Post-Bureaucratic Encounters: Affective Labour in Public Employment Services

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Abstract

The reorientation from welfare to workfare and the introduction of activation policies and New Public Management have changed the professional requirements for civil servants and public employees. Public services are supposed to increase their efficiency and effectiveness and public employees should act more responsively towards their clients.

Our article focuses on those developments in the field of public employment services in three central European countries (Austria, Germany and Switzerland). The workfare and activation regime addresses job seekers in all three countries in a similar way and constitutes a dual responsibility for employment agents: to advise and motivate job seekers and to control their effort in finding paid work. In accordance with the rising demand to assist, motivate and morally support job seekers interactive affective labour becomes the core issue of the counselling process. However, the interactive work process also constitutes power relations that we conceive as 'affective governmentality'.

1. Introduction and theoretical concepts

Against the background of economic turmoil and rising unemployment during the last two decades labour market policies and the principles of public administration changed. Activation became the major paradigm of labour market policies, and the public sector was reorganized according to the principles of New Public Management (NPM) to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of state administration. Traditionally, state administration and public services have been considered as emotionless terrain. Civil servants were thought of embodying the ideals of rationality, guided by routines and rules – devoted to implement political decisions and aims without getting caught up in their own interests: "Sine ira et studio", as Max Weber (1993: 32) characterized the work and decisions of state bureaucrats. Those traditional ideals appear to be incompatible with the state as modern service provider aiming at enabling and activating its citizens – a "touching" state (Cooper 2011), close to the citizens on one hand, but also governing "from a distance" by making people responsible for their own lives in a Foucauldian sense. In this new regime civil servants are required to perform interactive service work that involves affective skills. Affects lie at the core of service work, in particular of interactive personal services in various fields (Dunkel 1988: 67), which are considered as prototypical settings of affective labour as the economic profit derives from the process of interaction (Rastetter 2008: 113).

Focusing on public employment services in Austria, Germany and Switzerland this paper examines the transformation of former state bureaucracies into customer-oriented service providers. The focus of our research is on the role of affects and affective labour in the interaction between front-line workers of public services and citizen-customers. Our theoretical assumption is that these interactions create state governance as an institution and as power structure. We assume that employment agents embody the new regime of workfarism in order to put into practice new state policies in their interactions with customers. We follow Michael Lipsky's (2010) concept of "street level bureaucracy" and conceive the (activating) state as being produced in the interactions between employees of employment agencies and citizen-customers. „The ways in which street-level bureaucrats deliver benefits and sanctions structure and delimit people's lives and opportunities" (Lipsky 2010: 4). We label these processes as 'doing state'. However, the service sector logic can be highly contradictory aiming at costumer-orientation on the one hand and rationalization and efficiency on the other hand (Kerfoot/Korczynksi 2005: 390). This conflict is well-captured by Marek Korczynski's concept of the "customer-oriented bureaucracy", which implies that modern service workers have to reconcile the bureaucratic logic encompassing rationalization, efficiency and a focus on quantitative aims with the logic of

customer-orientation that aims at giving customers a sense of sovereignty and enchant them by appealing to their irrationality (Korczynski 2009: 78f.).

The new emphasis on costumer orientation, communicative skills, personal commitment and empathy in the process of state transformation points to the rising importance of affects in policy implementation and in 'doing state'. It seems that the subjectivity of the 'whole person' of the bureaucrat is at stake as states rely on a new "spirit" of public administration (in the sense of Boltanski/Chiapello 2007). Public employment agents have to perform service work in order to support the jobseekers, they have to motivate and monitor their clients, and they have to discipline and sanction them if they do not comply with the assigned duties. The ability to motivate, to feel empathy but also to be demanding becomes a central work requirement for public employment agents, therefore we conceive affective labour as the centrepiece of the labour process. Moreover, affective labour is a contested area of NPM with its focus on efficiency and rationalization. This might lead, as indicated above, to contradictory demands for employment agents.

