

Public administration in teams – from bureaucracy to self-governance

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Introduction

Different scholars from the social sciences are occupied with what they see as a profound transition of current western societies. This transition and thus the notion of change are articulated differently depending on the academic heritage of the scholars. Some describe the transition through the widely used notion of a development from government to governance (for a recent overview see Sørensen & Torfing 2007), some focus on the impacts of globalisation (Hardt and Negri 2000), and others use the notion of governmentality to diagnose current conditions in western societies (see Dean 1999; Rose 1996, 1999; and Deleuze 1995 all drawing on, and further developing the work of Michel Foucault). Within the latter perspective the overall claim is a transition from a society in which discipline is the dominant form of power to a society based primarily on control (Deleuze 1995).

It is this overall diagnosis and macro-level account of a transition in current societies that is the inspiration and starting point for this article. However, I argue that empirical micro-level studies of this very transition are much needed to understand the implications of such a transition. In this article I particularly examine the consequences of this transition for public administration organisations and the subjectivity of civil servants. This chapter, thus, offers a micro-level study of governmentality analysing how this overall diagnosis manifests itself at the level of public, administrative organisations and at the level of role.

The claim advanced by this article is that the increased use of network forms of organization in the public sector may fruitfully be regarded and analysed as a particular consequence of a transition from a society based on discipline to a society based on control. And that network forms of organization creates a new form of subjectivity in public administration where civil servants are detached from their fixed position in the bureaucratic functional hierarchy to become floating, self-governing individuals.

Drawing on the later work of Foucault I argue that network forms of organization imply a particular technology of self-governance that fundamentally changes and recreates the subjectivity of the civil servant. Through a micro-level analysis of an extreme case of a public network organisation, it is examined how technologies of self-governance creates a new form of subjectivity in public administration. Self-governance in public administration through team-work and project management is not only an alternative to bureaucracy as a specific form of organization, but it fundamentally transforms the subjectivity of the civil servant from bureaucrat to self-governing policy maker. Network forms of organization and the promotion of self-governance creates a subjectivity of free individuals that no longer follow bureaucratic rules and no longer are submitted to superiors in the bureaucratic hierarchy dictating what should be done and how

it should be done. Instead, civil servants are turned into self-governing subjects in a floating network structure.

The empirical part of the analysis is based on a qualitative case study of the Danish Ministry of Business Affairs between 1995 and 2001. In 1995 the Ministry began an extensive reorganization substituting its former bureaucratic, hierarchical form of organization in favour of a network organization where work was carried out in self-organising teams. The reorganization was fully implemented in 1997 and lasted until November 2001. Within these six years the ministry may be seen as an extreme case following the methodological definition of Bent Flyvbjerg (1991), since such a radical reorganization in the Danish state administration has never been seen before or ever since. The Ministry of Business Affairs, thus, represents an interesting case for the study of self-governance in public administration at a micro-level and its consequences for the subjectivity of civil servants.

It is important to note that the case study is focusing on the techniques of self-governance in public administration and the consequences on civil servants. Thus the policy outcomes of the work carried out in these self-governing teams are not analysed in their own right.

First, I introduce the governmentality perspective and the implications of a transition from discipline to control. I introduce the theoretical concept of technologies of the self and the ways in which it is used in the analysis of the case-study. Second, I link the governmentality perspective to the critiques of bureaucracy and the demands for a more flexible and proactive public sector found in both the literature on public management as well as in recent developments in public sector reform in western societies. I argue that bureaucracy and the bureaucrat is linked to society based on discipline, whereas network forms of organisation and the public administrator as policy-maker is linked to a society based on control. Third, I turn to the empirical case study of a public sector network organization. I begin by an introduction to the data material and the method applied in the case study. I then present the results from the case study showing in what ways the network organization has become a particular technique of self-governance and how this technique of self-governance transform the subjectivity of the civil servant.

From discipline to control

On a general level the transition from discipline to control involves a renewed understanding of the way in which power is manifested in society. In society based on discipline power is exercised through institutions that 'imprison' and discipline the individuals that occupy these institutions. The most obvious institution is the prison – Panoptikon – that is analysed by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1977). The

Panoptikon is a prison that is created in a way so that the prisoners cannot see their surveillers. Foucault illustrates how this knowledge of constantly being surveilled discipline the prisoners so that they become the harshest surveillers of all. Analogues to other institutions in modern society have been made. Examples of such institutions are the school, the hospital, the factory and the 'kasernen' (Deleuze 1995). These institutions may also be regarded as institutions of imprisonment, although individuals are not literally locked up, and they all discipline the individuals in contact with these institutions.

