

**PPCC-PAPER**

*Research and Studies in Politics, Sociology and Law*

*Scientific Online Journal of the Public Policy Competence Center –  
Expertise Hub of E-Democracy, State Modernization and Reform Policy*

**PPCC-PAPER**

Research and Studies in Politics, Sociology and Law  
Volume 10 (2023), Edition 1

**Academic coordination, editing and correspondence**

PD Dr. M. Reiners, [info@dr-markus-reiners.de](mailto:info@dr-markus-reiners.de).

# **Guiding Principles in the Context of State Transformation:**

## **Consequences for Public Actors and a supporting Comparison of Theories**

### **Author**

PD Dr phil habil MA Markus Reiners, Political Scientist and Director of the scientific Think Tank Public Policy Competence Center, Expertise Hub of E-Democracy, State Modernization and Reform Policy as well as Co-Editor of the PPCC-PAPERS, Research and Studies in Politics, Sociology and Law.

### **Citation**

Reiners, Markus (2023): Guiding Principles in the Context of State Transformation. Consequences for Public Actors and a supporting Comparison of Theories. In: PPCC-PAPER, Research and Studies in Politics, Sociology and Law. Scientific Online Journal of the Public Policy Competence Center, Expertise Hub of E-Democracy, State Modernization and Reform Policy. 10(1), 4-30.

### ***Abstract***

*Approaches that consider state transformation to be a process, the structure of which cannot be planned, as well as a social process of learning have proven helpful in the context of state transformation. It is apparent that a model espousing management principle has been gaining a foothold in the public administration. Thus, it seems obvious to study the impact that this development has on actors as well as focus more on the perspective of the individual. This will show that a discrepancy between state organizations and a new type of public-sector employee is becoming increasingly evident. Against this background, a broader view needs to be taken as to how institutions function in modern state systems. For this purpose, classical organizational theories are compared with post-structuralist arguments. When transformation is based on this kind of holistic view, it may be possible to shape it in a more reflective and sustainable manner.*

*Keywords: public administration, transformation, institutional theories, organizational theories, post-structuralism*

## CONTEXT AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Scholarly literature provides ample research on institutional stability as well as structural state transformation or changes in political administrative institutions. In addition, the large number of theoretical perspectives reflect the high degree of complexity. By now they have to a large extent been extensively underpinned by such neo-institutional theoretical constructs as, for example, actor-centered institutionalism, which grants some significance to the individual as well (Mayntz & Scharpf, 1995; Scharpf, 2000; cf. Reiners, 2008, 2019).

Yet, only few theses have focused on the individuals acting within such contexts; in other words, on the individuals acting in political-administrative institutions at all levels of the state. One reason for this is the assumption that individuals frequently only appear to be active participants in political processes in modern states when, in fact, corporative and collective actors are the predominant participants. Today many processes concentrate on organizations or institutions and, from an analytical point of view, it frequently is more alluring to remain on a purely systemic level. However, such perspective fails to acknowledge the constitutive role that individuals play in state transformation processes. It is evident that expanding the analysis framework accordingly may be a challenging task as regards labor economics. So, for example, it is very difficult to foresee how individuals will behave in certain situations simply because individuals take actions for myriad reasons. By contrast, the functional mechanisms of corporative actors are known. Unlike the human psyche, a much simpler and more predictable structure can be identified for these kinds of actors. Thus, one advantage of corporative action is that acting on behalf of the members' interests is decoupled from situational constellations because the interests are pursued for a long term (Benz, 2001; Scharpf, 2000; Stäheli, 2007; Reiners, 2008). However, marginalizing or completely neglecting the dimension of the individual and the effects of systemic transformation processes on the individual would result in a theoretical restriction given that persons need to formulate and imple-

ment decisions. For this reason, the study aims to move this dimension more into the focus of state transformation.

