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'Drowning in a sea of chewing gum'
Makework among members of bureaucratic organizations

Introduction

N.C. Parkinson once wrote jestingly in the English weekly *Economist*, that an elderly lady could spend the entire day writing and dispatching a postcard, while that effort would occupy a busy man for three minutes. Work (and especially paperwork) is elastic in its demands on time, Parkinson concluded, so there need be little or no relationship between the work done and the size of the work force. Consider a civil servant (called A) who finds himself overworked. Most likely, he will demand the assistance of two subordinates (B and C) - two, since a single subordinate might become his rival. When C complains in turn of being overworked, A will, with the concurrence of C, advise the appointment of two assistants to help C. But he can avert internal friction only by advising the appointment of two more assistants to help B. With the recruitment of D, E, F, and G, seven officials are now doing what one did before. Does this bring relief for A? Probably not, for these seven are apt to make so much work for each other that all are fully occupied. For example, an incoming document may well come before each of them. Official D decides that it falls within the province of E, who places a draft reply before C, who amends it drastically before consulting B, who asks F to deal with it. But F goes on leave at this point, handing the file over to G, who drafts a minute that is signed by B and returned to C, who revises his draft accordingly and lays the new version before A. A is actually working harder than ever. In addition to his normal duties, he has to deal with F's leave of absence, G's pale complexion, D's application for transfer to the Ministry of Pensions, E's infatuation with a married typist, the quarrel between B and C, and so on...

Parkinson condensed these observations into a 'law', stating, first, that officials want to multiply subordinates, not rivals, and, second,

that they make work for each other (1958). Parkinson's Law looked like an answer to questions about bureaucracies many people had but never dared to ask, and soon it gained worldwide fame. In the process, however, its second part almost got lost. The focus of subsequent research was on bureaucratic self-aggrandizement. Organization theory centered on the ratio of administrative to productive personnel in organizations (Haire 1959; Child 1973; Kimberly 1976; Mintzberg 1979), political science examined the growth of government (Borcherding 1977 and 1984; Cameron 1978; Larkey 1981), and economics revived Rational Man to explain bureaucratic growth as a function of individual utility maximization (Tullock 1965; Downs 1966; Niskanen 1971 and 1975; Breton & Wintrobe 1982).

Makework, in contrast, has rarely received scholarly treatment. There is an extensive folklore on the counterproductive effects of growing numbers of bureaucrats within the organization (e.g. Crider 1944; Humme 1982; Peters & Nelson 1979), but Kaufman's complaint about the dearth of 'serious' literature (Kaufman 1977:2) is still justified.[1]

Hence this study. We wanted to explore whether makework can be discerned as a specific phenomenon, distinct from other forms of bureaucratic (in)efficiency.

The study

Semistructured interviews were held with 61 members of three interlinked organizations in the Public Sector: the national Department of Education, the central administration of a State University, and the administrative apex of a large science department of the same school. Since we expected the respondents to refer to other bureaucrats, the sample was stratified along hierarchical layers and chains of command. Two chains of command were selected randomly per organization; for each chain, two individuals were interviewed per layer. As a result, the sample consists of overlapping pentads of one bureaucrat, his/her superior, two subordinates, and a peer. After a brief introduction to the concept of makework, the respondents were asked whether they felt forced to do unnecessary work because of shortcomings of their respective organizations. If so (all but three replied 'yes'), they were invited to describe their experience, cite causes, explain these causes, describe the impact of makework on the

organization, and assess the chances for reducing makework. A causal map was derived from each respondent's explanation(s), coded by two people independently, with sufficient agreement.

