

Cubicle land – on the sociology of internationalized rule

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1. Einleitung

„Each office within the skyscraper is a segment of the enormous file, a part of the symbol factory that produces the billion of slips of paper that gear modern society into its daily shape. From the executive's suite to the factory yard, the paper webwork is spun; a thousand rules you never made and don't know about are applied to you by a thousand people you have not met and never will.”

What C. Wright Mills (1951: 189) tried to describe with these lines is not a negative utopia but a picture of the society of employees into which the US had turned during Second World War, at least according to his analysis. Long before digitalization and the „age of information" replaced paper by bites, Mills saw offices as a network, a communicative system of leadership and coordination, organized by big hierarchical institutions.

Meanwhile this system of big national bureaucracies has changed. Hierarchical centralized bureaucracies tend to be replaced by the flat hills of „Cubicle Land". With this metaphor I would like to designate a global landscape of work cells separated by movable walls and connected by fibre optic cables, scattered across continents. While the bureaucratic structure of government has remained, it has lost its national segmentary character.

The morphology of bureaucratic rule is changing. Skyscrapers are no longer regarded by all as the icon of high modernity, but the office is still the stem cell of power. The organizational structure of offices has changed too since Mills wrote his analysis. However, the big utopia of the modern ages, namely to govern society by the invention of coordinated and well-organized offices in which information, competence, speed and force concur, is still alive. „Governance“ – “global” and “good” – is the most recent reflection of this tendency in the language of political science. And while in modern times government was organized mostly in hierarchical organizations, it has turned now, as I shall argue, into a slightly different mode. It differs from earlier fantasies of government in its temporality and in its main modus operandi. “Cubicle land”, the endless landscape of interconnected cubicle-like work cells scattered throughout the globe is the backbone of internationalized rule in world society. It is this form of project-oriented bureaucratic rule that I want to sketch in this article.

While sociologists have early on noticed how important bureaucracies are, political science has been much slower in doing so. Max Weber noted that domination (*Herrschaft*) in everyday-life simply means administration (*Verwaltung*). Ruling the world, done by states as classical government or in its more fashionable version of “governance” I will argue here, is therefore a question of administration. Whoever wants to know what the political features of the world are should look for the forms in which it is administered. Following political sociologist like

Weber and others, I would like to challenge currently dominating understandings of international relations, conceiving world politics either in terms of competition between hierarchical political units called states or in the framework of the lofty concept called “governance”.

In the academic field of International Relations, the issue of bureaucratic organization was only dealt with occasionally. The role of bureaucracies in foreign policy has been debated already forty years ago (Allison 1971; Krasner 1972) without having had a large impact on current debates. In the last five years or so, the bureaucratic character of international organizations has been studied again (Barnett/Finnemore 2004), stimulating at least investigations of the forms of organizations more generally in international politics (Dingwerth et al. 2009) However, these recent analysis only focus on international organizations whereas in fact bureaucratic features are dominant in far more areas of politics. Therefore, the theses of this paper go much further:

1. The mode of bureaucratic rule is still the central feature of rule in contemporary world society. “Cubicle land”, the most recent decentralized but interconnected mode of bureaucratic rule, cut through national boundaries and permeate state organizations.
2. This mode of rule has a history that is identical with the history of administration and management. States and corporations have both enforced bureaucratic modes of rule, even if they often presented their projects under very different headings. Meanwhile, this mode is the basis of non-state organizations like NGOs as well.
3. Cubicle land, the at first sight apolitical form of organization, is in fact a highly political phenomenon. It is full of dynamics of power and of attempts to turn power into domination. In the top echelon, priests and experts have monopolized wisdom on “salvation goods” (*Heilsgüter*). They preach and represent the dogma of the day, strong statehood in some decades, the liberal market idea for the next decades afterwards. The interconnections they spin themselves are not organized, they constitute an international caste of intellectuals, experts and consultants. They rule by discourse, by the creation of symbolic capital that sometimes includes state institutions, sometimes it plays with the alleged opposite of the state, the market. The experts create a language of “overall objectives” and “verifiable indicators” that low-ranking officers have to push through with the office staff in bureaucratic organizations. Subordinated to this “elite” is bulk of officers, leading cadres, or managing cadres (*leitende Angestellte*) as they used to be called. This stratum organizes the armies of office workers, placed in cubicles in which they execute the orders of the day.