The transition from discipline to control is not fully elaborated by Foucault and the concept of control is not used by Foucault himself but by Deleuze (1995). However, Foucault in his late works begins to reflect upon what has substituted the institutions of discipline as the dominant form of power in society after WWII (1978). And it is these reflections that Deleuze, among others (see, for example, Dean 1999 and Rose 1996, 1999), elaborate further. In a society based primarily on control power is no longer embedded in institutions of discipline. The stable units that institutions of discipline are built upon are transforming and power takes on another form than discipline. Deleuze's gives an example of the factory that is transformed into a business. In the factory workers are paid a fixed salary for the work they conduct. In the business payment is no longer a salary but a bonus. The bonus is subject for competition among workers and the payment for the work conducted in the business is not settled but negotiated and highly dependent on competition (see Esmark 2006 for an elaboration of this particular example). Accordingly the school is no longer regarded as *the* institution for education and learning. Instead, individuals continuously engage in processes of learning and self-development (see Triantafyllou 2003 for an analysis of the history of employee in Denmark). Hospitals are still regarded as important institutions in society but focus is moved from medical treatments in the hospital to 'forebyggelse' keeping individuals in a constant potential pathology (Esmark 2006, 9). Even the prison is substituted by cameras of surveillance and electronic 'husarrest'/afsoning hjemme (ibid., 9). Thus, power in society based on control is no longer primarily encapsulated in institutions of imprisonment and discipline. Instead, power is fluctuating and manifested through temporary networks, and the individual is no longer disciplined through institutional life.

The transition from discipline to control has also been analysed in the field of management and organisation theory (see McKinlay and Starkey 1998). Especially the discourse of Human Resource Management (HRM) has been analysed as a particular technology where the employee is held responsible for his or her continuous self-development in the organization (Townley, 1993, 1998 and Rose 1996, 1999).

In the analysis of HRM the transition from discipline to control also means a shift in analytical focus. If HRM is analysed as a technology of power focus is set on the way in which HRM discipline the employees. If HRM is analysed as a technology of the self focus is set on how HRM is turning the employees into self-governing individuals. This shift in analytical focus is also suggested by Starkey and McKinlay, when they promote the idea that a reading of the later work of Foucault could lead to analyses of the relationship between discipline and desire. What they argue is that discipline should be analysed as inextricably linked to desire and that desire “finds expression through forms of (self-) discipline freely created and embraced.” Or stated differently, that XXX

The theoretical perspective used in this chapter derives from the later work of Foucault with an emphasis on the technologies of the self. Network forms of organization are regarded as a particular technology that produces a particular subjectivity. The aim of the analysis is to illuminate the creation of such a particular subjectivity and not to evaluate for example whether civil servants have the ability or not to meet the skills required in the network organization, nor to illustrate how civil servants are ‘really’ disciplined and/or subordinated through particular technologies manifested through a network form of organization.

I will now try to unfold this analysis of an overall transition from discipline to control relating it to the field of public administration, its institutions and employees. I do not examine HRM as phenomenon in public organisations, but examine public institutions’ form of organisation.

From bureaucracy to network organization

Bureaucracy may be regarded as a disciplining institution together with schools, prisons and hospitals. The characteristics of bureaucracy has been widely described and debated ever since Max Weber’s ‘ideal type’ dealing with the nature and characteristics of the then emerging large-scale (state) organisations (Merton 1966, Mintzberg 1979, Harmon and Mayer 1986, DuGay 2000, Hales 2002, Olsen 2006). Most important is the components of rule and hierarchy. “*Bureaucracy is where the work of specialist or expert administrators is arranged in a detailed division of labour of closely-defined and specified roles, coordinated and controlled by a combination of detailed, centrally imposed rules and procedures and a hierarchy of graded levels of responsibility linked by vertical reporting relationships and accountability.*” (Hales 2002, p.52).

Within recent years bureaucracy has been contested as the best form of organization in public sector institutions. The demands on today’s public administrations in the western world have increased if we are to believe the literature on the subject (Hill 2005, pp. 164-165). The demands on modern western public administrations and their

employees go way beyond the demands on bureaucracy and the bureaucrat. It is no longer sufficient for the public administration to ensure that the law is followed and that citizens are treated equally. Instead we have seen an increased focus on the results and the performance of public administrations in western democracies (Behn 2001, 10, March & Olsen 1995, 155). Research has also shown that public administrations play a much more active part in the political system alongside politicians in the formulation of new policies (references...). Accordingly, public administration researchers have increasingly come to expect that the administration plays a creative and inventive role in the political system (Peters 1995).

Along this development, bureaucracy as a form of organization has been much debated and sometimes criticized. An often posed claim is that bureaucracy is an impediment to the invention of new ideas, as it does not leave any room for the creativeness of the employees – in this case the civil servants. Employees in bureaucratic, hierarchical organizations are only supposed to follow orders from people higher up in the hierarchy. Bureaucracy as a form of organization, thus, cannot match today's demands facing public sector organizations. Although some scholars, recently, have made a claim for a rediscovery of the benefits of bureaucracy seen from a perspective of liberal democracy and the sustenance of the Rechtsstaat (see for example du Gay 2000, Olsen 2006), the ongoing critique of bureaucracy as old-fashioned and a rigid form of organization that tends to reduce risk-taking, and thereby favour the status quo, has never been buried (McHugh et. al. 2001, p. 35, March and Olsen 1995, p. 144).

The critique of bureaucracy – whether true or not – has led to the promotion of alternative forms of organization in the public sector with an overall purpose to facilitate creativity and innovation capacities among the employees. These alternatives have been labelled “post-bureaucratic organization” (McHugh et. al. 2001, p. 35), “post-modern organization” (Volberda 1998), and most recently “network organization” (Hales 2002, 54). Although differently labelled, they all are formulated as alternatives to bureaucracy with the attempt to stimulate “entrepreneurial” behaviour among employees and to unleash creativity and risk-taking (Hales 2002, p. 55).

