PLAYING THE GAME – PERFORMATIVE ASPECTS OF BUREAUCRACY

„red tape n [so called from the red tape formerly used to tie up legal documents in England.]: bureaucratic procedure, especially as characterized by mechanical adherence to regulations, needless duplication of records, and the compilation of an excessive amount of extraneous information resulting in prolonged delay or inaction" (Webster's 3rd International Dictionary).

Most adults have in one way or another experienced the performative character of bureaucracy. Deconstructing this aspect of administration from an anthropological perspective leads us again to perceive the seemingly very rational realm of government as a collection of rituals, shared experiences, beliefs and habits. Considering performance further leads to the visibility of power and control and a more sound critique of bureaucracy. Hull (2012: 25) accentuates that „bureaucratic texts are produced, used, and experienced through procedures, techniques, aesthetics, ideologies, cooperation, negotiation, and contestation". Hence, there is a vast range of processes to be considered. Throughout decades, scholars and government officials alike have sought for solutions to reduce these procedures or what is referred to as „red tape". One of the biggest hopes was put into evolving information technologies, but despite their fast development, information technologies have not been the key to streamline administration, as David Graeber (2015) makes clear. It might exactly be the performative aspect, Lee (1980) argues, why neither analysis nor technologies could help making administration more efficient.