

Call for Abstracts
Journal of the Common Economy and the Common Good (Z'GuG)
Digital Services of General Interest in Rural Areas, 2/2024

Editors:

Univ.-Prof.ⁱⁿ Dr.ⁱⁿ Tanja Klenk (HSU/UniBw Hamburg), Univ.-Prof.ⁱⁿ Dr.ⁱⁿ Christina Schaefer (HSU/UniBw Hamburg)

Access to public infrastructures, goods and services that are essential for a digital society is far from guaranteed, especially in rural areas. Rural regions are often located not only in the geographical periphery, but also in the digital periphery. This phenomenon, discussed in literature (Cowie et al. 2020; Salemin et al. 2017) under the terms 'digital divide' or 'urban-rural divide', is also relevant for Germany: Although the larger population residing in urban areas, a significant proportion – one third of the population! – lives in sparsely or predominantly sparsely populated rural areas. Examining the distribution of regions accentuates the importance of rural regions for Germany: almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of the urban and rural districts can be classified as sparsely or predominantly sparsely populated rural areas (BBSR 2019).

Start-ups, social entrepreneurs and universities are important key players in digital innovation providing impetus for regional development. However, when these innovators attempt to implement their ideas, they often encounter administrative and/or political hurdles that hinder the realization of their visions. Conversely, stakeholders within local government and the local economy often lack the necessary human, time and financial resources to independently drive digital innovations forward.

Against this background, it is the **aim of this special issue to critically** reflect on the status and prospects of digital services of general interest in rural regions. Two assumptions are central to this issue: First, it is assumed that the provision of digital public services is crucial for maintaining and creating equal living conditions. Second, in the context of this issue, the further development of digital public infrastructure in rural areas is understood not only as a technical challenge, but also and especially as an economic, political-administrative, social and cultural challenge. Digital services of general interest encompass more than the establishment of physical infrastructure for high-speed internet (expansion of fiber optic, cable and mobile networks). Equally essential are public services that build on this digital infrastructure, for example in public transport, the health or education sector. Additionally, it encompasses digital content ranging from streaming digital council work to administrative data provided free of charge (open data) (Schulz 2019, p. 4).

The editors of this issue invite to submit proposals¹ for contributions on digital public services in rural areas. We **welcome both empirical studies and theoretical or conceptual work**.

¹ Orientation for the structure of the abstract with scientific survey: relevance and problem description/motivation; research question(s) and method; results (if the survey has taken place); practical relevance/implications.

The following questions serve as illustrative examples for the special issue's intended content orientation

Economic/economical aspects of digitalization in rural areas

- What do start-ups, social entrepreneurs and universities public companies contribute to the development of digital innovations in rural areas?
- Which digital innovations should be provided by (quasi-)state actors?
- What relevance do digital marketplaces or platforms for public and social services hold for rural development?

Political-administrative aspects of digitization in rural areas

- What are suitable criteria for assessing the maturity of digital innovations for rural areas from a public administration and public policy perspective?
- How can their contribution to the achievement of equal living conditions and regional development be measured?
- To what extent do local governments/municipal economies cooperate with start-ups, social entrepreneurs and universities to further develop digital services of general interest?
- Are there new forms of collaborative service production emerging due to digital innovations?
- What is the current state of innovation in local government?

Social and cultural aspects of digitalization in rural areas

- How do welfare state norms and values such as equal treatment, equal opportunities, and privacy protection inform the development and implementation of digital innovations?
- How are associations, advocacy organizations, individual users involved in the development of digital innovations and how do they contribute to the co-creation and implementation of these innovations?
- What influence do digital innovations have on working conditions in start-ups, local government and the local economy in rural areas? How are work patterns, working hours, qualification requirements and participation structures changing in the context of digitalization? How do working conditions unfold in public platforms?

After acceptance of your abstract, a peer review process will take place. Further details can be found in the publication modalities section.

Publication modalities

Notes on publication and submission	ZGuG - Notes for authors (nomos.de)
Language	German or English speaking
Deadline for abstracts (max. 1500 characters)	01.10.2023
Acceptance decision abstracts	01.11.2023
Deadline for full version	01.01.2024
Feedback 1st appraisal	01.02.2024
Resubmission	01.03.2024
Acceptance decision contributions	31.03.2024
Publication	May/June 2024 (Issue 2-2024)

For CfA queries/submissions, please feel free to contact directly:

Univ.-Prof.ⁱⁿ Dr.ⁱⁿ Tanja Klenk (HSU/UniBw Hamburg): tanja.klenk@hsu-hh.de

Univ.-Prof.ⁱⁿ Dr.ⁱⁿ Christina Schaefer (HSU/UniBw Hamburg): christina.schaefer@hsu-hh.de

For general inquiries about the journal and author references:

Leonie Weigner: weigner@wiso.uni-koeln.de

Editor

Univ.-Prof.in Dr.in Tanja Klenk (HSU/UniBw Hamburg)

Univ.-Prof.in Dr.in Christina Schaefer (HSU/UniBw Hamburg)

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