Figure 1. Section of a Chain of Command. (One pentad shaded)
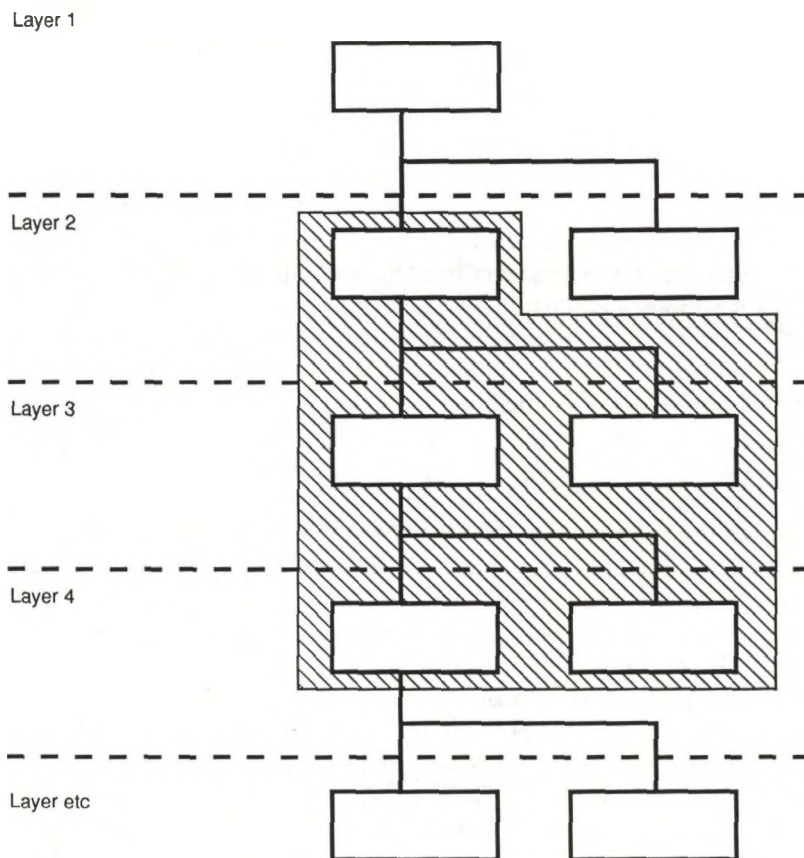
In trying to make the field's knowledge explicit, the approach is straightforward and inductive. However, in using individual statements as information about inter-individual phenomena, it entails validity risks. Assessing makework involves value judgments and

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emotions, and depends on the individual's frame of reference. In fact, one bureaucrat's work may become the next bureaucrat's makework - to rephrase Waldo's remarks about red tape (Waldo 1946:399). If makework is more than a common label for idiosyncratic perceptions and feelings, some concordance across individual observations should be present. To address this issue, respondents were asked to assess their neighbor's makework (i.e. the other bureaucrats of the pentad). Each respondent was confronted with the 'collective' causal map accumulated from previous interviews and asked to indicate agreement or disagreement. Data on individual attributes were collected and attitudinal scales measuring motivation and ambition were administered to check for the effects of subjective dispositions on individual statements. Motivation and ambition were chosen because they, among all personality factors, appear most closely related to Parkinson's theme. To compare perception with experience, a makework scale was administered and data were collected about structural variables that were expected to appear in the collective causal map of makework. In addition, individual explanations were coded by attribution type to check for attribution patterns and biases.

We undertook this study in a qualitative mood because of its exploratory nature. Nevertheless, we did analyze the data statistically and present some quantitative results.
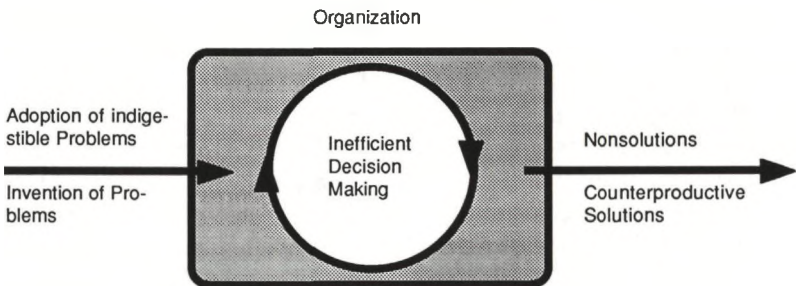
Makework

Organizations seem to generate makework by exercising irrelevant problems, by protracting or frustrating decision making, and by producing inadequate solutions. Bureaucrats seem to evaluate a problem's relevance in the light of what they apprehend as their organization's tasks and dismiss problems not pertaining to these tasks as irrelevant. 'There are real problems, I mean, problems related to the task of this organization, and other problems; my work consists of playing down unnecessary problems', a senior aid in the Department of Education said; 'Ten to fifteen percent of my time is consumed by non-problems', another one said, 'we keep each other busy with non-problems'. Solutions are perceived to be inadequate if they do not solve the targeted problems or create abundant side-effects. Such solutions are characterized as 'mayfly-decisions, devoid

of vision and strategy', 'lukewarm air', 'non-solutions, toppling each other'. Decision making is experienced as protracted or futile if decisions deemed necessary are not made in time or not made at all. 'It takes so much time',...'it takes always three times as much time as would be necessary',...'it takes an indefinite period of time',...'you can tell, there is no other choice, but they go on and on breaking their head and mine',...'everything in this organization shoots three times up and down, but nothing happens',...'they make a big fuss about it, but when push comes to shove, they don't dare to take a decision...' are typical descriptions of protracted or non-decision making.