4. Cubicle Land is a form of rule and domination that emerges in various fields. Most visible it is in development politics and in various policy fields in which the European Union is expanding its rule within member states. One primary example of it is science policy.
5. The newness of “cubicle land” consists in its temporality. Cubicle land differs from older, more centralized and more hierarchical forms of bureaucratic rule by operating in a project logic. Projects are short-term policies stipulating reachable goals (“project purposes”) that shall be achieved in periods between three months and three years. Older forms of government, Soviet and Western style alike, were projects too, driven by utopian ideas too. Cubicle Land differs from that logic by the parceling out of single steps in order to increase the control of political processes, especially the implementation of utopian ideas which follow “expectational concepts” (*Erwartungsbegriffen*) like “peace”, “democracy”, “freedom” or “justice” that are characterized by their non-reachability. This form of bureaucratic domination also produces a new form of employees, new subjects as a result of a new “assujétissement”.

As political scientists, we imagine rule and domination usually differently from what is suggested here. Government is thought off in form of the rule of institutions as they are described in political science textbooks called e.g. “Introduction into the political system of [Country X]”. Public and private administrations, offices and their practices do only very rarely appear in such books. Alternatively, government is conceived as being the government of persons or groups of persons or of “institutions”. What I address in this paper is the “rule of nobody” as Hannah Arendt (1990: 59) has famously phrased the logic of modern bureaucratic forms of domination, in its most recent epitomization.

Cubicle Land is another example for the malleability of bureaucratic rule. It produces in its historical forms its own orders and hierarchies. Cubicle land is the latest stage of a global culture of office employees who are suitable for jobs in international organizations, EU departments, academia or non-governmental organizations or government positions. What they do in there professional life, writing applications, researching data, compiling reports, constructing accounts and stories, presenting “facts” and mediating between viewpoints is totally identical. Only the contents of such practices vary. Practices like producing texts and graphs and presenting in written and oral forms bits of communication are required in all subsystems called “policies”.

Such a thesis, that the world is ruled by an international bureaucracy parceled into sub-units of states and other organizations, is of course in contradiction with established ways of

conceiving world politics. Most theories of world politics conceive states as main actors of world politics and see them rather in a conflictive relation than as parts of a system.

The empirical foundation of my argument is scattered and not yet systematized.¹ I will delve into two policy fields here, namely development policy and science policy in the next section. The purpose of these empirical excursions is rather to elucidate my argument. Actual proofs strong enough to defeat alternative theoretical viewpoints can only be delivered after having carried out systematic research later. The purpose of my paper is therefore rather to provoke comments that shall help me to design such research.

I cannot deal with all theoretical strands in this paper but will instead address at the end of my paper the most fundamental theoretical issues related to my argument. For reasons of delineations a few remarks on the current theoretical landscapes might be in order: Beyond so-called post-positivist understandings, three interpretations of world politics can currently be distinguished: Multipolarity, empire and global governance. It is probably not mistaken to assume that these three paradigms dominate the field of International Relations. All three share the crucial importance of states as a main assumption.

The most widespread assumption as it can be found in mass media and a lot of scholarly work as well sees the world as a world of competing states. Governments in capitals make decisions in order to pursue their goals in a zero-sum game. All states are hierarchically organized, with their respective heads of states at the top echelon. And all states are after relative gains, so that actions of states can be best accounted for by rationalist models. Cooperation between states is difficult these days as no single state can act as hegemon in our multipolar world.²

Another imagination of world politics follows the concept of empire. This viewpoint too can hint to evidence: US military expenditure, for example, is as high as that of the next most spending countries combined, more than half a million US soldiers are based overseas, and even if this does not yet constitute an empire, a number of serious scholars use this concept in order to describe US foreign policy (Laurens 2009, Münkler 2005).

