

Taken as a whole, this is a valuable and important book, a timely and important addition to the growing field of literature in both anthropology and the history of ideas. It is also an important reminder of the valuable heritage that some learned women and men have left for us, leaving us with important lessons that can serve us well in navigating through the complexities of contemporary debates.

Aleksandar Boskovic
UFRN, Natal (Brazil); Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade (Serbia)

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Eckert, Julia M. (ed.): The Bureaucratic Production of Difference: Ethos and Ethics in Migration Administration.

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In this edited volume, Julia Eckert and six other social and cultural anthropologists endeavor to address the question, ‘What do bureaucrats think they’re doing?’ Their focus is on diverse migration administrations, their aim being to shed light on the underlying factors influencing bureaucrats’ actions. The authors share the fundamental assumption that what bureaucrats think they’re doing shapes what they *actually* do, leading them to explore bureaucrats’ emic perspectives concerning their own work. Contrary to the widespread claim of bureaucratic indifference, the authors challenge this notion by identifying a common ethical concern for the common good that underlies bureaucratic practices. However, they also recognize that visions of this common good are often contentious and contradictory. Within the context of migration bureaucracies, these visions play a central role in negotiations regarding access to the common good or exclusion from it. Michael Lipsky’s seminal work showed the discretion street-level bureaucrats have. The authors of this edited volume set out to investigate the often ethical factors that influence the exercise of this discretion, alongside other aspects of bureaucratic practice.

In her introduction, Julia Eckert provides a comprehensive elucidation of the core concepts and theories employed throughout the edited volume, with a particular em-

phasis on the titular terms 'ethics' and 'ethos', both of which have Weberian origins. Bureaucratic ethics revolve around notions of a good society. On the other hand, 'ethos' refers to the values that govern bureaucratic procedures, encompassing aspects such as rule orientation, consistency and depersonalization. Importantly, the authors do not perceive ethics as external influences acting upon bureaucracies' ethos; instead, ethics are considered intrinsic to the very essence of bureaucracies. The entire volume revolves around the intricate interplay between ethics and ethos within bureaucratic systems. For Eckert, this exploration has significant value, as it can offer insights into the phenomenon of institutional change, which she views as the outcome of a dynamic process, where the prioritization of ethos over ethics and vice versa occurs in an alternating manner.

Laura Affolter's contribution to the volume is an ethnographic study of a Swiss asylum administration, focusing on the efforts of migration bureaucrats to keep numbers of successful asylum applications low in the pursuit of fairness. Laura Affolter identifies the norm of fairness as particularly important to case workers in Swiss asylum administrations who want to protect the asylum system by excluding everyone who, in their estimate, does not rightfully deserve asylum. Laura Affolter delves into the practical implementation of this ideal of fairness, particularly in how it influences decision-making processes. For instance, she examines how case workers employ strategic questioning techniques to create indicators of 'non-credibility' in asylum claims. The underlying rationale behind such actions is that the system can only function effectively if asylum is granted exclusively to those deemed 'deserving' by the case workers. Consequently, the ethical mandate of protecting the asylum system influences the ethos of the office, resulting in the establishment of 'fair' procedural values. By exploring this intricate interplay between ethics and ethos, Affolter sheds light on the dynamics of decision-making within the Swiss asylum administration.

The subsequent contribution, authored by Simon Affolter, offers a distinct perspective by examining the work of field inspectors employed by the Swiss association for labor market inspections. These inspectors are tasked with improving working conditions and combating informal labor, yet surprisingly they often fail to generate data to achieve these official objectives. Instead, the data they collect tends to obscure precarious agricultural labor conditions, effectively legitimizing the prevailing status quo. In a compelling argument, Simon Affolter contends that this apparent contradiction should not be seen as unintentional but rather as a consequence of the different yet interconnected hegemonic projects at play. The economic goals of the Swiss agricultural sector (ethics) take precedence over the pursuit of better labor conditions (ethos). This hierarchical prioritization is driven by the ingrained assumption that Swiss agriculture necessitates inexpensive labor to sustain itself. Simon Affolter posits that the mismatch between the declared goals and the actual effects of bureaucratic practice is not necessarily accidental: it can be attributed to an intentional hierarchization of conflicting ethics and ethos. What makes this case intriguing is that, unlike the other contributions in this volume, the individual ethics of inspectors, rather than the over-

arching ethics of the office, significantly influence their performance of their duties. However, the author does not delve into the reasons behind this observation. It might have been worth investigating whether the fact that inspectors often work outside a traditional office setting contributes to this difference.