In this paper, we investigate the subjection of employment agents to the new demands of public service work with the aim to activate customers not only by providing advice but also by affective means. We examine how the affect management of public employees in their encounters with customers is supposed to support and motivate the job seekers, and we refer to Michel Foucault's (2006) concept of "governmentality" to conceive how those employees are governed by institutional regulations and demands while they govern their clientele. Foucault's governmentality allows to conceptualize at once the self-constitution and subjection of our employment agents. Governmentality refers to historically specific power regimes and "neoliberal governmentality" to current societies where power is de-centered and its members play an active role in their own self-governance (ibid.). Governmental rationality consists of ways to govern others (through norms and regulations) and to induce a corresponding self-governance (so that individuals seek to enhance their own employability, e.g.). With regard to affective labour like counselling we call this process 'affective governmentality' – the interplay of external regulations and self-governance at employment services. In fact, we investigate the "double dynamics" (Newman 2007) of activation processes, demanding the activation of both, the employment agent and the jobseeker, with a particular focus on affectivity.

2. From state administration to modern service agencies: Affective labour and affective subjectivation

The transformation of the welfare state was triggered by accusations of supporting individual dependency on public transfer benefits and for discouraging individual responsibility and therefore to lure people away from work into passivity. In consequence, the traditional post-war Keynesian Welfare State was transformed towards a Schumpeterian Workfare State (Jessop 1994), strongly resorting to principles of NPM. Following Serrano Pascual's (2007: 14) characterization the activation paradigm shows three distinct features. Firstly, its "individualized approach" aims at changing the behaviour, motivation and qualification of individuals in contrast to structural changes. Secondly, it is assumed that wage labour is a necessary precondition for social participation and autonomy. Thirdly, "contractualisation" is a "core principle" of the relation between the state and its citizens (ibid.: 14). Citizens have to sign a contract with public institutions and thereby agree to obligations that need to be fulfilled in order to obtain benefits (like the conditionality of jobseekers allowances). At the same time citizens are subjectivated as "clients" and "customers". This includes a moral contract reaffirming "the reciprocity norm" that benefit recipients are a burden for society and have to try as hard as possible to overcome their recipient status (ibid.).

Public administrations of the workfare state are transformed from traditional bureaucratic organizations to modern managerial service providers by adopting a business logic that requests primarily the efficient and effective use of resources. The introduction of management by objectives, controlling and accounting systems, competitive structures and decentralized responsibility, but also of service orientation, are typical features of a managerial administrative organization that follows business routines to increase efficiency and formal rationalization in the era of Neo-liberalism. Under the new regime, work of administrative personnel is structured differently, resulting in new realities in bureaucratic organizations (Pollitt/Bouckaert 2011: 6), in particular into a service sector logic that differs from a strictly bureaucratic logic. While job security of public employees declines, the expectations and control mechanisms with regard to work commitment and goal attainment – core aspects of subjectivation under the regime of activating labour market policy – rise (Pollitt/Bouckaert 2011: 91). However, at stake is also a better service quality of public institutions. As indicated before, the service idea of the activation paradigm leads to a growing importance of communication, creativity and affects in the work process, employment agents have to perform "affective labour" (Hardt 1999).

The notion of affective labour does to some extend reflect the 'affective turn' in the social sciences as it refers to the interplay of body and soul, of bodily and cognitive dispositions. We do

not construct rational assessment and affective evaluation as opposing counterparts but as interwoven elements. However, in contrast to the work of Brian Massumi (2002), e.g., we conceive affects as bodily expressions that are always social, discursive and context related. By using the concept of affective labour we want to go beyond Hochschild's important work on emotional labour. Arlie Hochschild's (2003) ground-breaking study "The Managed Heart" on the feeling management of flight attendants and bill collectors in 1983 gave rise to numerous examinations of emotional aspects in service professions as diverse as fast-food service workers, nurses, call centre agents, insurance agents or managers (for overviews Steinberg/Figart 1999; Anderson 2006). These studies point to the growing importance and rising capitalization and commodification of emotions in private companies as well as changes in the organization of work processes and labour control. Hochschild focuses on alienation through emotional labour and discusses cases of estrangement from the job in her examination of flight attendants (Hochschild 2003: 132ff.). Kristin Carls in her study on affective labour in retailing indicates quite the opposite, though: that the affective character of frontline service work constitutes "an important source of recognition and satisfaction" (Carls 2007: 52). Following the latter findings we want to stress that work, which involves affects, can have quite positive implications like conferring meaning and providing job satisfaction through interaction and cooperation with customers (see Hardt/Negri 2003: 304f.). Hence, the notion of affective labour also stresses the empowering dimensions of contemporary wage labour.