In opposition to these two approaches representatives of a “global governance” paradigm identify a new pattern in world politics. According to them politics between states is not always a zero-sum game. Synergies between states, international organizations, private firms

¹ Evidence, however, is not hard to find. Apart from the cited literature it stems from my own observations in Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Uganda, France and Germany over the last ten years while teaching or conducting research there. Additional information has come from conversations with employees of NGOs in Haiti, Sudan, Germany and in my own professional field, „political science“ as an institutionalized academic activity.

² A paradigmatic case of such „power politics“ is the „great game“ of Russia, China, the US and the EU in Central Asia. On the inappropriateness of such conceptions for inter-state relations in the region cf. Heathershaw 2007. Similar ideas stimulate the discussion about China’s role in Africa and the allegedly waning role of EU member states there (cf. French 2004).

and NGO are possible and need to be realized in order to overcome “global problems”. “Public-private partnerships” are promoted as one of the most promising ideas to come to terms with these issues by producing “collective goods” (cf. Risse/Lehmkuhl 2007).

Here, I want to sketch a fourth interpretation that draws rather on seminal authors of political sociology. Max Weber, Norbert Elias, Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu are, as I argue, helpful in coming to terms with a political world that I call Cubicle Land. Bureaucratic domination as the most pertinent feature of politics in world society is overlooked rather by those classical approaches. These approaches focus far too much on the horizontal structure of states in their depiction of world politics overlooking the essence of what these institutions do: to practice bureaucracy. State and non-state bureaucracies for a long time already form a global system of bureaucracies. This global bureaucratic domination has a history. Cubicle land is only the latest stage of the bureaucratization of the world. This history is a global one that is not linear but marked by disruptions, hybrids, pushes and halts.

2. The global history of bureaucracy

That any form of domination needs a group of people to govern, and that this group always has some form of organization is common wisdom among sociologists. However, this form does not need to be bureaucratic, and not all bureaucracies take on the guise like the one that emerged in European early modern times. It is this form, though, that has been globalized first by the process of European expansion (cf. Reinhard 1999), and later by the endless weaving of international organization. In this section I will first sketch how this form developed historically, and then try to draw a few lines of the picture of its globalization.

2.1. The emergence of modern bureaucracy

It was the physiocrat Vincent de Gournay (1712-1759) who coined the expression of bureaucracy, ironically by criticizing it: He observed that functionaries in absolutist France showed the tendency to accumulate more and more power in their hands and this rendered him skeptical about the real chances of governments to implement decisions. This criticism of bureaucratic rule never died out and it still inspires the mostly denunciatory use of the term. Sociologically it was defined much later. The term designates a type as it was defined by Max Weber: Based on codified law, an “unpersonal order”, educated officials would work in

organizations that are structured hierarchically and along competences. Within these organizations, files and facts have a written form, and functionaries cannot dispose of means individually but are bound to rules in their decisions. The office becomes the “kernel of any modern associational life” (Weber 1985: 126), and state officers (*Beamte*) which do also occur in private firms, are remunerated with money, they do not have other sources of income, and they are subordinated to a strict system of discipline and control. On the other hand, they are offered a career path (*Laufbahn*). Precision, steadiness, discipline, and reliability – it is the calculability of bureaucratic apparatuses that render them so precious and efficient in the eye of power-holders already in early modern times. It unfolds, however, simultaneously with capitalism, as capitalism and bureaucracy constitute each other: Not only states and churches are bureaucratically organized, but also “armies, political parties, private firms, professional associations, clubs, foundations and whatever it may be” (Weber 1985: 128).³ Bureaucracy therefore isn’t just an organizational issue; it is an intrinsically political phenomenon since any administration is government. Furthermore, modern political systems too are shaped by bureaucratic logics. Bureaucracy, as Weber put it, is the “inescapable shadow of mass democracies” (Weber 1985: 130).

All explanations of the rise of bureaucracies draw on long structural processes: While they officially exist in order to solve particular problems, to allow governments to “steer” societies, they emerged as tools of domination, as machines of monarchs in order to press resources out of societies. Such resources were needed to fund warfare and prestige cults of royal courts (cf. Jacoby 1969) From its very beginning, the history of bureaucracies is therefore closely related to inter-state relations. Very early, states began to mimic each others’ bureaucracies. The parallel emergence of the monopoly of violence and the monopoly of taxation that Otto Hintze, Norbert Elias and Charles Tilly have reconstructed so carefully requires the rationalization of state organization as well (Raphael 2000: 21), ending up in related bureaucratic patterns.