In order to do so, several state modernization efforts from the 1990s onwards will be briefly reviewed below. The measures taken to implement change that can be observed everywhere usually are brought to the system from outside, since political-administrative systems tend to follow less of a strategic and more of a reactive logic. Accordingly, tighter budgets, demographic trends, changes in values, digitalization and, lastly, the inevitable awareness of the inadequacies prevalent in public administration play an essential part. The budgetary framework conditions are of substantial importance because they initiated an erosion of the public budgets. Such erosion has been ongoing since the reunification of Germany, the advancement of Europeanization, including various financial and economic crises, which began in the fall of 2008 and culminated in the indebtedness of various European member states, and, not least, since the global Covid-19 pandemic or the war in Ukraine. More than ever before, these circumstances have forced the state to stop relating its actions to its environment alone and to reflect on itself, to make its organizational structure the subject of politics and to question the fundamental structure of historical entities (Hesse & Benz, 1988; cf. Reiners, 2008; Mavroudeas & Papadatos, 2012; Delatte et al., 2017; Johari & Yahya, 2019; Becker et al., 2020).

As early as in the 1990s, the state responded – or attempted to react – to the prevailing situation by implementing new management methods and – downright exemplarily – by introducing New Steering Mechanisms that primarily can be considered a response to budget crises. At many levels, the failure of the measures was retrospectively attributed to a reductionist or, to put it succinctly, a decidedly rationalist and technocratic understanding of how institutions and organizations work (Reiners, 2012). In this connection, tough economic instruments and technologies were imported persistently and increasingly. This included, for example, replacing traditional, cameralistic forms of fiscal and budget management with new instruments of

financial management as well as new forms of cost and performance accounting as well as methods of control. All in all, a comprehensive process that seems to elude explanations in the context of classical systems theory (cf. Rosenfeld & Wilson, 1999; Young, 2015).

Yet, the trend to increasingly economize the political-administrative system as well as the more extensive realm of the social sector already had intensified before this time in the wake of neoliberalism (e.g. Bogumil, 2004). The internal modernization of public administration was initiated by introducing management principles. This was accompanied by an increasing dominance of management approaches, a whole range of privatizations as well as the withdrawal of the federal government from large industrial companies. A central concern of this paper is to look at the impact that this continuing managerialization of the public sector has on the political-administrative individual as well as his or her new dispositions and to assert that a discrepancy is becoming increasingly evident between traditional government and/or hierarchic organizations and the new type of creative public-sector employees. Having said this, the intensive involvement of individuals in such processes of state transformation may possibly yield potential opportunities, also as regards implementing changes in the political-administrative sector. Consequently, the contribution diagnoses changes in the public sector that originated with neoliberalism and, therefore, more participation seems meaningful in connection with state transformation processes. This point of view calls for a larger framework of analysis and a cursory comparison of classical institutional and organizational theories with post-structural concepts, on the basis of which state transformation may be planned more effectively and gain more legitimation, as the case may be.

The concept of the individual (“subject”) used here presents a paradoxical structure. Thus, authors like Foucault, 2000, Butler, 2001 and Reckwitz, 2008a considered it to be an, in equal measure, inherently psychic and physical being that can attain an autonomous way of living only by subjecting itself to cultural catalogues of requirements. Therefore, an analysis of the

political-administrative individual needs to address both the psychic-affective level as well as the physical-material level, i.e. if nothing else, specific performative and routine practices of the actors participating in the political-administrative system are of interest here. Particularly in the power-oriented field of politics, such a deconstructive view of identity may at first incite criticism. Politicians and administrative actors need to demonstrate strength, unity and invulnerability to gain or maintain power in future elections; however, power is defined differently by various theoretical standpoints, as will be discussed in Chapter 3, and power also needs to be distinguished from related concepts (e.g. rule or authority) (cf. Boulding, 1990; Mallory et al., 2002; Lukes, 2005; Castells, 2009; Jovanovic & Brasch Kristensen, 2015; Döhler, 2018). Certain strategies of invisibility are required to avoid disclosing one's innermost thoughts so as to not risk losing one's office or parliamentary seat. However, the circumstance that these kinds of performances, which are repeated frequently and routinely, are far from natural but rather pre-formed culturally, i.e. discursively and psychologically, needs to be studied.

Finally, it is significant in this context that the managerialization of the public sector not only seems to affect the political-administrative individual, which could be reappraised in a post-structuralist manner. At the same time, it is of central interest for political psychology, a per se interdisciplinary science that basically focusses on the interdependence and relationship between the power of the state and human individualism (cf. Sehested, 2002). This circumstance inspired the arguments below. In any case, the discipline of political psychology is lastingly impacted whenever approaches and solutions are needed in the course of designing state transformation reflectively, particularly when other disciplines more often than not prove to be unduly simplified.