Moreover, the concept of affective labour contextualizes the new role of affects in the recent neoliberal transformation of Western economies. With the transformation from factory work and material labour at assembly lines towards informatization of production and immaterial labour in the global North during the 1970s and 1980s physical discipline, established through external control, gives way to much more subtle processes to govern the whole person. Today, science and knowledge determine the possibilities of innovation. "What is coming to an end is the hegemony of the paradigm of industrial labour and manual labour power", Yann Moulier Boutang (2011: 53) argues. The current type of capitalism, termed "cognitive capitalism" by Moulier Boutang (ibid.: 57), "is based on the cooperative labour of human brains joined together in networks by means of computer". Vassilis Tsianos and Dimitris Papadopoulos' (2013) notion of "embodied capitalism" draws our attention to questions of organization of work in cognitive capitalism, labour control, soft skills and affects as sources of surplus value, as the contemporary system of (immaterial) production seems to subject not only the brains of the workforce, but also the pre-cognitive parts of cooperative labour, the unreflective consciousness – the affects. At stake in cognitive capitalism is the commodification of the creativity and innovativeness, of the social and communicative competences, the passion, sensuality and affectivity of employees in

order to improve the competitiveness of companies and efficiency of bureaucratic organizations. Industrial sociology usually refers to those processes as "subjectivation of work"; the emergent type of employee, shaped by the new character of labour is labelled "intrapreneur" or "entreployee" (Flecker/Hofbauer 1998), indicating that attempts to foster an entrepreneurial spirit among employees lie at the core of those developments. Subjectification of work possesses a twin-character: The development offers (or at least promises), on the one hand, greater freedom at the work place, i.e. a form of empowerment to meet organizational goals and targets, on the other hand, the process encompasses the marketization of personal properties and skills, cognitive competences and affects (soft skills), and the transformation of direct, external control into self-control. The central metaphor of neoliberal subjectivation is Michel Foucault's (2006: 314) "entrepreneur of the self", a figure – in contrast to entreployees – that does not refer to an empirical entity, but indicates the norm which individuals shall achieve. The term refers to a whole way of working and living, guided by competition and an entrepreneurial spirit, which implies also a specific self-management of affects. We therefore suggest to label these new forms of self-governance as "affective subjectivation" (Penz/Sauer 2014).

3. Methodological implications

In order to grasp the affective interactive service work of public employment agents, we are conducting a focused ethnographic study (Knoblauch 2005) at employment agencies in Vienna, Berne and Munich. Following the iterative principle of qualitative research and the idea of "theoretical sampling" (Glaser/Strauss 1967) the fieldwork is done in three separate waves. It encompassed expert interviews with the managing staff of the agencies at the regional level and in-depth interviews with employment agents in each city. Additionally, we observe job placement interviews and videotape such interviews in order to understand how affective service work is actually performed. Following Stefan Hirschauer's ethnographic approach (2002) we regard our bodies as data gathering instruments, documenting the affective atmosphere we perceive in so-called 'feeling protocols'. To investigate the customers' and the employment agents' feelings during the counselling interviews and the atmosphere the agents wanted to create we talk to them separately after each interview and record their feelings also in feeling protocols.

We analyze the written material (transcribed interviews, observation protocols) in accordance with Jochen Kleres' (2010) "emotions and narrative analysis" approach. As we conceptualize affects as discourses and practices in interactive and communicative processes we code practices of 'doing' (and 'un-doing') affects. Notions of employment agents on the moderation of affects to establish mutual trust would be a good indication of such an affective process. The main

interpretative idea is that affects „are inextricably interwoven with the meaning dimension of texts to the point where the distinction between cognition and emotion becomes blurred" (ibid.: 197). The analysis of the video material is based on Hubert Knoblauch and Bernt Schnettler's videography (2012), which focuses on interactions, on gestures and bodily expressions.

