scholars must be embedded in their mother disciplines and nonetheless come to collective understandings in the broader PA community. This chapter has shown that, currently, there is much heterogeneity in German PA – not only in institutional, but also in substantive terms. Its fate depends on how the latter diversity will be approached. Given the current bifurcation of German PA, it can go either way. If the internationalised and theory-driven faction drifts further apart from the more practical and country-oriented faction, the collective standing of the community will suffer. Both sides will have to make efforts to find some middle ground.

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