By some authors bureaucratization is therefore explained with functionalist theorems: differentiation, prolonged chains of interrelated actions and needs of coordination led to rationalization, and this meant at the end the calculation of means and organization in a bureaucratic manner that would order actions and orders cognitively, structure them logically and systematize them (Breuer 1994: 41). We know that this ideal was not already achieved in

³ In this sense, modern bureaucracies are different from patrimonial forms. In India and China we find of course forms of bureaucracies much earlier than in Europe. They linger, however, like forms of feudalism, between centralization and local patrimonialization: incumbents of positions appropriate the chances they have been granted, and these practices impeach a real rationalization. It seems as if the unfolding of modern bureaucracies is interconnected with the historical development of modern capitalism.

European early modern states, but during the 19th century the growth and rationalization of bureaucracies became a trans-European trend (cf. Osterhammel 2009: 866ff.).

When monopolies of violence were “published” by bourgeois revolutions, as Norbert Elias put it, state bureaucracies were opened as professional fields for emerging middle classes as well. The German type of functionaries (*Berufsbeamte*) were an integrative step in constitutional monarchies to include further groups into the apparatus of rule in order to stabilize it (Wunder 1986: 67; Dreyfus 2000). From then onwards the state became the location of promotion as new groups learned quickly that state offices were means for social mobility.

Apart from such micro-mechanisms that fostered the validity and acceptance of bureaucracies, one could look at the enormous growth of them also in terms of global functional requirements: According to Niklas Luhmann, for example, organization is a function of social differentiation (2010: 59), and the fact that political organization of world society is segmented into increasingly bureaucratic states does only cover a parallel process to the rise of “national economies” which in fact constituted a world market. There might be global bureaucratic system too.

The emergence of the biggest modern bureaucracies has taken place at the beginning of the 20th century when banks and insurance companies could administer the amount of information only by numeric codifications. This was the birth of “data systems” (Mills 1951: 193), and this again shows that the history of bureaucracies is not merely a state affair. All bigger enterprises, not only trusts, show similar organizational features, and their typical personnel, the employee, is just an equivalent to the state official (Krakauer 1930). The development of the Western welfare state is then nothing more than a convergence of bureaucratic modes of administering lives.

2.2 The globalization of bureaucracies

Like the history of parliaments and constitutions, so is the history of bureaucracies one of im- and exportations, of appropriations and reformulations. Such migrations of organizational forms took place in Europe first. Colonialism and its projects then became one big vector for the global spread of this form of political organization. From the era of colonialism, as many case studies show, one can draw a direct line to the practices of the project logic I call Cubicle Land. On the other hand, there are also deliberate importations of the European bureaucracy

into other parts of the world like China and Japan too (cf. Reinhard 1999: 491-509).⁴ In all instances, of course, the migrating concept incorporated local traditions and forms as well once it was implemented.

One of the most prominent examples for the bureaucratization of rule was of course the Soviet Union, if not already Tzarist Russia. Very early, non-dogmatic communist denounced the “real existing socialism” as just a bureaucracy that only privileges a stratum of functionaries and officials (cf. Rizzi 1985). The critique of this “nomenclatura” then became a constant theme of dissident voices in Eastern Europe and where else “socialism” was practiced (cf. Djilas 1957). Even if during Cold War times this criticism was of course easily used and perhaps at times exaggerated by the Western opponent as a proof for its own righteousness, there can be little doubt that social and political realities in the entire former Soviet empire were shaped by extremely bureaucratic forms.

ISAF in Afghanistan and MONUC in the DR Congo are not the first to learn that modern bureaucracies are dependent on social preconditions. Colonial administrators too had to compromise with local authorities and to live with suboptimal results of their efforts (cf. Spittler 1981; von Trotha 1994). The major result of colonial bureaucratization, however, was the implementation of an ideal that survived in Dar-es-salam as well as in Delhi, Djakarta or Taschkent (cf. Eckert 2006; Bichsel 2009).