In the following we present first findings based on the interpretations of our material gathered during the first two waves of data collection.

4. Findings: Organisational standards, affective labour and 'doing state' of employment agents

The preliminary findings from Vienna, Berne and Munich shed light on the structural (organizational) preconditions that govern affective labour, and we provide information on affective professional practices, i.e. the self-governance of employment agents, in interactions with costumers. In addition, we focus on entrepreneurial attitudes of our street-level bureaucrats, indicative of neoliberal entrepreneurial selves, and try to point to an emerging form of governmentality, which encompasses and relies on affects.

4.1. Vienna

The reorganization of the former Austrian Labour Market Office into a modern service provider, called Labour Market Service (*Arbeitsmarktservice*, AMS), in 1994 aimed at stronger decentralization and regionalization and was accompanied by the introduction of NPM mechanisms and a new service attitude towards costumers.

In contrast to other countries, e.g. Germany, the assignment of customers to their respective agents is usually not based on demographic characteristics, educational background or former profession but on the alphabetical order of the customers' names. The customer group of Austria's AMS is also relatively large and diverse as it encompasses people beyond the unemployment insurance system. The Austrian job placement system does not know client profiling and client classification according to employability and various forms of labour market obstacles. Thus, finding strategies to support the heterogeneous customer group is a challenging task for the front-line workers. In addition, the increasing demands on efficiency entail the risk of focussing more on the performance criteria than on the costumers' needs. The emphasis on various managerial control and steering-mechanisms – that put different AMS branches and individual agents into competition with each other – implies that not only jobseekers but also employment agents are constantly forced to legitimize their practices, that neither jobseekers nor

employees can be trusted entirely. The vice Managing Director of Vienna's AMS indicates such contradictions:

> *"Due to constant performance measurement and various techniques of managerial control, the people [employment agents] have the tendency to steer their work towards the fulfilment of the performance indicators rather than the actual goal [of providing a service to the costumer]."*

The introduction of competition provides an opportunity for some of the employment agents to reflect on their performance and to improve their counselling strategies, but at the same time these indicators are regarded as external forces that determine the work practices. Our research shows that the perception of the performance indicators and measures appears to be ambivalent and that some employment agents develop rather sceptical views:

> *"Most clients have no clue that I actually need to stick to totally strict directions. Most clients never get that. There are many pre-set goals and the more one achieves, the more one has to take-on. That is the way things work here."*

The contradiction between a tremendous amount of administrative tasks and the required costumer-orientation, inherent in Korczynski's (2009) concept of the "customer-oriented bureaucracy", was a central and often addressed issue by Vienna's employment agents. In our interviews these agents reveal their frustration or even resignation of being unable to perform their actual task due to the bureaucratic workload:

> *"The bureaucratic tasks increase steadily. From year to year we receive more directives, regulations and instructions telling us what to do with the customers, and all of this takes a lot of time […] The bureaucratic procedures consume increasingly time and obstruct my main tasks: to support and advise the customer. The bureaucratic formalities are tremendous."*

The Viennese case demonstrates that the structural conditions limit the required costumer-orientation and attempts of personalised counselling. To cope with these sources of frustration and in order to maintain a certain level of work satisfaction, the employment agents organize their counselling sessions in ways that (shall) prevent the display of affects and affective exchanges. They resort to mechanisms of 'undoing affects', i.e. not showing empathy or anger, they use objects like computers and staplers to maintain a physical distance from the customers and to fill the empathic vacuum with bureaucratic noise (stapling, stamping). Thus, the encounters between jobseekers and their assigned employment agents in Vienna resemble what Olaf Behrend (2013: 155) calls "administrative case-management".

