



# **United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA)**

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## **Accountability, Transparency and Citizen Trust in Government**

**Werner Jann  
CEPA, United Nations, New York, March 30, 2009**

# What are we here for?

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"Based on the parameters set by the background paper, the Committee will

- determine the **key issues** in capacity building and
- identify **policy options and recommendations** for Member States, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretariat in addressing them."

# Outline

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- Key Issues:
  - the importance of institutions
  - the importance of trust
- Key Lessons Learned
  - determinants of government performance
  - accountability and participation
- Key Principles to Guide Action in the Future
  - participation and consultation
  - empowerment and capacity building
  - research, analysis and advisory services

# Key Issues: Institutions

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- the importance of **institutions**
- first we shape our architecture, and then our architecture shapes us (Winston Churchill)

# Key Issues: Institutions

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- the problems linked with poor performance, lack of professionalism and corruption in the public service are **not the problems of individuals**, i.e. cannot be solved on an individual basis, but have to do with the public service as an institution
- civil servants cannot be expected to work efficiently, effective and reliable and to perform within **inappropriate institutions**, structures and systems

# Key Issues: Institutions

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- appropriate institutional frameworks have to be in place and effective to constantly **shape the behavior** of public servants and leaders and to ensure that they behave and act in a way that meets governments' and people's expectations
- **institutions are the basis** for developing the human factor in capacity building for development

# Key Issues: Institutions

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- what **constitutes institutions**?  
regulatory, normative and cognitive pillars
  - incentives: what actors have to do  
(rules, laws and economic sanctions)
  - appropriate behavior: how actors are supposed to  
behave (unwritten rules, social obligations)
  - worldviews: what is taken for granted  
(ruling concepts and assumptions,  
the social construction of reality)

# Key Issues:

## Trust

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- the importance of **trust**
- the idea that trust is essential for social, economic and political life is a very old one
- trust, weapons, and food are the essentials of government (Confucius)
- without trust efficient economic transactions are impossible (Adam Smith)



# Key Issues:

## Trust

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- trust is not so much a property of individuals, but a **collective feature of societies**
- generalized social trust in modern, large scale society is associated with a wide range of **positive social goods**
  - longer, happier, and more healthy lives
  - wealthier and more democratic societies
  - better schools, lower crime etc.

# Key Issues:

## Trust

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- social and **political institutions** and the way they work have profound implications for social trust, as well as for political trust and confidence
- doing things the **right way** (input legitimacy) is as important as doing the **right things** (output legitimacy)
- the **most important influence** associated with generalized social trust is
  - good government

# Key Issues:

## Trust

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- trust seems to be a **top-down phenomenon**, much more influenced by the nature and the operations of social and political institutions, than by individual characteristics
- citizens' trust in government through appropriate institutions should therefore be a **central concern for capacity building** for development

# Lessons Learned

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- what kind of **institutional arrangements** go together with better government performance?
  - very hard to measure, even harder to explain
  - **Sustainable Governance Indicators (SGI)** by the Bertelsmann Foundation in Germany
  - looking at institutional features and government performance in the OECD