Stories, forms and shapes differed of course, constituting trajectories. In Central Asia a late kind of adaptation of the Soviet type of bureaucratic rule was developed (Geiss 2007), while in South Asia, in sub-Saharan Africa, and, again much earlier, in Latin America, colonial rule led to real a push of bureaucratization from the 18th century onwards. China and Japan like the Ottoman Empire deliberately introduced reforms of their administration oriented at the European model. The Ottoman Empire, though, turned into a precursor of those internationally administered spaces of our days when its debt crisis induced informal overtaking by European powers.

Once again, financial administration seemed to indicate a tendency that would later to be observed elsewhere too. May be its need to “rule by calculation” (*Beherrschen durch Berechnen*, Weber 1919: 594) gives it the function of a vector of bureaucratization.

The history of the British empire then is a history of the globalization of bureaucracy too: As Niall Ferguson (2003) has shown, bureaucratic forms like currency and loan-systems, the Common Law and the ideal of the well-functioning Civil Service were exported and locally

⁴ Ironically, re-importations took place as well: In the late 1960s, impressed and frightened by Japanese success on different world markets, Western management theory studied practices and models there in order to draw lessons that would keep Western corporate government „competitive“ (cf. Boltanski/Chiapello 2003).

entrenched by the imperial expansion. It would probably not be a big challenge to show how other colonial empires developed different but similar forms of rule by bureaucratic means.

It was most likely the 19th century during which the basis of current political structures were formed, including the main bureaucracies ones in Europe (cf. Osterhammel 2009; Bayart 2004). The expansion of the world market, and the structural features of world politics emerged simultaneously (cf. Schlichte 2010), both bringing about a spread of bureaucratic features of rule. In continuation of that global formation, the late 20th century and our times might retrospectively look like the age of the internationalization of rule due to global bureaucracies developing their own momentum.

The globalization of bureaucracies has, of course, not only been the work of states and corporations. Studies in standardizations have shown that especially associations contribute a lot to the fabric of global norms and compatibility, and these homogenizations meanwhile concern the sport of handball as well as the registration of endangered bird species (Brunsson/Jacobsson 2000: 3). Human rights and well as environment issues are such political fields in which associations do politics with bureaucratic means nowadays. Any new regulation inspires a new bureaucratic tool of monitoring and administering. This, it seems, applies particularly in those cases when regulations cross the border of states. Such are fields defined as “global problems”, solved by huge programs like “state-building” or the creation of the “European Research Area” (cf. Bruno 2008).

3. Cubicle land – the latest state of bureaucratic rule

The classical understanding of bureaucracies is shaped by the image of big hierarchical organizations. The emergence of such organizations was the life-world experience of Max Weber and other founding authors of sociology at the beginning of the 20th century like Robert Michels (1911) working on the growing importance of political consequences of bureaucratization. Many later scholars and also the upcoming literature of management studies and organizational theory have pointed out that this imagination was inspired by the ideal-typical understanding of armies: Strictly separated strata of ranks, direct command-obedience relations and clearly defined competences are the core characteristics of such an organizational image.

For a long time this ideal of organization of bureaucracies prevailed. It came under attack first by the literature on management theory and subsequently in policies of Western states since

the late 1980s. Under the guise of “new public management”, a discursive shift has taken place that - in rhetoric and self-understanding of its proponents – is anti-bureaucratic. However, its practices just reproduce and enlarge the bureaucratic character of politics. What has changed, I will argue, is the mode of bureaucratic organization.

The project logic of Cubicle Land has been developing in fields of international relations as well. A great deal of these changes has to do with the rise of NGOs. While assumptions about the number of NGO on the globe go into millions (McGann/Johnstone 2006), the triplication of numbers of NGO registered as having a consultative status with the UN’s Economic and Social Council⁵ between 1985 and 2005 indicates that there has been a clear trend towards the professionalization – and that means: bureaucratization – of these organizations. Their rise certainly is also due to a change in the practice of Western governments to delegate the execution of development and other tasks to such organization as having less people on the payroll keeps state bureaucracies slim and flexible.