Mapped on the organization as an open system, the decision cycle seems to generate four opportunities for makework (figure 2): Bureaucracies, or their individual members, can (1) adopt problems for which they are not sufficiently equipped or which are better left to others ('we are doing too much', a senior aid in the Department of Education would put it); (2) 'invent' problems, 'being preoccupied with trivialities' or dealing with 'lukewarm air'; (3) handle problems inefficiently, thus devoting disproportional amounts of energy on a given issues ('You can tell, there is no other choice, but they go on and on breaking their head and mine'); (4) or generate solutions with abundant side-effects, thus creating problems rather than solving them ('Silly decisions are dispatched into the jungle where they meet each other').

Figure 2. Opportunities for Makework in the Decision Cycle

Makework appears to be energy-consuming in the organizations under study. Save three exceptions, all respondents reported being

subject to makework, and those that didn't saw others affected. 'I don't endure it, I make it', one of them responded. On the average, a respondent said to spend 29 percent of his or her time on makework, the minimum being zero, the maximum 60 percent. But most respondents insisted that their energy, rather than their time, is absorbed by makework. 'The worst is the extra energy you have to write off',...'it doesn't make you lose that much time, but a lot of enthusiasm',...'it's the psychic energy you invest', respondents would say. In addition, the rate of makework is perceived as growing. A majority of respondents spontaneously asserted that 'it is getting worse and worse',...'aggravating',...'insidiously sucking up more and more of your energy'.

Makework makes bureaucrats suffer. Most respondents described their experience in terms of pain and misery. 'You feel miserable',...'it's insidious, abysmal, yes, cite me, abysmal',...'it makes you feel so terribly tired',...'you feel so desperate',...'it's like drowning in a sea of chewing gum'.

Perceived causes of makework

Makework is attributed to an array of individual, structural, environmental, and unsystematic factors. Incompetence and self-interest are cited as the main causes on the individual level. Incompetent Other Bureaucrats 'deal with matters they don't understand', they 'miss judgment and make silly decisions', they are 'anxious and don't dare to make decisions', and they 'generate paperwork, rather than results'. Self-interested Other Bureaucrats 'think too much in terms of their own career to deal with real problems', they 'keep others busy because they are busybodies', they 'live and breathe their hobbies, rather than their task', and they 'make work to justify their position'.

Complexity, centralization, overregulation, and size of the organization are cited as structural determinants of makework. Complexity makes work since it increases the probability of errors. 'The more complex the decisions, the more time is lost',...'makework is directly related to the complexity of one's task',...'you trip over every trifle in the dark, and there is little feedback; the whole organization is simply too intricate'. Centralization is said to decrease the adequacy of decisions. 'Those responsible are too far away from the place of action to make adequate decisions',...'Most senior officials don't know, in fact,

cannot know how this organization works'. Overregulation is said to delay decisions and to prompt inadequate solutions: 'we need a fiat for each pen...'. Several respondents actually walked across their office to open a board loaded with what they said were regulations and related materials. One commented: 'it would be a fulltime job to read all this...'. Size is said to cause makework because too many functionaries, 'hanging around, feeling obliged to keep themselves busy', 'create redundant activities or duplicate work'. A majority of respondents estimated that at most half the workforce was needed to carry out effectively their organization's tasks.

Although the respondents apparently shared Parkinson's view on the relation between size and makework, they did not share his view on the effects of self-aggrandizement. Growing numbers of subordinates were not perceived as having a positive impact on one's own utility. There was apparently little to be gained from the multiplication of subordinates in the bureaucracies under study. Neither salary levels nor perquisites were linked to the number of subordinates, and success was not perceived as depending on one's own number of subordinates (although self-aggrandizement was sometimes cited as motivating The Other Bureaucrat's behavior). Rather, success was perceived by most respondents in terms of career advancement. Asked for the key to success, respondents would point to personal characteristics, such as persistence, creativity, and competence, not to one's own span of control. 'One has to have ideas, know how to present them and propagate them consistently',...'ultimately, it's competence',...'competence determines success'. In contrast, the count of subordinates was seen as a burden, rather than as key for success. 'I cannot simultaneously play chess with twenty-five people at the same time', or... 'they (subordinates) are a drag; they bother you all the time', respondents would say.