# Lessons Learned

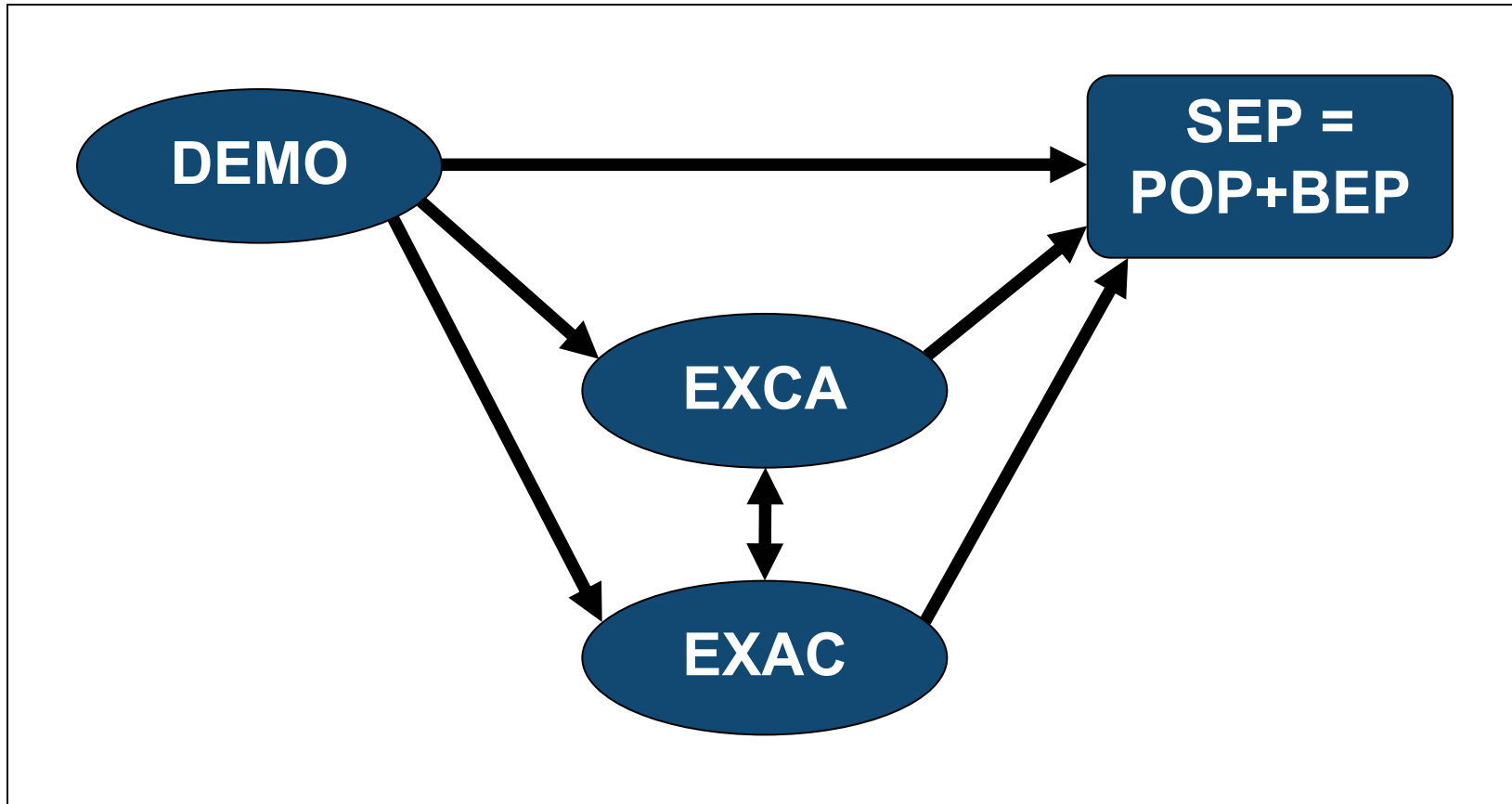
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- looking at four different dimensions
  - status of democracy (DEMO)
  - executive capacity (EXCA)
  - executive accountability (EXAC)
- socio-economic performance (SEP)
  - basic socio-economic parameters (BEP)
  - policy-specific performance (POP)
    - economy and employment
    - social affairs
    - security
    - sustainability