It would be naïve to assume that this change would indicate a decrease in bureaucratic practices. The opposite is more likely as the amount of time spent for the highly competitive application market has rather grown. Writing applications, documenting implementation, organizing evaluations and writing reports has become the major activity of NGO leading personnel.

As a consequence, the field of development assistance meanwhile is dominated by the logic of projects, short-term thinking and an overburdened discourse. The European Union has been one great machine in the production of projects, being itself one. Numerous authors have noticed the role of “private” actors even in classical fields of international relations such as diplomacy (Kappeler 2003: 57). It is therefore hard to tell how many people on the globe are caught in the logic I am describing here.

Cubicle land is an appropriate metaphor in order to sketch this logic as it designates the large, often storey-wide landscapes of cells in which most employees throughout the world work meanwhile. These cells are not separate rooms but are delineated by movable walls, each covering 25 square feet. These cells, standardized as cubicles by companies that offer this hardware, are of course interconnected by fiber cables of media like phones and the internet. As a consequence, it has gotten much harder to tell where one organization ends and where the next one begins. Cubicle land has become, in fact, one country.

In order to delineate this sketch of changes in how the world is governed, I will elucidate that impression in three steps: a short sketch of the techniques and practices in Cubicle Land will

⁵ Cf. (http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/pdf/INF_List.pdf) accessed July 27, 2010.

be added by a number of theses on its internal political structures. A rather theoretical part of the analysis will deal with the temporality of this form of organization, the endlessness of projects.

Techniques and practices

Bureaucratic domination always had a material and a personal aspect. Its history could be told both as a story of commodification of the labor of rule and of ever abstract systems of knowledge production and administration. In its inner life, however, bureaucracy has kept a deeply personal side. Portraits of bureaucratic characters in novels have for example two through running features. Herman Melville to Nicolai Gogol, Italo Svevo and Wilhelm Genazino thematize the monotony of paper work and the cruelty of superiors and colleagues in Boston, Moskau, Trieste and Frankfurt. This material is also instructive when it comes to what bureaucrats actually do. In offices of the 19th century, book-keeping was the central activity. Bureaucracies gathered information on people, businesses, property and the like. This knowledge, as Gerhard Spittler (1980) has shown, formed the backbone of state authority as it allowed to track down individuals and as it created the illusion of having an all-encompassing overview of social life.

In the decades after 1900, automatization set in. Punch cards, postage meters, mailing machines and later digitalized form of information processing and storage changed the organization of bureaucracies dramatically (Gardey 2008). However, it continued to depend on persons knowing about the social relations within organizations, the ways of routines and contexts. While the use and storage of information became depersonalized, the actual fabric of bureaucratic organization kept its personal character, even if no single person within it has a universal knowledge of its functioning or of the information administered. Instead, the sale of ideas and visions, presented as “power-points” have become more and more prominent, and their importance increases with the speed in which one reform is chasing the next.

Two main features of bureaucratic rule haven’t vanished though: first, the gap between bureaucratically produced images and social reality was not closed. It became perhaps even wider. Second, human beings did not disappear, so that very personal aspects of power and domination continued to exist, juxtaposed and intertwined with technical structures that build power structures by themselves.

What political science textbooks euphemistically call “policy cycles” became the most recent mode of bureaucratic rule. The design of policies, its implementation and its supervision, evaluation and re-design determinates by and large what bureaucracies do. Policy papers, conceptualizations, monitoring and reporting have become the main activities on all levels,

reaching from higher EU echelons to every bush office of NGO in the field of developmental aid (cf. Schlichte/Veit 2007). This practice ranges from monthly report sheets of single development projects up to the annual “World Development Report” of the World Bank Group, issuing each year another key phrase that promises salvation.

Data gathering and its interpretation for the purpose of “improving policies” and designing new projects is still a crucial activity in cubicle land. The purpose of data often is less administration but more and more just a feature in the process of reformulating politics. It is no coincidence that social sciences often take part in this process, standing in the long tradition of the relation between states and statistics. In any case, the production of self-referential texts, be it internal briefings, reports, policy recommendations or published yearbooks, is the main activity in cubicle land.