In addition to structural factors, political and cultural factors in the organizations' environments influence makework. The breathlessness of the political system's four-year cycle, the rhetorical needs of parliament ('the Secretary uses reports as bills of exchange in his dealings with the House, and I have to write them', one respondent would say), and the negotiated hazards of participative decision making are cited, as well as the public sector's culture in general. Respondents also accounted for unsystemic causes of makework by referring, for example, to the ramifications of a recent Law of Higher Education, to the long lasting impact of the former deputy secretary

of Higher Education, to the brilliant, but irate personality of his successor, or to the weakness of subsequent boards of directors of the State University that led to the exodus of competent senior administrators and their replacement by mediocre cadre. The collective causal map of the causes of makework is given in Figure 3.

Figure 3. The Causal Map of Makework
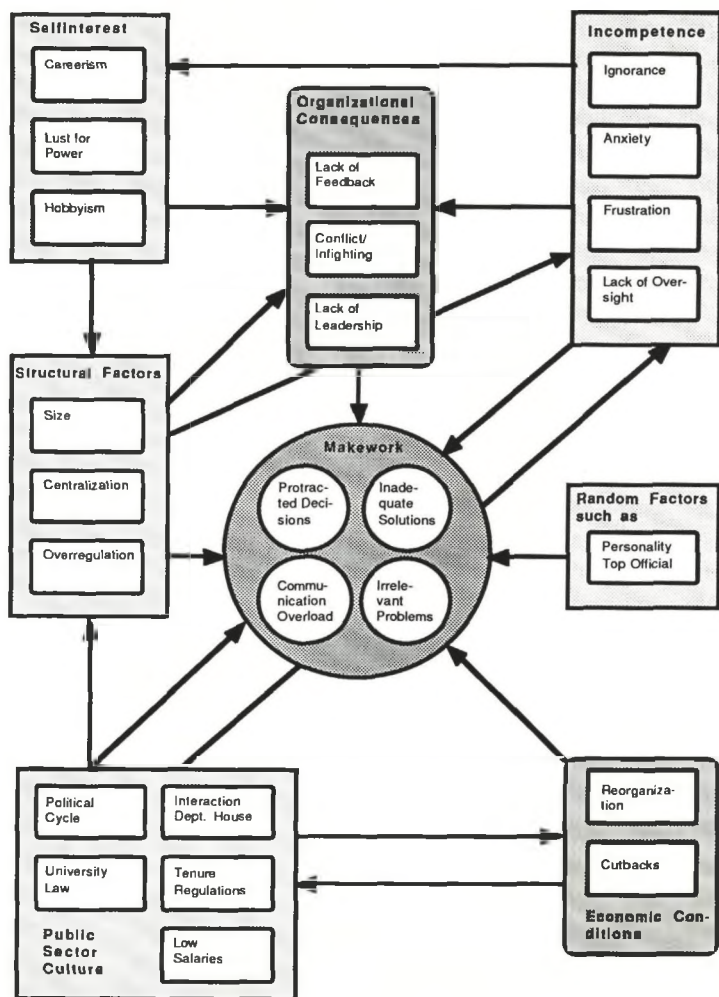
Makework?

Taken at face value, the respondents' statements confirm the existence of makework. Yet, this should give one pause. In Parkinson, the stage is set for a tragic farce, the bureaucrats being the players, and the audience (the citizens) paying taxes as admission. As the drama unfolds, everybody suffers, but little can be done; caught in a vicious circle, the protagonists make work by trying to avoid it. The bureaucrats of this study, in contrast, knew too much to play their part convincingly. They seemed to have little reason to behave as Parkinson's bureaucrats.

A related inconsistency arose in the cross-attribution of motives. Most respondents maintained simultaneously that making work is counterproductive for one's own career and that advancement is the primary goal of most bureaucrats. But they frequently invoked self-interest when explaining the motives of other bureaucrats for making work.