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# Lessons Learned

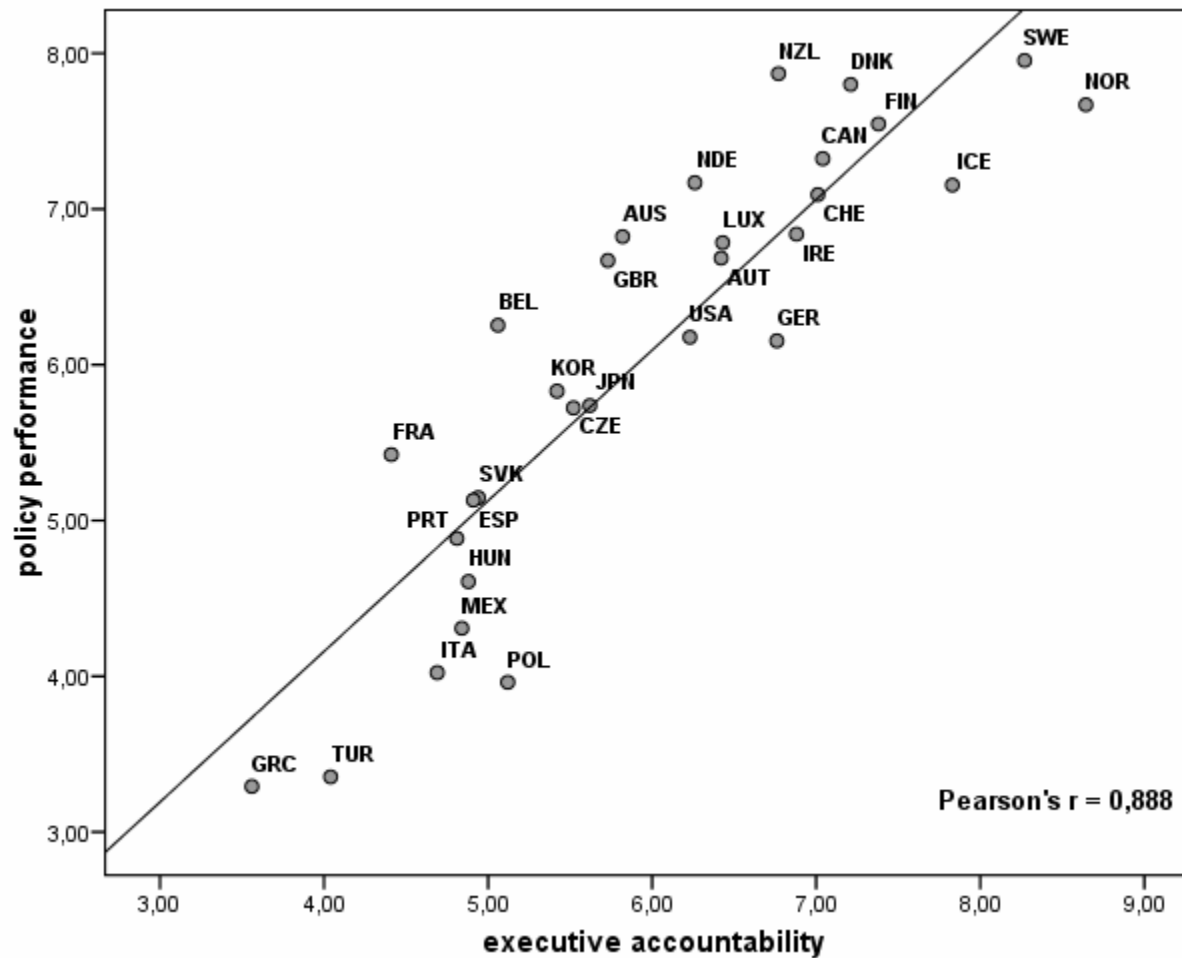


# Lessons Learned

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- **policy performance (POP)** shows the strongest relationship
  - not with executive capacity (EXCA)
  - but with **status of democracy (DEMO)** and
  - with **executive accountability (EXAC)**
- for **basic socio-economic parameters (BEP)**
  - only **executive accountability (EXAC)** matters
  - (EXCA correlates negatively)??