Internal political structures

The history of management generally is a continuous refinement of instruments for controlling labor force of employees (Boltanski/Chiapello 2003: 120). Cubicle land is just the latest stage of this process. Project employees, supposed to control themselves in order to fit the new mode, are the most recent outcome.

Bureaucracies, both state-ones and non-state, are now conceived to be lean and flatter organizations. They do without a number of former layers of hierarchy and they outsource all functions that are not part of the core business. This applies to Ministries of Development as well as to universities. As a consequence, there has been an incredible increase of employees who do no longer have labor contracts with state agencies but are employees in short-term projects. This renders the conditions of “success” of individual employees even more demanding. They need to develop networks of contacts in order to survive in a more flexible and highly volatile professional field. These networks replace the old patterns of “advancement” in hierarchical, unilocal bureaucracies.

However, power differences have not vanished. These self-organizing units need leadership too (Boltanski/Chiapello 2003: 115). All related classical issues like power, legitimacy and domination have remained even if their actual working is disguised by a smoke-screen of independence, freedom and choice. Leadership is less achieved by classical “bossism” but rather by internalized forms of self-organization by the inmates of cubicles.

Leaders in Cubicle land become team leaders. Instead of sober commands and bureaucratic rules they need to use “visions” in order stimulate a workforce that cannot be motivated by money alone. This “vision” is a way of organizing followership without commanding force. It is rather a form of *mise-en-scène* charisma. Leaders become more like coaches of sport teams

and resemble less and less the old type of bosses. Motivation and mobilization become their main tasks.

These changes also can be seen in namings: Former bosses turn into “managers” and dusty administration turns into “management” or “governance”. Managers are no longer commanding officers but should rather be inspiring thinkers, giving impulses, inspired and inspiring, being generalist and creative (Boltanski/Chiapello 2003: 119). Employees, on the other hand, are required to be creative too, as organizations no longer need simple duty-performers but want to hire the entire personality that for that purpose needs to adapt itself to the expected format. “Management by objective”, the innovation of management theory in the 1960s, has thus paved the way for a new mode of internal politics within organizations.

The temporality of Cubicle Land – the endlessness of project logic

Cubicle Land is ruled by concepts that the historian Reinhart Koselleck (2006: 68)) has called “expectational conceptions” (*Erwartungsbegriffe*). “Good governance” in politics, “excellence” in science, or “development” in economics are not accidentally keywords of our age. That there is no respectable definition for them is not a disadvantage but the reason for their discursive ubiquity. Such concepts now serve as replacements for the old political utopia that revolved around emancipation, peace, democracy and justice.

Since the 18th century meaning of such concepts is of course contested as are the ways to achieve these moving horizons. The success of expectational concepts might be explained by the fact that single particular interests and institutional programs coalesce here. The quest for “good governance” or “development” and the most recent accents on “excellency” in academics or “sustainability” in development can, however, not be reduced to such interest coalitions. Their success lies in their quasi-religious character. These are secularized theological conceptions as Reinhart Koselleck has shown for the earlier versions like “progress” (*Fortschritt*) and “liberty” (*Freiheit*).

The current concepts of the project temporality in Cubicle Land stand for endless projections which are characterized by moving horizons. Once a step has been accomplished, the horizon moves again further, which is of course instrumental for all those benefiting from the business. “Mission creep” of international organizations and of NGOs should thus not just be understood as the result of institutional self-interest. It is also, perhaps even more importantly, an built-in mechanism based on expectations and imaginations.

The consequence of this temporality is the endless row of projects called “reform”. This has its historical roots in the governmentality of the Early Modern State as it has been analyzed by

Michel Foucault (2004). To turn the society into an object of state intervention, to mould it according to political imaginations of leaders is the very idea of “government” (*Regierung*). The endless reform is nowadays no longer a process with a marked beginning and a recognizable end point. Reform has become a state (*Zustand*) itself. It is precisely the purpose of reforms, that aims can never be achieved. The legitimacy of reform and of the endless projects it entails is based on the non-fulfillment of its aims.