There was yet another inconsistency. Respondents were surprisingly consistent in estimating one another's passive makework (the rate of makework they claimed to undergo), but failed to account for an adequate rate of active makework (makework they claimed to make). Due to the sampling design, it was possible to compare each respondent's own estimated and his or her neighbor's estimates regarding her passive makework. The degree of concordance, measured as the average difference of ego's estimate and the mean of alter's estimate, was 84 percent. (This concordance was not unconditional, however; it was based on ego's deliberate identification with alter's personality and judgment. For example, respondents would accompany their estimate of their colleagues' passive makework with statements such as: 'knowing his impatience...' or 'knowing his blind commitment...'). Active makework, on the other hand, virtually disappeared in the cross- check. Since each bureaucrat is bureaucrat to all others, the work 'made' should equal the work being made. With four exceptions, however, respondents either denied making work for others or maintained that the amount of work made for them decidedly exceeded what they made for others. After the estimates of active and passive makework were balanced, 88 percent of all makework (in estimated working hours) was unaccounted for.

However, in other respects, there was considerable consistency across individual statements. For example, the respondents

displayed notable agreement in explaining makework. Having elicited each respondent's own theory of makework, we confronted them with the collective causal map accumulated in prior interviews. While the evoked set of causal attributions differed considerably across bureaucrats, they tended to accept alternative explanations (attributing differences to subjective predispositions, rather than to matter of fact disagreement). The average rate of consent was 78 percent, with dissent spurred by topics apt to be controversial: attributions invoking sensitive value judgments (e.g. political topics). The highest rate of dissent was encountered with attributions to the Law on Higher Education, which many saw as producing makework, whereas others perceived it as 'democratic achievement' (it imposes co-determination on the institutions of Higher Education).

In addition, there was congruity between individual statements and experience. Explaining makework is one thing, being made work is another. If the respondents' knowledge reflects bureaucratic reality, experience and explanation should coincide. Hence, the individual's experience of makework (as measured by the makework scale), should be significantly associated with the variables appearing in the collective causal map. We lack sufficient information and/or variance in the available data to test for all variables cited, but we obtained usable data for respondent's work unit size, his/her span of control, his/her superior's span of control, and the nature of his/her task (coded on one dimension, ranging from purely managerial to purely clerical). In addition, we had data on the respondent's motivation, ambition, and career score.[2] Interpreting the work unit size and the span of control as proxy for size, and the portion of managerial tasks as a proxy variable for task complexity, one should expect a positive relation between these variables and experienced makework, provided that there is congruity between word and fact. Statistical testing by means of regression analysis confirmed this expectation. The coefficients displayed the expected signs with substantial weight (all t-values significant at the .001 level). The model explained 51 percent of the variance of makework and produced corresponding significant F-statistics at the .0001 level and below (Table 1A). The respondent's own span of control, in interaction with the scope of his/her managerial duties, turns out to be a strong predictor of makework experience, as is the size of one's work unit in interaction with the superior's span of control.[3]

But individual predispositions do interfere, modifying the make-

work experience beyond the impact of structural factors. Taking into account the respondent's ambition, motivation, and career score, obtained better results than regressing makework (as measured by the makework-scale) on structural factors alone (Table 1B). A respondent's personality apparently mediates the experience of makework; bureaucrats with high motivation are more sensitive to the makework experience than others (the range of the confidence interval for the third term of the equation precludes an evaluation of the effect of ambition).

Table 1. Regression Models

Model A   Organizational Variables

$MW = .132 (MD * \sqrt{SOCC}) + .00005 (SOCR * SWU) + .28$
t=5.1, sign <.0001   t=3.9 sign <.001   t=10.5 sign < .0001
95% CI: < .08, .18 >   <.00002, .00006 >   < .23, .34 >
expl. var. 31%   expl. var. 20%

$R^2 = .51$ F = 15.58 sign. F< .0001

Model B   All Variables

$MW = .17 (MD * \sqrt{SOCC}) + .18 \ln(MOT) - .001 (AMB * CS) + .002 (MOT * \sqrt{SOCR}) + .44$
t=7.13, sign <.0001   t=3.55, sign < .01   t=3.48, sign <.01   t=2.41, sign <.02   t=8.44, sign. <.0001
95% CI: <.12, .21>   <.08, .28>   <.009, .002 >   <.002, .007>   <.44, 05>
expl.var. 31%   expl.var. 21%   expl.var. 8%   expl. var. 6%

$R^2 = .66$ F = 17.24 sign F <.0001

Symbols: MW = make-work; MD = % of managerial duties in R's work; SOCC = R's span of control; SOCR = Respondent's superior's span of control; SWU = size of the respondent's work unit; AMB = ambition; MOT = motivation; CS = career-score.