These alternative forms of organization may not be as clearly and precisely defined as the bureaucratic model of organization described by Max Weber (1975). However, they do represent some common and quite different features that are remote from those defining bureaucracy. These alternative forms of organization, which I from now on will call network organization, contain of self-governing, often temporary work units or teams within which there is a fluid division of labour. Thus, the organization consists of *“temporary, contingent, self-organizing teams, constantly forming and dissolving*

according to work demands and trading and collaborating with each other as required.” (Hales 2002, p. 54).

It is important to note that the introduction of the network form of organization in some cases *may* replace bureaucracy as the dominant form of organization. More often, however, they form *a supplement* within an overall bureaucratic structure (Alveson 1995, Hales 2002). Whether network forms of organization are replacing or simply supplementing bureaucracy, they still represent a form of organization that is quite remote from that of bureaucracy and challenge some of the fundamental organising principles as they have been described by Max Weber.

This development regarding bureaucracy in the field of public administration mirror the claimed transition from a society based on discipline to a society based on control. Bureaucracy has been challenged by new forms of organization in public administrations, which fundamentally change the way power manifest it-self.

In bureaucracy civil servants are *“constrained by both bounded, defined responsibilities which are arranged hierarchically and procedures which are transmitted and monitored hierarchically. Thus, managerial behaviour is both guided and circumscribed by a hierarchy of positions and their associated levels of responsibility and a hierarchy of rules ranging from broad policy to specific operating procedures.”* (Hales 2002, pp.52-53).

In the network form of organisation civil servants are freed from their bounded position in the hierarchy as either super- or sub-ordinate. The stable and predictable hierarchy and the primarily demand to follow rules is substituted by network forms of organisation and new demands on civil servants to be inventive and creative policymakers. I will now examine this transition more closely through a Danish case study analysing how this transition manifest it-self at the organizational level and the level of role.

A study of an extreme case

The results presented below are based on a qualitative case study carried out in the Danish Ministry of Enterprise between 1995 and 2001. The case study is based on studies of various internal documents and 10 qualitative interviews with civil servants in the administration conducted in 2001.

Civil servants at all levels within the organizational hierarchy, i.e. from the permanent secretary to the ministerial clerks were interviewed. The questions asked pertained to their role within the political system, whether they can identify with that role, the main criteria of success and failure within the organization, the primary difficulties of

day-to-day business, dilemmas and coping strategies. Questions also covered broad self-perceptions and interpretations of what it means to be ‘a good civil servant’.

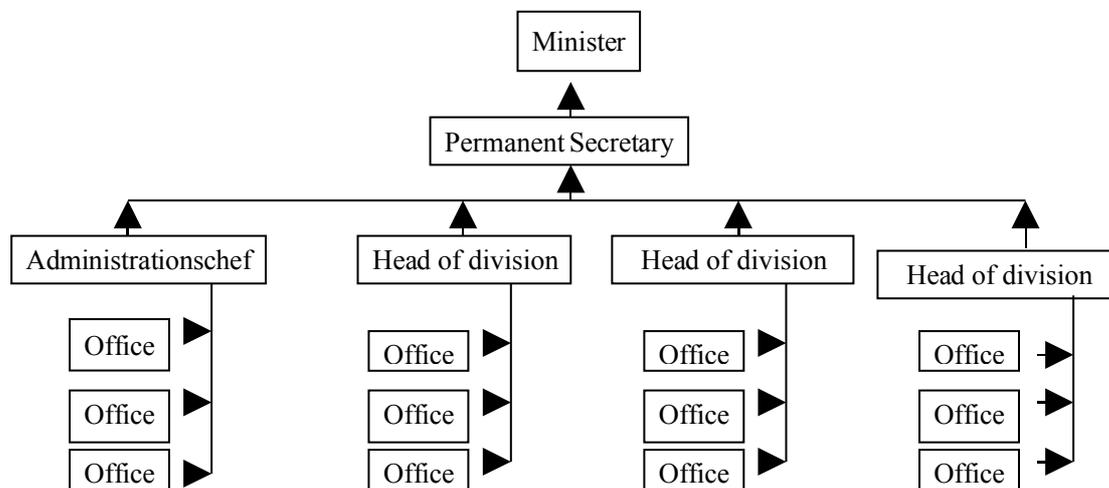
The translation of Danish occupational terms into corresponding English can be somewhat difficult, as the two political systems differ. I have chosen to translate the occupational terms in the following way: ‘departementschef’ = ‘permanent secretary’, ‘afdelingschef’ = ‘head of division’, ‘kontorchef’ = ‘head of office’, and ‘fuldmægtig’ = ‘ministerial clerk’.

The creation of a network organization

The Ministry of Business Affairs was established in 1994 and a result of a merge between two very different ministries: the relatively new and small Ministry of Coordination and the old and much larger Ministry of Industry.

The Ministry of Industry was established in 1914 and had 1700 employees in 1993. It had a bureaucratic form of organization (see Table 1 below). The Ministry was characterized by a clear division between separate functional units and a clear hierarchy among them. Every civil servant held a fixed position in a hierarchical structure and referred to a civil servant further up in the hierarchy.

Table 1. The Ministry of Industry before 1994.



Note: The diagram is a translation into English of an internal document from the ministry in 2001.