Employment agents in Vienna provide rather depersonalised services in their attempts to activate costumers – an (unintended) effect of the increasing time pressure and growing bureaucratic tasks. They are caught up in contradictory requirements, and affective encounters (where employment agents affect the jobseekers and vice versa) are fraught with tension, whereby the prevailing mistrust against jobseekers in Vienna also contributes to the difficulties of affective labour in counselling situations. Nonetheless, the employment agents try to establish a cooperative climate, which helps to smooth out conflictual situations and raises the willingness of jobseeker to adopt advice:

> *"Well, I think it is also important that one gives the customer the feeling, that you take him seriously and do not treat him like a number. Because that's what makes the people stubborn and perplexes them, and that wouldn't help. Sometimes it does happen to me, I have to admit. When I see the tenth customer for the fifteenth time and nothing has happened, I do become grumpy."*

In sum, the situation in Vienna's AMS is characterized by a significant inconsistency between customer-orientation, a high degree of standardized encounters and an immense workload. Employment agents in Vienna try to bridge these contradictions by creating an affective distance between themselves and their customers. We conclude that affective labour of employment agents in Vienna consists mainly in 'undoing affects', an affect management that attempts to hide feelings and a form of self-governance to cope with the contradictions between standardization and costumer-orientation of public services.

4.2. Berne

In the Swiss case the national government devolves policy competencies to cantonal (regional) governments. By means of decentralization, contractualization and management by objectives, the central government tries to ensure that the regional and local actors act in accordance with national objectives. The Swiss government uses (financial) incentives to motivate and control the cantonal agencies (Bonvin/Moachon 2007: 8f.). These governance tools indirectly influence decision-making processes at the local level (Bonvin/Farvaque 2007).

As a response to these national provisions, the management of the public employment service in Berne (*Regionale Arbeitsvermittlung*, RAV) launched a new organizational strategy in 2013, named "Berne Top", which strongly emphasizes costumer-orientation and personalization of counselling. The project aims at avoiding unspecific and unrealistic application efforts and at improving the image of the employment service and the regional employment agencies. Drawing on social work-concepts and in cooperation with the employment agents a counselling model

called "Solution and resource oriented counselling" (*lösungsorientierte Beratung*) was created. Accordingly, the customers' autonomy rose due to the abolishment of job placement proposals and the employment agents try to support their costumers by finding suitable labour market programmes and by personalised counselling. This counselling conception aims not only at enhancing the jobseekers' self-reliance but also at enabling a dialogue between employment agents and their costumers based on partnership.

The cantonal programme "Berne Top" adopts NPM strategies such as management by objectives, measurement of goal attainment or IT-control systems to foster an entrepreneurial spirit among the civil servants. However, most of the RAV employees do not perceive these instruments as managerial control but as possibilities to enhance their own motivation and to improve their individual performances. Overall, we could observe a strong identification of the employment agents with the organization and its goals:

> *I think if I ever would fall behind [the other employment agents], my direct superiors would first look at my customer structure. Then, my boss would approach me and probably tell me: 'Well, I see you are little bit behind the others. Do you know the reasons for this backlog?' And then we would discuss my costumer structure, and I could say to him: 'Look, we could optimize this in a certain way', so that my boss would recognize how much I am devoted to my job."*

Mutual trust is a crucial component in the counselling process and helps to establish a cooperative atmosphere. Despite unequal power relations, the employment agents in Berne are strongly preoccupied with the idea of a cooperative partnership and try to boost the customers' self-esteem through empathic attention and affective motivation. The jobseekers shall feel comfortable and appreciated in the counselling situation:

> *"Transparency, so the costumer understands everything and feels comfortable and appreciated as well. Also, I have to accept the costumer the way he is […], and I have to feel comfortable myself. Well yes, when they go home after our meeting, they should have received some added value. So that they realize it is worth coming to the RAV."*

The work of employment agents consists mainly of affective labour in accordance with the feeling rules of the organization, but it also encompasses additional affective aspects, termed "voluntary emotional labour" by Steve Vincent (2011: 1375), to maintain relations of (quasi-) partnership and to create added value for the jobseekers. These aspects constitute an important source of motivation and satisfaction for the Bernese employment agents: *"It is important for me that people trust me and that they open up […] I also get feedback […], for example, from a man in his fifties*

writing me a note that he felt in good hands. Such feedback makes me happy." However, uncooperative costumers and unsuccessful attempts to activate jobseekers – accompanied sometimes by threats to impose sanctions – result in frustration and even trigger feelings of resignation.