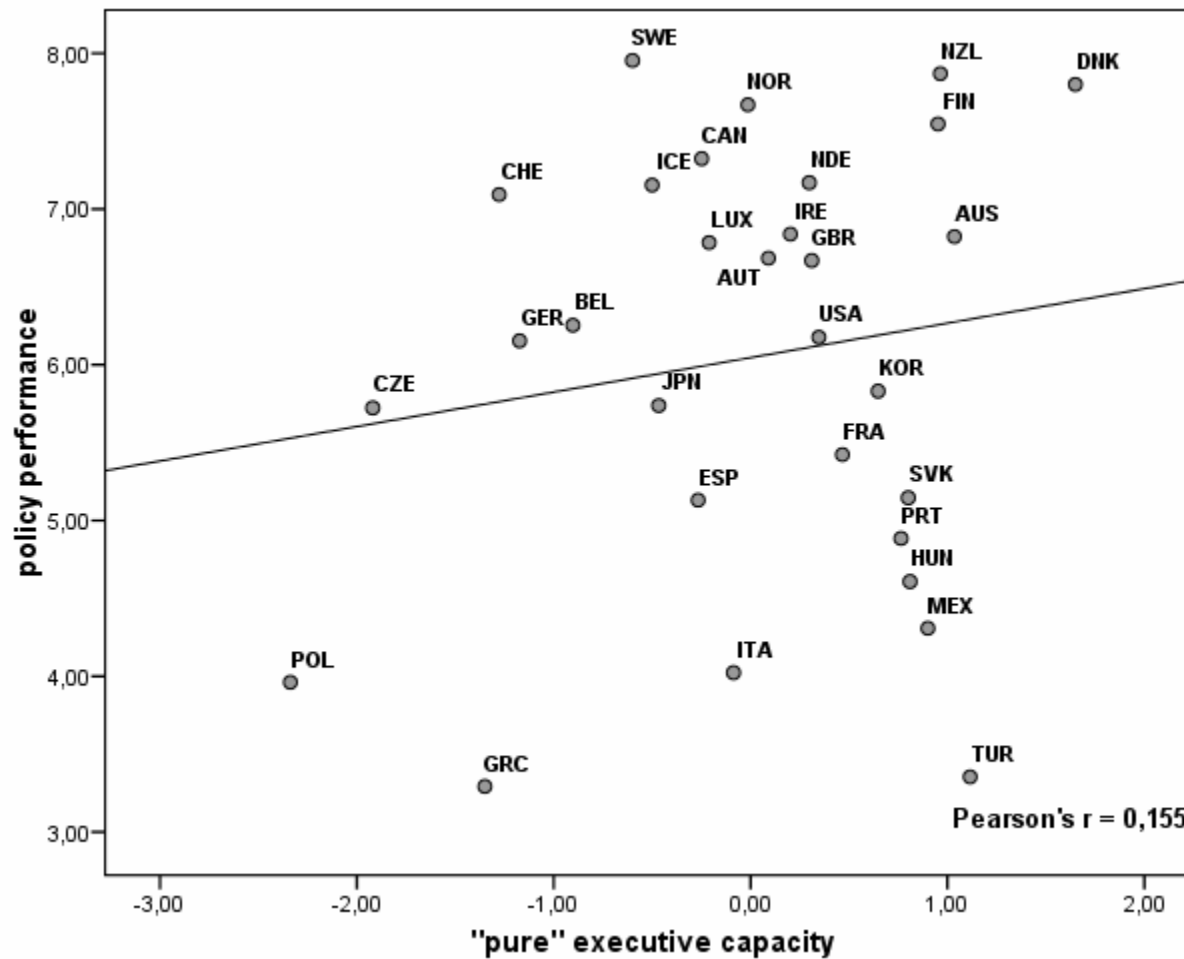
# Lessons Learned



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# Lessons Learned



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# Lessons Learned

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if we look even closer

- in **status of democracy** (DEMO)
  - it is mainly **rule of law** that matters
- in **executive accountability** (EXAC)
  - it is **citizens**, their evaluative and participatory competencies and
  - **intermediary organizations**, their professional and advisory capacities that matter

# Lessons Learned

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if we look at other explanations

- the **age of democracy** matters strongly for policy performance (POP)
- the **openness of the economy** matters strongly for basic socio-economic parameters (BEP)

# Lessons Learned

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**classical governmental features** do not matter

- competitive or consociational democracy
- consensus or majoritarian democracy
- parliamentary or presidential systems
- uni-cameralism or bi-cameralism
- federal or central states
- majority or proportional elections

# Lessons Learned

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- if we look closer at **executive capacity**, certain institutional criteria matter (where are governments with good performance particularly good?)
  - **societal consultation**, i.e. "consultation with trade unions, employer's associations, leading business associations, religious communities, and social and environmental interest groups" and
  - **effective implementation** (monitoring ministries and agencies, task funding)

# Lessons Learned

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- if we look even closer at what the "best countries" do, and what others don't have, we find they have special institutional arrangements and resources in
  - **strategic capacity** of central government
  - inter-ministerial **coordination**
  - **societal consultation** and mobilisation of support and
  - **institutional learning**, i.e. structures of self-monitoring and -reform

# Lessons Learned

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- what does all this tell us about accountability, transparency and trust?
    - executive capacity does not exist in a vacuum
    - performance of governments is indeed linked much more closely to
      - **quality of democracy** and
      - **executive accountability**
- institutions matter!

# Lessons Learned

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- and if we look more specifically at executive capacity
  - performance of governments is again linked much more closely to elements like
    - societal consultation and
    - institutional learning
    - all of which are concerned with establishing **accountability, transparency and trust**



# Lessons Learned

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- democracy and participation are **fundamental goals and objects of value** in and of itself, but
- citizen and organisational participation have strong **positive impacts on governance performance**, on output and outcome of policy formation and implementation
  - efficiency
  - effectiveness
  - equity
  - social justice

→these are the lessons of the developed world

# Key Issues

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- "Member States need to review their governance and public administration institutional arrangements, structures, systems and practices of the public service, and make them conducive to civic engagement, transparency and accountability as key components of a relationship of trust that is crucial to face the challenges of achieving the Millennium Development Goals."

