

Paperwork follows an overall impersonal aesthetic, „simple and self contained“ (Graeber 2015: 52). Not only for the purpose of simplifying a complex reality, but also for the prevention of the re-contextualization of documents by their users, producers of bureaucratic writing decontextualize their writing. While this aspect refers to most of bureaucratic writing, there are substantial differences in modes of inscription, like Hull (2012: 16) has shown in his study of administration in Islamabad. Whether a letter is handwritten or machine typed can say something about the importance given to the recipient or the case. The material qualities of a paper document, as in size, color, thickness, etc. determine and underline their purpose (ibid. 17). As such, one might be less likely to disburse, say, a handwritten fine from the municipality on an A5 squared paper. It is therefore our shared belief in that materiality of documents that makes us trust them, eventually unfolding their power. Another familiar example is the materiality of a photocopy. Content and appearance of a photocopy are obviously the same to its original counterpart, but the signature, the performative act of authorizing a document through signing it, is lost in the copying procedure (ibid.). It is an untrustworthy document to be authorized and in some contexts not credible for the same reason. Giving the example of academic degrees and the confidence in them, Graeber (2015: 22) criticizes an explosion of credentialism since the 1980s referring to the U.S.: „[...] official credentials are seen as a kind of material fetish – magical objects conveying power in their own right, entirely apart from the real knowledge, experience, or training they’re supposed to represent“ (Graeber 2015: 22). Measuring and standardizing is believed to give evidence and validate (Star & Lapland 2009: 10), which almost implicates a superstition.

Another aspect revealing the importance of materiality to the bureaucratic myth is fraud. Matthew Hull illustrates this in his study on Pakistan. Whereas, writing as a mode of inscription has been introduced by the British, managing the East India Com-