Cubicle Land now is a further step in the history of bureaucratic reform. In opposition to earlier times when not only decisions were taken on central levels but also detailed plans were developed in departmentalized state offices, Cubicle Land is a system in which the inhabitants of cubicles have to invent their future themselves, of course within the frame of “goals” set elsewhere. Single project workers but particularly their superiors have to think about future projects, they have to turn their biographies too into projects that show neither times of idleness nor stagnation. The subjects of Cubicle Land have to invent projects, to forge plans, to build networks and to maintain their contacts (Boltanski/Chiapello 2003: 156). All this is part of their value on the labor market in Cubicle Land.

On these markets of ideas and personnel the most important thing is to raise the awareness of ones own activity among others, and to create sympathy (Boltanski/Chiapello 2003: 160). This becomes more important than the actual content. The importance of “impact factors” in the academic sector of Cubicle Land is one of the most visible proofs of this rule. Because content actually becomes less and less important, subjects also become interchangeable as long as they master the rules of this game of attention. In the respective biographies one will find patterns of nomadism (Deleuze/Guattari 1992: 522) as a consequence of these rules. The successful inhabitant of Cubicle Land has to obey an imperative of “unboundedness”.

Conclusion: Political science as bureaucratic practice

Cubicle Land can be discussed in various regards. One would concern the causality of the observations: Why is there a change in bureaucratic modes? One answer to that question might hint to growing interdependencies that render hierarchical forms of leadership (*Steuerung*) inefficient and inappropriate (Scharpf 2000: 290). Another thesis could be developed along the argument of “gaining its own momentum” (*Eigendynamik*) (Mayntz/Nedelmann 1987). A third one, more in line with critical political economy, would perhaps stress the commercialization of public functions.

Bureaucratic forms of rule appear in our liberal age as something annoying but not utterly dangerous. One point of discussion and criticism has always been the tension in which it stands vis-à-vis democratic ideals. Political theory has always taken this seriously, and there is a long list of authors ranging from Alexis de Tocqueville, Robert Michels and Max Weber to Hannah Arendt who saw in the rise of state bureaucracies an existential threat to what politics actually are according to her understanding. “Domination by nobody” as she called it (Arendt 1990: 59) can surely be regarded as threat to democratic principles like transparency and accountability.

I would like to conclude this paper with another note, though. One could look at Cubicle Land just being another form of bureaucracy. My impression, still needing empirical tests, is that its dangers go beyond that, especially for social sciences. Political science, especially the productions of “experts” and “analysts” are part of this form of rule. At least in development and security policy they produce reduced images of a complex reality in remote areas, selling it under labels that are congruent with general imaginations that bureaucratic headquarters – governmental or not - have of “developing” areas. The entire discourse on “organized crime”, “international terrorism” and “failed states” is a product of this kind of anticipated obedience to assumed expectations (cf. Heathershaw 2007).

In that sense one might say that a huge part of political science and of course of International Relations is just participating in a bureaucratic language game. Bureaucracies need this kind of language to categorize a social reality they could otherwise not administer. With the growth of international organizations, state and non-state ones alike, it became apparent that the globalization of discourse made these categories even broader. The more the organizations tend to cover, the emptier their categories become.

This language, however, has real consequences. When it is reproduced in media and academia, it shapes a perception of a world that is not only much more complex but perhaps totally different from what bureaucratic politics define for their organizational reasons. “Failed states” in Africa, “organized crime” as the main feature of the successor states of the Soviet Union and the “dangers of Islamism” become generalized perceptions that shape politics. This is much more than the “constitutive power” Barnett and Finnemore found in the activity of international organizations (2004: 17). In fact, it creates a world image that legitimizes ever far reaching interventions.

The function of political science is of course to keep a critical distance to the bureaucratically produced imaginations of the world. Otherwise it risks becoming part of the “doxa” that Bourdieu thought of when he said that “we are thought by a state which we believe to think”

(1998: 93). Without a critical distance that allows for an empirically based understanding of a world still understudied political science and IR just remain a part of Cubicle Land.

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