## CAPITALISM AND CONSEQUENCES

The subject matter will be approached by looking at the genealogy of neoliberalism. So, for example, it seems expedient to look at approaches that develop further Foucault's project of discourse analysis of liberal forms of government and to apply it to neoliberal discourse. Proceeding from German ordoliberalism and the Chicago School, Foucault uses the program of commodification of the social to describe a new type of power that cannot be reduced solely to the mechanisms of discipline (Foucault, 2005; cf. Gertenbach, 2007; Butterwegge et al., 2008).

Subsequently, this paper will discuss the consequences of this new and flexible form of capitalism, in particular as regards the political-administrative individual in the wake of modernization policies. So, starting from neoliberalism, the changes in the public sector, and in this respect explicitly the impact that state modernization policies have on the individual, have been significant. A political-administrative individual, for example, can be an administrative employee or a politician. Post-modernism seems to be generating a new material framework for its late-modern forms of labor within the political-administrative system by means of new information and communication technology, and this, as it were, also implies new forms of social practices. An important premise is to view labor practices as central to individualization or subjectivity, in which – drawing on Foucault – the individual interacts with himself or herself, thereby creating a relation to himself or herself (Reckwitz, 2006; Foucault et al., 1993).

Accordingly, the traditional employee has been evolving into a creative individual for some time now. This change, so to speak, also marks the transition from standardized mass production to flexible specialization. The digital revolution in particular can be taken as the initial spark that triggered this post-bureaucratic working culture. The ease of acquiring information, direct access to myriad written, visual and auditory signs as well as the possibility of exchanging, reshaping and recombining these signs, all of which are facilitated by the rise of



new technologies, point to a new complex of jobs that routinely involve the analysis and creation of symbols. And the individual integrated in administrative structures – presumably – will have to fulfill this catalogue of requirements (Reckwitz, 2006, 2008b, 2008c).

So, for example, at the same time as more appraisal reviews with employees, workshops, quality meetings or training programs in assessment centers are carried out, the individual will face steadily rising requirements as well as competition for economic and, in particular, symbolic capital within the individual administrative units. As explicated in the overall context, this relates to a new set of qualities that employees bring to the job. Contrary to previous generations, today's employees do not respond only to hierarchic orders; instead they are post-bureaucratic, self-confident and creative employees, whose resources need to be used in the process of innovation and who need to be involved in the planning process. In other words, they are employees who 'manage themselves' – they are creative economic subjects who strive for more individuality and orient themselves along economic criteria, too. The 'enterprising self' is a new identity for the employee, one that blurs the distinction between worker and manager (Miller & Rose, 1995; cf. Bröckling, 2007).

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If one focusses on the neoliberal dimension, then it seems increasingly doubtful that the state will withdraw in times of neoliberalism. When one studies the political discourse of neoliberalism in more detail and compares it to the discourse of classical liberalism, it becomes evident that neoliberalism is not simply a reanimation or radicalization of classical liberalism. In fact, it has its own political rationality and governmentality, which breaks with the world of classical liberalism in many ways (Gertenbach, 2007; cf. Meijer, 1987; Peacock & Willgeroth, 1989; Gerber, 1994; Tickell & Peck, 1995; Ingham, 2005; Harvey, 2005).

Taking recourse to Foucault's concept of government, which is not limited to the direct and indirect power exercised by the state administration, but primarily emphasizes that the individual and, thus, all of society need direct leadership, the question arises as to the specific style

of governing stated in the political program of neoliberalism. Although both classical liberalism and the neoliberal discourse still have in common their genuine criticism of specific forms of government practice that is expressed in their opposition to the direct intervention of the state in economic mechanisms, an epistemological break occurs at a certain point between the two discourses. Albeit classical liberalism was characterized by a dichotomic spatial division between the market and the state, in other words there still existed a conceptional parallelism, neoliberalism increasingly interweaves the two spheres. To a large extent this is rooted in history. Contrary to classical liberalism, the Freiburg School, which paved the way for ordoliberalism, from the beginning never had to deal with a functioning state but rather with a discredited or actually non-existing state. As a result, it was not possible to legitimize the state internally. Instead, the state had to be justified on the basis of economic freedom, and this argument anchored economic liberalism in the institutional design of the state at the same time (Gertenbach, 2007). Such economically-based legitimization of the state marked the beginning of the conceptual interdependence of the market and state, which, in the end, allowed neoliberalism to install a kind of economic tribunal vis-à-vis the government (Foucault, 2004).