Discussion

How to account for inconsistencies in the respondents' collective knowledge? Do they upset the inductive results presented so far? Not necessarily - there are alternative explanations. Respondents may fail to recognize their own contribution to makework because of attribution errors, and related biases: the common causal map may not represent the full knowledge (or the full array of motives) of the bureaucracies' members. In addition, respondents may defy their own rationalizing explanations by acting irrational.

Attribution errors. Respondents may commit attribution errors by laying blame on others (Heider 1958; Staw 1975; Kelley & Michela 1980; Salancik & Meindl 1984). Complexity imposes limits on individual sense making - to make sense of one's own actions is easier than to make sense of others' activities (Weiner 1971). As a consequence, others' activities may appear senseless and their ramifications in the organization's structure as makework. Subordinates would, for example, complain about orders making work because 'they don't make sense, but must be executed', or 'cannot make sense because they change every day', or which are 'so consistently inconsistent that they must create a lot of unnecessary work'. The limits of sense-making were underscored by the attribution pattern: respondents directed attributions of makework more frequently at distant individuals or instances than at close neighbors, whose motives or points of view they were more likely to understand. Also, respondents would themselves hint at the possibility of attribution biases by suggesting, for example, that other departments may discount their activities as makework because 'those people are intrinsically unable to understand our reasons for doing things the way we do them'. In some cases, when conflict was involved, respondents would even state their bias explicitly: 'I understand their motives', a senior aid in the Department of Education would say (discussing his foes' involvement in a bureaucracy-wide conflict that quite a few respondents had mentioned as a reliable source of makework), 'but I am not willing to excuse them'. In addition, the obtrusive context of semi-structured interviews may induce respondents to understate their own active involvement.

The causal map as evoked set. The cumulated causal map represents

solicited ad-hoc theories. It may not fully reflect the imperatives and trade-offs of the context in which decisions are actually made. Two examples may clarify this point:

-The size of the work-unit is an important cause of makework in Parkinson as well as in the collective causal map of the respondents. Consequently, respondents might be expected to strive towards minimizing their work unit (given that work-unit size is not related to salary, advancement opportunities, or other relevant arguments in the respondents' utility function). But other trade-offs may force them to reverse this course. For example, under the tenure regulations in the public sector, reducing one's work-unit size can only be accomplished by not replacing departing functionaries. This would clog the system with mediocre cadre, since turnover is much higher among the 'good' people.

-Third-best choices. When asked about rational choices, respondents may be expected to reason in terms of the best choice. But strategic situations may prevent them from ever making the best choice. Many respondents described their organizations along the lines of March & Cyert (1963), or Pfeffer (1981), namely, as politicking machines, stalled in frozen conflicts: 'We have to deal with a messy structure that evolved as a compromise between hostile departments', ... and... 'politicking is the name of the game'. A respondent would, for example, refer to 'futile bureaucratic arms races' or 'unending tribal warfare' as the bureaucratic condition. Such arms races tend to force third-best choices upon the participants, as they throw them into strategic dilemmas (e.g., prisoner's dilemma, Schelling 1969; Kahn 1965; Wallace 1979). Pitted against each other in 'tribal warfare', bureaucrats must seek to neutralize each other's activities - only to experience each other's activities as makework. One respondent referred in this context directly to the March & Cybert's *Behavioral Theory of the Firm* (1963), calling the problem 'Crisis of Bureaucracy'.

Bounded rationality and irrationality. In a similar vein, the projection of rational behavior on bureaucratic agents may ignore the limits to information processing capacities or the possibility of non-rational behavior (i.e. 'expressive' behavior not oriented towards goal-achievement, but exercised as an end-in-itself [Parsons 1937 and 1951]). A human's capacity to process information is quite limited (Simon 1947; March & Simon 1958). As a result, any action easily

produces unintended consequences that are not easily anticipated; these create side effects, which, in turn, 'make work' for others.