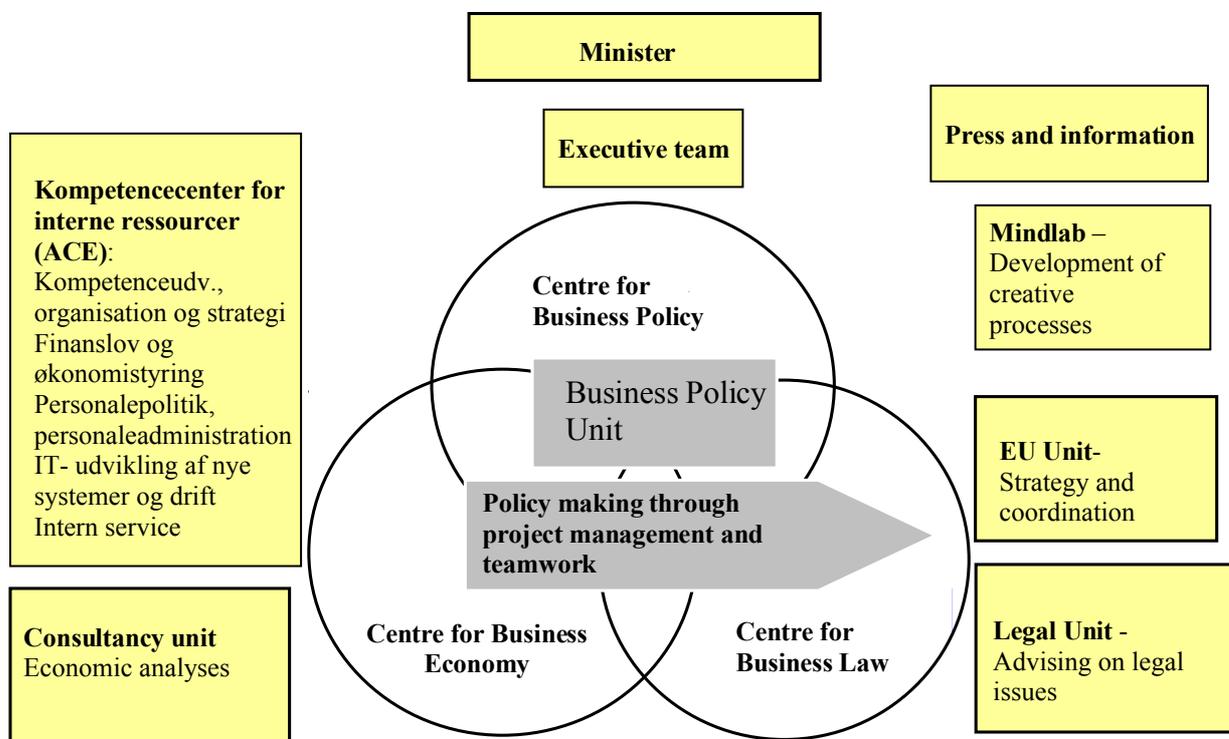
The Ministry of Coordination was established in 1993 and had 40 employees. The task of the Ministry was coordination of Business policies among regional and national stakeholders. Due to its small size and its coordinating function the Ministry could hardly

be described as having a bureaucratic form of organization. All civil servants in the organization knew each other and worked together.

It was the Permanent Secretary from the small Ministry of Coordination that was appointed as new permanent secretary in the Ministry of Business Affairs in 1994. He wanted to transform the department into a network organization and thus make the new Ministry of Business Affairs remind of the Ministry of Coordination. The declared aim of the organizational restructuring was that 80% of the department's resources should be used on strategic policy development (Henningsen 1999, 17). The means was the creation of a network organization where civil servants worked together in teams. Administrative tasks were decentralized to the Ministry's different sub-units (styrelser) and a profound organizational restructuring was started in 1995. In 1997 the reorganization was fully implemented.

The reorganization consisted of an abolition of functional units placed in a hierarchical structure. Instead, three main centres were established and substituted former units such as offices and divisions. The three centres – Centre for Business Economy, the Centre for Business Law and the Centre for Business Policy – were overlapping, meaning that employees worked together across centre lines and work tasks were not necessarily placed in one centre alone. Furthermore a general office was established as a new unit called the Business Policy Unit (Erhvervspolitisk Sekretariat). Its primary task was to function as a link between the minister and the work conducted in the department as well as in the Ministry's different sub-units. Table 2 below illustrates the form of organization after the restructuring was fully implemented.

Table 2. The Ministry of Business Affairs after 1997.



Note: The diagram is a translation into English of an internal document from the ministry in 2001.

Teamwork was seen as the primary means to enable strategic policy development. A head of office explains that a general idea in the way they created a network organization was that people with different skill and different educational background should work together. Day to day case work was reduced due to the decentralization of administrative task to the Ministry's sub-units and released time to teamwork on selected policy themes.

A team consisted of at least three clerks and they would work on a subject typically for six months. Then new teams were constituted with new task to carry out. The work conducted in teams was called 'projects'. The heads of division functioned as so called 'project-owners'. They worked out a contract for the specific project that described its objectives and the course of action. During the six months it was the head of division's job to revise the contract if necessary. The heads of office was not team members, but functioned as 'partners' whose aim was to facilitate the teamwork through consultations. A clerk describes the conditions of team work. He says: "As a clerk you are not employed in a specific office. Every six months you are thrown into the air and then you have to collaborate with new people."

The philosophy behind the teamwork was that it – together with the elimination of bureaucratic hierarchical structures – would enable civil servants – executives as non-executives – to think more independently and thereby actively participate in the development of new policy ideas.

The creative processes through teamwork were also believed to be stimulated through *interdisciplinary* team work, since it forced employees to look at the same subject from different perspectives. A head of division who was responsible for recruitment and organizational development says: *“If people with the same educational background are put together in a team, then it is almost guaranteed that nothing interesting or new will be the result. Instead, if you have mix of people with different backgrounds and different approaches, something new will grow; something new and interesting; something you have never seen before.”* Interdisciplinary team work was seen as one of the most important elements in the development of new political ideas, and it was a criterion that all team members should come from different educational backgrounds.

Furthermore, the network organization was believed to be more efficient compared to a bureaucratic form of organization. All paperwork and files should only go through one executive civil servant before it reached the minister. In the bureaucratic form of organization – known from the Ministry of Industry – most files would pass first the head of office, then the head of division and finally, before it reached the minister, the permanent secretary.

Civil servants kept their traditional titles such as clerk, head of office or head of division. However, they no longer held a fixed position in a hierarchy of functional units such as offices and divisions. Heads of division and heads of office became so called “floating” executives which meant that they were no longer attached to a certain group of employees as was the case in the former Ministry of Industry.

In the same way clerks had no primary superior to which they always would have to report. A clerk tries to describe her lack of a fixed position working in the network organization. She says: *“We do not have a clear office structure within our organization, which means that you as an employee are floating; you are not able to place yourself clearly in relation to others, you do not have one executive and you do not have fixed colleagues with whom you normally work. In this way you are floating around within the organization.”* The lack of a fixed position in a functional hierarchy was very much appreciated by the same clerk, since it also meant that the tasks she carried out constantly changed. She says: *“I like that I can move around and get new tasks. I am not locked into a certain policy field in the organization. In a way one get a bit addicted to the fact that one is not ‘boxed in’.”* The clerk also indirectly talks about her job as freedom. She is ‘addicted’ to the fact that she is not ‘boxed in’. Thus she is not ‘imprisoned’ through a

fixed position in a functional, bureaucratic hierarchy, Instead, she feels free in her 'floating' position constantly addressing new tasks.

The temporary teams and their changing tasks were also believed to create a dynamic organization where creativity blossomed compared to a bureaucratic form of organization. If employees were experts on a small policy field – it was argued – they would lose their ability to ask new questions and think untraditionally regarding their particular field. A clerk explains: *"We are constantly working criss-cross; no one sits in the same place for 12 years going more and more into details"*. Thus new ideas and change were favoured values compared to knowledge and experience with a small, precisely defined policy area. A head of office puts it in this way: *"We are not limited by experience"*. Thus experience regarding a certain policy field was believed to be a potential problem for a civil servant's ability to develop new ideas in relation to that specific policy field.

The fact that many years of experience were not particularly valued in the organization was also reflected in the young age of the heads of divisions. Out of four, three were in their early 30's and had made it to the top in the organization within very few years. I will now turn to an analysis of the particular subjectivity that the network organization created.

From bureaucrat to self-governing policy-maker

A way to get a first impression of the subjectivity that was created through the network organization is by examining the advertisements for civil servants before 1995 and between 1995 and 2001. Since 1980 job advertisements for positions in the Danish state administration has been advertised in the "DJØF-Bladet", which is a fortnightly magazine published by the Union "Danmarks Jurist- og Økonom Forbund". I have not studied all the issues published in one year, but have chosen to study two issues for each year: the last issue in January and the last issue in August, as it is the issues that have most advertisements throughout the year. Before 1995 the advertisement described the job as civil servant in few and rather precise words along with the skills required, i.e. educational background as well as experiences from a similar job. During the six years when the ministry were turned into a network organization the advertisements changed radically.

In one advertisement for a ministerial clerk, the Ministry of Business Affairs was looking for a *'political octopus'* that had his *'finger on the pulse'*, and wanted to *"influence the development in the Danish society"*. Further down it said: *"You think that advising the minister is an exiting way to influence the political agenda"*. Also it is stressed that the job implied a willingness to work in teams, which aim was *"to develop*

new insights, new visions, and new policies” (Djøfbladet 2001, no. 8). In another advertisement the Ministry of Business Affairs was looking for a clerk with a juridical background. The demands on the clerk were described as an ability to show “*drive and enthusiasm*” as well as having the ability to “*look at things in new and different ways*”. It was a requirement to be “*willing and able to engage in teamwork with network-oriented work methods.*” Furthermore the clerk needed to “*show creativeness and inventiveness.*” (Djøfbladet 2001, no. 6). In yet another advertisement the Ministry of Business Affairs was described as a place where you “*work in a straightforward, young and dynamic work environment without classic hierarchical structures*” (Djøfbladet 2000, no. 15).

The civil servants that the ministry was trying to recruit were far from the ideal associated with the bureaucrat. Civil servants were required to show drive and enthusiasm, they should be creative and inventive, and their aim was to develop new policies. Impartiality, which is a profound value for the bureaucrat as ideal type, was substituted by the possibility of influencing the political agenda. Finally, the work environment was described as young and dynamic. A ministerial clerk explains: “*The values that are reflected in our organization is that you need to act dynamically, constantly be ready for changes, show flexibility, and think politically. It is a profound value in the culture of our organization that it is expected that the employees are always able and willing.*” When I asked in what sense the civil servants need to show flexibility, whether it has to do with work hours or a need to show flexibility in relation to professional skills, the clerk replies: “*Flexibility is the centre of everything.*”

It was also valued if civil servants showed enthusiasm in relation to their work. A head of office explains how enthusiasm enables creativity in the organisation and thus helps invent new policies. Thus, the values that were prevailing in the organization were creativeness, inventiveness, and individual autonomy and flexibility.

The subjectivity created through the network organization was very far from the ideal of a rule-following bureaucrat. First of all civil servants were not supposed to wait for orders before they conducted their work. Instead, they needed to act pro-actively and to a large extent be self-governing. A clerk explains how the demands in the network organization differ from the demands in a more traditional bureaucratic organization as the one he worked in before. He says: “*You need to be much more self-governing. You are supposed to be the driving force behind your own development in the organization regarding your competencies and regarding the work tasks that you want to conduct. In this respect you have a huge influence. But you need to have ideas and know what you want to work on.*”. Self-governance became an important ideal for civil servants in the network organization. No one gave you direct orders. Instead, you were responsible for your own self-development and the work tasks that you chose to conduct.

Second, the promotion of self-governance implied that civil servants were expected to take on a great responsibility for their own work. Civil servants should not constantly involve a superior civil servant, but instead show the ability to solve problems on his or her own, which was also part of the idea of creating a more efficient organization.

Third, the organizational demand for developments of new ideas created a constant chase for good ideas among the civil servants. A head of division says: *“There are huge expectations on your creativity and ability to get new ideas and come up with suggestions to how things can be done in new ways. That will make you far more visible within the organization”*. Consequently, we see an organizational culture where everyone was competing to get the best ideas. However, if a civil servant showed originality in his or her work and was creative, he or she is free to do almost anything he or she wanted to do. A head of division explains: *“There is a demand on the civil servant to think creatively and act dynamically. /..If you have the ability, you are allowed to do almost anything, but if you do not have the energy or are not prepared to take on the responsibility, then you are quickly forgotten.”* It is also important to note the articulated difference between the ‘visible’ civil servants and the ‘forgotten’ ones. It was a value to be visible through a proactive attitude where you contributed to the invention of new ideas.

In general, civil servants believed they have a great influence on their work. A head of division says: *“Our form of organization means that people have a huge influence on the work they conduct – on the project that they start working on”*. And it was this influence that made them tick. The same head of division says: *“We have an influence on which [political] decisions are made. People in this organization find this so interesting that they are willing to make an extra effort.”*

This sense of influence on their own work situation was also experienced as a form of freedom and stimulated civil servants enthusiasm and willingness to work long hours. The same head of division is aware of how he should conduct his role in order to stimulate this creativity. He says that he does not see his role as a controlling one regarding the work conducted by clerks or heads of office, and claims that he is not worried by the fact that he does not have a 100 % control over the content of all files that are presented for the minister. Instead he states: *“I want to give people the freedom to develop new ideas”*. Direct control of the work of clerks is not a dominant part of his job. According to himself he is not a controlling superior judging the work of others. Instead he explains that he asks the clerks what they think of their work themselves. And if they say that the work is fine, then he sees no reason for him as a superior to proofread it. According to him control is thus substituted by confidence in people that will set them free to develop new ideas.

From the interviews in general it seemed that employees worked with enthusiasm instead of out of a sense of duty. A head of division says: *“I do not have demands regarding a particular position that I want to hold in my career. But I do have demands in the sense that what I do need to be fun for me”*.

The subjectivity of the civil servant in the network organization tended to put a focus on civil servants personality on behalf of their professional skills or experience. Asked about which skills are important in order to work in the ministry, the head of division responsible for recruitment and organizational development explains: *“It is not so much about your former experience, or your educational background. What is important is your personality.”* Asked about what kind of personality is required he stresses that civil servants must have an ability to work together with other people, they need be open minded towards other people, they must possess social skills, and they should be able to tackle conflicts. When he conducts job interviews he creates a role plays for the applicant in order to test their personality. He says: *“We really test people’s personality, since we want them to work in teams. It is very important that they have such a (teamwork) mentality.”*

In general, the same head of division thinks it is important that employees – including him self – experience a continuous personal development through their work. He says: *“I think it is very important that you consider the job you have and in which way it can help you develop your personality... You need to consider who you are as a person and how to develop your-self as a human being.”* In this sense the network organization seemed to create an indistinction between the employee’s work identity and personal identity. Employees were whole persons and their personalities were assets in the work place together with other ‘skills’ such as educational background and experience.

Indistinction as phenomenon was also manifested through the fact that overlapping centres substituted the units of the functional hierarchy such as for example offices. Employees were floating around in the organization and thus detached from a structure of clear distinction.

Any reminiscence of the rule following bureaucrat acting on orders within a classic organised hierarchy and on behalf of his professional skills disappeared. Instead, employees needed to take an active part in the policy formulation and show the ability to work in teams. I asked a head of division whether he could recognise himself in the word ‘civil servant’, and he said: *“No, not really. Of course I am a civil servant, but I do not identify myself with that role. To me a civil servant is a bureaucrat, and I cannot identify with that role. If I should find an appropriate word it would be business policy entrepreneur.”* In table 3 below the subjectivity of the civil servant is summed up.

Table 3. The subjectivity of the bureaucrat and the self-governing policy-maker.

| Bureaucrat | Self-governing policy maker |
|--|---|
| Civil servants hold a fixed position in a hierarchy of stable units | Civil servants have a changing position in a flexible network structure |
| Recruitment based on expertise (Economy, Law or public administration) | Recruitment based on 'who you are as a person' |
| Expert on a particular field (experience) | Social skills/your personality as teamplayer |
| Focus on educational skills | Focus on personality |
| Rule-follower | Self-governing employee, Entrepreneur / policy-maker |
| Duty | Enthusiasm |
| Work as a way to get a pay-check | Self-realization through work |
| Impartiality | Influence |
| Re-active | Pro-active |
| Anonymous | Self-promotion through 'visibility' |
| Self-discipline through the eyes of a superior | Self-development |
| Responsibility according to position in a functional hierarchy | All are equally responsible |
| Distinction between work and personal identity | A whole person |
| Freedom from work (freedom outside the workplace) | Freedom through work (self-realization) |

There is no doubt that many of the civil servants working in the ministry thought it was the best place to work compared to the other ministries in the Danish state administration. They valued the great amount of freedom that they were embraced with due to the fact that they were carrying out most of their work in self-governing teams. They appreciated that they were able to work creatively and to a large extent influence the work they conducted. A head of division says: *"We have a lot of freedom in this organization. 90% of the work I do, I define my-self"*. Thus, most of the employees – both executive and non-executive – seemed very enthusiastic about their work and found it satisfying. However, not every civil servant could adjust to the subjectivity of the self-governing policy-maker and did not necessarily experience the job as a liberating and empowering

one. I will now show some of the difficulties to which the reorganization and the subjectivity gave rise. Most radical were difficulties leading to exclusions of civil servants that could not fulfil the new role and find a way to “live” in the organization. Less radical were the difficulties expressed through uncertainty and dilemmas. I will begin with the exclusions.

From exclusion to self-exclusion

The organizational transformation meant that civil servants who did not approve of the reorganization left the ministry in the late 1990, which was also referred to as the “personnel cleaning” (Henningsen 1999, p. 20).

Many employees with professional legal skills also found the new form of organization difficult to live with and left the organization. The permanent secretary, who himself had an educational background in economy, questioned traditional legal competences, which led to larger discussions about law in general. A head of office explains: *“We have had many discussions about our employees with professional legal skills.../What does it mean to work in an organization like ours if you have professional legal skills?.../It is important to be able to understand law within a larger societal frame. What is law nowadays? For what purposes can we use law? What constitute rules and how do they work in a society like ours?”*. As the quote demonstrates law, rules and legal competencies were something that was debated in the ministry at a more general level, i.e. “what is law nowadays?” Law was no longer seen as the primary way to govern society which corresponds to the idea of a changed role of the state in the literature on Governance (see for example Bevir et al. 2003 and Sørensen & Torfing 2005). Thus, working in the ministry as a civil servant with professional legal skills, you could no longer just be a civil servant as you used to be. Instead you were forced to reflect upon your educational background more profoundly than civil servants with other educational backgrounds as for example economics or public administration, were.

This may be one of the reasons that many civil servants with educational legal skills chose to leave the organization. A civil servant with professional legal skills who stayed and enjoyed his work says: *“When it comes to civil servants with a professional legal background, we want someone who is not a traditional case officer.../There are many ways in which you can choose to be a civil servant with a professional legal background. You can choose to be the one who claims that everything is impossible because you always make reservations, or you can choose to develop new ideas and find new ways. And if you like the latter, then this is a very interesting work place, because you are almost never stopped if you have a good idea and know how to argue for it.”*. Thus, it was possible to work in the organization if you had professional legal skills, but you

should not aim at being “a traditional case officer”. Instead you should show the ability to reflect on law as one way of governing among others, and you should not be the one pointing to the impossibility of new ideas due to existing laws. The overall quality favoured in the ministry was the ability to invent new ideas that were in the edge of traditional thinking and maybe existing laws.

Others were exhausted by the amount of work and left the organization. A head of division gives an example of two clerks that... (p.39-42 i interviewudskriften).

Importantly, nobody was fired due to the reorganization itself or due to particular educational skills. Instead, many civil servants chose themselves to leave the ministry because they could no longer fulfil the new role of the civil servant and the way it was reformulated. Power was, thus, not manifested through formal exclusions of civil servants that were misfit in the new form of organization, since nobody was fired. There were no formal rules or explicit disciplining of civil servants. No one dictated civil servants how to conduct their work. In this sense civil servants were freed from rules and a particular position in a rigid hierarchical structure. Instead, exclusions were individualized and self-imposed. Thus, if civil servants were misfit and could not function in the network organization they needed to take responsibility for the situation themselves through self-exclusion. Superiors did not take responsibility by for example firing them. In this sense, possible conflicts between the subjectivity created through the network organisation and civil servants were individualized.

Uncertainty

The civil servants that chose to stay and work in the Ministry of Business Affairs embraced the network organization. However, they would have to live with a constant level of uncertainty. A head of division says: *“I think that what we have created in this organization is a latent insecurity among all of us. There will always be uncertainty working in a ministry like ours, because what is up and what is down; and who are in charge?”*. One of the uncertainties had to do with the fact that you as a civil servant was not placed in a specific office with the same colleagues year in and year out. The centre structure also meant that the clerks did not have one executive civil servant who acted as their “boss” and with whom they could discuss their work. Everyone had to intake new positions every six month. Sometimes the more general uncertainty, experienced especially by newly employed civil servants, came about as dilemmas.

The dilemmas associated with the role of the civil servant under self-governance primarily had to do with the fact that the organization was still a ministry and thereby a political, administrative organization that could not afford mistakes – neither political nor legal/economic mistakes. Although the primary criteria for success in the network

organization were expressed in terms of inventiveness and creativity, the organization as such still needed to ensure that no mistakes were conducted. A head of division explains it in this way: *“There are always contradictory demands./../In our organization, we want to be highly orientated towards new policy developments and act with a high willingness to take risks and dare to try out new things. At the same time we are not allowed to make any mistakes. If an unpleasant story ends up in the newspaper and the mistake is yours, then you might have done some very good stuff, but it is very quickly forgotten.”*. Thus, it turned out to be equally important to prevent errors. However, the mechanisms known from the bureaucratic form of organization were not available in order to secure that. In this sense what was created was a dualistic organization with potentially opposing criteria for success. A head of office explains: *“We are a very dualistic organization. We must be creative and challenge things, but at the same time we must be able to ensure zero-errors when it comes to serving the minister.”*.

Another dilemma in the network organization was specifically connected to the ministerial clerks. An important part of the reorganization was also to increase effectiveness in the organization. Thus for the ministerial clerk it was important not to involve more than one executive level in the organization, if the case you as a civil servant were involved in, was a “routine case”. However, it was difficult for the single ministerial clerk to judge whether something was just another routine case or the case had turned into a politically important one, or if things were simply going “the wrong way”. A ministerial clerk provides an example of the pressure you may feel when something goes. She says: *“When the permanent secretary then had to involve himself once again, he thought all of a sudden that what we had done was all wrong. And we thought that we had done exactly what had been agreed upon. In situations like that, there is an enormous pressure on you. I felt like the most stupid person in the world.”*. As we have seen, different difficulties were associated with the transformation of the subjectivity of the civil servant in the network organization expressed through exclusion, uncertainty and dilemmas. However, many civil servants embraced what they saw as an increased freedom through their work in a network organization.

Conclusion

In November 2001 Denmark had a new government, and both the minister and the permanent secretary were replaced, and that was the end of the network organization in the Ministry of Business Affairs. It may be that Colin Hales is right when he states that alternatives to bureaucracy are likely to remain exceptions. The alternatives *“will be confined either to small-scale or expressive fringes of the organization terrain or to temporary periods of experimentation by large organizations before the visible hand of*

hierarchy retightens its grip.” (2002, p. 65). A statement he bases on an overall argument that bureaucracy “*regardless of its operational inefficiencies is a highly effective form of legitimized domination*” (ibid.). I do agree that bureaucracy as a form of organization still plays a very important role when we want to understand public sector organizations. However, the alternative forms of organization promoting self-governance and “entrepreneurship” in the public sector seems to have come to stay, and they radically change the subjectivity of the civil servant compared to the subjectivity of the bureaucrat.

Through the analysis I have shown how a network form of organization creates a particular subjectivity of the civil servant. Civil servants must embrace the ideal of self-governance. They are... The subjectivity created through the network organization is thus one of constant self-development, and an individualization of responsibility regarding work, self-developments and even exclusions. Power is not manifested through self-discipline and following orders from superiors. Instead power is manifested as an individualized responsibility for self-development and a demand for flexibility regarding work hours, work tasks, and personality. It is not possible to be a civil servant in the network organization if you want to obtain a fixed position in a functional hierarchy with precisely defined work tasks, who thinks personal life and work life should be separate and who wants to intake a more anonymous position in the organization. The process of renewal and self-development is not imposed by a superior. Instead it is the employees that constantly engage in self-developing projects and chase new ideas and thus impose the paradigm of self-governance on them-selves.

Some civil servants embraced this subjectivity and happily fulfilled their role. Others found the network organization unliveable and suppressive and chose to self-exclude.

My intention has not been to argue that the civil servants embracing the new role of self-governance were not ‘really’ free or that they suffered from false consciousness. On the contrary self-governance may be regarded as empowering for the civil servants that loved the possibilities encompassed in their work. However, the paradigm of self-governance was not unproblematic, since it was very exclusive of other values and it created uniformity. Experience, educational skills and continuity were regarded as blocking the on-going development of new ideas and creativity of civil servants. The employees were, thus, not free to choose for example continuity in their work or favour experience as values they encompass. Furthermore, they were constantly in a process of renewal and self-development. In this sense it was a particular kind of freedom and subjectivity that was established through the network organization and it was not every civil servant that experienced this subjectivity to be liberating or empowering.

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