

pany, in order to gain larger control over the employees in the periphery and later Indian society, Hull observed that „[i]t is precisely this regime of presumptive written truth that establishes the social possibilities of noncorrespondence, including fraud. [...] The very claim of graphic artifacts to transparency motivates their use to generate opacity or false clarity“ (Hull 2012: 246). Sometimes, when confronted with paper fraud, bureaucrats in Islamabad would return to taking decisions or issuing communications through the spoken word, in order to keep control and avoid paper fraud. This reveals the ambiguous character of bureaucratic writing: „Writing is usually seen to nail things down, but it can also set them in motion— often it does both simultaneously. Thus, state control can be extended not only through specification, but through ambiguity, by leaving matters undocumented“ (Hull 2012: 248). The materialized form of state control – files, documents, and such – does not only create a certain level of distance between the administration and its subjects, it also constitutes the state’s penetration into everyday life (Das & Poole 2004: 15).

Among all examinations of graphical artifacts, Hull gives a special attention to the file as a medium. Keeping track of its own path through various forms of inscriptions, a file becomes its own chronicle and at the same time the material artifact of authoritative decision making (Hull 2012: 116–127). The file also serves well to illustrate the concept of „associations of paper“, which serves here as an analytical tool to grasp the whole complex of actors, objects and relations that emerge from the circulation of documents. Studying associations of paper can help defining the border between administration and administered, and contribute to the understanding of social relations underlying bureaucratic processes and how they may change over time (ibid. 19–22). A more thorough look into the path of documents will in effect lead to the performative aspects of bureaucracy.