We conclude that the implementation of "Berne Top" requires a specific modus of self-governance. The central task of the employment agents is to enhance the costumers' self-reliance and to provide motivation for the costumers' main duty: to find a job on their own. Affective relations are necessary to establish a trustworthy atmosphere and to create and maintain a cooperative climate. In Berne, 'doing state' shows a wide range of affective practices, from creating a friendly atmosphere, showing empathy and understanding, attempts to foster the wellbeing of costumers to exercising control and holding customers responsible for finding a job. Affect management of the public employees seems to support an entrepreneurial spirit, where self-improvement in accordance with the objectives of the organization is at stake. Labour control and the measurement of performance are not regarded as disciplinary tools but as opportunities for self-optimization. The cantonal programme "Berne Top" leads to the embodiment of major NPM ideas and encourages an entrepreneurial spirit among the employees of the RAV. In that respect Berne's employment service is a model example for activation policies as well as costumer-orientation.

4.3. Munich

In Germany the reform process of labour market policies started in 2002 with the notorious Hartz IV-reforms and brought about major institutional changes and a transition from active to activating measures of employment promotion (Sell 2006). Like in Austria and Switzerland NPM methods were adopted and costumer-orientation became a prominent issue. In our research we focus only on Employment Agencies (*Agenturen für Arbeit*, AfA), which are responsible for costumers covered by the unemployment insurance system. In contrast to the Bernese or Viennese example, in German employment agencies there exists a special segmentation of jobseekers along professional branches, like a department for artisans or academics. In the following we will discuss some findings that we gathered in the department for unemployed graduates before we return to more general results.

The academic clientele is rather sceptical of the proposed services, which demands strong argumentative persuasion on the part of the employment agents:

> *"Normally, the costumers assigned to this department are rather sceptical of the employment agency […]*
> *Usually they adopt a kind of protective attitude, telling themselves that they are highly qualified and able to*

take on a managerial position, questioning if the employment agency will be able to provide any help for them. That's their general attitude."

In this department of the Munich agency the interactions are less characterised by control and sanctions, the employment agents rather try to motivate and to support their costumers with reasonable arguments und good ideas. In doing so, they strive to establish a trustworthy atmosphere, relying on a mixture of rational arguments and affects such as empathy, integrity, seriousness and professionalism. The interplay of both dimensions, of rational explanations and affective relations, appears to be crucial for the successful affection of jobseekers:

"The interviews should take place at eye level, also some small talk is important. I just try to give my costumers the feeling that I take them seriously. And by relying on my own life experience and on my expertise I try to create a climate of mutual trust."

In all departments of the AfA steady eye contact and open seating positions (the body of the agent facing the costumer) are some of the physical means to create a cooperative counselling atmosphere. And all employment agents try to integrate the costumers into their administrative computer work (very much in contrast to the situation in Vienna, where the computer almost builds a wall between the interaction partners). In Munich the employment agents encourage and motivate the jobseekers, and they try to boost the self-confidence of their costumers by showing empathy and professional interest, and they provide support in developing reasonable application strategies for jobs.

All interviewees in Munich stress the importance of having a positive impact on their customers' situation and they try to address the individual needs of their costumers. The employment agents show a strong identification with their professional tasks, and their professional identities seem to depend on the recognition of the customers' concerns and the underlying idea of partnership and mutual trust. In the counselling situations with unemployed graduates, a very active costumer group at the outset, the aforementioned intentions become particularly clear. However, the counselling of jobseekers is not always free from paternalistic traits, and the power asymmetry becomes visible in some instances:

"I always try to discuss the goals with my costumers. Normally, the costumers themselves have a clear goal in mind. In order to make sure that the goal is attainable, we have to discuss it, and in most instances we come to an agreement. But there are always some cases where the goals are unrealistic, and we have to try to find a common solution. Eventually, we [the employment agents] determine the goals, but usually no conflicts occur."