This helps understand why a neoliberal practice of government needs to pursue a kind of permanent, indirect intervention. As a result of the fundamental distrust of the automatic regulation of the economic system as well as the constant concern about the market, a governmentality comes into being that proactively seeks to safeguard market processes (Gertenbach, 2007). While classical liberalism was still primarily concerned with preventing state intervention in the autonomous sphere of the market, neoliberalism believes in creating and establishing framework conditions, under which the market can unfold the laws inherent to it. Contrary to a more or less reactive policy – the “laissez-faire” of classical liberalism, so to speak – neoliberalism now strives for an active or, to put it more succinctly, activist governmentality

that keeps a watchful eye on the state. Compared to the topical concept of an isolated market, a state defined by permanent concern more or less promotes the cultivation of the market, which in other words is active governmentality after all (Gertenbach, 2007). In this way, the market is transformed into a u-topical place. Precisely because it is no longer granted any space, it cannot exclude any sector of society anymore. Like a net, it is about to encircle the entire sphere of the social.

The extra-territorialization of the government's sphere of influence renders the moment of freedom, the significance of which should not be underestimated in classical liberalism, a fundamental element because from this point on the freedom of the individual is a constitutive prerequisite of neoliberal policy. In fact, removing the boundaries of government intervention in this way does not reflect selective policy. On the whole, the actual objective is to make society governable (Gertenbach, 2007). An intensive debate about an activating state (guaranteeing state) has been going on since the end of the 1990s. It highlights the development discussed above and clarifies that it is no longer the political-administrative system alone that is being criticized for its deficiencies in regard to implementing political goals, but that, for one, a large part of the responsibility now is transferred to society as a whole and, for another, a large number of social actors are involved in mastering the problem. This is also referred to as civil society (cf. Bogumil, 2004).

It suggests itself that neoliberal governmentality embodies an individualizing and, therein, a totalizing dimension. Accordingly, the individual progressively becomes an active, productive economic subject that finds himself or herself in a new structure characterized by futurity and insecurity, in which work is understood to be a, more or less, insecure investment in the future. So, for example, the individual would have to adopt the work practices introduced along with the New Steering Mechanisms, if he or she wanted to maintain its chances for continued employment and promotion in an environment marked by a progressive decline in jobs

and other rationalization measures. Thus, it becomes evident that the individual had to increasingly orient himself or herself along decidedly business-management criteria and needed to assume certain significative elements and patterns of action prevalent in economics. Just think of the consequences that ensued from the integration of departmental and budget responsibility, the supposedly labor-friendly reduction of hierarchies, increasing use of project management, the general rise in the span of control, or cost accounting and results accounts (Reichard, 2004).

The ensuing mobilization of the individual makes it more and more evident that administrative employees are promoted, as it were, to entrepreneurs of themselves. Bearing in mind the steadily rising demands made on them – innovation capacity, creativity, readiness to assume risk, capacity for team and project work – the employees, moreover, become engaged in a permanent dynamic cycle of rivalry. This in turn subjects them to an enduring dictate of comparison, as a result of which they may incur psychological disorders (Bröckling, 2007; Ehrenberg, 2004; cf. Boltansky & Chiapello, 2003).

The current developments culminate in digitalization, a development that encompasses all areas of life. However, the digitalization of innumerable channels of communication also provides new opportunities for political-administrative systems, accelerates the exchange of information and, not least, can decisively increase many times over the quality of public service. Thus, the question arises as to what new subject-artefact constellations will emerge as a result of the changed framework conditions and how this will transform the patterns of thought and perception of the individuals acting in them. So, for example, numerous post-bureaucratic modes of work can be discerned, all of which distinguish themselves in that the individual, who is increasingly operating in digital cultures, needs to exhibit both economic as well as aesthetic competence (Reckwitz, 2006).

Digital media play an important part with regard to a subjectivity that oscillates between aestheticization and economization. Before the digital revolution, the individual depended on written or documentary culture, now the transformation of material culture that is accompanied by the digitalization of many areas of life is remodeling the disposition and codes of post-modern individuality. In the wake of the new technologies that are shaping writing and reading etc. (email, chats, video conferences, downloads etc.), the relationship between administrator and citizen, between politicians and voters is intensifying many times over once again. Accordingly, electronification is a prerequisite for new social practices in communication, distribution and production of process-oriented modernization processes within political-administrative structures, a phenomenon that generally can be subsumed under the generic term of digitalization (Winkel, 2004).

In this respect, the effects on the working world are simplified access to information, delocalization, dehierarchization as well as an intra- and inter-organizational interconnectedness of activities. The ability to handle manipulatively textual and visual surfaces, therefore, can be considered a central skill of the political-administrative individual in the post-modern age, since, after all, people have to learn to handle the symbolic worlds of computers as a matter of routine. In view of its aesthetic-economic dual structure, the individual whose work involves computer work exhibits a combination of elective, experimental and aesthetic-imaginative predispositions (Reckwitz, 2006).

Consequently, on the one hand, the individual needs to acquire certain skills for creative design, for work involving the creation of symbols and for expressive work, needs to show confidence in the semiotic approach to reality and gain a corresponding awareness of contingency. On the other hand, the individual needs to be constantly aware of being embedded in the political – and today that includes economic – practice. In this way, the administrative employee can advance to a post-Fordistic economic subject, i.e. an individual who – and this

tendency can be observed in the public sector, too – conveys aesthetically charged products (Reckwitz, 2006). Thus, such administrative staff as politicians not only have to learn to become more aware of their biographies and skills, but they have to position them successfully as well (Reckwitz, 2008d). Under the dictate of success, politicians in particular have to present themselves as an individual brand so as to distinguish themselves from competitors. In the struggle for legitimacy and power, they have to develop certain psychological tactics so as to avoid losing votes and to stand their ground in the competitive political game. Bearing this in mind, they are forced to train themselves in self-optimization and gain the affective-emotional skills needed to win over the electorate. Consequently, policy making is no longer neutral political work, but is characterized by self-presentation and image-building with a human touch (cf. Fraser, 2007).

Against this background, the individual political-administrative actor proves to be not only an entrepreneurial self, which needs to defer only to economic criteria, but also a self that increasingly is obliged to follow a creative imperative. The American social scientist Florida pointed out the significance of a new emergent “creative class” in his study “The Rise of the Creative Class,” and, thus, took note for the first time of a new creative sector (Florida, 2002). First of all, he determines that this class comprises about 38 million workers at the time that his study is published – that is just short of one third of all Americans employed at the time. At first, he defined this group “to include people in science and engineering, architecture and design, education, arts, music and entertainment, whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology and/or new creative content,” but today one could most likely also include individuals integrated in administrative structures. Based on the case being argued herein, they, too, increasingly need to acquire the “common creative ethos that values creativity, individuality, difference and merit” (Florida, 2002). Today, more than 55 million Americans work in the creative sector, many of them in the political sector.

Besides its aspiration to individuality and self-expressiveness, this new class also distinguishes itself by a certain common habitus and collective lifestyle, the far-reaching permeation of which, in the opinion of Florida, leads to an extensive restructuring of everyday life. Such attributes as being rooted in old structures, maintaining close ties to family, friends etc. as well as the classic separation of work, one's own home and free time are increasingly being superseded by an experimental lifestyle that is primarily characterized by restlessness and autonomy. Traditional hierarchical systems of work organization are being replaced by “new forms of self-management, peer recognition and pressure, and intrinsic forms of motivation, which I call soft control” (Florida, 2002).

The social construction of time, the sense and use of time, is undergoing a similar kind of profound change, too, since any and all time always can be defined as working time. Creativity does not go by the clock. Therefore, this new Creative Class is rooted in economics: “its economic function both underpins and informs its members' social, cultural and lifestyle choices. The Creative Class consists of people who add economic value through their creativity (...). Their social and cultural preferences, consumption and buying habits, and their social identities all flow from this” (Florida, 2002). To what extent this trend towards a new, creative administrative culture can be demonstrated in Europe needs to be examined in more detail. However, for some time now there have been many conspicuous signs demonstrating that this new, creative administrative culture is not only emerging but actually is gaining a foothold in Europe as well, even if there still is a lack of founded empirical or scientific research (cf. Braun-Höller & Zähringer, 2005; Ladner, 2005).

## COMPARISON OF THEORIES

Various theoretical concepts need to be studied and compared in order to determine the impact of recent developments on the post-modern political-administrative individual in a post-

Fordist society in the course of state transformation or state transformation processes. Therefore, this paper examines whether classical institutional and organization theorems still are up-to-date, and they are compared to post-structuralist argumentation figures. Such post-structuralist school of thought breaks with the structure-oriented viewpoint of classical theoretical concepts and, under the assumption that organizations are characterized by irreducible heterogeneity, it attempts to adopt a decidedly process-oriented perspective (cf. Hosking & Morley, 1991; Chia, 1996; Simon, 1997; Belsey, 2002; Weiskopf, 2003; Ryan, 2005; Bernard & Harcourt, 2007; Angermüller, 2015; Wald van der, 2017).

In this case, the focus is on the development of institutions or organizations in connection with the central question as to how institutional or organization order is possible at all. Particularly if one takes recourse to Max Weber's theory of action and considers the belief in the legitimacy of certain forms of organization and authority in general or bureaucracy in particular to be the fundamental source of their stability and reproducibility and, thus, views the legitimate validity of such order systems as something that has to be established first in the minds of individuals, then a theoretical modification of the subject – to put it carefully – can be attained and, accordingly, the framework of analysis regarding the way institutions or organizations in modern systems of administration operate or function can be enlarged (1976).

Comparing classical institutional and organizational theories with post-structuralist argumentation figures will help clarify the consequences of the developments discussed above. The first step is to determine what conditions promote the success of state transformation, hence what options are available to achieve state transformation and to enforce state transformation as such, whether the individual should be involved in the process of change in the long term, and to what extent classical institutional and organizational theories can be applied to gain an adequate understanding of recent state modernization efforts. In the first instance, a significant aspect is the dilemma arising from the high complexity of political-administrative struc-



tures. Whenever very different but equally power-specific rationalities of the actors involved clash, any meticulous planning of modern administrative processes, and the micropolitical processes connected thereto, turns out to be a very difficult undertaking. In retrospect one significant problem, for example, that became obvious during the implementation of New Public Management can be traced back above all to the circumstance that the micropolitical complexity of subjective, and frequently conflicting, patterns of action and behavior patterns within the system and the myriad power constellations therein were underestimated. And this once again demonstrated that organizations are more dynamic, unpredictable and less projectable than many initiators of political reform projects would care to admit. This, too, is an insight that runs counter to the business-management concept of introducing rational planning to political modernization processes (cf. Küpper & Ortmann, 1988; Holtkamp, 2008; Reiners, 2012).

Particular attention needs to be paid to power-specific phenomena. Thus, the differentiation of the political system according to Luhmann follows one single principal code, namely that of power-specific office-holders and the structure of positions prevalent in the state. Politics and administration basically are about holding or not holding powerful positions, on the basis of which public governance can be exercised, and this impacts the decisions taken in certain public offices (Luhmann, 2004). The ambition to strengthen one's own position of power, to be reelected or to be promoted within the administrative system hinder modernization efforts and turned the (failed) introduction of New Public Management into a play for power, as a result of which – as is known from all modernization processes – there were winners and losers, and, ultimately, influence and power were redistributed (Reiners, 2012; Holtkamp, 2008). This exemplifies that the problem in such instances is that allegedly innovative measures frequently only lead to reproducing and solidifying existing power structures.

Under the growing influence of neoliberal governmentality, power is increasingly becoming invisible and depersonalized. Moreover, the concepts of power based on action theory that are still dominating political science seem questionable at times. Particularly concepts of power following Foucault (who breaks with a substantial notion of power and, similar to Luhmann, emphasizes its relational, contingent and - since it penetrates all of society - ubiquitous nature) seem more effective when attempts are made to reconfigure institutional and organizational theories. Accordingly, Foucault was the first theoretician who spoke out against a juridical power model, i.e. a power model that tends to oppression. Foucault does not consider the individual an autonomous instance of power anymore. In fact, by describing power as a social force that creates spaces of opportunity and brings about interacting relationships between the actors, he believes it involves a decidedly productive moment as well (cf. Kneer, 2008; Foucault, 2000). The contingent character of power suggests that the organizational power of actors depends on how skillfully they are able to use formal, resource and information structures to control the actions of other actors. Thus, the exercise of power from a micropolitical standpoint is by no means a top-down process in the hierarchy, but rather a contingent form of mutual interactive behavior (cf. Reiners, 2012).

Classical institutional and organizational theories take a more structure-oriented viewpoint of the phenomena of power and assume that institutional or organizational arrangements have a certain degree of stability, predictability and orientation; whereas the post-structuralist perspective exposes the paradoxes of institutional and organizational systems, in that their efforts to create unambiguity, stability and predictability all but remain problematic and steadily generate new ambiguities or indecisiveness (Kneer, 2008).

In line with Foucault's analysis of power and Derrida's proposal to deconstruct occidental logocentrism, institutions and organizations refute any concept of exclusively hierarchic social structures. Instead they emphasize the dynamics, decentralism and heterarchy of organi-

zational structures. Therefore, instead of exhibiting stability, institutional ensembles should be characterized by persistent transformation processes. Accordingly, the focus of analysis is shifted from examining the structural rules of coordination to the informal relations between members of the administration (cf. Gulick, 1937; Hammond, 1990; Leigh & Guy, 2017). When this point of view is taken, the systems of rules as such are subject to a “différance,” i.e. rules are continuously changed, reformulated and invalidated. If nothing else, this helps rehabilitate the respective situational and material context whenever micropolitical structures are analyzed. In this respect, every rule implies its own context-specific interpretation, construction, reinvention, modification, subversion and, hence, partial suspension and violation (Kneer, 2008). In this connection it also needs to be mentioned that, contrary to Luhmann's downright radical assumption that the political system exhibits operative cohesion, politics increasingly are aware of and, therefore, responsive to such environmental influences as, for example, the economic logics of communication and operation as well as significative elements from the field of aesthetics (Luhmann, 2004, 2008).

Raising awareness for the historical situatedness, context and specific environment of each organization, decision-making or situational decision-making, as is proposed herein, runs counter to the assumptions expressed in economic management research that, now as before, are based on rationalist decision theories, which, as is generally known, decisively influenced the New Steering Mechanisms. That is to say, the latter remain closely attached to a model based on the assumption that organizational and systemic processes involve a high degree of calculability and regularity. The fact that other perspectives are possible as well is demonstrated by the new direction of reform promoting good governance (cf. Holtkamp, 2008, 2010).

What are the consequences? By paying more attention to the complex interplay between very different actors, all of whom have at their disposal completely different rationalities within new subject-artefact constellations, future state transformation, when indicated, could be im-

plemented and supported in a more reflective and sustainable manner, e.g. in particular by taking recourse to the creative subject, which only became such because of the new developments.

One question that certainly needs to be asked in this respect is what type of state transformation is being discussed. Although success in many cases may be achieved by means of radical changes that are based on re-design and, in part, on the potential for learning that may be gained through creative destruction, this remains the exception (Reiners, 2008). However, it goes without saying that processes planned at short notice come as a surprise. In addition to being only moderately transparent or participative, they already have been enforced or implemented before any organized resistance can form. Thus, they reflect a riskier strategy, because the existing organizational order is fundamentally called into question suddenly when they are implemented. This course of action is more likely to be successful when it is accompanied by measures relating to structural organization per se, even if all such measures urgently call for adaptations to the process structure (and vice versa). In the case of changes relating to structural organization (New Steering, e-government, etc.), however, it is more likely that an evolutionary process could or would be more successful, because then the organization is transformed from its actual condition to the desired condition methodically and cautiously in small, successive learning steps that always progress from the one before.

Yet, it must be ensured that all members of the organization can keep up. That being said, this manner of proceeding certainly bears the risk that the adaptations that are introduced are only symbolic and that no routine behavior patterns are actually changed. In other words, this approach would be suitable for measures that per se are designed for the long term because a bureaucratic administration cannot be (cognitively) readjusted at short notice towards different forms of control that are diametrically opposed to some extent. Indeed, sometimes this may only be possible after a whole generation is replaced.

In many cases, evolutionary, continuous, participative, transparent and incremental measures, i.e. measures ultimately designed in such a way that they will be accepted and will ensure integration of the individual, would most likely lead to successful implementation. The grid-locked and routine habits of the individual cannot be superseded by new practices of work that not only are imposed top-down but from one day to the next as well (cf. Reiners 2012). This kind of approach would fail simply because continuous managerialization of the public sector reveals the described effects on the political-administrative individual. In addition to the strong concentration on products and technologies, the major reason for the failure of New Steering Mechanisms that can be observed in many cases is the lack of participation and involvement of the (creative) workforce, whose consent and readiness to cooperate can be deemed a constitutive prerequisite for the long-term success of political reform projects (Bogumil, 2004). Accordingly, an essential prerequisite for achieving the objective of a reform is to combine institutional as well as individual interests and to allow the employees to actively participate in the reform processes or create their own structural rules, which would encourage large-scale and intensive involvement of actors. If strategies undertaken in this connection are to be productive, they need to be based on modernization measures and regard the transformation efforts to be processes that involve social negotiations and compromises or strategies that are grounded in political-administrative learning (Reiners, 2019).

Accordingly, social change should not be reduced to the mere enforcement or implementation of an a priori and ex cathedra defined model. Social change needs to be understood as a collective process, in the course of which the members of a unity learn new ways of approaching social cooperation and conflict; in other words, they learn how to adopt, that is to say invent and define, new social practices and in this way acquire the necessary cognitive, relational and organizational skills. Therefore, social change is a process of collective learning, too (Crozier & Friedberg, 1979; cf. Wilkesmann, 1999; Reiners, 2019). Of course, there so-

cial action is not possible without power. Power is a means, without which intervention in existing conditions is not feasible. Likewise, transformation cannot be achieved without changing the power system. Thus, transforming a system – or the power relations – is the most important step towards effecting change. Only power can fight against power. And to this end a larger number of people need to be allowed to join the power relations and need to be given more autonomy, freedom and opportunities to make decisions (Crozier & Friedberg, 1979; cf. Reiners, 2012).

Progressively generalizing the social experimentation, i.e. collective and institutional learning at all levels, or, to put it more precisely, creating conditions that facilitate such general extension, is the only alternative to any forms of technocratic, authoritarian change imposed top-to-bottom. It is not a question of deciding on a new structure, technology or a new process, instead a process that presupposes and comprises actions, reactions, negotiations and cooperation needs to be initiated. In other words, it is a matter of defining a plan that, instead of representing the will of individuals, reflects the capability of the different groups that are involved in a complex system to design the required collaboration differently. Success is conditional on mutually initiated and implemented processes, whereby the resources and abilities of the persons involved that are needed to establish new approaches are mobilized or created. When they are applied freely and without force, the system as a whole will be enabled to reorient itself like humanity in its entirety (Crozier & Friedberg, 1979; cf. Reiners, 2012).

## CONCLUSION

Managerialism in the public sector has myriad effects on the post-modern individual active in the political-administrative arena. Besides negative effects (mental, physical, social) that can be traced back to ever-increasing expectations and higher competitive pressure, which ultimately lead to estrangement from the work process, a whole series of new and partially great

opportunities for communication and information processing have arisen under neoliberal conditions, particularly in the field of subject-artefact constellations. The latter immensely promote collective work and may impact positively the patterns of perception and thought of administrative staff or politicians. Accordingly, the aesthetic-economic double structure of post-modern individuals, who increasingly move in digital cultures and need to learn how to creatively handle signs, absolutely may yield positive effects, also as regards the implementation of state modernization and transformation processes.

It goes without saying that this kind of individual-centered analysis necessarily involves more complexity. A significant difficulty arising in many state modernization efforts most notably can be traced back to the micropolitical complexities of subjective, conflicting patterns of action and behavior as well as varying constellations of power. When, however, one draws on Foucault's power model, in which power is described as a force inherent in all social relationships, a force that displays positive effects and, for example, creates positive spaces of possibilities, any disruptions, ambiguities and undecidabilities that may arise can be considered essential components of collective learning processes and, ultimately, it will be possible to come to grips with them.

It has been argued that there are strong indications that neoliberalism is having an impact on a new, post-modern type of employee, particularly in public administration. Some of the signs have changed meanwhile because now the issue is the new qualities and skills of a creative workforce, whose resources need to be integrated in the development processes by encouraging its participation; ultimately, it is about employees lay a higher claim to individuality and are motivated by economic criteria as well. This orientation, for example, may prove helpful in state modernization processes. The impact was explained by cursorily comparing classical theories of institutions and organizations with post-structuralist approaches. Sometimes the latter is better suited to depict social reality.

Assuming the complex interaction between diverse actors, each of whom displays varying rationalities within new subject-artefact constellations, state transformation, where appropriate, can be shaped in a more reflective and sustainable form. The approaches, conclusions and suggestions put forward in this theory-based paper provide a useful basis for further empirical research work.

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