We observed several typical scenarios for such side-effects: Rules or regulations are designed for 'one specific case, then linger on and make paperwork in many other cases'. Superiors, suffering from information overload, respond to dysfunctional stimuli (Kaufman 1973), involuntarily encouraging their subordinates to make work ('you have to "score", as it is called, you have to get your superiors' attention. And you do this, for example, by writing memos. The more memos you write, the better'). Bureaucrats lack the intellectual prowess for optimal decisions ('they miss judgment and make silly decisions', as one respondent put it). Or bureaucrats act non-rationally. Rather than cunningly maximizing their utility, they pursue pet projects with little chance for success - and consequently generate abundant makework for other bureaucrats ('shirking, debauched functionaries fight for their own bonanza'). Or they lack the nerve to act rationally. The reported behavior of one senior official illustrates this point: Nobody else was as frequently accused of making work, although neither his competence nor his dedication was ever questioned - quite a few respondents called him extraordinarily brilliant. But respondents would refer to his 'unbridled fits of rage', to his 'almost physical manners of running this operation', or his 'boyish, uncontrolled spontaneity' as resulting into a 'spree of inconsistent directions that make much unnecessary work'.

Makework as a mirror of organizing

The inconsistencies in the bureaucrats' collective knowledge have plausible explanations. But these explanations add an important subjective dimension to the concept of makework as an objective category. Makework lacks the 'objective' identity of a physical object, since it evolves from human interaction. But it is more than a garbage can for individual sensations or idiosyncrasies. Rather, makework is a mirror that reflects different aspects of organizing under different angles. Specifically:

Organization. Given the evidence collected in this study, there is little reason to discard the collective causal map of makework. Though

basically Parkinsonian, the map, which features a variety of factors, is richer than Parkinson's own theory of makework (Figure 3). There are structural factors, such as size (of the work unit and of the organization), coupled with centralization and (over)regulation. There are also factors related to the organizational culture of public sector bureaucracies. These conditions, in turn, interact with personal properties through self-selection: low salaries and protective tenure regulation make the Incompetent Bureaucrat stay and the Competent Bureaucrat stay away. In addition, they may reduce individuals' commitment, reinforcing egotistic instincts.

Complexity. The factors of the collective cognitive map give individuals the impression of being made work because the individuals are not up to bureaucratic complexity (if they were, bureaucracies, as living human expert systems, would become unnecessary; individuals could do the job without organization).[4] Complexity is the inverse of bounded rationality; because human information processing capacity is limited, bureaucrats cannot apprehend all the aspects, reasons, or motives of bureaucratic interaction. One bureaucrat's work is, indeed, the other bureaucrat's makework. Bureaucrats *make* work because they cannot fully anticipate how their actions may interact with others' activities (or even their own activity). Bureaucrats *are made* work because they cannot fully understand why (or how) others are doing what they are doing. Complexity serves as the medium that transforms organizational interaction into makework.

Bias. When qualifying the Other Bureaucrat's activities as makework, members of an organization are attributing the cause of negative experience to others. Here, they are apt to commit attribution errors, thus shifting the balance of 'good' and 'bad' causes in their own favor. Although there is increasing evidence that attribution styles may co-vary with some organizational features (Crittenden 1983; Salancik & Meindl 1984), it is beyond doubt that the source of attribution errors is rooted in the human psyche, not the organization - even though it is the organization that provides the opportunity for attribution errors.

Individual sensitivities. Not all individuals are equally sensitive to makework. The experience of makework varies with such personal traits such as motivation and ambition, and other personality factors not covered in this study may play a role as well. To the extent that

such factors are involved, makework is an individual phenomenon, independent of the form of organizing.

In sum, makework is not one thing. It reflects different element of organizing under different angles: as the mirror of the organization, makework is created by complexity; as the mirror of other members of the organization, it is distorted or contorted by psychological bias; as a mirror image of the individual bureaucrat, it is amplified (or reduced) by one's own sensitivity (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Makework as a Mirror of Organizing
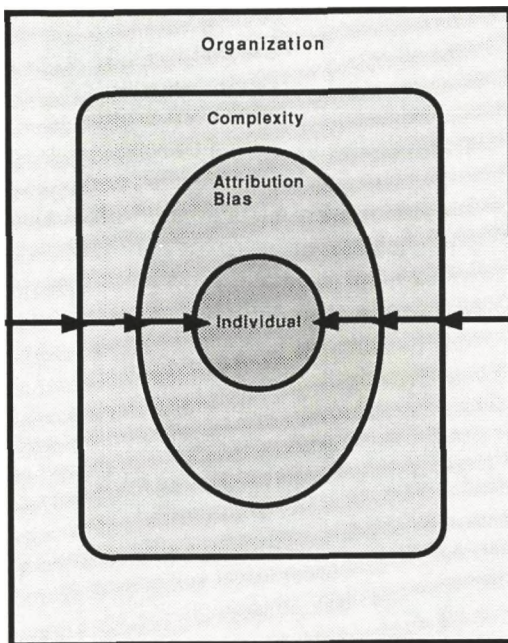
Conclusions