In conflictual situations the employment agents in Munich emphasize their role as state officials and tend to refer to the legal framework of their profession: principles of public welfare, economy efficiency, or to the rules of the insurance system as stated in the SGB III. That way they are able to create a distance between themselves and their costumers and thereby 'neutralize' aggressive behaviour.

Permanent reforms and institutional changes are also regarded as detrimental to high-quality support for jobseekers. Our interview partners try to make up for these organizational shortcomings in their work with customers, and – in accordance with their professional self-perception or professional ethic – they attempt to protect their costumers from organisational inconsistencies and increasing administrative pressure:

> *"Honestly, I just don't apply all of them [reforms, rules]. Because some make no sense to me and I don't want them to influence my work with the costumers [...] We are in direct contact with the costumers, and when we realize that the counselling concepts developed at a higher level are not really useful, then we focus directly on the costumers and what they say and report back."*

5. Conclusion

Our research indicates that the activation paradigm forms a guiding principle for labour market policies in all three countries. The way it is enacted by the interactive service work of employment agents at the street-level, however, differs tremendously. At the micro-level of interaction we observe rather different forms of affective engagement by employment agents, although everywhere in combination with a strong entrepreneurial spirit. In Vienna, the large number of cases and the highly standardised work process prevent personalised counselling to a large extend, whereas in Munich and in Berne the wide scope of discretion encourages the creation and maintenance of affective relations between employment agent and costumer. Organisational structures like time constraints as well as the routines that the front-line workers establish under these structural conditions influence the endeavours to activate customers and the employment agents' ways of 'doing state'. Nonetheless, in all three cases the counselling process presents itself as a combination of factual information and affective relationship, as a combination of these interrelated aspects of communication.

This paper shows that affective labour is crucial for the understanding of contentious policy issues and for their implementation. Under the current workfare regime unemployed people shall be treated as self-reliant customers. Activating labour market policies put pressure on the employment agents to make the customer a co-producer of services, to create a cooperative

climate, to show empathy, to motivate and encourage effectively. While success is generally defined as the successful integration of customers into the labour market, the success of a counselling situation consists first of all in a trustworthy interaction between front-line worker and customer. In order to be successful employment agents have to provide affective labour – by 'doing' (or 'undoing') affects –, and affective subjectivation is part of their jobs.

By NPM mechanisms aiming at enhancing the competition between employment agencies and their subdivisions, public policies do not only regulate the interactions between employment agents and their costumers, but they also determine the internal relations between the staff members and the professional climate of agencies. Key performance indicators such as the reintegration-rate of jobseekers, various managerial control techniques (like team meetings and supervision) and individualised financial responsibility hold the individual employee accountable for the overall performance, these measures structure the work practises of the agents and contribute to their entrepreneurial attitude. However, successful counselling and placement of jobseekers in such a context is only possible if the employment agents' entrepreneurial attitudes are paired with affective labour. The quality of services provided by employment agencies dependents to a high degree on costumer-oriented counselling, i.e. on the personalization of interactions and on mutual trust. According to the rules of our three regional organizations, the creation of a (fictional) partnership with the jobseeker is an important point of the promoted costumer-orientation. Most employment agents do not only act according to such feeling rules, but they usually make some extra effort to create a friendly and cooperative atmosphere, and the affective aspects of their work are crucial for their job satisfaction. Thus, we can speak of 'affective self-governance' or conclude that the employment agents develop an affective "practical sense" (Bourdieu 1998) for their task: that the public workforce consists of 'activated activators', subjected by organizational regulations and feeling rules, which they incorporate or embody.

Affective subjectivation as part of policy implementation and 'doing state' is a figurational process in which public employees develop a professional identity, which encompasses entrepreneurial affect management. And in their (affective) work practices public employees constitute a state of workfare, where unemployed citizens are not only governed by disciplinary measures but also by affective persuasion. In conclusion, our research suggests to add an affective dimension to the well-established theoretical discourse on the workfare or "neo-social" welfare state (Lessenich 2013) and to discuss state transformation also in terms of affective governmentality.

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