# Key Principles for Future Action: For Member Countries

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- strengthen **participation and consultation** in all phases of the policy cycle
  - agenda setting and problem definition
  - policy formation and project planning
  - policy implementation and project execution
  - policy evaluation and project auditing

# Key Principles for Future Action: For Member Countries

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- **accountability** is of central importance for governmental performance
  - strengthen the cognitive and participatory capacities of citizens
  - strengthen the professional and advisory capacities of intermediary organizations
  - strengthen the learning and analytical capacities of governments and public managers

# Key Principles for Future Action: For Member Countries

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- **institutions** are of central importance for governmental performance
  - strengthen classical Weberian bureaucracies – separation of the job from the person, assessment of performance, merit-based promotions, internal rule of laws, written documentation of decisions etc. create trust in those we don't personally know
  - establish and strengthen watchdogs for appropriate behavior, like Supreme Audit Institutions (SAI) as supported by INTOSAI

# Key Principles for Future Action: For United Nations Agencies

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- support a **wider concept of governance**  
(from government to governance)
  - at the level of government and public administration
    - societal consultation
    - networks and subsidiarity
  - at the level of civil society
    - empowerment
    - social mobilisation

# Key Principles for Future Action: For United Nations Agencies

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- support **social mobilisation and capacity building**
  - creating a civil society where none exists, and strengthening it where it does
  - mobilising the capacity and initiatives of civil society organisations working for social and economic development
  - *be aware: newly emerging NGOs are often created from the top, often with state patronage, and with very little participation of people from the bottom*

# Key Principles for Future Action: For United Nations Agencies

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- prerequisites for empowerment and participation
  - pluralism  
accepting different interests and ideas
  - civil liberties  
freedom of speech  
freedom of organisation and association
  - rule of law  
functioning of the legal system  
literacy, financial means
  - transparency  
availability of information



# Key Principles for Future Action: The Secretariat

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- through **research, analysis and advisory services** the Secretariat should support the deepening of understanding and the transfer of knowledge for
  - the importance of **institutions and trust** for human resources capacity building
  - the importance of civil society and citizen **participation and consultation** for capacity building
  - the importance of a wider understanding of **governance**

# Key Principles for Future Action: The Secretariat

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- the research and advisory work of the Secretariat should embrace **newer concepts** of government and governance, like
  - actor-centered approaches and
  - institutional theories, like
  - the concept of the Neo-Weberian State

# Key Principles for Future Action: The Secretariat

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- the concept of the Neo-Weberian State entails
  - reaffirmation of the role of the **state as facilitator** for collective problem solving
  - reaffirmation of the role of **representative democracy** at all levels
  - reaffirmation of the role of administrative law and **Weberian bureaucracy** (necessary rules, hierarchies, professionalism)
  - reaffirmation of the idea of a **distinctive public service**

# Key Principles for Future Action: The Secretariat

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- the concept of the Neo-Weberian State entails
  - stronger **external orientation** (from rules to citizens, quality, and service)
  - stronger direct **consultation** with citizens and civil society
  - stronger orientation towards **results and performance**
  - stronger **managerial professionalism**

# Key Principles for Future Action: The Secretariat

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- research, analysis and advisory services in these directions should be strengthened through
  - **regional centres of excellence**, taking into account the different social and cultural prerequisites for capacity building
  - an involvement of the **university of the UN**, making public administration, public policy and public management a central concern of UN research, education and training

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# Thank you very much!

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Prof. Dr. Werner Jann

Chair for Political Science, Administration and Organisation

University of Potsdam

eMail: [jann@uni-potsdam.de](mailto:jann@uni-potsdam.de)

Mail: August-Bebel-Str. 89, D 14482 Potsdam

Tel.: +49/(0)331/ 977- 3241

Fax: +49/(0)331/ 977- 3302

WWW: [http://www.uni-potsdam.de/u/lv\\_verwaltung/index.htm](http://www.uni-potsdam.de/u/lv_verwaltung/index.htm)

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