In his contribution, Werner Schiffauer investigates the ‘Verfassungsschutz,’ the German domestic intelligence agency, and its knowledge production. Unlike the police, the Verfassungsschutz lacks executive power but plays a crucial role in providing intelligence about perceived ‘enemies of the constitution’ to both the police and the broader public. Knowledge production within the Verfassungsschutz primarily involves creating fixed categories of ‘extremists’ who are seen as threats to the common good. However, the process of categorization inherently oversimplifies and rigidifies the complex and fluid realities of society, resulting in the production of a categorical fiction. Moreover, Schiffauer identifies an issue in the division of labor between the police (exercising executive power) and the Verfassungsschutz (engaged in knowledge production). Once categorical information is disseminated to external actors beyond the Verfassungsschutz, it becomes naturalized, obscuring its reductionist nature. This is especially the case because the Verfassungsschutz’s evidence production is conducted in secret. Schiffauer states that the ethical framework of the bureaucracy must rationalize the decision-making that is based on these bureaucratic categories, as otherwise its arbitrariness would contradict the principles of rational legal governance (ethos). This creates a delicate balance between ethical considerations and the need to uphold a sense of rationality and legitimacy in bureaucratic actions.

In her inquiry, Chowra Makaremi delves into the epistemologies employed by French airport border-detention procedures. She identifies two significant axes that influence the decision-making of protection officers in determining the ‘truth’ of asylum seekers’ narratives. The first axis revolves around the question of whether the narration is true, while the second axis concerns whether the narrative places the subject in need of protection. The officers judge asylum-seekers’ narratives based on criteria such as clarity, sincerity, accuracy and likelihood. Makaremi draws attention to the subjectivity of sincerity assessments, which can be influenced by individual perceptions and biases. On the other hand, evaluations of likelihood and emotionality appear to be more culturally determined in her findings. The increasing importance of verification, or the need for proof of the narrative, is evident in this process. Makaremi’s relativistic proposition is that individual experiences may contain a deeper truth that is not easily translated into a narrative form. The current epistemological approach within the French airport protection officers’ framework tends to undermine the truth of individual experiences by adhering to a universalized perspective. By shedding light on these epistemological nuances, Makaremi invites us to critically examine how the current system may overlook or diminish the authenticity of asylum-seekers’ experiences, underscoring the need for a more nuanced and culturally sensitive approach to understanding and validating their individual experiences.

In his contribution, Nicholas De Genova offers significant theoretical insights into the increasing deportability and detainability of migrants. He interprets detention as an enactment of sovereign state power, driven not by any legal wrong-doing but by the perceived undesirability of individuals. Despite depriving individuals of their liberties, detention surprisingly does not provoke much outcry; instead, it appears mundane and bureaucratic in its implementation. De Genova's chapter sheds light on how those deemed outside the scope of the common good are subjected to discipline and uncertainty. In these 'everyday states of exception,' ethics once again take precedence over ethos. Street-level bureaucrats become pivotal in making case-by-case decisions concerning this state of exception. The law is, in essence, suspended to defend against perceived threats to the legal order.

In his examination of so-called assisted voluntary return migration, David Loher draws attention to the conflicts that arise between rule-orientation, efficiency and humanitarian considerations. Loher departs from Max Weber's traditional analytical distinction between ethos and ethics. Instead, he views rule-orientation and efficiency not exclusively as matters of either ethos or ethics. He argues that rule-orientation is not just a means to an end but an ethical objective in itself in the self-representation of counselors involved in voluntary return programs. Furthermore, Loher highlights the migration bureaucracy's prime directive, which is to assess and determine an individual's qualification for being entitled to be a part of the common good. If someone receives a negative asylum decision, the counselors perceive it as their duty to enforce a deportation. Interestingly, in this setting, bureaucrats often anticipate negative asylum decisions and act proactively, not waiting for an official verdict. This anticipatory approach allows them to curtail lengthy and potentially unsuccessful asylum cases by bypassing the rule of waiting for a formal decision. Here, efficiency takes precedence over strict rule-following in the counselors' decision-making process.

This edited volume offers valuable insights into the intricate interplay of ethics and ethos within migration administration. Having engaged with these compelling case studies, two questions arise. First, while the volume illuminates how ethics often take precedence over ethos in decision-making, it would also be intriguing to explore instances where ethos surpasses ethics. Understanding such occurrences could help identify trends in institutional change and shed light on the dynamics of decision-making when different values come into play. Moreover, contextualizing the findings within the debate on 'New Public Management Reforms' could be a fruitful endeavor, since it is, in essence, a debate about the economy of bureaucratic values over time.

Simon Schneider
Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg