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Bureaucrationality Behind the Scenes

Field Study of Bureaucrats' Balance Between
Objectivity and Compassion

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Abstract

Considering the depersonalization that the bureaucratic role entails, it is interesting to analyze the bureaucratic role-play that occurs between public and private sphere from a dramaturgical perspective. In order to investigate the personal shift of bureaucrats' attitude, I conducted participant observations and interviews at an office of a Swedish Agency. Based on critical theory and feminist critique, the main research question regarded how a bureaucrat is balancing between objectivity and compassion in their daily work.

The findings show that fragmentation of bureaucratic system entails a distribution of accountability for each element of the process, however, absence of responsibility for the final outcome. Bureaucrats deciding upon cases are physically distanced from their customers, whereas street-level bureaucrats are mostly information providers. The system constitutes a precondition for emotional detachment and imbalance between objectivity and compassion. Expressing compassion is considered as belonging to the private sphere, among intimate relationships. Expressing objectivity, which represents reason, is considered as belonging to the public sphere.

Key words: bureaucracy, dramaturgical analysis, objectivity, compassion, communicative action

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1. Introduction

Thinking of bureaucracy in everyday life, an intuitive image that appears in mind, might be of boring, stiff, routinized white-collar workers, sitting by a desk and turning endless amount of sheets, eight hours a day, five days a week. The term itself can be associated with a dysphemism of complexity. There are more exciting interpretations ahead. 'Can bureaucracy be beautiful?' was the question asked by Frederickson (2000, p. 47), who considered the beauty of noble purposes, and their realization through public organizations and processes. Taking an outlook from political science 'Can bureaucracy be dramatic?' is the question I pose, considering the dramaturgy of bureaucratic role play, entailing ethical dilemmas. According to the script, constituted by law, the performer is ought to act with engagement, and balance between objectivity and compassion (SOU 1997:57:150) towards members of society, constituting the audience. But, if it is just a play, is a bureaucrat an unexpressive marionette, strictly following the script, or an active performer, playing with empathy? Are they only responsible for what happens at the front stage, during performance?

The question of balance between objectivity and compassion is strongly related to the concepts of accountability and responsibility. In order to shed light upon the significance of these dilemmas, I will return to Frederickson's admiration of bureaucracy. As an organizing principle, it is indeed magnificent what bureaucracy can accomplish. A functional bureaucracy requires an objective attitude, accountable for the decisions that are based upon the principle of equal treatment. Consequent application of the law is providing stability and order for members of society.

Nevertheless, the purely rational process can be a channel for noble, as well as despicable purposes. History lessons teach us about the highly rational and advanced techniques, used to pursue highly irrational goals (Arendt, 1963/2006, p. 137; Bauman, 1986/1989, p. 250), requiring nothing else than thoughtless obedience of bureaucrats. Retrospectively speaking, it is uncontroversial to deem cases of Auschwitz or Gulag as immoral. But from a bureaucrat's perspective, is it possible to realize it before, or while it occurs? Responsibility and compassion are crucial ingredients prohibiting aggression towards the other. Simultaneously, equal treatment and consequent application of the law requires objectivity. How does a bureaucrat balance between objectivity and compassion?

1.1 Aim of the Study

While discussing the notion of public and private regarding organizations, political scientists are often considering the privatization of public sector (Rainey, 2014; Pierre, 2016). Application and effects of New Public Management in Swedish administration have been frequently studied (Lundquist 1998; Pierre, 2016; Rothstein, 2014). While 'private' as economic sector, has been in the spotlight of political science, another meaning has been left in the shadows, namely 'private' as an intimate sphere. Due to my interest within the sub-fields of political science as ethics, philosophy and organizational studies, I decided to investigate an ethical dilemma of principle, within bureaucratic context. The question of principle I aim to investigate is:

How does a bureaucrat balance between objectivity and compassion in their daily work?

The inquiry is based upon a supposition that both aspects have a certain place in bureaucracy, thus, it is not a question of *either* objectivity *or* compassion. This is somewhat different from the common perception of bureaucrats as perfectly objective and neutral during work.

Considering the depersonalization that the bureaucratic role entails, it is interesting to analyze the role-play that occurs between public and private sphere from a dramaturgical perspective. In order to investigate the personal shift of bureaucrats' attitude, I conducted a field study at an office of a Swedish Agency (remaining anonymous). During two weeks, I pursued participant observations and ten semi-structured interviews with street-level bureaucrats. Based on interpretative approach, and with critical theory and feminist critique constituting my preunderstanding, I analyzed the meaning-making and bureaucrats' own reflexivity upon their context. The concepts in focus, at an abstract level, has been reason and passion, concretized as objectivity and compassion. The balance between these two, in bureaucratic situation, is related to responsibility and accountability. In order to analyze the attitude of bureaucrats, I used theory about communicative and purposive-rational action. Building upon these, I categorized their attitude as two ideal-types, which I call bureaucratinalities. The contextual setting of bureaucrats was conceptualized from several perspectives - public and private spheres, as well as organizational principles. The terminology of dramaturgical analysis, presented in the end of Method section, is applied throughout the Analysis.

Disposition of the text does not follow the line of concepts, as I have presented them in the introduction. Instead, I chose to continuously explain the theories and concepts in a manner that enables to trace the interconnections. Each section is related to concepts that have been discussed in previous sections. I guide you continuously throughout the text.

2. Theoretical Framework

The etymology of 'person' derives from Latin *persona*, meaning 'mask' (SAOB, 1952). Since bureaucrat is the *persona* of interest in this inquiry, the theoretical framework entails dramaturgical metaphors.

In the presentation of theories, I start with a brief introduction of the philosophical and traditional origins of the dilemma between objectivity and compassion, entailing responsibility in action. I discuss the context of public and private sphere, constituting the stages for bureaucrats. Considering that the word 'drama' derives from Greek *drana*, meaning 'action' (SAOB, 1922), it is convenient to continue with theorizing action. In accordance with my methodology, I view action as contextual. In order to understand the bureaucratic context, organizational principles are discussed.

2.1. Determinism of Reason and (Com)Passion

In this section, I discuss the philosophical implications of my inquiry, referring to Ancient philosophy and Christian tradition. Both have had a significant impact on how the Swedish context came to understand the duality of reason and passion, a precondition for objectivity and compassion. I start to frame the problem in theatrical metaphors. However, the operationalization for Analysis is developed in the end of Method section, where I describe the framework of dramaturgical analysis. The historical context presented below serves as a general introduction to the concepts, embedded in myths. My argument is that the traditions discussed, are enduring to high extent.

According to Whitehead, "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato." (Whitehead, 1978, p. 39) Viewing the world as a theatre and studying the roles played within, has a long history in Western society (Sennett, 2002, p. 34). And indeed, it can be traced back to Plato's philosophy. In the Allegory of the Cave, puppets are playing a show between a wall and a fire. The prisoners, chained to the wall, watch the puppets' shadow play and perceive it as the reality, since they are unable to turn their heads around and see the cave they are situated in (Plato, n.d./381 B.C.E.). Hence, the physical conditions of being chained and surrounded by a wall, are not only contributing to restrictions of physical mobility, but even creating mental boundaries. Prisoners lived in an isolated world of contemplation, not able to deliberate with others. Let us suppose that prisoners walk out of their cave of subjectivity and isolation - how do they think and act, when situated among others? In *The Laws*, Plato portrayed each man as a marionette in the hands of gods, pulled in opposite directions, by the steel strings of passions and a golden string of calculated reason.¹ The golden string of calculated reason entitles a gently coercive public law of state (Platon, 1924, p.

¹ The translations vary between reason, calculation, etc. I choose to use a combination of "calculated reason", since calculating utilities is among various forms of reason, which will be further discussed in "Communicative and Purposive Action".

207-8). The duality of objective reason and (com)passion, depicted as two strings drawn in opposite directions, is fundamental to my inquiry. Plato's solution to our bureaucratic dilemma, would be that one is ought to follow the law, representing an idealized calculated reason.

Man as a marionette, being ruled by the pantheon of gods, became an object of a singular director in Christianity. The Biblical God was not only the creator of the worldly stage and its actors, but prevailed as the audience, since "Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him" (Hebrew 4:13, 2011). This sheer visibility of one's deeds and intentions would constitute an anxious feeling of being observed, if not for the belief in determinism of one's fate, in which someone above bears responsibility for our own actions.

Following religious or legal frameworks within one's societal context can be perceived as an unquestioned necessity, rather than a conscious choice. Breaking from conformism is a threat to the reputation, whereas remaining in the position of consensus is applauded by the society. What if the reason of the law of the state is not well calculated? How extensive is the voluntarism and determinism of our actions when we face irrational laws? The question of (ir)responsibility in action within a conformist context is developed further in the last section of theoretical framework, where I concretize the issue of bureaucratic balance between objectivity and compassion. Below, I still continue at an abstract level regarding these two concepts, and how they became enshrined in public and private spheres.

2.2. Public and Private

In this section, I start with describing Arendt's distinction of fundamental human activities and discuss its connection to distinction between public and private spheres. Drawing upon the traditional distinction between public and private will provide with an understanding of current state of affairs regarding reason and passion, concretized as objectivity and compassion. They have been enshrined in each sphere, imposing an asymmetrical hierarchy. Critical theory will be complemented with feminist critique, revealing the gender power relations that are present in public and private, as well as how they relate to objectivity and compassion, associated with masculinity and femininity. Further chapters will discuss the shift of activities between public and private, influenced by manufactural organization principles.

Arendt designates three fundamental activities of human condition: labor, considering biological aspects of life, assuring individual and species survival; work, regarding the bestowing artificial objects built by humans in the world; and action, the only activity between people without intermediary things, being about our particularities as individuals (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 33). For the sake of my study, the latter two are of interest, namely work and action. There is a strong connection between action and public sphere (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 56). In order to trace the connection, it is necessary to include its relation to private sphere. Due to ambiguities of the term, it is worth mentioning that I do not aim to discuss the private sector considering economics and market. In this thesis, the term private is

regarding intimacy. Public and private spheres are considered as literally physical space, and metaphorically. In metaphorical manner, power is in the relationships between humans. Taking public space literally, power is in the relationship between humans and their environment. Shaping of space can enable or prohibit certain interactions, thus carry power (Brodin, 2006, p. 2).

Distinction between public and private sphere is at least as old as the Ancient Greece. The private was depicted as the intimacy of a household and its family relations, driven by biological necessity, whereas the public life represented organization of politics (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 57, 68). Greeks were convinced that the exchange of words and deeds of citizens constitute the public space of *polis*, the city-state (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 270). In the public, a citizen could make his individuality appear explicitly to others (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 267). Exclusively *his* individuality, since being a male was a requirement to achieve a status of citizenship, thus access to the public. The roles between sexes were clearly defined in the household, where males were responsible for providing nourishment and females for giving birth (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 60). While violence was considered as a primitive mean of politics, thus not being used in public, it could instead be pursued in the private sphere, by the male head of household (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 55).

The duality of public and private in Western thought, constituted an asymmetrical hierarchy, in which private sphere was subordinated and depoliticized (Bexell, 2005, p. 49). John Locke, representing liberalism, thought of public as a sphere where reason, order, authority and knowledge prevailed, whereas the private was a sphere of subjectivity and passion (Bexell, 2005, p. 44-5). According to Hobbes, compassion is one of the passions that leads to war and needs to be tamed by the state (Hobbes, 1651/2004, p. 83, 157). In terms of Machiavellian realism, the uncontrolled female Fortuna needed to be coerced and beaten into submission, by the decisive man of Virtù (Machiavelli, 1532/1985, p. 133; Tickner, 1992, p. 38). The relations were reproduced as dichotomies throughout history, and maintained a superior public sphere, dominated by males and masculine traits, whereas the females and feminine traits were subordinated, and considered as belonging to private sphere. Bearing in mind that objectivity was perceived as an exclusively masculine trait, compassion, considered as feminine, was inferior and bounded to the household.

Despite that physical aggression and despotism is considered as immoral, and illegal, in current Swedish society constituting the context of this study, the history of traditionally determined gender roles and household despotism still have an impact on the legitimacy of women in public sphere. Some women, consciously or not, choose to accept their fate as dominated within the patriarchy (Ringmar, 2007, p. 194). If they play well the role of a 'beautiful soul' (Kronsell, 2012, p. 21) and gladly embrace the dichotomy between male and female, they become rewarded by the society - in contrast to refusing this role (Beauvoir, 1949/2012, p. 77). The only participation of women is by being lovers and mothers with the function of reproducing the nation (Kronsell, 2012, p. 20, 21). Thus, traditionally, females were ought to be chained in the cave of subjectivity, constituted by the private sphere of household, where repetitive acts of necessity

occur. In Arendt's terms, labor was the major category of activity for females. On the other hand, the male was able to maneuver between the categories of labor, work and action.

The asymmetrical gender norms have been strongly questioned, especially by women striving for equal opportunities and power. Sweden is considered as a gender equality pioneer in the international context, since it initiated the feminist foreign policy (Martinsson, Griffin & Nygren, 2016, p. 49). Male voices about gender are not as loud, which has contributed to a connotation of gender regarding only females. Public deliberation has been approaching the femininities as if it is the only gender in need of transformation. This implies that becoming more masculine is an improvement, whereas transference towards feminine traits is inferior. It is a symptom of the masculinity being the norm in authority, continuously reproducing the asymmetry of gender traits, thus an imbalance between the value of masculine objectivity and feminine compassion. To care about others is what gives meaning to a person's being in the world, according to Heidegger (1927/2013). However, the script of humankind, composed by males in public sphere, have portrayed female as the only caretaker. Below, I focus on the concept of action, whereas work is discussed in following sections.

2.3. Communicative and Purposive-Rational Action

In this section, I aim to discuss the significance of action in public sphere and conceptualize two types of attitudes, in accordance with Habermas' theory of communicative action. Further, I discuss its implications for objectivity and compassion. This framework serves as a base for my categorization of the agents' attitude as two ideal types, which I call bureaucraticities. The concept of bureaucraticity is presented further in Analysis section.

Mutual appearance in the public, through words and deeds, constitutes the reality of a citizen. Being deprived of participation in such exchange, as women and slaves historically, is in a sense deprivation of a reality (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 270). Communication enables one's subjectivity to transform into an intersubjectivity, which means understanding others perspectives of reality (Habermas, 1981/1984, p. 286-7). The act of speech, *logos*, is letting something - the subject of conversation - to be seen, for those who converse. Thus, the concept of *logos* can also be understood as closely related to *ratio*, meaning reason and relationship, since we make our perception of reality visible to others (Heidegger, 1927/2013, p. 48-51). The enlightenment of perspectives in a conversation, embedded in these concepts is - similarly to the Ancient Greece - constituting the public sphere. These relations constitute an intersubjectively common lifeworld, in which its participants pursue meaningful actions that are interpreted by others (Habermas, 1981/1984, p. 13). Below, I conceptualize two types of attitudes that bureaucrats can adopt in the public.

According to Habermas' theory of communicative action, a person can adopt two types of attitude in interaction with others - oriented towards success and/or reaching understanding (Habermas, 1981/1984, p. 286). In purposive-rational action, a participant strives to pursue a certain end through certain means,

and calculates consequences in order to success. The results of this action consist of intended effects, as well as unintended side effects (Habermas, 1981/1984, p. 285). Communicative action replaces egocentric calculations of success, with a strive to harmonize their individual goals with others actions, through reaching understanding. This means, negotiating on definition of situation among speaking and acting participants (Habermas, 1981/1984, p. 286-7). Moreover, communicative action is a process of social integration and development of identities (Habermas, 1981/1987, p. 139).

The realia of interaction is more complex than this simplifying division. Communicative action can be an instrument in pursuing purposive-rational action, and communicative action requires some sense of purposive-rational action. Therefore, the types should not necessarily be perceived as either-or. Being aware of the variations of interplay, for the sake of later analysis, I use these two types of attitudes, expressed through speech and acts, and as types of rationality that can be adopted at individual and organizational level. I argue, that purposive-rational action is based upon calculated rationality, emotionally detached in pursue of a determined goal, thus enabling more objective action. The goal itself is not necessarily based on objective values, however, the argument considers means. Communicative action is compromising in character and takes the other part into consideration, hence providing more balance between objectivity and compassion.

2.4. Organizational Principles

In this section, I aim to continue with a discussion of organizational implications for action in public sphere. Development of manufactural strategies have influenced public organizations significantly. I discuss how their economic logic affected the public and private spheres literally as physical space, and metaphorically, as relationships between humans. Throughout the discussion, I refer to previously mentioned concepts of purposive and communicative rationalities (Habermas, 1981/1984) and the distinction between three human activities: labor, work and action (Arendt, 1958/1998). This section is ought to create a theoretical understanding of organizational conditions for bureaucrats' situation. Its implications on objectivity and compassion will be discussed in last theoretical section.

2.4.1. Automatization of Production

During the 20th century, the small-scale handcraft became increasingly replaced by organizational principles of large-scale production. Taylorism was the first significant theory regarding scientific management, where people were measured with mechanistic precision, in order to increase the efficiency of production. Subsequently, standardization of work tasks in addition with assembly lines were introduced by Fordism, established by the automobile company (Maier, 1970, s. 27-34). Toyotism was a further principle developed from car industry, also called Lean production. As the term Lean implies, the strategy regarded reducing stocks, waste, delay and defects, in order to increase efficiency

(Brännmark, 2012, p. 7, 12). These organizational principles entail purposive-rational action with profit as its objective.

Division of labor and specialization became important principles that contributed to a more efficient and sustainable organizational system, in which individuals were easily replaceable. The purpose of entire system was considered, whereas unrelated, individual tasks lacked meaning for individuals (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 170). In contrast to the production of *auto mobile*, a self-movable object, the workers were controlled and determined by the system of production, worked in isolation by themselves, yet, movable only in accordance with a precisely measured schedule and bounded to the machines. Automatization of labor might be perceived as a relief of the burden of necessity, leaving more spare time to pursue more meaningful action. The paradox of automatization, is that people are increasingly stressed in the everyday life, instead of being relieved. What was suppose to make us free, is forcing us to adjust ourselves to its efficiency and intensity. As Arendt (1958/1998) points out, humans create machines with reckless dynamics, enforcing an adaptation to its hastening rhythm (p. 181).

Work tasks that previously required human judgement are becoming computerized, which contributes to digital Taylorism. Individuals experience meaninglessness, due to decreasing contact with others (Gellerstedt, 2012, s. 47-8). The absence of relatedness in the public is compensated in the private, intimate relationships where people appear in front of friends and family, instead of public (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 284).

Modernity and industrialization transformed the notion of public sphere, from the Ancient Greeks' definition, as the desire of exchanging perspectives between citizens, to exchanging products as producers and customers (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 284). The action pursued in public, creating togetherness, was replaced by work in isolation, where manufacturers were surrounded by machines, instead of having direct contact with people and pursue action. This development entails a focus on purposive rationality in public sphere, simultaneously diminishing the communicative rationality, due to the absence of preconditions for action, pursued directly between people, without any barriers.

2.4.2. Transparency and Silence in Public Sphere

The industrial and mechanistic ideals of mass production were an inspiration for modern European architecture that cemented this in aesthetics of buildings, using industrial materials, in undecorated, sparse and functional forms. Architects believed that extraneous elements were slowing down the building process and increased costs. Ford's car models and means of production were considered as the beauty ideal. Colossal sky-scrapers made of glass and steel, with inner divisions of standardized cells, became the setting of bureaucrats during the 20th century (Gartman).

According to Goodsell, a governmental office setting is balancing on a scale of asserting authority and exuding warmth, expressed through symbols (1977, p. 80). The current ideals of visibility, incarnated through open space and

glass walls, is paradoxically contributing to increased isolation. Being constantly exposed to others in an open-floor office, the mutual surveillance turns people inwards instead of chatting, which increases the efficiency of workers from organizational perspective. The absence of tangible barriers that provide protection from surveillance of others, and create intimacy, leads to a decreased sociability among individuals (Sennett, 1977/2002, p. 12-5). As in Foucault's (1977) reference to institutional Panopticon, awareness of being surveilled results in self-monitoring.

The modern public space is empty and silent, permeated by areas to pass through, but not to be in. People protect themselves from scrutinization through withdrawal and silence. In public, people hide their character by trying to look unremarkable (Sennett, 1977/2002, p. 26-7). Averageness, in accordance with what is considered as proper and allowed, is expressed in the obscurity of publicness (Heidegger, 1927/2013, p. 149).

The anonymity, self-control and absence of expressed individuality among bureaucrats became legitimized, since they had to tolerate this technical rationality only eight hours a day. During evenings and weekends, they could reward themselves with spending time in suburbs, expressing their individuality. This temporal and spatial separation of activities as work and play, enabled their contrasting ethics to coexist (Gartman). Being an individual in private sphere and playing a depersonalized role at work, transforms action to bureaucratic duties. (Kallinikos, 2004, p. 9)

According to Sennett (1977/2002), what differentiates the modern private sphere from the past, is the isolation of our psyche and its contemplation as an end for itself, instead of using it as a mean to know the world (p. 4). Considering the Ancient Greek sense of public and private, the expression of individuality has shifted between the spheres. Spatial settings of areas to pass through, and not to be in, serve the purposive rationality to carry out one's tasks as planned. It is eliminating possibilities to pursue communicative action. From the perspective of an agent pursuing purposive-rational action, unplanned communicative action can be perceived as a disturbance. The efficiency embedded in architecture and organizational principles is both representing purposive rationality in itself, and constituting preconditions for acting in accordance to this rationality in public sphere as an entity. Shaping human relationships in accordance with purposive rationality and creating spatial possibilities, as well as prohibitions, entails power. The impact of this rationality on bureaucrats' sense of responsibility, and balance between objectivity and compassion, is discussed in the section below.

2.5. (Ir)Responsibility in Bureaucracy

In this section, I discuss the implications of bureaucrats' situational context for the balance between objectivity and compassion, the presence and absence of responsibility, and obedience towards authority against own conscience.

Lundquist's argument is that a bureaucrat has three significant kinds of relations. A bureaucrat is supposed to obey the law, be loyal towards leaders and take members of the society into consideration. If these interests come into

conflict, a bureaucrat can face an ethical dilemma. It is unclear which of these three aspects has a priority in case of conflict (Lundquist, 1998, p. 106). According to Weberian ideal type, a bureaucrat is objective and depersonalized in his role, emotionally detached from irrational feelings as love and hatred (Weber, 1922, p. 1-3). Emphasis on the objectivity as a superior value remains in current institutions. The division of labor and specialization of work tasks creates a system in which each bureaucrat works with certain sort of problems, instead of handling entire cases. Emotional detachment becomes possible, since the bureaucrat is not engaged in individual customer's cases (Thompson, 1975, p. 121).

Simultaneously, there are reasons to include compassion in ethical framework and special treatment in certain cases (Lundquist, 1998, p. 121). Implementation of a law can sometimes lead to unethical consequences. Thoughtless reception of what the day has to offer and reckless following of bureaucratic routines has historically proven its tragic effects during the Holocaust. Human conscience can be put to rest by being in a society with a self-image of being "good" or "respectable" (Arendt, 1963/2006, p. 126). Considering the ontological stability of everyday life's routines, existential analysis of one's actions has a violent character (Heidegger, 1927/2013, p. 344). Being constantly preoccupied in the everyday life can have a calming effect, however, it is a flight from reflexivity of the self (Heidegger, 1927/2013, p. 380, 383). That was the case of Eichmann, one of the organizers of Holocaust, who blindly followed the will of his leader and pursued his duties (Arendt, 1963/2006, p. 137). As he expressed it, "I was one of the many horses pulling the wagon and couldn't escape left or right because of the will of the driver." (Edidin, 2000, 5 March) Bearing the previously introduced Platonic and Biblical myths in mind, Eichmann's confession makes clear that he thought of himself as a marionette, acting out in accordance with how the strings were pulled. Potential choices of the free will became diminished, since the actions were determined by someone else bearing responsibility. Refusing to act in accordance with purposive rationality would entail a life-threat in a violent conformist context.

"[Eichmann] is actually stupid, but then, somehow, he is not" (Arendt, p. xii-xiii). What I want to emphasize here is the aspect of his actual intelligence, being complemented with absence of reflexivity in action. As Paulsen argues, application of instrumental rationality without reflection is not 'stupid' in itself (2016, p. 189). Nevertheless, rational technology and bureaucracy can be used to pursue irrational goals (Bauman, 1986/1989, p. 250).

The fragmentary system of decision making, being permeated by economic logic, has shifted the focus from holding bureaucrats responsible for their actions in general, to focusing on accountability (Svensson, 2012, p. 307), meaning a retrospective legal answerability (Bexell, 2005, p. 68). Responsibility is fundamental to the moral conscience, that evokes in the presence of the other. When closeness is replaced by distance, the responsibility and compassion become reduced (Bauman, 1986/1989, p. 250). According to Milgram's experiments on obedience towards authority, time, distance and physical barriers are important factors that neutralize moral sense (Milgram, 1974, p. 157). In

combination with an authority distributing orders, the obeying person does not feel responsible for his or her acts. Eventual immoral consequences of pursuing orders are neutralized through psychological mechanisms, as avoidance or denial. Pushing a button that will release a bomb has a similar emotional force as pushing a button that will call an elevator. Technology is enabling humanity to use increasingly destructive means towards distanced others. Conversely, evolution has not provided humans with inhibitors against distanced aggression, as strong as the inhibitors in face-to-face interaction (Milgram, 1974, p. 153-59).

The distance of time and space, channeling decisions through technology, has crucial implications for the emotional force of compassion towards others. Conducting in accordance with orders from an authority, contributes to a shift of responsibility in the mind of the obeying person, who feels discharged of his deeds and its effects on others. Eichmann serves as an example of how bureaucratically constructed distance can legitimize a carelessness in pursuing orders, entailing carelessness towards its victims.

3. Method

In order to investigate how a street-level bureaucrat balances between objectivity and compassion in their daily work, I conducted a field study at an office of a Swedish Agency. Below, I discuss the general implications of interpretative approach. Subsequently, I present and reflect upon my research design, consisting of participant observations and semi-structured interviews.

3.1. Interpretative Approach

For the sake of understanding certain practices, actions and institutions, it is necessary to apprehend the meanings, beliefs and preferences of the relevant agents (Rhodes, 2017, p. 6), namely bureaucrats. In accordance with interpretative approach, I emphasize the contextual meaning-making, by studying the perspective of chosen agents on their own context and why they act in their particular ways (Schwartz-Shea & Yanov, 2012, p. 52-3).

A social scientist needs to participate in the production of the agents' socio-cultural lifeworld, in order to understand its meaning (Habermas, 1981/1984, p. 108). The researcher becomes a research instrument within the context of investigation, especially in ethnography. The evidence is not being there *a priori*, waiting to be collected. Rather, the data is co-generated in the field, by the researcher and agents together. During the process of co-generation, the researcher is selecting information considered as relevant. Thus, the data, and accordingly, the results of the study, are dependent on the researcher's perception. The argument that seeing is partial, has broader implications for the character of the evidence as not objective. In contrast to positivist approach perceiving this as an issue, interpretivist researchers are transparently reflecting upon their positionality during the research process (Schwartz-Shea & Yanov, 2012, p. 79-81).

While investigating the realia of the field, existing theories and deductive hypothesis might be insufficient in explaining the empirical evidence. The interpretive approach requires openness and flexibility, meaning that the planned research design might be revised during the learning process. Abductive and hermeneutic reasoning is a suitable tool that maintains a continuous interaction between theories and empirical evidence. The researcher is directed from a puzzle, towards various possible explanations, in an inferential process (Schwartz-Shea & Yanov, 2012, p. 27-8, 73). A regular critique towards interpretive approach is that the method is not rigorous enough (Rhodes, 2017, p. 35). However, while positivist research designs are strictly determined *a priori*, the advantage of interpretivist approach is emphasizing the ambiguities that appear in the field and adjusting the researcher to the field, instead of adjusting participants to experiments and reducing the evidence to certain variables.

Despite the bottom-up perspective, emphasizing the value of local knowledge, it is not meant that the researcher blindly accepts information. Instead, the multiple perspectives of different agents are mapped in order to attain intertextuality (Schwartz-Shea & Yanov, 2012, p. 51). For instance, it appeared that the narratives of the bureaucrats regarding how they should pursue a certain work task are contradicting. It is the role of the researcher to reveal the ambiguities, understand their sources and provide with a critical perspective when it is adequate. The purpose is to both produce and challenge interpretations by systematically drawing from alternative points of departure (Alvesson, 2011, p. 7).

Since there are no schools of thought or theories of method regarding political ethnography (Rhodes, 2017, p. 40), the norms of reflexivity in research are less developed in political science, than in other fields of social science, for instance anthropology (Schwartz-Shea & Yanov, 2012, p. 102-3). A significant source of inspiration for conducting participant observations was Gustafsson's (2016) study of students in Swedish school, where she transparently discussed her expectations before entering the field and collecting the evidence, as well as difficulties during the research process (p. 37).

3.2. Research Design

Considering the notion of understanding the contextual meaning-making from an insider perspective, I decided to initiate the field study with participant observations, and subsequently, pursue semi-structured interviews. Participant observations enable opportunities for shadowing specific agents and pursue walking interviews in their own everyday context (Schwartz-Shea & Yanov, 2012, p. 65-6). Semi-structured interviews enable the agents' reflexivity of their own context, with a possibility for the researcher to ask them follow-up questions. The combination of interviews and observations is an opportunity for comparing saying and seeing (Rhodes, 2017, p. 14). Field studies can be informative, confirming and challenging for a researcher's interpretation (Friedman, 2010, p. 333). The observations prepared me to ask relevant questions during the interviews, in which I included bureaucrats' own concepts. Consequently, the

interviews enabled me to revise my prior understanding and pursue a more intertextual interpretation.

3.2.1. Accessibility

The field work was dependent on getting access to a governmental office. In the role of the researcher, this inquiry puts me in a less powerful position towards the agents that decide upon allowing or denying access to certain knowledge (Schwartz-Shea & Yanov, 2012, p. 60). With the help of personal contacts, I sent requests to three offices of the same Agency, located in different cities in Sweden. After being denied access due to secrecy reasons, I went to an office of another agency in person, where my request was accepted. The shift of organization did not result in any issues for my research question or design. A setting where bureaucrats have direct contact with customers was the only necessary aspect, while choosing an adequate context to study. The organization remains anonymous, which I discuss further in the section regarding pursuing interviews. I describe the organization more specifically in the result section. Below, I continue with a deeper discussion about how the research design was applied in the field.

3.2.2. Pursuing Participant Observations

Within the given time frame for this master thesis, which is one term, I considered two weeks of participant observations as reasonable. The participant observations were conducted during ten working days from 6th to 17th November 2017, at an office of a Swedish Agency.

Beyond co-generation of data with agents, the analyzing process was not only pursued by the desk - it started already in the field. A continuous self-evaluation of the co-generated data between agents and researcher, can bring critical insights towards how the approach taken by the researcher might shape the evidence, for instance, how the questions posed shape the received answers (Kapiszewski, MacLean & Read, 2015, p. 332, 336-7).

I participated in the bureaucrats' context in several situations. I started a day by participating in more formal contexts as morning meetings for personnel regarding organizational questions, observing and listening when they were welcoming customers by the entrance, sitting next to them by the desk where they were meeting customers, as well as more informal contexts, as their morning exercise routine by copy machines, coffee and lunch breaks. Beside interacting with bureaucrats, I had spontaneous conversations with personnel having other functions. Furthermore, I had minimal interactions with customers and only when they approached me, due to respect for their integrity. Although bureaucrats were in focus of my inquiry, interactions with non-bureaucrats provided me with a more nuanced understanding of their context.

I was very particular with field notes, by registering details through all of my senses and translating it into words, from the look of the office, the affection of the furniture, to the tone of agents' speech or the smell after their smoking

breaks. With time, I became increasingly aware of elements that are more relevant to write down. Beside conducting field notes, I took photographs of the office in order to capture its spatial notions.

During the ten working days, I initiated the study with a careful attitude. I was avoiding to utter my own opinions or reflections towards the bureaucrats. The approach of neutralizing myself was due to my own presupposition that a depersonalized attitude of a researcher would enable co-generation of a more reliable data. This prejudice was a result of the focus in handbooks throughout my education, where positivism and approaches imitating natural science are in authority. As previously mentioned, there are no schools of thought or theories of method regarding political ethnography (Rhodes, 2017, p. 40), which made my task difficult.

I realized the fault of my initial attitude - not being in line with my methodological approach - in the field. During the third day, certain event led to re-evaluation of my role. A bureaucrat that I was shadowing expressed an opinion about a certain incident that just happened and asked what I thought about it. I tried to avoid answering, but the agent insisted by saying "I told you what I think, now you tell me!" curiously. When I shared my personal thoughts openly, the agent reacted with an enthusiasm "There! You understand my situation precisely!". This moment became an indication in two regards. First, a certain intersubjective sense-making between me and the agents became apparent. Second, in order to pursue a truly *participant* observation, sharing my own reflections upon the situation can result in a more open and stimulating co-generation of information. Simultaneously, I was aware of the problematic aspect of steering the direction of agents' comments by sharing too much of my own opinion. Therefore, I was thoughtful in asking open questions and not framing the situation with my preunderstanding. After changing my attitude, I noticed that the agents are daring to share more of their inner reflections, I was able to ask better questions and improved my ability to take field notes. Instead of taking notes constantly, I put more emphasis on eye contact while talking to the agents, in order to be more present in the conversation. My relationships with participants developed noticeably. "It is going to be empty without you here!" said one of the agents at the last day of my field work, which indicates that my belonging within their context was intersubjective.

3.2.3. Pursuing Interviews

During the first week of field work, I got an insight into the particular context of bureaucrats, which enabled me to revise my preunderstanding. Learning from the agents about their everyday routines provided me with necessary local knowledge, which I regarded in formulation of interview questions (Appendix 1). Since I have had co-generated a lot of data during the participant observations, the interviews were regarding certain themes in which I searched for a deeper reflection or complementary information. I conducted the semi-structured interviews during the second week of participant observations, from 13th to 17th November 2017. In order to make bureaucrats comfortable with

expressing their honest thoughts, I decided to protect the individual's identity towards each other, the leadership and public, and promised them an anonymity. After presenting the implications of my study, anonymous interviews, and providing a formula with the request and time schedule to entire office, ten bureaucrats attended voluntarily. The duration was between 15 to 45 minutes. I informed the interviewees that they can interrupt and refuse to answer anytime. I promised anonymity and, with their consent, recorded the interviews in order to be more present, thus able to ask adequate follow-up questions. I shadowed almost all of the interviewees before conducting interviews with them. This enabled me to prepare questions well. Participants were allowed to choose a place where the interviews would be pursued, and all perceived the office as an adequate location.

Confidentiality was a significant ethical consideration. It is important that participants are not revealed towards the public in general, and neither towards each other. "Am I going to be anonymous? So that one can answer sincerely." Despite that this phrase, expressed by an agent, indicates that anonymity increases sincerity in answers, I can not be sure that participants expressed freely during the interviews. There is always a risk of agents' feeling obliged to provide an answer that is perceived as "correct", not willing to stand out from the consensus at work and disturb the definition of the situation that the team is trying to uphold.

3.2.4. Pursuing Analysis by the Desk

"How do I simplify this complexity?" was the question I asked myself frequently during the process of analyzing the entity of co-generated data by the desk. Words can not capture my gratitude towards participants, being so generous with sharing their opinion. This aspect provided me with a solid base of empirical data. Simultaneously, such an extensive size of data was a challenge, considering the very limited time frame I had for disposal.

Shortly after pursuing field work, during the sense-making process by the desk, I chose to apply the dramaturgical analysis as a framework. Despite that it provided me with certain structure, I struggled with an ethical consideration of reducing agents' life stories - to whom I developed a relationship - to simple models. Throughout the search for intertextuality of the data, I strived to continuously think of the significance of ambiguities and provide a nuanced result. Listening to interview recordings, reading through the field notes, watching pictures of the office, and relating it to my theoretical framework was a requiring and intense process. For the sake of agents' anonymity, I had to neutralize their characteristics completely. Despite that I discuss the aspects of sex and age in general, I was limited to not mention agents' previous backgrounds and experiences, which might be significant for the analysis, but entail a risk of revealing their identities. Although leadership of the office had a transparent approach and was indifferent regarding anonymity, it was important to protect the identity of the individuals. Throughout the text, they are referred to as bureaucrats, performers, personnel, employees. Due to the amount and variety of customers, I

was not as limited regarding their individual characteristics, which did not entail risks of violating their integrity.

Due to limited time frame for this thesis, I chose to transcribe five of the ten interviews, and none of the field notes, beside significant fragments for the analysis. The utterances throughout the text are translated from Swedish to English. Original versions can be found in Appendix 2.

3.3. Dramaturgical Analysis

After conducting the field work, I realized that dramaturgical analysis is an exceptionally adequate tool to present the organizational context of bureaucrats at the office of Swedish Agency. During the interviews, it appeared that bureaucrats are indeed performers of a certain role. This means that I did not tailor the data in this direction during its co-generation. The application of dramaturgical analysis occurred during analyzing process by the desk. As you will find in the Analysis, it was a self-image and own understanding of the situation, by a number of bureaucrats. For the sake of later analysis, I describe certain elements of dramaturgical analysis, based on Goffman (1956/1990).

Using terminology from theatre as a metaphor for the everyday life, dramaturgical analysis emphasizes how presentation of the self is depending on the context. Each person is a performer in front of an audience. Performers are sometimes forming teams that strive to sustain a certain definition of the situation, by conducting a coherent performance at the front stage. (Goffman, 1956/1990, p. 27, 32, 108). The front stage has a stable physical setting that consists of furniture, decorations and other items. A personal front consists of characteristics that belong to the performer, as insignia of rank, clothing, bodily gestures, facial expressions, sex, age, etc. (Goffman, 1956/1990, p. 34). The performers have a tendency to present an idealized expression, incorporating the official values of society or of the team they belong to (Goffman, 1956/1990, p. 44-5). A disruption of the performance by a single performer can lead to misunderstanding in front of the audience and destruction of entire team performance (Goffman, 1956/1990, p. 65, 71). In order to avoid disruptions and perform efficiently, the team is organizing the act in the backstage, an area inaccessible to the audience. Creating a social distance by hiding celestial qualities or hiding entirely from observation, can generate mystification and an awe in the audience (Goffman, 1956/1990, p. 74-5).

Dramaturgical performance entails a persuading mean to pursue power (Goffman, 1956/1990, p. 234). Inspired by military strategies, a team has strategic secrets, meaning hidden information about the strategy of future actions. Beside that this enables to pursue a coherent team performance in front of the audience, belonging to a group of those having secret information is creating a sense of solidarity (Goffman, 1956/1990, p. 141-2). While meeting the audience, a performer might act accordingly to the routines, whereas backstage is the area of derogation, where the team can gossip or ridicule the situations that happened in the front. This can serve as a complement in case of loss of self-respect, enabling maintenance of moral in the front, as well as being a binding factor that increases

solidarity of the team (Goffman, 1956/1990, p. 171, 173). The team members are praised for their loyalty, thus, they need to pay attention to not get attached to the audience. While the audience is dehumanized, performers are offering each other emotional support in the backstage (Goffman, 1956/1990, p. 208-9). The self-control and suppression of emotions constitutes a dramaturgical discipline, which maintains a clear boundary between public and private affairs (Goffman, 1956/1990, p. 210-1).

4. Analysis

”It is a bit like a theatre here (...) you need to uphold a facade”, said one of the participants, regarding the bureaucratic role. There are two kinds of facades that I aim to discuss. Firstly, the physical facade of the office, providing a setting for bureaucrats’ situation from dramaturgical perspective. I categorize it in accordance with previously discussed public and private spheres, considered literally and metaphorically. Secondly, the particular facial facade, meaning the attitude of individual bureaucrats, in accordance with communicative and purposive-rational action. I categorize their attitudes as two ideal types, namely goal-oriented bureaucratuality and communicative bureaucratuality. I discuss their implications for objectivity and compassion. Following sections regard organizational principles and their affection upon bureaucratuality, objectivity and compassion, as well as responsibility and accountability. Several sections are initiated with citations that are representing the subject of discussion.

4.1. Physical Facade of the Office

Physical space is a prerequisite of any action. To begin with, I will provide a brief introduction to the spatiality of the office. Further, I will divide the area in public and private spheres - both literally and metaphorically - by using the terminology of dramaturgical analysis (Goffman, 1956/1990). The shape of the physical office creates restrictions, as well as possibilities for certain interaction, thus, it entails a power relationship between humans and their environment. I do not view the spatiality of the office as deterministic, however, it does have an impact on human behavior. The physical space can provide implications for relatedness or separation between people situated within given space.

4.1.1. The Office

The working environment of the office is open and transparent, which reflects the organizational values of the Agency. Its location within the city is central and visible, thus providing accessible service to customers. A glass facade is physically separating the inside from the outside, which enables employees and customers to watch what is happening outside, simultaneously as they are perceptible to people passing by on the street. The surrounding transparency of the glass walls is complemented with an open-floor plan, that increases the visibility

of employees and customers, to each other, and to people outside of the office. Working space where the employees are not visible to customers is very limited. There are certain areas surrounded by partial walls, providing a hidden area for employees. The only spaces that are completely separated from the sight of customers are areas for practical use, as kitchen or bathrooms.

4.1.2. Bureaucrats' Situation as Stages

The spatial and temporal distinction between public and private spheres in bureaucrats' situation became apparent during the participant observations. The mental boundary between these spheres became even clearer during the interviews. Having briefly discussed the physical aspects of the office, I continue with using the terminology of dramaturgical analysis to portrait the division between public and private as stages, where bureaucrats are performing in front of an audience, namely customers.

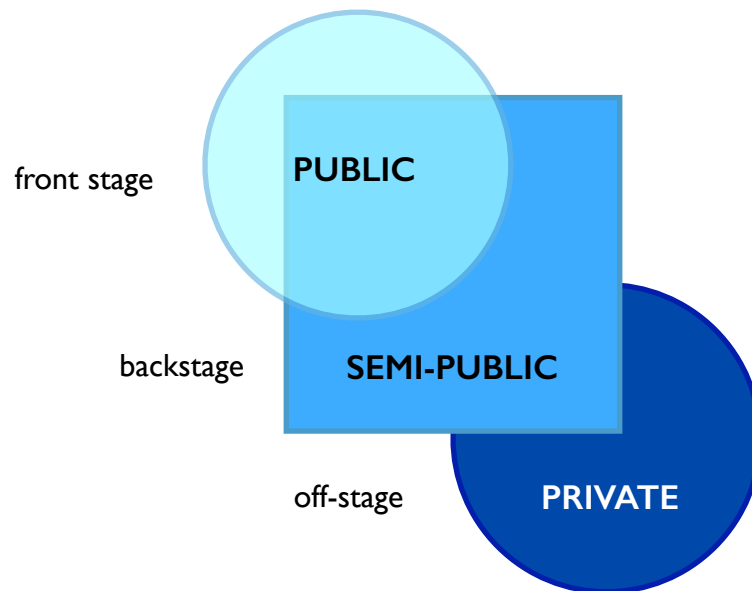


Figure 1. Model of bureaucrats' situation as stages.

The model above represents the disposition of bureaucrats' situation as three stages. The upper light blue circle constitutes the public sphere, which is the front stage of bureaucrats' performance. The darker blue square represents the spatial boundaries of the office, consisting of public sphere as front stage and semi-public sphere as backstage for bureaucrats. The darkest circle is the private sphere, where the bureaucrats are off-stage. Below, I use the following terms interchangeably: front stage and public; backstage and semi-public; off-stage and private; performers, bureaucrats, personnel and employees; audience, customers and visitors. I refer to the model in following sub-sections.

4.1.2.2. Public as the Front Stage

The glass wall of the office, represented by the contour of the semi-public square cutting through the public circle, opens up a possibility for scrutinization. Thus, the front stage, meaning the public, is placed both inside and outside of the physical office. Customers inside of the office and people passing by on the street, constitute the audience. Simultaneously, the audience is performing in front of each other and the bureaucrats. However, the most significant performer-audience relationship is the one between bureaucrats and customers, which remains in focus of this analysis.

Mutual and constant surveillance contribute to the averageness of behavior in public, acting in accordance with what is considered as proper manners (Foucault, 1977; Heidegger, 1927/2013, p. 149; Sennett, 1977/2002, p. 12-5). It is in the interest of the performers to maintain this order, with the physical setting and routines as requisites. Openness, transparency and accountability are remarkably incarnated in the public physical setting of the Agency. These are an idealized expression of the official values of the institution, as well as society.

Despite openness, providing an adequate idealized expression of organizational values, there is a reverse side of it. From customers' perspective, the centrally located, visible and easily accessible office can appear as representing entire bureaucratic system of the government, providing solutions regardless character of the errand. During mornings, before the opening time, people start to form a line outside the office. There has been cases of people joining the line, with a supposition that there is a huge sale that people are queuing for. While conducting participant observations at the front stage, one customer waited in line, and when it was his turn, he approached me asking where the currency exchange was. Misunderstandings can become amusing to the performers, however, it is a significant disturbance in defining the situation, when the initial impression of the audience is as far from the expression that the institution aims for. It is common that misunderstandings are based on customer's language difficulties.

Another troublesome aspect of the open publicness is regarding customers' integrity. While waiting to get help or speaking to a bureaucrat, customers can perceive each other with sight and hear each others errands. Various working desks entail various degree of protection for customer's integrity. Wider desks, provide a more intimate setting to solve a sensitive errand, than a small desk, where customers are standing up, able to move, see and hear, thus perceive other errands. Sitting by the desk entails surrounding of partial walls, however, they are not isolating sound, at least *de facto*, according to participating observations. Beside meeting customers by the desk, the errands can - and are strongly encouraged to - be solved by computers, next to the entrance. The screens, where people fill formulas, are not hidden in any way, from the perception of the audience. Hypothetically, if a person would be very eager to collect personal data from a customer who is standing up by a computer and filling formulas, they can do so even from outside of the office, since some screens are perceptible through the glass facade. Despite that such scenario is improbable, the visibility and

scrutinization can create an uncomfortable feeling for a customer with a sensitive errand, if the audience is encouraged to explain their case standing up, with no barriers from others and is persuaded to solve it digitally, without any intimacy for the sake of integrity. Thus, customer's integrity is completely dependent on the individual attitude of the bureaucrat, whether they speak with lower voice, or choose to stand more distanced in relation to other customers. There is an awareness of this issue among performers, nevertheless, it becomes especially difficult to solve the deficiencies of physical setting when there are many customers. It is worth mentioning that there are closed rooms for customer meetings at the office. However, they are rarely used, since bureaucrats are encouraged to solve the errands as quickly and efficiently as possible - preferably standing up, next to the entrance. The office should not indicate a waiting room, according to formal organizational aspect. It is ought to motivate customers to solve the errands by themselves. Making customers non-comfortable is a strategic secret, to create a setting to move through, but not to be in. I argue that the efficiency in handling customers' errands at the office is at the cost of their integrity.

By entering the office, the customers are orienting themselves in the new setting, and many wish to approach the performers directly, but notice the boundary of the railings in front of them, enforcing formation of a zigzag queue, thus directing them back and forth, away from, and towards, the performers. This experience creates a certain confusion for many customers, me included, during my first visit. Majority adjusts to the routines quickly, but occasionally, a customer expresses an impatient attitude with angry comments or shoutings, creating disturbance in the performance. Disturbances are in most cases unprovoked and happen due to customers' mental instabilities or illnesses. Customers can have severe life situations and direct their frustrations towards the personnel. Nevertheless, these incidents occur occasionally, as already mentioned. Preventive strategies from physically violent disruptions of situation are enshrined in the spatial arrangements of the office, as creation of spatial distance and boundaries between customers and bureaucrats. Further preventive strategies are presence of a guard and personal alarms that bureaucrats are carrying. Among more subtle strategies adopted individually by bureaucrats are adjusting their attitude to the customer, having a low and calm tone, and as one of the performers expressed it "listening is the key to disarm them". Beyond being service-minded, experienced performers manage to adjust their attitude to the audience, harmonize customer's aggression and maintain stability. In spite of this gentle attitude towards the audience, they remain in authority by having access to inside secrets, shared only by performers backstage. The awareness of the power relationship is created through environmental arrangements, as standing in line to meet a performer that sits behind a desk with a computer, being surrounded by other performers with know-how and access to backstage.

One of the interviewees expressed that the situation can be theatrical, where they need to uphold a certain facade, even if they are not in the mood. It is therefore not necessary that the expressions of the performer towards the audience in the public, are sincere. Despite this eventual discrepancy, the performers are

most often disciplined and patient, even if the audience is appearing and acting upon anger and anxiety, already at the entrance. The patience of the performer to uphold the facade in difficult situations with customers, is dependent on their level of experience, discipline and mood at the current day. I discuss the value of experience in later sections. Below, I continue with a presentation of what happens behind the scenes of bureaucratic performance.

4.1.2.3. Semi-public as the Backstage

"We're quite lively at the backside, not towards customers or so, but at the backside, when we go and make copies (...) [in public] you need to think of the bureaucratic role a bit more, you don't need to be completely stiff, but you still need to think of how you answer and how you act. Maybe that's why we're acting so lively at the backside." bureaucrat during interview

In order to pursue a coherent performance at the front stage, the bureaucrats are organizing themselves as a team backstage, in what I call semi-public. Locked doors are restricting the audience to physically access the area. Nevertheless, the backstage is divided from the front stage only by partial walls, enabling the audience to perceive the team members backstage with their sight. There is a various degree of intimacy provided by walls, from areas to pursue celestial necessities as kitchen and bathrooms, which are completely separated from the front stage, to an organizational area, providing a hidden area from the sight, but not from the sound, of the audience.

Less publicness and more intimacy in the semi-public area enables bureaucrats to have a more relaxed attitude and express thoughts and emotions about performance disruptions, as well as regarding difficult or frustrated audience. Pursuing short communicative action backstage, during their shift, is constituting a relief from the strict facade they maintain at the front stage. There are no formal organizational routines of processing emotions, however, performers are expressing it regularly in an informal way in the backstage, towards each other. A bureaucrat emphasizing the significance of backstage and humor in team work, admits that they "lack only laughing-gas". Another depicts the prejudice regarding bureaucrats: "I didn't think that it would be like this when I came here. I thought it would be grey and boring *laughter*, but it's fun actually. We joke around as at any other workplace and I didn't think so before I arrived here." Acting humorously among team members in the hidden areas is helping them to uphold morale at the front stage. Expressions shared backstage, as sighing, complaining, mocking, or crying, are often not adequate to express in public. These seemingly trivial moments of derogation, ridicule or sharing pity about customers are an important element of emotional support that help the performers to suppress their feelings and act disciplined at the front stage, thus maintaining a clear distinction between public and semi-public attitudes.

In the end of the work day, all of the employees are waiting together in the backstage for the last performance to finish. This creates a sense of equity, solidarity and togetherness. During the waiting period, the bureaucrats gather

informally to exchange information about the disruptions of performances and provide emotional support if needed. The eager awaiting in the last minutes of working day creates a positive atmosphere, featuring relaxation and laughter.

Relaxation has been depicted as a significant aspect of the backstage. But it is also the area, where bureaucrats plan to pursue an efficient and persuasive performance at the front stage, which is a mean of coercive institutional power. The team is exchanging information and sharing strategic secrets that help them in maintaining the definition of the situation. The audience is unaware of the secrets and the inaccessibility to the backstage contributes to their mystification, and provides respect towards the bureaucrats representing the institutional authority. This becomes especially noticeable in the shifting attitude of the audience, depending on whether the bureaucrat is standing up, completely visible, next to the entrance; or sitting down by a desk, connected to the backstage, partly visible and only reachable if the customer received a ticket with a number to wait in another queue, waiting for a signal of their turn. From customers perspective upon bureaucrats who stand up in the front, "You know nothing in their eyes. Most of all, they want to get to the desk, they want to talk to someone competent." Regardless that the personnel consists of individuals with the same competence, only changing shifts between quick errands by the entrance and more requiring desk errands, the bureaucrats that are sitting down, partly hidden, with the backstage behind them, are considered as more competent and respectable by the audience, due to their physical setting, creating awe and mystification.

4.1.2.3. Private as Off-stage

The most distinct boundary - mental, spatial and temporal - is the private sphere, where bureaucrats step out of the bureaucratic role. Since I have not pursued participant observations in their private life, this analysis relies on interviews, which is a limitation, compared to previously discussed spheres. Due to less amount of co-generated data regarding the private sphere, I choose to pursue a more comparative analysis and discuss the shift between the stages.

As previously mentioned, bureaucrats are exchanging information in the backstage, regarding their performance at the front stage. By pursuing this team work and making the transformation of attitude between backstage and front stage visible, they make the shift between the public and semi-public sphere apparent to each other. Considering the limitation of co-generated data, the shift between backstage and off-stage is less clear. During interviews, it became clear that it is common for bureaucrats to be affected by the performance and reflect upon it off-stage. Whereas some of participants are discussing work related subjects in their private sphere, others choose to contemplate for themselves, thus, making the mental shift between stages invisible.

All of the interviewees experience a clear differentiation between their work and private life. Practical implications are the major pre-condition for this perception. Employees are not able to pursue any work tasks at home or work overtime, and the working hours are in accordance with a strictly structured schedule.

4.2. Facial Facade - Bureaucrationality

As previously discussed in the theoretical section, communication is a crucial feature in the intersubjectively common lifeworld, where people interpret each others actions. During participant observations, bureaucrats expressed that the interpretation of bureaucratic role, and what the service towards customers entails, varies among them. Considering that bureaucrats are representing the authority of government, they are in a powerful position to determine the character of interaction by initially approaching customers with certain attitude. Based on my field studies and Habermas' (1981/1984; 1981/1987) theory of communicative action, I categorize the bureaucratic attitude in two types, which I call bureaucrationalities. Each type of bureaucrationality constitutes a certain reasoning in action, forming an initial attitude towards customers. Consequently, this has a major impact on the bureaucrat-customer interaction. Firstly, I discuss the goal-oriented bureaucrationality, inspired by Habermas' approach on purposive-rational action, and secondly, inspired by his approach on communicative action, the communicative bureaucrationality. I continue to use the dramaturgical terminology (Goffman, 1956/1990).

4.2.1. Goal-oriented Bureaucrationality

"I'm quite disciplined and firm. If the customer has caused this severe situation him/herself, naturally I show responsiveness for customer's needs, but deep down I think 'well, you caused it yourself' (...) But when it's regarding things that the customer can't help, I help them a lot and it can affect me, but I wouldn't say that I help them more than others (...) I'm not that emotionally affected (...) The only thing, and I don't know if it's because I'm selfish, but the only thing that can destroy me and that I worry about are my children." bureaucrat during interview

"I adjust myself to the situation. (...) when people complain night and day like 'it's crowded, it's like this, it's like that' I don't feel that. I think 'I come to work and work on'. Maybe I'm... I don't know, passive (...) I just do my thing, there's nothing hindering me from doing a good job." bureaucrat during interview

Performers acting in accordance with a goal-oriented bureaucrationality are emphasizing their organizational role, focusing on pursuing performance that is efficient in quantitative manners. Expression of this attitude can take shape of providing short answers to customers, not speaking more than necessary. A bureaucrat can choose a working desk where the customer needs to stand up, in order to not become comfortable, which leads to shorter visits. As one of the interviewees describes it, "when the desk is higher, it [the customers' case] gets more to the point, let's get this done, thanks goodbye". Having high desks and customers standing up is indeed a formal organizational aspect, in order to increase quantitative efficiency. This becomes a strategic secret by which the

performers can manipulate the perception and behavior of the audience in a wishful direction.

The goal-oriented bureaucrats are more thoughtful regarding upholding a strict and disciplined facade, regardless their sincere emotional reaction towards a customer or their own issues in private sphere. Reflexivity is abstracted to consider organizational level, even in the moment of meeting the customer. They perform more strictly according to formal organizational framework through purposive-rational action. The goal-oriented bureaucrats are pursuing communicative action in the backstage with team members or off-stage with relatives.

Complete depersonalization in the bureaucratic role entails a sense of feeling accountable for their specific task, but not responsible for the implications that customers experience. In order to act disciplined and according to the rules, the customers can become dehumanized. During meetings with customers, bureaucrats are not allowing for relatedness to occur between them. Continuous reflexivity on organizational level is a tool to prevent emotional over-stimulation. According to goal-oriented bureaucratization, objectivity is the organizational value that must be idealized during performance in public. Compassion is perceived as a reluctant expression during performance and becomes suppressed, even in situations when bureaucrats do feel compassionate towards a customer. There is a belief regarding compassion, that its expression hinders objectivity and realization of the principle of equal treatment. The strict sense of emotional self-control is allowing them to express compassion only backstage or off-stage.

4.2.2. Communicative Bureaucrationality

"I had a fun customer. Everyone are not pure routine. She was so sad that she cried, when she arrived. But she was quite bolstered when she went from here, so that feels good!" bureaucrat during participant observations

"Sometimes I think 'God, what... what situation that person has to go through'. You feel sorry for some. Because some people have very tough situations. And some meetings can be really hard, you might need to go in and talk to a colleague and tell them 'Oh my God, how tough situations some people are in, and she was sad, or he was sad, so they cried next to me', you know, and you are still suppose to help that person, although they are sitting there and being very sad, and don't know what to do. It doesn't happen that often, but we do have that kind of meetings, and it's... it's... you think about it afterwards, when you go home. And then you try to, oh, you try to move on, but... it's not always easy, no. Because I'm that kind of person, I'm not... like, 'here and now, and then it's over, I don't care'. I can go home and think about it... later too." bureaucrat during interview

Performers acting according to communicative bureaucratization are emphasizing the value of good service for customers. This can be expressed by spending more time with customers, frequently using courtesy phrases and

engaging in small talks in order to make customers thrive. They can choose low working desks, where customers are supposed to sit down and be comfortable. Low working desks can also be perceived as increasing customer's integrity, since they are more physically separated, thus, decreasing possibilities to hear others errands. Furthermore, if needed, bureaucrats can provide more service than they are obliged to, for instance, by giving advice or guidance regarding other institutions.

Performers adopting communicative bureaucratization can sometimes, in difficult or tragic cases, be more allowing to show their compassion through comments, listening to customers' life stories and giving them more time than they do in regular cases. If the customer is having language difficulties, the bureaucrat makes a lot of effort to simplify the phrases and make sure that there is a mutual understanding between them. Bureaucrats acting in accordance with communicative bureaucratization put an emphasis on the individual situation, and pursue a continuous reflexivity about the particular customer. They are more allowing for communicative action to take place in the meeting with customers, creating relatedness.

This attitude does not entail a complete depersonalization. There is an emphasis on engaged service-minded performance, taking customer into consideration. A bureaucrat performing according to communicative bureaucratization can feel obliged to provide satisfactory help from customer's perspective, involving compassion for the other. This can have implications for feeling emotionally drained off-stage. Communicative bureaucratization can entail higher level of compassion towards customers, compared to goal-oriented bureaucratization. However, in case of both attitudes, acting objectively is perceived as superior.

4.2.3. Discussion

"Of course you feel sorry for people and you need to have sympathy, but I still need to follow the rules. (...) With some things [errands], you need to be like 'finished, end of story' but you still need to explain, you still work with people and it's still their lives it's about." bureaucrat during interview

The division of bureaucratization does not mean that the two ideal types are differentiated by being hard and soft. It can rather be perceived as basic tendencies in attitude that performers adopt, which has an implication for the character of interaction with customers, and further, customers' impression of the institution. Despite that bureaucrats might have a certain initial type of reasoning, it does not mean that it is stable. Performers, regardless their initial type of bureaucratization, can shift their attitude to the opposite if it is adequate for the situation, as according to the citation above. For instance, the audience frequently consists of fragile, anxious and psychically unstable individuals. While meeting the performer, the more experienced the personnel is, the more intuitive is their perception of the customer, which enables a more flexible shift of behavior. They are acting as chameleons in Darwinian manner, adjusting to their environment, as

one participant expressed it. Moreover, bureaucrats enjoy the variation in playing different roles.

In Goffman's terms, the presentation of self is dependent on the context. The shift of attitude is not only occurring in the public while meeting the audience. As previously discussed, the shift of behavior occurs between the stages. Adjusting the presentation of self at the front stage towards the audience is more important for a bureaucrat, than upholding adequate morals towards other performers backstage, or while being off-stage. While (non-)bureaucrats appear in the private sphere, they have possibilities to establish their own definition of situation, or compromising with others in the manner of communicative action. In the backstage and front stage, bureaucrats need to efficiently maintain a definition of a situation, defined by democratic consensus. The rigidity in definition of situation at the office is perceived differently among the performers, depending on attitude. According to goal-oriented bureaucratuality, the definition is strict, whereas communicative bureaucratuality entails more flexibility while meeting the customer, allowing a certain extent of compromise.

"Rules are rules, and I can explain them in a good way and, like, make you understand the content and everything. But it's not anything that I can change, or that I would want to change, on the contrary I think it's quite nice that there's a framework of rules that we follow and then it's like nothing else I can do myself, it is how it is and it regards everyone." bureaucrat during interview

Despite the distinction regarding the level of compassion that performers express, depending on their bureaucratual tendencies, all of the participants experience that they can not be emotionally engaged in every case. Some of the meetings can make a strong impact on the bureaucrat, becoming a subject of reflexivity after work hours. Nevertheless, the sense of responsibility for final outcome that customers' experience is cushioned by the fact that they are not accountable for the tasks pursued by other workers in the bureaucratic process. Furthermore, the practical conditions, where the employees are not able to pursue any work tasks at home, create a clearly articulated boundary between work and not-work, public and private - spatially, temporally and mentally, making it easier to keep distance from being constantly engaged in work-related situations.

The distinction between spheres of work in public and play in private, are legitimizing each others ethics. But is it the opposite regarding responsibility? A bureaucrat is playing a role at work, turning the institutional script into practice. Writers of the script - managers or politicians - are considered as bearing responsibility for the outcome. A bureaucrat can rely on legal framework, making themselves accountable but not responsible. Responsibility is carried out towards the closest people they care about in the private sphere. At work, the institutional 'invisible hand' is pulling the strings, taking the responsibility, allowing bureaucrats to play, as long as they follow the script. Being nothing else than accountable during work, where one is ought to play a role, can be perceived as a relief from the responsibility of caring about others in their private sphere.

Below, I continue to discuss the implications of a bureaucrat's characteristics of personal front, as age and sex. These aspects are, to certain extent, forming the attitude of the performer, as well as they affect the impression in front of audience.

4.2.4. Age and Experience

"I feel that I create a sense of trust in the beginning of the meeting, because I know, after so many years, how you can treat people first, and then, they understand that I feel secure in what I'm doing. (...) But many, in my view, they want to come to me. It can depend on that they see that I'm older. They think that older people are more skillful, kind of. So yes, I have a very good relationship with my customers." bureaucrat during interview

"I couldn't meet people in anyway, I need to meet the customer at the same level, simple as that, and back off a bit. I need to feel quite a lot how the person [customer] is, but it's not a disadvantage, you just do it and then, for the most, everything goes fine. And maybe it's due to the experience, that you have worked (...) very close to people." bureaucrat during interview

It can take an entire year for new personnel to properly understand the complex system of bureaucratic routines. Considering that the general trend is that younger employees change their jobs every second or third year, the staff is regularly losing the valuable experience. Bureaucrats that have been working with customers for several years develop an intuition, enabling them to adjust their behavior in order to maintain a stable situation - towards customers, but also among the colleagues. Regarding customers, the bureaucrat can suddenly act exceptionally calm, if they notice that a customer appears mentally unstable. Regarding colleagues, the bureaucrat can refuse to discuss sensitive topics as political views, and choose to converse about trivial subjects, in order to avoid conflicts. Experienced bureaucrats with developed intuition can be more cautious and have clearer defined boundaries about appropriate behavior, that will help to maintain order and sustain the definition of the situation, for the long term. As one of the experienced bureaucrats states: "that's why I love my job, everything is predictable".

Younger performers are sometimes treated with less respect by the customers that assume lack of competence due to young age. Some of the less experienced bureaucrats can have less patience towards customers and colleagues, struggling to uphold their temper, being more dependent on their daily mood. With increasing experience, the sight of the bureaucrat expands from short, to long. Years of developing the practical knowledge provides an individual with an ability to stay calm in disturbing situations, balancing well between the strings of passion and calculated reason, in Platonic terms.

4.2.5. Sex and Gender

"Honey, could you help me?" customer towards me, during participant observations

"Quite often, it might be older men that think, that just because you're a younger girl, they can do what they want, and it's enough to raise their voice a bit, so they can do exactly what they want. But it doesn't work like that here. *laughter*" bureaucrat during interview

The experience of female bureaucrats being more questioned and criticized by the customers is not only mentioned by females themselves, but also by male bureaucrats. Despite that the majority of the personnel consists of women and there is a mutual respect and equality between the sexes, men realize their privileges, appearing in front of the audience. This constitutes a power relation of subordination, not only of female, but also femininity, entailing its values. Beliefs that males are generally more competent and objective, in contrast with females being compassionate and subjective, remains as a stereotype among parts of the audience. According to the co-generated data during participant observations, sex or gender of a bureaucrat is not a factor affecting their balance between objectivity and compassion. It is rather the matter of attitude, as discussed in previous sections analyzing bureaucratialities. Furthermore, it might entail that gender balancing in quantitative manners does not result in a balance between feminine and masculine traits, as objectivity and compassion.

Pursuing interviews with customers might possibly reveal whether some customers believe in the stereotypes, but choose to not act upon them, in order to not disturb definition of situation. As previously mentioned, there can be a discrepancy between the thought, or will, and the factual action pursued by a performer. This implies that performers are sometimes consciously forcing themselves to act in accordance to the script. Considering that the customers - despite constituting the audience in relation to bureaucrats - are performing as well, they are apparently adjusting to the already staged performance. However, their thoughts or will have not been the subject of this investigation.

Compassion is still considered as the characteristic of intimate sphere, not belonging to the public sphere. Private sphere and compassion are subordinated to the public sphere, which is characterized by an exchange of words and deeds, constituting intersubjectivity - where reality happens. Institutions as directors, laws as script and bureaucrats as performers, hold the status of reality, despite being staged. A wishful impression is staged by idealizing a performance and strategic secrets are used to direct the audience according to their plan. The performers are bureaucrats, as well as non-bureaucrats. However, a constant awareness of the several identities that the performer possesses, would be too requiring for the audience. While meeting the other, we quickly decide which category of performers they belong to, highly dependent on the characteristics that instantly appear.

4.3. Organizational Implications

In the following section, I analyze bureaucrats' situational implications, based on organizational principles, previously presented in theoretical framework. I relate it to previously discussed concepts.

The workload can be intense and exhausting, making employees tired towards friends and family in their private sphere. Two customers waiting by a desk while the bureaucrat was away and copying their documents, had a conversation about the Swedish working routines and uttered that although some people manage to maintain a balanced life, "some people are working themselves to death". According to more experienced bureaucrats, the current workload is less intense than during previous years. The number of employees *versus* customers is more balanced. Despite that experienced performers might find it comfortable, the new employees find the job challenging in the beginning. However, even experienced bureaucrats can find it exhausting, as expressed during their conversations: "I'm completely finished in my head." "One is tired after a whole day at work." "I don't have time or energy to play with my kids. Or help them with homework." "Oh, oh, oh, I'm so split." Work days can be very intense and entail a lot of different customer meetings under a very short period of time. Bureaucrats need to understand the customers' needs quickly and handle the errand as efficiently as possible, implying high pressure during shifts. Acting in accordance to goal-oriented bureaucratuality can work as a strategy sustaining more energy, due to complete depersonalization and emotional detachment. Acting in accordance to communicative bureaucratuality - considering the intensity of workload - can be more requiring for the psychological health, if pursued for the long term. Majority of bureaucrats realize, that being emotionally engaged in each case is not sustainable, not only for sake of their own health, but for maintaining a stable definition of situation. As previously mentioned, expressing compassion is, by many bureaucrats, considered as hindering objectivity and equal treatment.

4.3.1. Fragmentation of the Stage

A strong trend of modernity is specialization of work tasks. The goals established from a top-down perspective are at several points contradictory to the bottom-up perspective of bureaucrats and customers. As several bureaucrats point out, it is as if the leadership establishing the organizational goals lack insight in the reality of the field. It is rare that a two-way communication occurs between bureaucrats and leadership, for instance by pursuing employee surveys. Top-down approach is strictly defined, not leaving a lot of possibilities for impact from bottom-up. Specialization and simplification of working tasks is a change that has been mentioned especially by more experienced employees. Even the less experienced personnel is expressing dissatisfaction due to increasingly simplified working tasks, making the performers feel under-stimulated.

The customers in the office are only allowed to meet service personnel that provide them with information about their cases, while there is another personnel, spatially distant, deciding upon their case. The administrative personnel is only available to the customer through phone or e-mail - not face-to-face, which they sometimes express their frustration about towards the bureaucrats in the office, regardless that someone else is accountable for the decision in their case. As one interviewee explains "of course it is easier to tell a customer something through the phone or write a letter [than meet face-to-face]". The closeness and distance have implications to the role of compassion, which is more apparent in the presence of the other, according to Milgram's (1974) experiments on obedience towards authority.

Further implications are regarding miscommunication that occurs when many people are involved in one case, which sometimes leads to errors. The fragmentary system of decision making, being permeated by economic logic, has shifted the focus from holding bureaucrats responsible for their duties in general, to focusing on accountability (Svensson, p. 307). In Swedish context, the linguistic aspect, barely signifying any differentiation between the term responsibility and accountability (*ansvar, ansvarsutkrävande*) might entail a difficulty in discussing the ambiguity. The fragmentary aspect of the system reveals who is accountable for which element of the process, but leaves a vacuum of responsibility for the general outcome. The leadership is very particular with quantitative evaluation, based on employees reporting statistics into their digital system. The statistics are about categorizing customers' errands, waiting time in the line and the time that the specific errand takes. This information is analyzed and used for creation of strategic secrets, as controlling customer flows.

One of the interviewees is expressing the stressful situation, when asked about handling difficult situations of customers': "I am quite strict with our mission being a bit like quantity rather than quality (me: mhmm) or quantity and quality but, oh, we have so many [customers] sitting and waiting, and it is ticking all the time, and you are suppose to take next, next, next [customer]". The bureaucrat is expressing the pressure, which occurs between the organizational purpose of performing efficiently and the amount of customers requiring good service. Another performer spoke about previous experience from working for a company: "There, it's more like you sell something, here, you help people to do things right and guide them, make it easier for them. There's no profit in it." Despite this, along with the economic logic, visitors are called 'customers'. A bureaucrat argues: "'Customers'... They don't buy anything. 'Citizens', not even even half of them are, so neither that would work." Another bureaucrat thought of the term 'customer' as being a commercial word, as if there is some sort of trade. Despite that it was difficult in the beginning, using the term became a habit. Bureaucrats adjust themselves to the economic logic enshrined in the everyday terminology.

4.3.2. Digitalization of the Stage

One of the organizational goals is to pursue 50 percent of the errands digitally. The objective of specialization and digitalization are in line with striving towards a more efficient performance, having less physical customers coming to the office, by making them self-sufficient digitally. One of the interviewees compared the situation to their previous experience from working for companies. "The customer was always right and we wanted them to come back (...) here, we don't want them to come back." Another bureaucrat pointed out that efficiency is positive, since it leads to lower costs and saves our taxes, but it is not necessarily positive for the citizens "because the world becomes colder". The personnel is in favor of variety of working tasks and having contact with customers. However, the leadership seems to strive for efficiency through narrowing down the working tasks, as well as limiting physical access to information and officials, while increasing capacity of their digital services. Most of the participants perceive digitalization as a positive progress with its quick solutions, a relief in the stress of everyday life. Nevertheless, several participants point out the presence of marginalized groups that are not able to benefit from this development. Worrying thoughts regarding digitalization are expressed mainly by performers with communicative bureaucratization. Despite appreciation for the effectiveness of digital services, they feel compassionate regarding customers' situation, as expressed below.

"This we get to hear, that we're ought to reach a certain goal digitally, that it's ought to be a certain amount using digital services, pushing this entire thing. I think it's difficult to achieve. With the... customer base that we have. It's people that need extra help, many of them can't speak Swedish, they're, they've just moved to Sweden, received personal number and you're ought to stand there and instruct them into digital services, but they maybe, you know, still have family in war zones, or you know, their thoughts are somewhere else. And I'm suppose to stand there and tell about the digital stuff, you know, 'BankID, and you need to get it, it's good for you...' " bureaucrat during interview

"(...) it [digital services] is not easy to understand for everybody (...) what kind of responsibility it entails (...) I don't really know if they always understand what they are doing, I stand next to them and try to explain, and point, and they just click, and you know, continue. I don't know if they are always aware of their choices, we just tell them what to do." bureaucrat during interview

Digitalization is based on an assumption of purchasing certain digital devices that enable customers a self-sufficient automatized pursue, of what otherwise is paperwork. From organizational perspective, this can improve efficiency and save economic resources. However, digitalization contributes to marginalizing groups of less powerful customers, and developing towards an exclusion of non-digital customers. Beside customers that can not afford digital devices; language difficulties, illiteracy and disabilities can constitute a hindrance

for customers to become self-sufficient. Thus, I argue that the organizational strive for complete self-sufficiency, through digitalization, is highly beneficial for majority of citizens, simultaneously as it contributes to marginalization of groups that already feel excluded. Founding a bureaucratic system upon 'survival of the fittest'-principle, where the digitally self-sufficient are the strongest, is unethical, unless there is a provision of accessible help. Due to pressure on bureaucrats, expressed from top-down, some customers are not informed, thus unaware, of a possibility to pursue paperwork without digital devices. As previously discussed regarding customers, "Most of all, they want to get to the desk, they want to talk to someone competent. And we're suppose to hinder them at any cost. (...) They are unwilling but (...) most of them go along." A common belief among bureaucrats is that the desks for more requiring errands will be removed in the future and the office will be entirely based on digital services. The amount of digital services replacing paperwork has increased strikingly during last years. Despite a number of bureaucrats expressing dissatisfaction, majority of them are complying and implementing the organizational goal, by directing customers towards solving their errands self-sufficiently through digital devices, even though the customers do not need to. Enforcement of digitalization is rarely questioned by customers at the office. The customers are assuming that this is the only way, since they are rarely informed about other alternatives. Considering that the audience appearing at the office is, to high extent, consisting of individuals belonging to marginalized groups, as newly arrived immigrants, they lack confidence to question bureaucratic procedures. The power relationship between customers and bureaucrats can be exceptionally asymmetrical in cases of customers with severe life situations, being dependent upon bureaucrats' help. Despite that bureaucrats are consciously providing customers with equal treatment, I argue that digitalization is contributing to less equity for customers, exacerbating already marginalized groups. The complexity of customers' cases might not always fit to the bureaucratic assumptions in digital formulas, and the formulas are not always understandable even for a native, well educated citizen. A digitalization of the system entails an absence of possibility to compromise on the definition of the situation, as in communicative action, and consequently, decreasing understanding of people's various perspectives. It is not sure that people can be helped, without being understood. In some cases, understanding, for itself, is the help that a customer needs. This becomes a question of purposive rationality, if one thinks that in order to solve complex errands efficiently, they need to be understood. Otherwise, there is a risk of disturbance in definition of situation entailing loss of legitimacy, as a consequence of continuous misunderstandings, as well as alienation between the audience and the directors of the entire bureaucratic performance.

Several bureaucrats are depicting a dichotomy between digitalization and good service. "They say we are ought to provide good service, but simultaneously digitalizing. You have to choose either the first or the second, and then, they choose digitalization. I might be old-fashioned, about that you are ought to provide a good service. But it is still a government Agency. (...) But it [digitalization goal] comes from top-down." Expressing a disagreement and

helplessness regarding organizational goals, followed by a shrug, is common, especially among bureaucrats having tendencies for communicative bureaucratization. Another, while asked about which situations at work are exceptionally difficult, the performer speaks about frustration regarding the discrepancy between bureaucrats' and leadership's perception of reality, experienced at the office. Beside depicting a dichotomy between digitalization and good service, the bureaucrat wonders, as many other bureaucrats, where the marginalized people will get their help, if everything is ought to be processed digitally. During the participant observations, I notice that many customers come back to the office several days in a row. Their cases are often involving several institutions and language difficulties are posing a hinder for many customers to become self-sufficient. Digitalization entails increasing risk for misunderstanding in such circumstances. If a bureaucrat is pressured to act entirely efficiently, according to purposive rationality, giving up on service-mindedness, the reality that marginalized customers experience will become undermined (if it is not, already at this stage), thus the complex errands will not be efficiently solved. In the end, the customers' impression of the institution becomes the question of state's legitimacy.

4.3.3. Digital Taylorism

"The computer didn't let me do it (...)"

"Computer says (...)" bureaucrat during participant observations

The personification of the computer, allowing or denying certain access to information or action, is implying on the digital dependency. Previous disturbances of 'human factor' within organizations are substituted with digital errors. Since employees are completely dependent on access to information through computer, they become frustrated when technical issues occur. The dependence and emphasis on technology from the top-down is resulting in digital Taylorism (Gellerstedt, p. 47). This means more controlled and specialized working tasks, based on computer softwares, previously requiring human judgement. The work becomes automatized, more boring and with shorter introduction for beginners (Gellerstedt, p. 47). The system, based on meritocracy, does not put pressure on employer to keep the employees at work for long term. They can easily be replaced. The necessary knowledge and information is collected in the digital softwares. Increased automatization entailing decreased necessity for work force, does not rhyme with government's ambition to increase retirement age. People might either end up unemployed or spending time on meaningless work tasks for the sake of contribution to society. However dystopian this might seem, maintaining meaningless routines will enable maintaining a stable definition of the situation. In other words, the strategy is a coercive string of law being pulled, so gently that people comply without reflexivity.

4.3.4. Discussion

The decreasing face-to-face meetings between officials and customers can entail a risk of imbalance between objectivity and compassion. The closeness of the audience reminds the performer about the purpose of the act. "I feel privileged to be able to help people", as one interviewee says. To care about others is what gives meaning to a person's being in the world, according to Heidegger (1927/2013). Concern for others is the fundament of one's existence. There is a dependence between the audience and performer, as Goffman (1956/1990) points out "no audience, no performance". By being distanced from the customer, there might be a risk of increasing purposive-rational action. The bureaucrat might not be able to see when special needs require special solutions, and thus, not forward errors and discrepancies between people's situations and the assumptions in bureaucratic formulas, to the leadership. Dependence on technology and automatization can contribute to a less active behavior, where the act of speech, that makes us political beings, decreases. The conquer of purposive rationality over communicative rationality, as portrayed in my discussion, can lead to an increased alienation between customers and bureaucrats, bureaucrats and leadership, citizens and government.

In most cases, bureaucrats do not have to cope with the ethical dilemma of balancing between objectivity and compassion. The bureaucratic system creates settings for acting objectively in decision making, through the structure of physical distance. Settings for acting service-minded and compassionate are present in face-to-face interactions, where customers can only be provided information. Considering the development towards digitalization, the physical face-to-face service is diminishing. Such bureaucratic model, based on spatial and emotional detachment in accordance with Weberian ideals becomes not only objective, but also amoral. The room for bureaucrats' decision-making is shrinking into an increasingly fragmentary system. The system itself increasingly prevents the occurrence of ethical dilemmas, if we consider that spatial and temporal distance between bureaucrats and customers constitutes a precondition to feel less compassion towards the other. If ethical dilemmas occur, the bureaucrats might be powerless due to the fragmentary system, where a certain decision can be dependent upon a large amount of elements and other bureaucrats. Again, each official is accountable for their task, but no one is held responsible.

4.4. Conclusion

The divisions between work and play in the lifeworld, along with person and role during work, is creating mental boundaries, determining where and for whom the compassion should be felt. Expressing (com)passion is considered as belonging to the private sphere, among intimate relationships. Expressing objectivity, which represents reason, is considered as belonging to the public sphere. The asymmetry between passion, enshrined in private, and reason expressed in public, has its roots in the Greek *polis*. The distinction is based on a

the dichotomy of male, acting objectively in public, and female, bounded to the subjectivity in private.

You might argue that my critique of bureaucracy is insufficient, since I do not present an alternative organization of institutions. My intention is not to disclaim bureaucratic system in its entirety. A bureaucracy, standardized to certain extent, is necessary for a well-functioning and efficient democracy. Nevertheless, careless bureaucracy, pursuing entirely purposive-rational action, is decreasing communicative action, and most important, the act of compassion, a basis of our humanity.

Bureaucracy can be used as a tool to pursue constructive and destructive goals. A fragmentary system is decreasing the ability to act responsibly with conscience for the final outcome for the other. I mean that Eichmann was an ordinary man, positioned in an unordinary system of production of evil, where obedience was enough to contribute. By reminding of Eichmann's case, I do not mean that the bureaucrats at the Swedish Agency are thoughtless and passive pursuers of orders. I was very much surprised by how careful they are about the customers, being especially compassionate when the situation of the visitor was exceptionally severe. During participant observations, while sitting by the desk with bureaucrats who met customers, we shared moments of joy with those who received good news, and sympathy, when the life situation of some was exceptionally difficult. The employees have an active sense of conscience and do what is in their power to help the customer - sometimes more than is required of them. My argument is that the specialization of work tasks narrows down the responsibility and power that bureaucrats can execute.

The increasingly fragmentary system is following the economic logic of efficient performance, striving for utilization of time and cost. As in Taylorism (Maier, 1970, s. 27-34), people are measured to fit into the digital machinery of statistics and formulas, enabling governmental control. Working tasks become experienced as increasingly meaningless, and people become detached from each other. The principle of *auto mobile* factories of Fordism (Maier, 1970, s. 27-34) and Toyotism (Brännmark, 2012, p. 7, 12) are implemented in the public organizations, striving towards a digital *self mobility*, meaning self-sufficiency, for the sake of efficiency. But the self-sufficiency has not much to do with freedom. As with auto mobile, dependent on a functional infrastructure, the digitalized self mobility entails purposive-rational movement within a determined and controlled administration system. Precision of this process enables for strict accountability of each task pursued by a bureaucrat. However, there is less focus on responsibility for the final outcome. Decisions are taken by a distant official, accountable, but not responsible. The outcome is provided digitally or by a personnel that is neither responsible, nor accountable for the decision.

According to Alvesson and Spicer, the phenomena of workers without reflexivity and justification for work tasks they pursue is called functional stupidity. It is not regarded as a personal trait, rather 'unwillingness to use one's cognitive capacities' (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012, p. 1194, 1200 in Paulsen). In contrast to these authors, I refuse to use this misleadingly offensive term, and argue that this phenomena can be a smart strategy among individuals, if applied in

adequate cases. Based on my empirical data, I argue that unreflexive pursue of purposive-rational action is encouraged through structural means of bureaucratic organizations, appreciating discipline and loyalty in accordance to a present definition of the situation.

My argument is far from asking to erase purposive-rational action. Teleological institutions are enabling for an efficient practical implementation of democracy, based on the principle of equal treatment. The result of my inquiry is pointing to the imbalance between purposive and communicative rationality in public sphere (Habermas, 1981/1984). Furthermore, I argue along with Brodin (2002, p. 7), that reproducing only one standard within institutions is making us blind in front of other perspectives, and the singular worldview that is being reproduced becomes non-falsifiable. To conclude at an abstract ontological level, I present a version of categorization of concepts that have been the subject of my analysis.

objectivity	compassion
public	private
work	action
purposive rationality	communicative rationality
accountability	responsibility

Figure 2. Standardized worldview as dichotomies.

Based on the theoretical framework and the co-generated data, the categorization above serves as a reproduced standard situation of bureaucrats. As I have discussed, the realia consists of ambiguous variations, and these categorizations as dichotomies are too simplifying. My argument is regarding the reproduction of one standard worldview within institutions, striving towards homogenization into the dichotomies as presented above. If an increasing standardization would take place, channeled through purposive rationality of administration, this illustrates the idealized definition of situation, in terms of dramaturgical analysis. Appearing in public would entail objective pursue of isolated working tasks, in accordance with purposive rationality, making oneself accountable. Relatedness, compassion and responsibility would be expressed through communicative action in private sphere.

Allowance for alternative worldview and ambiguities in the reproduced order can not only be solved by providing formal institutional frameworks arranging communicative action. An extent of freedom for informal expressions and disturbance of definition of situation is necessary. Otherwise, people end up feeling as marionettes, deterministically pulled by coercive law of the state, discharged of their moral capacity.

How does a bureaucrat balance between objectivity and compassion? How is the presence or absence of the other affecting the relationship? Experience of meaningfulness is increased by direct contact with customers, applauding after their performance and expressing gratitude. It creates a sense of helping the other, thus actively contributing to the society. Playing a role in accordance with communicative bureaucratuality can create a performance close to the experience of the modern private sphere and its intimacy constituted by caring for each other. It is unclear which state of affairs is initial - whether a bureaucrat experiencing meaningfulness contributes to adoption of communicative bureaucratuality, or playing a role in accordance with that attitude is creating meaningfulness. It is a causality dilemma as with chicken and the egg.

4.5. Reflections

A critique that can be posed, by a reader, and myself, is that the model regarding public, semi-public and private as stages is under-theorized. In order to provide a more complete model, I would have had to co-generate data with bureaucrats in their private sphere. I considered that option initially, however, I realized that it would be unrealistic to pursue such a time-consuming field study in relation to the given time frame for this thesis. Moreover being time-consuming, it would have been very requiring physically and psychically.

A critical reader might wonder why I chose to narrow down the attitudes of bureaucrats to two ideal types. It is indeed a vast simplification of the nuanced reality. Nevertheless, I believe that my task is to provide simple answers to complex questions, as well as to shed the light upon ambiguities. I did consider whether another model might have been adequate, for instance a scale or a continuum. Having such a broad approach, as viewing the shift of attitudes as a continuum, would entail difficulties in operationalization of empirical cases. As discussed above, the bureaucratualities are not necessarily either-or ideal types. Since bureaucrats appeared to shift to contrasting attitudes, sometimes very suddenly, I considered the two types as an adequate framework.

Furthermore, if one is ought to question the theoretical basis of this study, it relies to high extent on idealistic thinkers, from Greek to German idealism, critical and critical feminist theory. By frequently referring to Greek ideals of public sphere, I did not mean to romanticize its suppressive character - rather emphasize its deliberative notion of freedom. I do not aspire to provide *the* interpretation of public sphere and bureaucrats' situation - rather one interpretation of many possible.

Another critique might be directed towards my writing, not being precise enough. Vague expressions as 'some' or 'many' are indeed problematic, while trying to question the intertextuality of my data. Nevertheless, I found it more important to provide anonymity for the bureaucrats, than describe how representative a certain opinion is in quantitative manners. Therefore, the vagueness serves as a shield, for those who generously shared their thoughts.

4.6. Further Studies

Further studies could investigate the implications of responsibility and accountability for the balance between objectivity and compassion in bureaucracy, by studying the legal framework, its creation and interpretation by politicians, or people in leadership positions of public organizations.

Customers' views upon the meeting with bureaucrats is a significant subject to study. It is of interest to understand the implications of expressed (im)balance between objectivity and compassion on the institutional legitimacy, from customers' perspective.

Based on my empirical data, I can not know whether a distant administrator taking decisions regarding a customer's life is able to act according to communicative bureaucratuality. I can only speculate based on previous studies (Milgram, 1974), that distant administrators might be less careful and compassionate towards customers, for the sake of pursuing their duties objectively. It would be interesting to conduct experiments on bureaucrats, whether the situation of distance or closeness to the customer has an impact on their decision making, or their balance between objectivity and compassion. Digitalization becomes a key factor. The relation and conscience of the distant bureaucrats, requires further field studies, and I would encourage to use ethnographic methods, enabling the researcher to compare saying and seeing (Rhodes, 2017, p. 14).

5. Summary

The question I asked initially, was how a bureaucrat balances between objectivity and compassion in their daily work. Based on participant observations and interviews with bureaucrats, I found an imbalance, where compassion is considered either as inferior to objectivity, or completely reluctant to express towards customers. Bureaucrats can feel compassionate towards a customer with a severe life situation, however, they are not necessarily acting upon it. A belief of not acting objectively and going against the principle of equal treatment if compassion is expressed, is present especially among bureaucrats with a tendency for goal-oriented bureaucratuality. Acting upon communicative bureaucratuality entails more consideration of customer's situation, allowance for relatedness and expression of compassion.

Fragmentation of bureaucratic system entails a distribution of accountability for each element of the process, however, absence of responsibility for the final outcome. Bureaucrats deciding upon cases are physically distanced from their customers, whereas street-level bureaucrats are mostly information providers. The system constitutes a precondition for emotional detachment and imbalance between objectivity and compassion.

Spatial and temporal distinctions between public and private, office and home, are creating a mental boundary, a precondition to uphold the morale at work. They can be understood from a dramaturgical perspective, as distinguished

stages, where performers are acting upon bureaucratic role. Expressing (com)passion is considered as belonging to the private sphere, among intimate relationships. Expressing objectivity, which represents reason, is considered as belonging to the public sphere.

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Appendix 1

Original Interview Questions

Hur trivs du på ditt jobb?

Vad hade du jobbat med innan?

Hur påverkas du när kunden har en särskilt svår livssituation?

Upplever du en tydlig eller svag gräns mellan jobbet och ditt privata? Hur påverkar dessa två sfärer varandra?

Uppstår det situationer där du å ena sidan vet vad du bör göra, men skulle själv, enligt ditt egna tycke, vilja agera på ett annat sätt? Och hur löser du dessa situationer?

Hur resonerar du kring det fysiska utrymmet här på arbetsplatsen? Tycker du att den är välanpassad till era situationer?

Vad anser du om digitalisering?

Hur tänker du att kunder är gentemot dig på golvet och vid disken?

Translation of Interview Questions

How do you thrive at you work?

What did you work with previously?

How do you get affected when the customer has an especially difficult life situation?

Do you experience a strong or a weak boundary between work and your private?

How are these two spheres affecting each other?

Do you experience that there are situations, when you know what you should do, but you yourself, according to your own thoughts, would like to act in another way? And how do you solve these situations?

What are your reflections regarding the physical surrounding at the workplace?

Do you think it is well adjusted to your situations?

What do you think about digitalization?

How do you think that the customers are towards you at the floor and by the desk?

Appendix 2

Original Quotes of Bureaucrats in Swedish

3.2.2. Pursuing Participant Observations

”Nu har jag sagt vad jag tycker så då får du också säga!”

”Där förstår du precis min situation!”

”Det kommer att vara tomt utan dig!”

4. Analysis

”Det är lite som teater här (...) man ska uppehålla en fasad”

4.1.2.2. Public as Front Stage

”lyssna är just nyckeln till att avvärja dem”

4.1.2.3. Semi-public as the Backstage

”Vi är ganska spralliga och ändå, bakom, inte gentemot medborgare och så, men bakom när vi går och kopierar (...) där får man ju tänka sig in i tjänstemannarollen lite mer, man behöver inte va helt stift, men man får ju ändå tänka på hur man svarar och hur man agerar. Och det kanske är just därför vi sprallar ur så liksom på baksidan.”

”det fattas bara lustgas här”

”När jag kom hit så trodde jag inte att det skulle va så. Jag trodde det skulle va beige och tråkigt *skrattar*, men det känns faktiskt roligt. Vi skojar precis som på andra arbetsplatser och det trodde jag faktiskt inte innan jag kom hit.”

”Man kan ju i deras ögon ingenting egentligen. Utan de vill ju alltid fram till disken, allra helst, för de vill ju prata med nån som kan”

4.2.1. Goal-oriented Bureaucrationality

”Jag är ganska disciplinerad och hård. Om kunden själv har orsakat det här svåra situationen så tycker inte jag, naturligtvis vissa lyhördheten liksom för det kunden behöver, men innerst inne, jag tänker ’ah, det är du själv har orsakat’ (...) Men när det gäller saker som kunden, man själv kan inte hjälpa, som sjukdomar och såna saker så, jag hjälper jättemycket och jag kan bli påverkad, men jag kan inte säga att jag hjälper de mer än alla andra (...) Det enda som, jag vet inte om det beror på att jag är så självisk, men det enda som kan förstöra mig och så jag blir väldigt orolig, är mina barn.”

”Jag anpassar mig efter situationen. (...) när folk tjarar natt och dag om ’det är trångt, det är si och det är så’ jag känner inte det. Jag tänker ’jag kommer till jobbet, jobbar på’. Kanske jag är... jag vet inte, passiv (...) Jag bara, jag gör mitt, det är ingenting som hindrar att jag gör ett bra arbete.”

4.2.2. Communicative Bureaucrationality

”Jag hade en rolig kund. Alla är inte bara rutin. Hon var så ledsen att hon grät när hon kom. Men så var hon ganska stärkt när hon gick, så det känns bra!”

”Ibland så tycker jag ’Men Gud vilken... vilken situation den här personen har’. Man tycker synd om vissa. För det är, vissa har det jättetufft. Och vissa möten kan va riktigt jobbiga, att man behöver kanske gå in och prata med en kollega efteråt och berätta ’Herregud, vad tufft vissa har det, och hon var ledsen, eller han var ledsen, så att de grät hos mig’, du vet, och du ska ändå försöka hjälpa den här människan, fast hen sitter där och är jätteledsen och vet inte vart de ska ta vägen. Det händer inte så ofta men vi har såna möten också, och det är... det är... tänker man på efteråt, när man går hem. Och så försöker man ändå, ah, man försöker gå vidare, men... det är inte alltid lätt nej. För jag är en sån person, jag är inte... typ ’här och nu och sen är det slut, jag bryr mig inte’. Jag kan gå hem och tänka på det... senare också.”

4.2.3. Discussion

”Man tycker ju väldigt synd om människor såklart och man måste även ha sympati, men jag måste ändå hålla mig till reglerna. (...) Vissa grejer måste man va så ’punkt slut’ men man måste ändå förklara, man jobbar ändå med människor och det är ändå deras liv det handlar om.”

”Regler är regler, och jag kan förklara dem på bra sätt och liksom få dig att förstå innebörden och allting runt omkring. Men det är inget som jag kan liksom ändra på, eller jag vill ändra på, utan jag tycker att det är ganska skönt ändå att det finns regelverk som vi följer och sen är det liksom inget annat jag kan göra själv utan det så det är och det gäller alla.”

4.2.4. Age and Experience

”Jag känner att jag skapar tillit från första mötet för jag vetat hur, efter så många år, hur man kan behandla människor, först, och sen, de förstår att jag är trygg i jobbet. (...) Men det är många jag upplever de vill komma till mig också. Det kan bero på, också, de ser att jag är äldre. De tror att äldre människor är duktigare liksom. Så att ja, jag har väldigt bra relationer med mina kunder.”

”jag kunde inte möta folk liksom hur som helst, utan jag får möta på samma nivå helt enkelt, och gå undan lite, jag upplever att jag får känna av ganska mycket hur personen är, men det är ingen nackdel utan gör man bara det så går det mesta bra. Och det kanske är erfarenhet att man har jobbat (...) väldigt nära folk.”

”det är därför jag älskar mitt jobb, allt är förutsägbart”

4.2.5. Gender and Sex

”Gumman, kan du hjälpa mig?”

”Asså ofta är det ju kanske äldre män som tror bara för att man är yngre tjej så kan de göra lite vad de vill och att det räcker med att de höjer rösten lite så kan jag göra exakt vad de vill. Men det funkar inte riktigt här. *skratt*”

4.3. Organizational Implications

”some people are working themselves to death”

”Helt slut i huvet.”

”Man är trött efter en hel dag på jobbet.”

”Jag har inte tid och är för trött för att leka med mina barn. Eller hjälpa till med läxor.”

”Oj, oj, oj, man är helt splittrad.”

4.3.1. Fragmentation of the Stage

”det är lätt för nån att sitta på telefon och säga vissa saker eller skriva brev”

”Asså där är det mer man säljer något, här är det du hjälper folk att göra rätt, att vägleda dem, att underlätta för dem. Det är ingen vinst på det hela.”

””Kunder’... De köper ju ingenting. ’Medborgare’ funkar inte, det är inte ens hälften av dem som kommer hit.”

4.3.2. Digitalization of the Stage

”men världen blir kallare”

”Asså det här som vi får höra, att vi ska uppnå ett visst mål digitalt, att det ska va ett visst antal som använder digitala e-tjänster, att man liksom pushar det hela. Jag tycker att det är svårt att nå dit. I den... med den kundkretsen vi har. Det är människor som behöver extramycket hjälp, många av dem kan inte svenska, de är, de har precis flyttat till Sverige, fått personnummer och så ska man stå där och visa dem e-tjänster, fast man kanske, du vet, fortfarande har familj som är i kriget, eller du vet, deras tankar är nån annanstans. Och så ska jag stå där och berätta om digitala, du vet, ’BankID, och du måste skaffa, det är bra för dig...’ ”

”det är inte så lätt för alla att förstå det här med digitala e-tjänster och vad det innebär att ha ett BankID, vilket ansvar man får, och där kan jag tycka att när jag ska hjälpa en kund med det digitala och om de har BankID, jag vet inte riktigt om de förstår alltid vad de gör, utan jag står där bredvid och försöker förklara och peka och de bara klickar i och du vet, går vidare. Jag vet inte om de alltid är medvetna om deras val, utan vi säger åt dem vad de ska göra.”

”Man kan ju i deras ögon ingenting egentligen. Utan de vill ju alltid fram till disken, allra helst, för de vill ju prata med nån som kan. Och vi ska ju hejda dem till varje pris. (...) De är ju motsträviga men (...) de flesta följer ju med.”

”De säger vi ska ge god service, men samtidigt digitalisera. Man får ju välja det ena eller det andra, och då väljer de digitalisering. Jag kanske är gammaldags, om att man ska ge god service. Men det är ju ändå en statlig myndighet. (...) Men det kommer uppifrån.” *rycker på axlarna hjälplöst*

4.3.4. Digital Taylorism

”The computer didn’t let me do it (...)”

”Computer says (...)”