We set out to explore whether makework can be discerned as a specific phenomenon, distinct from other forms of bureaucratic (in)efficiency. Proceeding inductively, we tried to discover whether the con-

cept would ring a bell in the collective mind of employees in the Public Sector, hoping that the echo would allow us to delineate the concept and identify its theoretical implications. Quite successful at the first step, we were less lucky at the second. To arrive at a plausible explanation of makework, we have to resort to several, fairly discordant, levels of theoretical abstraction. We are unable to provide a unifying framework that would establish *makework* as concept for a specific class of phenomena, distinct from other forms of bureaucratic inefficiency. Rather, makework turns out to be a generic term for perceived bureaucratic inefficiency. As such, however, our results have a bearing on the theory of bureaucracy. There are basically two dominant paradigms of bureaucracy:

Rational choice. The first tradition portrays bureaucracy as a conspiracy of smart, often omniscient, bureaucrats who exploit their organizations in the pursuit of their own ends. The bureaucracy's stated goals serve as a shield behind which bureaucrats optimize their own well-being. This tradition pays little attention to makework as an organizational pathology, being more interested in macrofeatures of bureaucratic inefficiency (for overviews: Larkey, Stolk & Winer 1981; Moe 1984). But certain aspects of makework are addressed in the literature. Downs (1966), for example, introduces the concept of 'wasted motion' as an outflow of goal-displacement; Niskanen (1975) discusses bureaucrats maximizing (inefficient) activity as a function of their preference or growth; Breton & Wintrobe (1982) introduce the notion of purposefully counterproductive behavior, intended to signal discontent to superiors. Also addressed is the theme of information overload deliberately created to silence superiors. The common denominator is comprehensive rationality (Steinbruner 1974); rational bureaucrats know very well *why* they are doing what they are doing, and by implication, why other bureaucrats are doing what they are doing.[5] For such individuals, bureaucracy should be a simple affair, comprehensible in all relevant aspects to all individuals involved. Individuals would understand one another - even if they disagree. Makework (the impression of being made unnecessary work for no good reason) would be replaced by the perception of conflicting goals.

Myopic man. The second tradition assumes that bureaucratic agents are myopic individuals. Such agents adapt in simple ways to their

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environment, using rules of thumb and feedback information. Under favorable conditions, feedback may create desired outcomes (which might bring the bureaucracy close to what it would be under the assumptions of rational choice [Bendor & Moe 1985]). Under less favorable conditions, the feedback may deteriorate to superstitious learning (Lave & March 1975). Misunderstanding the causal structure of the environment, bureaucrats may produce problems by trying to solve them; vicious circles result (Masuch 1985). Parkinson's own concept of makework is situated in this tradition, as is the more sophisticated contribution of Meyer, Stevenson & Webster (1985): task uncertainty (produced by bureaucratic complexity) triggers the establishment of new departments (to which the uncertain tasks are assigned). As the organization grows, its complexity grows, so that growing task uncertainty triggers a vicious circle. Makework becomes an AIDS-like pathology, as the cause (complexity) overwhelms the forces that could be mobilized against it (cognition).

The findings of this study are at odds with the rational choice model of bureaucratic behavior. Rather than focusing primarily on conflict, the bureaucrats of this study cited a variety of non-rational reasons for makework - either pointing to their own inability to act rational (provided they would give inadequate explanations), or pointing to the inability of the Other Bureaucrat to act rational (provided they would give adequate explanations). Only a premeditated conspiracy of all the respondents against this research would reconcile our results with the model of rational choice. Clearly, the bureaucrats of this study would fit better into the second explanatory model, despite the paradox that Parkinsonians have good reason to break Parkinson's spell. The respondents of this study, as a collective entity, were sufficiently myopic not to break the vicious circle of makework, yet sufficiently lucid to recognize its debilitating effects. This result places the finding of this study at equidistant from both the rational choice model and the myopic model of bureaucracy. For the bureaucrats under study this is a very uncomfortable position; as heroes of a tragic farce, they know their destiny, yet are unable to change it. The unhappy marriage between individual and organization is bound to continue (Argyris 1957 and 1964).

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